‘The Power of Knowledge, the Resonance of Tradition’.

Electronic publication of papers from the AIATSIS Indigenous Studies conference, September 2001

edited by

Graeme K Ward and Adrian Muckle

AIATSIS, Canberra

Research Program

The Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies

Canberra

First published in 2005 by the
Research Program
Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies
GPO Box 553 Canberra 2601
AIATSIS Research publications co-ordinator: Graeme K Ward

NATIONAL LIBRARY OF AUSTRALIA CATALOGUING-IN-PUBLICATION DATA:

AIATSIS Indigenous Studies Conference (2001 : Canberra, A.C.T.).

The power of knowledge, the resonance of tradition :
electronic publication of papers from the AIATSIS
Indigenous studies conference, September 2001.

Bibliography.
ISBN 0 85575 489 3.

1. Aboriginal Australians - Congresses. 2. Aboriginal
Australians - Social conditions - Congresses. 3.
Aboriginal Australians - Economic conditions - Congresses.
I. Ward, Graeme, 1943- . II. Muckle, Adrian G. III. Australian
Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies.
IV. Title.

305.89915

Research Program
Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies

Contents

Papers from AIATSIS Conference2001: Electronic publication

Adrian Muckle and Graeme K Ward

AIATSIS, Canberra

The first major Conference of the AIATSIS for several years was held at the Manning Clark Centre of The Australian National University, Canberra, between 18 and 20 September 2001. Its title, *The Power of Knowledge, the Resonance of Tradition – Indigenous Studies: Conference2001* stressed the interrelated significances of knowledge and tradition in Indigenous Australia and suggested the importance of exploring changes in these over time. This was encouraged through three main symposia: 'Land Resources and Knowledge', 'Knowledge and Colonialism', and 'The resonance of tradition', and workshops on language and multi-media use. Three keynote presentations addressed the major issues of each symposium. Conference2001 program details can be seen at <http://www.aiatsis.gov.au/rsrch/conf2001/program.htm>.

This Web publication brings together nine papers from Conference2001. A further sixteen papers have been selected for publication in book form (Taylor et al in press). In recognition of the fact that the approaches and methodologies that guide Indigenous studies are constantly developing, and that conferences such as this provide a space for reflection, the collective purpose of these publications is to provide a broad record of the conference (which included more than one hundred presentations) and the thinking that was then current on issues in Indigenous studies and research in Australia. The various papers in this online collection help bring into focus the twin themes of the conference; they explore the importance of place and tradition in contemporary society; and they examine the politics and processes associated with acquiring or sharing knowledge and the ethical development of new knowledge. Recognition of Indigenous community knowledge holders and partnerships or collaborations between researchers and representatives of Indigenous communities underpin most of these contributions. Collectively, they draw attention to the interpersonal dimension of education and research.

The conference provided an opportunity to reflect on changes in the political and social environment in which Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders live. In his contribution, Colin Tatz reviews a half-century of negative and positive achievements in the practice of government policies for Aboriginal people in Queensland and the Northern Territory. Noting that the transition from wardship to the recognition of Aborigines as 'people of account' who both command and demand national respect has been achieved within the life span of an individual, Tatz expresses and diagnoses a general optimism—albeit an optimism tinged by the pain associated with the many negative achievements, especially in the areas of health and housing.

In two presentations which form part of a conversation between Dave Passi and Nonie Sharp on sea rights and the traditions of the Meriam people of Mer (Murray) Island in the Torres Strait, optimism is also tinged by anxiety about what the future holds for the next generation. Both Passi and Sharp draw attention to as yet unresolved issues of access to sea or fishing rights—in other words, right of access to economic self-determination—as well as emerging problems associated with the exodus of young persons and dependence on welfare. Sharp writes of the need for a paradigm shift in thinking about Indigenous peoples who still live on their own lands—a shift that does not involve or presuppose a break with tradition.

Tradition, as Sharp notes, can be an enabling force which promotes confidence, and it is also a vital force in creativity and artistic expression. In conversation with songwriter and bandsman Neparrŋa Gumbula, ethnomusicologist Aaron Corn reveals the extent to which kinship and inherited tradition—religious and legal ties of their members to family, ancestors and country —inform band formation and compositional practice in Arnhem Land. In this case study, an apparently alien institution, the popular band, is shown to be a part of contemporary Yolngu culture in which traditional virtues, notably the following of ancestral precedent, and relationships to place are very much evident. Corn and Gumbula make the point that the creativity involved in the blending or juxtaposition of the new and the old is seldom recognised outside of these communities, but it is worth contemplating what implications these insights might have for the way that other institutions (or forms of cultural production) are viewed and understood.

The theme of Indigenous issues in environmental and natural resource management brings together the next three contributions. Jocelyn Davies reflects on her experiences in teaching a course on 'Indigenous Australians and Environmental Management' in South Australia. Using data obtained from a survey of her past students, she considers how an experiential, field-based approach to learning about Indigenous issues and the relationship between the cultural and natural environments has influenced the work of professionals in the area of natural resource management and their approaches to Indigenous issues. One obstacle identified by Davies is the challenge of educating, or communicating with, students who are indifferent or hostile towards developing an appreciation of such issues. The challenge for Aboriginal studies education, Davies suggests, is to go 'beyond mere communication about Aboriginal people and the issues they face to build relationships, and to foster dialogue and conflict resolution between Aboriginal people and these hostile "Others"'.

With reference to the northern Kimberley region of Western Australia, David Bowman and Tom Vigilante discuss a collaborative research project designed to develop a better understanding of fire management that takes into account Aboriginal perspectives and changes in burning patterns in the era since the beginning of colonisation. In their view, 'research projects between Aboriginal people and Western scientists offer a means by which different knowledge systems can be communicated and exchanged so that land management decisions can be more effective and equitable'. In a similar fashion, Dermot Smyth and Claude Beeron discuss the development of the cultural indicators to be used in monitoring the condition of the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area in north Queensland. This is of mutual benefit to the rainforest community and the management authority. While the indicators themselves are specific to the area and community concerned, their method has the potential to be applied elsewhere. One important part of this process must be the recognition that Indigenous

aspirations and understandings of what is appropriate will change over time and that management systems should respond accordingly.

Recognition of the Australian experience of settler-colonialism is also a critical aspect of research concerning (or involving) interaction between Aborigines and settler Europeans. In considering what an 'ethical political theory framework' might be when researching mediation and conflict resolution processes, sociologist Morgan Brigg acknowledges both the settler-colonial context (based on dispossession) and the fluid space of representation provided by the contemporary human sciences (in which the status of knowledge claims is contested). Brigg identifies the practices of autonomy and self-regulation as features common to the political lives of Aboriginal and settler Australians which can be used to explore—in this case—intercultural conflict resolution processes. While Brigg thereby locates a point of intersection in the political lifeways of Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians, Nicholas Gill, Alistair Paterson and M.J. Kennedy's discussion of one individual's life-map draws attention to some of the 'hidden histories' of Aboriginal–settler relations in the Northern Territory. In combination with an archaeological survey of landscape this (auto)biographical mapping of a personal history brings into relief an important part of mid-twentieth century pastoral history—it also testifies to the potential value of a multi-disciplinary approach.

Returning or restituting knowledge acquired or discovered is a critical part of the research process which requires special skills. In the final contribution to this collection anthropologist Barbara Glowczewski relates some of the processes involved in the use of multimedia technology, in this case a CD-ROM, to return material to the Warlpiri people of Lajamanu. One of the future issues that Glowczewski identifies is whether Indigenous communities will have the means to control the different processes involved when knowledge is transmitted in this way. In her view, however, the Warlpiri 'have shown that they master this dynamic aspect of their culture even when traditional transmission is not restricted to the old ways.'

Publishing these Conference2001 contributions in an electronic provided the opportunity to include longer papers and those requiring inclusion of more than a minimum of illustrative material and the use of colour. The papers included in the Aboriginal Studies Press book, while they were selected for their representation of the diverse facets of Australian Indigenous studies at that time, were also, by contrast with those able to be included here, limited to less than four thousand words and only a few illustrations. It is also possible that further Conference2001 papers might be added to this electronic collection as they become available.

The papers presented here are the first publication of conference presentations on the Institute's Research Web pages. They have been refereed externally by appropriately qualified and independent persons – that is, meeting the peer-review requirements of the Department of Education, Science and Training (DEST 2003:20-21,26) – and edited by staff of the AIATSIS Research Program.

Appropriate referencing of articles in a compilation such as this has challenged compilers and editors since the advent of electronic publishing. We see no reason why these papers should not be treated as part of the whole – as in any hard-copy collection – and have numbered consecutively pages of the introduction and the nine original papers. The paper by Tatz, for example, may be referenced thus: Tatz, C. 2005 From welfare to treaty: reviewing fifty years of Aboriginal policy and practice. Pp.5-24 of

'The Power of Knowledge, the Resonance of Tradition'. Electronic publication of papers from the AIATSIS Indigenous Studies conference, September 2001, edited by G.K. Ward and A. Muckle. Research Program, AIATSIS, Canberra <URL …> (accessed …).

Acknowledgment

Ruth Nicholls of AIATSIS assisted with the early stages of compilation and editing of this collection.

References

DEST 2003. *Higher Education Research Data Collection* … Department of Education, Science and Training, Canberra <http://www.dest.gov.au/highered/research/herdc.htm>

Taylor, L, GK Ward, G Henderson, R Davis and LA Wallis (eds), in press, *The Power of Knowledge, the Resonance of Tradition. AIATSIS Conference 2001*. Aboriginal Studies Press, Canberra. ISBN 0 85575 484 2 <http://www.aiatsis.gov.au/asp/docs/ASP2005Catalogue.pdf>

Adrian Muckle
History Programme, School of History, Philosophy, Political Science and International Relations, Victoria University of Wellington <Adrian.Muckle@vuw.ac.nz>

Graeme K Ward
Research Fellow and Conference2001 convener, AIATSIS <graeme.ward@aiatsis.gov.au>

Canberra, December 2004

From Welfare to Treaty: reviewing fifty years of Aboriginal policy and practice

Colin Tatz

Macquarie University

***Abstract**: A feature of Aboriginal policy and practice since 1948 has been the range of governmental policy dictums: institutionalisation, segregation, assimilation, integration, self-determination, self-management, community development, Aboriginalisation, reconciliation, practical reconciliation. Aboriginal and Islander ideals—autonomy, sovereignty, negotiated treaties—have yet to be given credence. Considering how these policy dictums have affected the daily lives of Aborigines, this paper reviews the positive and negative achievements to date, and Geoffrey Blainey's assertion that 'the pendulum has swung too far in the Aboriginal direction'.*

Geoffrey Blainey has written an acclaimed short history of the world: succinct, beautifully written, and as authoritative as any one can be in so short a space. The pity is that his pithy phrasing of the Aboriginal experience—as 'the black armband view of history'—lacks both authority and credence. He defines this 'genre' as the way in which the interpretation of Aboriginal issues has allowed 'the minuses to virtually wipe out the pluses'. This pendulum swing, he says, 'has run wild', and he even refers to the High Court as 'that black armband tribunal' (Blainey 2000).[1]

Since 1961, I have been observing the pluses and minuses, in a variety of capacities: first as research scholar at The Australian National University, then director of research centres at Monash and Macquarie universities, a few professorships, several committee chairmanships at AIATSIS, writer of seventeen books and numerous journal articles and more accessible essays. The political and legal landscape for Aborigines and Islanders has changed remarkably; the days of welfare and wardship have given way to the present era of claim and clamour for first nation status, for a treaty of some kind, and for greater levels of autonomy than has already been achieved in some domains.

Since 1948 there has been a range of governmental policy dictums: institutionalisation, assimilation, integration, self-determination, self-management, community development, Aboriginalisation, reconciliation and 'practical reconciliation'. There is no point or value in examining each of these policy phases because they have been really no more than slogans. A sensible way is to review achievements by looking at what has happened in *practice* rather than what has been preached as *policy*. In several places I have written about 'a catalogue of pluses' and an

1 Blainey now claims he was referring to such matters as the environment, for which he was and is in mourning and, Australian football fan that he is, he insists his metaphor was born out of the practice of these footballers wearing a black arm stripe when someone connected with the game dies (*The Australian*, 13 November 2000).

'inventory of minuses' (Tatz 2001:3–7). Rather than repeat them, let me assess aspects of the policies that were in practice fifty years ago by comparison with the contemporary situation, especially in the Northern Territory and Queensland.

What did Aborigines have or not have in 1951 and what do they have now? We can use at least ten measuring-rods, ranging from political, legal and economic rights to public recognition of, and respect for, Aborigines as a permanent presence in the Australian consciousness.

Political rights

At the half-century, in 1950, Aborigines and Islanders had no political rights whatsoever: no franchise, no form of representation, no political organisation or movement apart from a few White-run bodies like the Northern Territory Council for Aboriginal Rights. Directed by Brian Manning, this Council was looked upon as a satanic organisation by governments and churches alike. The Methodist Overseas Mission Board (MOM) asked Beulah Lowe, their linguist, to translate into the vernacular and distribute Fred Schwartz's messianic tract, 'The Disease of Communism', What MOM sought was not so much prophylaxis against 'the red menace' as to stop Aborigines joining any organisation with an agenda other than their own (Tatz 1964).

Responsibility for the representation of Aboriginal interests in the Northern Territory lay with the Director of Welfare, one of several public servants in the Legislative Council, then a body with a majority of official members. In Queensland, Aboriginal Affairs bureaucrats Con O'Leary and Paddy Killoran supported Aboriginal membership only of their front organisation, the One People of Australia League (OPAL). In December 1967, at a public seminar in Townsville entitled 'We the Australians: What is to Follow the Referendum?', Killoran ordered Margaret Reynolds (the future senator) not to participate upon pain of expulsion from OPAL. She was 'in danger' by virtue of collaboration with speakers Joe McGuinness, Faith Bandler, Charles Rowley and Colin Tatz. The contrast with August 2001 is stark: there are now four elected Aborigines in a Territory parliament of twenty-five and there is one Aboriginal cabinet minister in Darwin (in 1986 Ernie Bridge was the first Aborigine to become a cabinet minister in the Western Australian State government).

Charles Rowley and I joined in saying that Aborigines were the most totally conquered peoples in Western history, the peoples with the fewest rights and the fewest chances to bring claims against their victors. We also said that Aborigines were the most over-administered peoples in the world. Later, I would describe the White-Aboriginal relationship as the most one-sided in modern [British] Commonwealth history: a junior flyweight pitted against a super-heavyweight, if I remember my sporting metaphor correctly. We contended that Aborigines needed more lawyers than welfare officers and that legal incorporation would provide Aborigines with a greater chance of respect than the then current contest between 'organisation men'—the Aboriginal administrations, the police, and the health, education, justice and housing departments—and 'the naked individuals'. We recognised only too clearly that Western society has infinitely greater respect for organisations than for the individual.

Incorporation began from the 1970s, leading to the astonishing number of over 6000 such legal entities today. New South Wales has the rather absurd statistic of one

incorporation for every 272 Aborigines. Rowley and I were both right and wrong. Incorporation did even out the uneven battles to some extent, and Aboriginal associations were able to gain a status hitherto not accorded individuals. Here were the beginnings of empowerment. These bodies have all the outward trappings that Western society recognises: chairmen, treasurers, secretaries, articles of association, meetings, minutes, and, importantly, auditor's reports. The high- or low-water mark of all this, depending on your lens, is that the individual Aborigine no longer exists nor has any status or standing. Only incorporated bodies can apply for and dispense funds, obtain aid, speak out, or obtain a hearing. Unless the speaker is 'from' an organisation, his or her voice counts for nothing.

Is all this for the better? Yes, of course, but there are major downsides. A serious weakness is the ability of bureaucracy to play off one association against another, to truly divide and rule, to have each association dangling at the end of a baited line, always having to toe approved lines, always heavily monitored, always suspected of seeking to rob both the great White treasury in the capital cities and the 'ordinary taxpayer'. Ostensible empowerment has produced a little autonomy, but there is no room to manoeuvre, no room to criticise or complain; incorporations are always at risk of losing their funding or, latterly, being deregistered for alleged technical breaches.

Legal rights

Fifty years ago, Aborigines in most states and territories were a separate legal class of persons: minors in law, with all the attendant disabilities of that status. They had no independent legal capacity, could not sue or be sued in their own name, could not enter into legal contracts without the permission of their official guardians or protectors. Unlike minors in the general legal system, however, their status did not end at twentyone or, later, at eighteen. In those days, there was no foreseeable date set, or seen, for 'citizenship', or majority status.

Aborigines were not only amenable to the normal legal system of criminal law, they suffered the additional burden of being subject to a separate jurisdiction of 'administration law', that is, a catalogue of offences that only Aborigines controlled by special laws could commit. In Queensland, they could be imprisoned or removed to different parts of the state for 'being cheeky', 'refusing to work', committing adultery, absconding from a dormitory, failing to produce samples of faeces demanded by hygiene officers, breaking the bottles provided for that purpose, for having served a term in regular prison, being a menace to young girls, constituting a nuisance, and so on (Tatz 1963).

In the Northern Territory, Aborigines could be punished by prison or fine for being within 'two chains' of licensed premises, leaving a reserve without permission, drinking alcohol, possessing alcohol, having sexual relations across 'the colour line', possessing firearms in some circumstances, and marrying a non-Aboriginal person without official permission..

In Western Australia, Aborigines on reserves could be, and were, punished for being untidy, swearing, not putting rubbish in the containers provided, wasting water, drinking alcohol, cutting down trees and not conducting themselves 'in a respectable manner at all times'. The few who were able to obtain citizenship in 1944 could lose that status (of being 'White people') if they were twice convicted—not of ordinary

offences but for offences under the *Native Administration Act*—or were convicted of habitual drunkenness. They could also lose this status for not 'adopting the manner and habits of civilised life', or for contracting 'leprosy, syphilis, granuloma, or yaws'. In no other 'decent society', to use Prime Minister John Howard's term for today's Australia, could someone lose their citizenship rights for contracting or suffering an illness (Tatz 2003).

For the most part, these legal barbarisms have disappeared. Remnants remain, with some police, magistrates and justices of the peace still inclined to treat Aborigines as lesser people in the eyes and hands of the law. From time to time, new barbarisms arise, such as the mandatory sentencing laws in Western Australia and the Northern Territory, indisputably aimed at Aboriginal youth. Before his political demise, the Northern Territory's Chief Minister Denis Burke passed a 'Public Order and Antisocial Conduct' statute which has strong parallels with anti-Gypsy legislation in Europe and Nazi Germany in particular. It enables police to remove persons who have not committed a crime but whose presence in a prescribed or public place 'causes apprehension, harassment, alarm or distress', obstructs pedestrians, interferes with trade, and 'disrupts peace or good order'. A private place, such as a person's home, may be declared a public place for these purposes. The Administrator signed the law in August 2001, and it remains to be seen whether, when, or how the new Labor government will repeal this remarkable, and uncommented upon, law.

Before the 1970s, there was no legal representation of Aborigines in non-indictable cases. In the Northern Territory, professional counsel were appointed only in Supreme Court matters. Unlike today's criminal profile, in those days the great majority of Aboriginal offences were ones only they could commit, or which were minor in the normal legal system. It was in the vast majority of lower court cases that the directors in both the Northern Territory and Queensland saw their duties as 'upholders' of the law; they saw their duty as protecting the Crown rather than their clients. As Aboriginal counsel, they were often seen to be, or were, on the side of the prosecution. Where court appearances on behalf of Aborigines were made, the persons involved were untrained welfare or patrol officers, men who pleaded mitigation rather than acting as defence counsel for their clients. I attended several lower court cases where such 'counsel' asked a magistrate to impose a severe sentence 'because the Welfare Branch can't do anything with him' (Tatz 1964).

Four decades later we watch the politico-legal spectacle of the North Australia Aboriginal Legal Service bringing civil suits against the government for employing the chief magistrate in Darwin outside the guidelines for judicial appointment. The changes in the legal ring have been enormous; Aborigines are now serious opponents of those who bully them or who seek to diminish their rights in law. But Aboriginal legal services across Australia often fail their clients by pleading guilty and seeking mitigation rather than fighting the charges. One does not have to go to law school to be able to do that. That they do so because of under-funding and under-staffing does not alter Lord Brougham's dictum that there is 'a sacred duty which he owes his client' and that the lawyer 'knows in the discharge of that office but one person in the world—that client and no other'. These legal services also have been very slow indeed in taking up

civil suits, a matter that has long concerned me, not to mention the hundreds of thousands of persons who have been civilly wronged.[2]

Nevertheless, some hundred civil suits in fifty years are better than none. They represent what Rowley called the *recovery* of rights—and what I called the *discovery* of rights—through procedures available in civil law since the days of Magna Carta. The issue of the Stolen Generation will produce a plethora of cases, enabling Aboriginal plaintiffs the very best of counsel, in the manner of several key land rights cases in the 1980s and 1990s.

A small but significant measuring rod comes to mind: when I wrote a thesis chapter on Aborigines and the law in 1964, there were no more than five published pieces on the subject, three of them slight and two weighty, those of Justice Martin Kriewaldt and Professor A.P. Elkin. By 1987, there were 800 pieces listed in McCorquodale's *Digest*. My guess is that by 2000 there were more than 2000.

Economic rights

Fifty years ago, Aborigines on cattle stations and on most missions and settlements were not paid wages, only rations. Work in the pastoral industry was real enough, but on settlements and missions it was largely artificial. Very few of these institutions had any sort of economy and 'work' had to be manufactured.

With the Northern Territory *Welfare Ordinance 1957* came the *Wards Employment Ordinance 1953-1959*, a statute meant to regulate Aboriginal employment, wages and training, including clothing and ration scales. My research showed an abysmal state of affairs. Among many other defects and failures of the legislation and its operation, one was the apportionment of wages on the basis of race rather than on an individual's capacity and skill basis; *all Aborigines* working on properties were paid a fixed sum, irrespective of talent and ability. In theory, it was illegal for a pastoralist to pay more than the prescribed wage, one set well below the basic wage operating in 'White Australia', and below which no one else was allowed to be paid (Tatz 1964).

'Wages' varied wildly from settlement to settlement and from mission to mission: a fortnightly male wage in one category at Delissaville was £4.50 ($9.00) and at Yuendumu the same category of worker received £1.60 ($3.20). Superintendents were allocated a wage component and it was they who decided how many workers could or would fit their allocation. A driver at Hermannsburg was paid £3.10 ($7.00) a week, but his counterpart at Umbakumba received £1 (or $2.00) for the same work. I did, in effect, accuse the missions of engaging in scams. Certainly, the pastoralists were involved in schemes which enabled many of them to boast that 'it was more profitable to grow niggers than beef'.

The system was simple enough: the government paid missions and pastoralists subsidies to employ Aborigines and their dependents. They were responsible for the wages and keep of one adult male worker, one wife and one child. The subsidies supported the rest. I investigated whether the subsidies were ever received by those for

2 See my articles and papers on Aborigines and the Civil Law, inter alia 'Aborigines, Law and Race Relations' (Tatz 1982:74–117).

whose maintenance they were paid. The answers were always 'no'. The churches and the pastoralists paid minimal wages and often minimal rations, certainly not the ration scales laid down in law. No one was ever prosecuted for failure to conform to the law. The government claimed it did not have to abide by the law because the convention is that the Crown is not bound by its own legislation unless such a law specifically binds it. Oenpelli, then a domain of the Church Missionary Society (CMS), was the only mission ever threatened with loss of lease and licence for 'poor performance'.

The law required an adult male worker to receive the somewhat astonishing diet of seven pounds of boneless beef per week, five pounds of flour, two pounds of potatoes or rice, a pound of sugar, a pound of dried peas or dried fruit, a half pound of vitamin-fortified margarine, six ounces of milk or cheese, a pound of syrup, jam or treacle and three ounces of tea.[3] Rosemary Stanton would not have approved these nutrition scales, especially the huge dosage of flour and sugar. Bathurst Island supplied a twelve ounce tin of bully beef to each adult male, 7.7 pounds of flour and three pounds of mixed sugar and tea; Hermannsburg gave each adult male ten pounds and each female eight pounds of flour, up to six pounds of meat and the rest of the diet that could fit into sixteen shillings worth; the CMS missions doled out vast quantities of (usually weevil-infested) ground wheat porridge, rice and sugar.

No real training took place and skills were not recognised. In 1962, a total of 35 'wards' in the Northern Territory received the basic wage, not the basic wage plus margins for skill given to all other workers covered by industrial agreements.

Queensland was even more replete with scams. Dr Ros Kidd is now examining a matter that I castigated, in strong terms, in the 1960s, namely, the manner in which Aborigines paid both taxes on their earnings, and had the bulk of their earnings, apart from a pocket money portion, paid into the Aboriginal Welfare Fund.[4] Monies in that fund were siphoned into consolidated revenue or, in a case I came to know, lent to other departments, at interest, to build hospitals for 'Whites-only'. Millions of pounds went 'missing' and remain 'missing', with the present Queensland government offering the $8 million remaining in the fund and a possible further $180 million as a final settlement.

A low-water mark in Northern Territory history was the 1966 case brought by the North Australian Workers' Union before the Commonwealth Conciliation and Arbitration Commission, seeking inclusion of Aborigines in the *Cattle Station Industry (Northern Territory) Award*. The Commonwealth—inevitably it would seem in matters such as this—sided with the Northern Territory Pastoralists' Association to fight the claim. The Commission ruled that Aborigines should be given 'wage justice', but not until 1968 because they needed time to learn to adjust to real 'money'. It also ruled that *pastoralists*—not industrial magistrates, which is the normal procedure—could declare all or any Aboriginal workers to be slow workers, thus legitimising reduced rates of pay (Gruen 1966:197–215).

When the whole concept of wardship, which meant restrictions on all 'full-blood' persons, was abolished by the *Social Welfare Ordinance 1964*, there appeared to be a

3 One pound is equivalent to sixteen ounces or 0.45 kilograms.

4 *ATSIC News*, Autumn 2001, 66–7.

case for celebration, but not for Aboriginal employees. Aborigines, freed of legal minority status and restraint for the first time in Northern Territory history, remained wards for purposes of employment, wages and training until 1971.

What has changed? Not much. Wages are now (almost) equal for equal work—provided that Aborigines can find work in the general community. Space prevents a full analysis of the Community Development Employment Projects (CDEP) scheme. In essence, since 1977—when a group of Northern Territory Aborigines complained that they were fed up with getting 'sit-down money', their social service benefit entitlements—some Aborigines have been able to work to the limit of their benefit entitlements. As of 2001, the number of CDEP positions has been pegged at 30 000 across the continent. This figure is quite inadequate, given that there are probably over 450 000 Aborigines, of whom at least 100 000 must be adult men and women. In my observation, there has been a growth of morale; where CDEP operates people have pride in what they do, and they have a restored dignity, no matter the shortcomings of the system.

CDEP will not warm the heart of any trade unionist. There is no margin or room for skill, ability, ambition. The ceiling is more-or-less fixed at the rate of the social service benefit; it can be topped-up, but not by much. The jobs are contingent on what a community can find locally, what it can muster, and what it can sell by way of service to a neighbouring town. Some of the work, such as visiting prisoners or being a friend in court, has immense value. Much of it, regrettably, is still at the old mission and settlement level of holding a hose on a desultory rose.

Social security rights

The change in social security rights over the last fifty years has been enormous. In the 1950s, the great majority of Black Australians received no benefits: they were eligible only for child endowment, unemployment and sickness benefits, and very few received them. Tuberculosis allowances, based on the medical view that a sufferer should have sunshine and rest, were not paid to Aborigines on the grounds that they might 'develop a vested interest in their disease'. The *Social Services Act 1959* extended all other benefits—age, invalid pensions, widows and deserted wives' pensions and maternity allowances—to Aborigines, as of February 1960. 'Nomadic' and 'primitive' peoples were excluded. The director-general of social services ruled that those who lived on settlements, missions and pastoral properties were not 'primitive' and could be paid, with '*the guiding principle being that, wherever possible, payments will be made to the individual concerned*' (Tatz 1964:90). However—and there is always an however in matters Aboriginal—where the pensioner asks, or where the department 'considers it desirable', 'the whole or part of the pension may be paid to some other person or authority on behalf of the pensioner'. According to the ruling, 'this is in no way a discriminatory provision because it applies equally to all pensioners in the community'.

In this ruling the director-general applied the principle applying to homes for the elderly, where a pension was paid to the home, and management gave the resident a portion of their pension as pocket money, keeping the rest as an offset against his or her food and maintenance. Suddenly, every Aborigine—the *guiding principle* notwithstanding—became a resident of an old-age home. Herein lay a scam, or rather a sleight of hand, of cosmic proportions. The Commonwealth parliament would, for many years to come, state that 'x' millions of dollars were being allocated for Aboriginal

affairs. But the money was made up of two quite separate components: money for Aborigines plus the total allocation for Aboriginal social security benefit payments. In this way, Aboriginal benefit entitlement money went into a consolidated package to make the total spending on Aborigines appear nearly twice its actual size. Recipient Aborigines were, in effect, paying for the maintenance and welfare of non-recipients out of monies that were intended, by the nature of the benefit, to sustain them. There was not much difference in genre between this practice and the system operating in the Queensland Aboriginal Welfare Fund.

These schemes were always justified on the ground that Aborigines were, by tradition, communalistic, even communistic peoples. Thus, it was felt, nobody could or would worry about individual rights and individual payments because provision was being made for the betterment of the group. So what if pensioners' money went into buying a tractor for the farm, since they all ate the produce? Or if such monies went towards the furlough of caring missionaries, men who really needed a holiday? In this way missions and cattlemen grew richer: the more dependents, the greater their income. Did the beneficiaries benefit by way of institutional management? No. I literally weighed and measured the 'benefits' on some fourteen settlements, thirteen missions and about 25 cattle stations. No beneficiaries got or gained anything more than non-beneficiaries got, or had, in the way of housing, rations and clothing.

Since 'liberation' and the payment to individuals, social service money has become virtually the sole source of income for the great majority of Aborigines across the country. There is virtually no outside money, apart from some thirty royalty and mining agreement incomes and the little that comes back into a community from workers who earn a normal wage in the mainstream. In short, there is still chronic welfare dependency. Despite the virtues of CDEP, Aboriginal social service money is still subsidising and propping up uneconomic communities, communities which government would normally have to subsidise in some way, *in addition to* paying social service benefits. Until the advent of work-for-the-dole schemes which began to operate in the general community in 2000, Aborigines were the only people in Australia whose social service benefit entitlements were either garnished or encumbered in these ways.

Land rights

In 1950, there were no land rights for Aborigines. Legislation in different jurisdictions provided for reserves, but these were always located on Crown land and each of them was revocable, at will or whim. Reserves could be leased for mission activity and for mining, but leasing rights were always in the hands of the Minister or his delegated servant, never in the power of the Aboriginal inhabitants.

The first forensic foray to achieve some Aboriginal autonomy over land took place a mere thirty years ago. The cases of *Mathaman and Others v Nabalco Pty Ltd* and *Milirrpum v Nabalco Pty Ltd and the Commonwealth of Australia* were decided in 1969 and 1971 respectively. The Yirrkala clans sought an end to bauxite mining on their reserve, and compensation for land that had been occupied and despoiled. In *Milirrpum*, the decision of Mr Justice Blackburn against the Yirrkala people was in some degree sympathetic because he believed he had only moral support, but no law, with which to back them. These two losses were the spur to the appointment of the Land Rights [Woodward] Commission and the subsequent Labor and then Coalition land rights legislation in the Northern Territory.

The first political decision to attempt land rights, unprompted by law suits, was Don Dunstan's effort in South Australia to set up an Aboriginal Land Trust Board in 1966. Prior to that, only two parcels of land were acquired by, or for, Aborigines: Yalata Station and Gerard Mission (Sharp and Tatz 1966).

Since the landmark acts in the Northern Territory and South Australia, land rights in all jurisdictions except Western Australia have been achieved. The much-disparaged Queensland system of 'deeds of grant in trust'—by which land is granted for a period of fifty years under stringent lease conditions—is working well. There are strong land councils in the Northern Territory and New South Wales. Even in Western Australia, several sheep and cattle station leases are held by Aborigines.

The achievements have been hard fought: Northern Territory Aborigines have had to go the High Court on numerous occasions to fight off challenges by the Country-Liberal Party to Aboriginal land awards—not given readily or easily by Aboriginal land rights commissioners. That anti-Aboriginal government, in power for 27 years (until August 2001), contested at least sixteen land rights awards. In 1986, Paul Everingham, then Chief Minister, stated: 'Land rights are a blight on this country. With the best QCs money can buy, twelve times in the High Court I've challenged land rights and twelve times the High Court kicked my head in' (Tatz 1998:11).

In 1984, the federal government promised uniform land rights legislation. By 1986, that notion was dead, and the two major political parties fought the Western Australian State election on a platform based on the extent to which each would *restrict* land rights. At century's end, there was a costly campaign to enact legislation to establish State and Territory regimes by which Native Title can be permanently extinguished and the right of the Indigenous peoples to negotiate access to traditional land can be seriously restricted. The federal Coalition government's 1998 Wik legislation is a defining moment: it sees a recently 'encitizened' community 'uncitizened' in land law. This is not, as the protagonists claim, because of racial discrimination, which is assuredly what it is, but in the cause of 'equal citizenship' and 'good property law'. Earlier, the High Court had ruled that where Aboriginal rights and those of pastoral *lease*holders (not owners) conflicted, the latter's interests should prevail.

Nevertheless, the Wik judges made the sensible decision that Aboriginal and pastoral rights could, and should, co-exist. The present Coalition government's view is that Aboriginal rights should not in any way impinge on what is believed to be a solely White domain. Accordingly, Aboriginal rights should be extinguished because they are unable even to co-exist with White property interests.

In 1998, the Coalition government appointed John Reeves QC to review the Northern Territory *Land Rights Act*. The object, according to political journalist, Alan Ramsey, is 'to shred the integrity' of the Act by breaking down the powers of the Central and Northern Land Councils, and by giving the essentially anti-land rights—and essentially anti-Aboriginal—Northern Territory government greater control over Aboriginal land.[5] It is hard to disagree with this analysis. In Aboriginal eyes, there has been a serious turning-back of hard-won achievements since the second Mabo High Court judgement.

---

5 *Sydney Morning Herald*, 1 May 1999.

For the moment, we have been able to behold acceptance of some valued conventions, as James Tully (1995:119–127) calls them: first, a recognition that Aborigines existed and had some legitimate rights; second, that any interference with, or change to, any people's rights had to receive the consent of all parties; and third, that Aborigines as an identifiable, self-determining group would survive. That, I believe, is the crowning achievement of land rights.

Health rights

In the 1950s and 1960s, the low point of Aboriginal health was the alarming vital statistic of infant mortality. Though this statistic is by no means the sole measuring rod of a community's health, there was an inherent drama in broadcasting how many live-born babies didn't make it to the age of one. Using the records obtained at some 27 communities, I found rates of 130 to 150 deaths per 100 000 live births, figures found not even in world war or as a result of tidal waves in Asia. Another researcher, Frank Lancaster Jones, denied access to Bathurst Island, was forced to use the records, such as they were, in the Darwin Registrar of Births and Deaths office. He came up with figures of over 200 deaths per 100 000, or one in five babies not achieving a year of life. (His report was the very first publication of this Institute [AIATSIS].) One priest in central Australia claimed he could document one infant death for every two births.

My health analysis concluded with condemnation of the Commonwealth Health Department for its fiddling of the Aboriginal figures. There were some monumental goings-on. For example, a mere three Aboriginal cases of gastro-enteritis and 115 of infantile diarrhoea were published for the whole of the Northern Territory in 1960–61. In the same year covered by this 'record', at Papunya alone the local hospital records showed that in July 1960 there were six deaths from gastro-enteritis and 51 cases of infantile diarrhoea; in January 1961, 78 infant cases of serious diarrhoea; in February, 52; in March, 61; in April, 44; in May, 32; in July, 28; in August, 54; and so on. On the matter of trachoma, the statistics collected in Darwin from the four regional districts for 1954 stated that there was only *one* case in the Northern Territory. In 1955, there were 62, in 1956, 82. When Professor Ida Mann, the internationally renowned ophthalmologist, visited in 1957, 1958, 1959 and 1960, the Darwin figures leaped to 2732, 413, 1790 and 644 respectively. By 1962, the number was down to six. 'How come?', I asked. 'We dispute her findings', replied the bureaucrats.

That was not quite the end of it. Between 1954 and 1962, the divisional (Northern Territory) figures for trachoma were collected in Darwin and sent to Canberra. The total was 5787 cases. By the time these figures appeared in the published annual returns for the Commonwealth Health Department, however, the number had somehow been whittled down to 1266 cases.

Amid this massaging of the data, Aboriginal health was under assault from: gastro-enteritis, influenza, infantile diarrhoea, respiratory infections, eye disease, otitis media, pneumonia, venereal disease (which somehow managed *not* to find its way into the notifiable and infectious diseases schedule laid down by the World Health Organisation), hookworm infestation, leprosy, tuberculosis, bacillary dysentery and malaria. There appeared to be no diabetes, strokes, cardiac disease, renal failure, or cancer.

'Hospitals' were no more than sick bays, with usually one-certificated nurses there for short stays. Most diagnoses beyond the nurses' ken were made by way of outback radio schedules from Alice and Darwin twice daily. Cases beyond the base doctor's airwave diagnosis resulted in aerial evacuation—in daylight hours and on weekdays only. My finding was that this was not even a poor quality copy of the health services available to the White community.

By 1972, I could write an indictment of all this in a monograph entitled 'The Politics of Aboriginal Health', later given as a paper to a 1973 seminar under the heading 'The Paradox of Innovation Without Change' (Tatz 1972a, 1974). I did rail then, and I still do, at the gross imbalance in the distribution of doctors and nurses in northern Australia, the inadequate training and induction procedures for work in these remote areas, their total lack of exposure to native 'internal' medical and treatment systems, their ignorance of and contempt for sorcery, the lack of any longevity to establish a decent patient-doctor relationship, and the propensity for the system to merely collect data rather than analyse or contextualise it.

Aborigines do not reject western medicine. Rather, they object to the imposition of regimens that are often culturally at odds with their values or socially at odds with their circumstances. In particular, they disdain the assertion that the price of good health is total Anglicisation.

So what has changed? The disease pattern for one thing: renal, cardiac, metabolic, carcinomatous and some mental diseases are now prevalent and rampant. The dietary patterns for another: bad as the flour and sugar regimen was, the Coca Cola, fried chicken and chips that replaced it has had even more deleterious effects. There has been a profound improvement in terms of the involvement and engagement of Aborigines in their own health, and in terms of the input of money. In 1964, there were perhaps five medical articles that addressed the contextual illness and morbidity patterns, as distinct from the early dental caries, skull measurements, heat and cold resistance and other so-called health research *on*, not *for*, Aborigines. Today, as with the law materials, the health bibliography runs into the thousands of items.

Do fewer babies die? Yes. Do Aborigines live longer? No. Do they enjoy even a modicum of good health? No. Are men old, often 'burned out', at forty? Yes. Do Aboriginal children show signs of kidney failure as young as eight-years-old? Yes. Has eye disease been alleviated by regular treatment? To some extent. Are kids with chronic otitis media still becoming deaf? Yes, in large numbers. Has death by non-natural causes reached the rate of death by natural causes? Almost. Does a long and steady procession of special health reports repeat the same material? Yes. What is so sad is to be told by persons working in the Northern Territory and north Queensland that—apart from changes in budgets, training, Aboriginal involvement, and reduction of some diseases and infant death rates—what I found in the 1960s, '70s and even '80s is still the overall picture.

Health organisations have found that despite some changes in statistics, there is not even a vestige of 'equality' between Aboriginal and mainstream health. Health organisations operate in a state of crisis, confronted daily by catastrophic leaps in deaths from cardiovascular disease, diabetes, infections and external causes. There is not yet the climate or room for planned social change. At the start of the millennium, health

outcomes—in terms of social, physical and mental well-being—have not come anywhere near Aboriginal hopes and expectations.

Housing rights

Housing has always been a vexed issue, not so much because of the lack of it but because of a White insistence that Aborigines ought to have the kind of housing we desire. Going back to 1951, the policy dictates of Minister for Territories Paul Hasluck spelled out what he meant by assimilation: 'housing after the normal Australian manner'.

In the Northern Territory, it was believed that the people were not ready for this leap to civilisation and so a few thousand 'transitional' housing units were built, at enormous costs for that time. The 'Kingstrand' aluminium huts, of one room and a largish verandah, were prefabricated, mobile 'Meccano sets', as we called them. Neither water nor electricity was supplied. They cost £620 delivered to Alice Springs and Darwin, and up to £800 and £900 ($1800) in the more remote areas. One of my 'studies' was to measure the temperatures of the concrete floor at eleven o'clock each night: eighteen degrees Fahrenheit hotter than the outside temperatures and 23 degrees Fahrenheit higher than the interior of a spinifex-grass humpy at the same hour. (There was no invasion of Aboriginal privacy in these tests: the one room was always used as a storage place or a kennel, while people slept on the verandah or outside.) When Ted Egan was superintendent of Yuendumu, he constructed, with Aboriginal help, prototype houses built of locally quarried stone, comprising two and even three rooms, with the possibility of water reticulation. The cost per unit was £25. He was forbidden to continue the project: too slow, it was alleged.

Over the decades, a variety of schemes have been tried. Some communities have engaged their own architects, like Wally Dobkins in the Alice town area. Nearly all of these schemes and designs have failed, largely because our architects, draftsmen, designers and builders insist on a format that resembles suburbia, however impossible the environment. They also insist that the modern nuclear family is the unit of persons who will inhabit the places. The reality is that Aboriginal family size, even without extended family and kin, is nothing like that of the non-Aboriginal family. Nevertheless, the construction of three-bedroom, lounge, dining room, wire-cut, pink brick veneer on 150 x 60-foot blocks continues relentlessly, and remains the Australian and the Aboriginal 'dream'.

In my unforgettable days as a member of the Aborigines Welfare Board in Victoria, policy and practice was for the Board to acquire houses, or build houses, wherever land was available. It mattered not that the town had no Aboriginal connections, or history. Persons would be taken from Lake Tyers or from places of Aboriginal connection to these new centres, like Stawell. The object was to 'pepperpot' the people, to 'sprinkle' them amid migrants and working class Australians. From the air, all roofs looked the same, and assimilation was thus 'complete'. The Board was always astonished and affronted when these new 'homes', always rental homes, were battered and then broken.

One of the most bizarre scenes, among many, in Aboriginal life is to watch White builders from, say, Alice Springs working away in the midday sun at places like Yuendumu or Kintore, standing on the frames of the new construction while kids openly and brazenly smash and demolish the relatively new houses next door. No one

seems to question what is happening, let alone why. There is ample evidence that where Aborigines have assisted in design and been engaged in building, the maintenance of the houses has been reasonably good.

Queensland fibro, tin-sheeting and timber cottages were the order of the day on settlements and missions. All were too small, unsuitable in tropical climates. In my view, then and now, the issue was much less the material for housing, or their designs or size, but the almost total absence of water supply, electricity, excreta and garbage disposal. Many of the communicable and infectious diseases prevalent in many communities were, and are, water- or excreta-borne. Lack of potable water remains a singular problem.

In 2000, Prime Minister John Howard arranged for the army to spend five months at Jumbun community, near Tully in North Queensland, installing a sewerage system. This installation was presented as a special bonus, as an example of positive discrimination and 'practical reconciliation'. One has to ask two questions about this innovation. First, why is the provision of a *basic utility* regarded as a bonus? Second, why is there no comment on the civic authorities' long-standing and deep-seated abdication of responsibility for such an essential service, a failure of local civic will and action that requires peace-time army units to remedy? Why is it that municipal and State bodies, water boards and sanitation departments, have been unable to install the basics needed to sustain healthy life? The grim answer is simple: they haven't wanted to, and they still don't want to. In this area of action, almost nothing has changed in fifty years.

Cultural rights

Great change has taken place in artistic, literary and musical life. Aboriginal art, even derivative or imitative art, commands a market both at home and abroad. A few traditional paintings have reached the $500 000 mark, and galleries and investors clamour at Sothebys and Christies for more.

It was not always so. In 1959–60, all Aboriginal artists in the Northern Territory earned £13,430 ($26,860). In 1960–61, twenty-four artists earned £7581. At Hermannsburg, in the last six months of 1961, Clifford Inkamala sold paintings to the mission for £32, Claude Pannka earned £85, Enos Namatjira £49, Keith Namatjira £86, Albert Namatjira £220, Herbert Rabberaba £42 and Reuben Pareroultja £58. The mission deducted one or two shillings per pound sterling in 'handling charges', a fee dependent on the size of the painting. If not sold to the mission, the artists would come to Alice town and see Lois, the typist, on the verandah of the house that accommodated the Welfare Branch. She would stamp each painting, with words to the effect that the painting had been endorsed as a genuine and approved painting, but she would then add the sum for which it had to be sold to a tourist or shop. Her 'figures' were predicated on what she assessed was a 'big' painting or a 'small' painting, that is, big or small in area, not conception. There was a futile attempt to warn the buying public against buying unstamped paintings.

Over the decades, Aboriginal artists have been cajoled, blackmailed, browbeaten and ripped-off by a variety of personages posing as preservers of Aboriginal integrity, keepers of national treasures, or friends wanting to ensure that Aboriginal interests were protected. Schemes have been established to protect copyright and to see to it that royalties are paid. Even so, Aborigines have had to resort to the courts for protection, or

for damages. A business corporation is not a corporation unless it has an Aboriginal artwork in a prominent place. Museums and books abound with tributes to this rich material culture. Despite the problems, art has truly arrived, in Olympic proportions.

Aboriginal music and dance is now venerated and respected, desired at home and by overseas audiences. Most major bookshops in Australia have Aboriginal or Aboriginal Studies sections. AIATSIS has large holdings of Aboriginal fiction and poetry. Aboriginal Studies Press has a most impressive record and its recent brochure carries works ranging from David Horton's *The Encyclopaedia of Aboriginal Australia* to Jim McDougall's splendid children's book, *Anna the Goanna.* What is so radical is the change from appreciation of these achievements by a handful of academics interested in material culture to acclaim by national and international audiences. What is also radical is the change from apparent Aboriginal silence about their perspectives to an outpouring of their experiences, in fact and fiction works. It has happened in avalanche style. In 1975, I edited a book, *Black Viewpoints: The Aboriginal experience*. Together with Kevin Gilbert's *Living Black* in 1977, these were the first expressions in English of Aboriginal views about their history and politics. Since then, we have a treasury of Aboriginal memoir, lament and opinion as well as the interrogation of White sovereignty and everything written about Aborigines.

Much of this cultural recognition has, of course, come about as a result of a better educated population. In 1969, the national seminar on 'Aborigines and Education' revealed that there were nine Aborigines in tertiary studies across the continent. Today the figure is somewhere between 7000 and 8000. At that seminar, the Territory's Director of Welfare contended that we would not see the first Aboriginal matriculant until at least 1975. He was wrong: the 'primitives'—Father Eugene Perez's 1977 term for the peoples of the eastern Kimberley—latched on somewhat more quickly.

Sporting rights

I have written all I can about sporting rights elsewhere. It is enough to say that sporting access was severely restricted by laws proscribing movement into and out of reserves, missions and settlements until the late 1950s. Only a handful of men were able to get out from under the systems constraining them in all jurisdictions.

Joe Johnson, Doug Nicholls, Shadrach James and 'Jube' Wandin were the only Victorians to make it in Australian football between 1904 and 1953. West Australian stars began to emerge in 1937 with the Hayward brothers, with a long wait until the 1950s era of Polly Farmer, Ted Kilmurray, Jack Trent, Irwin Lewis, and Billy Dempsey in 1960. Fred Agius was the only South Australian of prominence in that decade. In the Northern Territory, it was 'the emancipation' of the 'half-castes' that led to the formation of the legendary St Marys Australian football team, and the emergence of Steve Abala Snr, Joe Bonson, Leon Pon, and the Lew Fatt clan. 'Full-blood' participation began with Teddy Cooper and the famous David Kantilla, the first Territorian of such 'blood' to play in the South Australian premier league.

Since those days, and especially since the late 1980s and 1990s, there hasn't been an AFL team without one or more Aboriginal champions. Even the bigoted Collingwood has recruited Aboriginal players of late. Aboriginality is now synonymous with quality, showmanship, crowd excitement and media hype. Much of this is, of course, still racist, even the well-intentioned myths that Aborigines have eyes at the

back of their heads, peripheral vision denied to others less blessed, and a 'black magic' flair, speed, flamboyance attributed to some mysterious genetic origin. No matter; they are there, they are well paid and their affairs are managed by teams conscious of the need to behave well on behalf of their players.

The rugby league story is much the same, but one confined to Queensland and New South Wales. Apart from George Green, 1918–22, only brothers Dick and Lin Johnson gained places in NSW premier division (and State) sides in the 1940s. Wally McArthur, a fellow inmate with Charlie Perkins and John Moriarty at St Francis' Home in Adelaide, had a fine career in Britain in the 1950s, and Queensland's Lionel Morgan became the first Aborigine to play for Australia, in 1962. Artie Beetson, Buddy Cain, brothers George and John Ambrum, Eric Robinson, Eric Simms, Bruce 'Larpa' Stewart (uncle to the Ella brothers of rugby fame), and Kevin Yow Yeh were the few 1960s men. The 1970s were fairly sparse, and the coming of age was to be in the 1980s and 1990s. That Mal Meninga, a South Sea Islander, and Laurie Daley should captain national sides and become truly legendary, and revered, is a good indicator of change. For Mark Ella to captain Australia in nine tests and for the Tutton brothers to dominate Australian volleyball was also a sign of changing times. That Cathy Freeman should become *the* national hero, *the* national icon, the 'biggest' of them all, is also significant.

Boxing was always an exploitative sport and Aboriginal fighters were especially exploited. Jerry Jerome, the first Aboriginal national champion in 1912, eventually had his exemption certificate cancelled and both he and his earnings were claimed by the Queensland authorities. Ron Richards, perhaps Australia's greatest ever ringman, was *the* tragic figure: he, too, became truly in need of protection, and died, penniless, as a vegetable gardener at Palm Island. Most of the greats—George Bracken, Jack Hassen, Elley Bennett—had to get out from under the Queensland laws. They also had to struggle to avoid 'reclassification' as persons in need of care.

The stories of the sportspeople are essentially stories about legislative restriction, geographic isolation, poverty, forcible removal from parents, life in locked dormitories, ill-health, lack of equipment and training facilities, missionaries and officials who disliked sport or who thought sport would give those talented inflated notions beyond their station in life, and exploitative managers. They had to overcome these obstacles—and then their opponents.

Nancy Cato, author and grand-daughter of Daniel Matthews, founder of Cummeragunja mission in 1874, wrote that the resident Aborigines 'had discovered that their prowess in sport, particularly in cricket and running, gave them a passport to the White man's world, even to his respect and friendship' (1976:172–182). She was partly right. Sport has been a passport, of sorts, and it certainly has been the premium vehicle of respect in a country that is besotted with sport. In what other country could a cricketer be described as the 'greatest living Australian' and in what other country could a Prime Minister assert that the highest achievement of mankind is the captaincy of the Australian cricket team?

Identity rights

Identity has been one of the most bedevilling factors in Aboriginal life. Fifty years ago, administrations battled with the excruciating arithmetic of colour as they tried to

implement different policies for ‘octoroons’, ‘quadroons’, ‘half-castes’ and ‘full-blood’ persons.

Australia was a lottery for Aborigines. In the Northern Territory, anyone other than a ‘full blood’ was classified as White, and emphatically told they were not Aborigines (even though they had been, at least since 1911). In Queensland, until 1972, Aborigines were ‘full-bloods’, persons with a preponderance of ‘full blood’, part-Aboriginal spouses of Aborigines thus defined and—never mind the blood—residents of reserves. Part-Aborigines were those with one ‘full-blood’ parent and one with no *strain of the blood* of the Indigenous inhabitants, and those whose parents both had some blood but not a preponderance of it. Said a Perth magistrate to a self-identified Aboriginal defendant on a charge of failing to register for national military service in 1972, from which Aborigines were then exempt: ‘There’s no evidence of him living in a native camp, and he apparently lives at a normal address in Perth. I must also take notice of his appearance. He is well-dressed and well-presented. I’m going to convict him’ (Tatz 1972b:11).

In 1969, William Wentworth, the then Minister in charge of Aboriginal Affairs, went a long way towards resolving these nightmares, with the Commonwealth agreeing that an Aboriginal person was anyone of Aboriginal descent who defined themselves as an Aborigine and who was accepted by other Aborigines as such. This did not immediately overrule State definitions, but there was at least a move away from the language of blood strains.

In time, Aborigines began to assert identity, in name, cultural and geographic heritage, historical and spiritual experience*: Koori* or *Koorie* in New South Wales and Victoria, *Nunga* in South Australia, *Nyungar* or *Nyoongah* in Western Australia, *Murri* in Queensland, *Yolgnu* in the Northern Territory. That evolution, and struggle, lasted for some twenty years, until the mid-1990s. The peoples of the Torres Straits do not see themselves as having the same history and the same grievances as mainland peoples, and they have finally won the right to their own separate identity and flag. As of 1994, they were given that official recognition. The South Sea Island community received some limited recognition from the federal government in 1992, and in 2000 the Queensland government formally recognised the separate identity (and flag) of the 15 000 persons who live, mostly, in and around Mackay and Bundaberg.

In my writing, I studiously avoid the word ‘indigenous’ or ‘Indigenous’. I understand very well why some (rightly) talk about indigenous rights in reference to land, sea beds, fishing and hunting rights: these are moral, human and legal rights arising out of prior occupation as a people who had forms of governance and a reign of law. But such rights, *indigenous rights*, must *not* be confused with the names by which peoples call themselves and wish to be known. ‘Indigenous’ is plainly not the name that these peoples call themselves. Nor do they wish to be subsumed into a commonality of history, culture, language, and geography that they hardly share.

‘Indigenous’ as noun and adjective—when clearly Aboriginal or Torres Strait or South Sea Islanders is meant—is a cute, seemingly chic and convenient shorthand by academics and journalists who find the full wording too tiresome. The Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies conference brochure states that ‘Indigenist approaches’ will be presented on several topics. They (or we), of all people, ought to know better.

Treaty rights

Fifty years ago there was no question of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal parties sitting at the same negotiating table. Aborigines were considered inert objects, merely the recipients of whatever policies, actions and programs were decided for them.

In the late 1970s, the Aboriginal Treaty Committee—Judith Wright, Dymphna Clark, Eva Hancock, Hugh Littlewood, Diane Barwick, W.E.H. Stanner, H.C. 'Nugget' Coombs, Charles Rowley and Stewart Harris— began a campaign for a treaty. It would restore Aboriginal land, compensate for land and lifestyles lost, establish conditions for land use, protect Aboriginal civilisation, give Aborigines control over their affairs, end the humiliation, recapture Aboriginal dignity and embark on a future of mutual peace and friendship. What they had in mind was something akin to the treaties signed, but most often abrogated or negated, with Native Indians in the United States and Canada. They also visualised something comparable to the Treaty of Waitangi in New Zealand.

In April 1979, the (then) National Aboriginal Conference (NAC) called for a national treaty in the form of a *Makarrata*, deriving from a *Gupapuyngu* ceremony of settling a grievance and ending a dispute. The NAC commissioned me to report to them on the feasibility of their idea, which was not quite the Treaty Committee's idea. They published a list of twenty-seven discussion points, including calls for: all Aboriginal reserves to be acquired by the Commonwealth and given as freehold, in perpetuity; the development of 'self-government in each respective tribal territory', with respect to Aboriginal life and culture; the payment to Aborigines of five per cent of the gross national product per annum for 195 years; the return of national parks and forests, as well as artefacts, art works and archaeological finds; mineral rights to the land and control of the air space above it; recognition of Aboriginal customary law; Aboriginal schools, medical centres and legal aid offices where needed; the voiding of all extant laws relating to Aborigines; the reservation for Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders of seats in the national and State parliaments; and that 'the studying and diggings of all lands by Anthropologists and Archaeologists cease …'. This 'invoice' presented to the nation hardly went down well. My views on all this were presented and published in 1983 (Tatz 1983). They didn't go down too well either. The Treaty Committee left the issue to the NAC and soon enough that body disappeared, the treaty idea along with it.

The idea has resurfaced strongly, after two decades of dormancy. But there is much confusion, uncertainty and unease about it. In November 2000, a member of the executive of the Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation stated: 'The whole question of an agreement, without using words that are loaded, is something that the Council has for over the past 10 years discussed, and everyone is of the common view that it is something that has to be achieved—whether it be called treaty, compact or agreement.'[6] Chapter 10 of the *Reconciliation—Australia's Challenge* report, insists that, after ten years of deliberation and consultation, there must be some formal settlement of the issues presented. Most Aborigines are not demanding an equal voice as a 'nation', but they do seek the credence and credibility of being able to sit at a negotiating table to discuss 'reconciliation', land use, and levels of autonomy. The ink was not yet dry on the report before the Prime Minister rejected any such formal compact, and several

6 *The Australian*, 9 November 2000.

major newspapers complained bitterly against the idea (as blocking the path to reconciliation).[7]

Other countries have such treaties, compacts or agreements. New Zealand has recognised the Maori as a 'first people', worthy of negotiating with. The 1840 Treaty of Waitangi has been ruled a legally enforceable instrument, resulting in a special Waitangi Tribunal that listens to Maori claims and recommends substantial compensations.[8] South Africa has faced the past from 1960—the somewhat strange date set by the government—through its Truth and Reconciliation Commission, and there is ongoing discussion about the size and nature of reparation. In 1996, Canada's Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples concluded 'there must be an acknowledgment that great wrongs have been done to Aboriginal people', the 506 000 Amerindian and Inuktitut who now form 1.7 per cent of the population. The new self-governing Territory of Nunavut is one major outcome of the recognition of their 'first nation' status.

In Australia, Prime Minister John Howard has rejected any movements towards a national reparation, or a treaty: *that*, he claims, implies two nations, a notion he 'will never accept' (Tatz 1999:46–47). In December 2000, the Prime Minister rejected the treaty notion, then declared that 'reconciliation is and should be an unstoppable force', thereby signalling some change in his hitherto hard-line stance. In the same month, he awarded the Aboriginal Affairs portfolio to the Minister for Immigration as an adjunct, not primary, responsibility. For the first time since 1973, there is no longer a minister responsible solely for Aboriginal Affairs. The very first utterance of the new Minister, Philip Ruddock, was a rejection of any treaty consideration because such would imply two nations—and that is deemed divisive.[9] Whatever the federal government's rationale, the result is ambiguity.

The right to respect

In 1972, I presented a major paper on 'four kinds of dominion', comparing race policies and practices in Canada, South Africa, Australia and New Zealand (1972b). I wrote:

> There appears to be a direct (but unprovable?) correlation between the extent of Indigenous rights and the degree to which they fought (are fighting?) against the dominant society. I call this 'the respect factor'. Respect does not have to mean a liking for: it can have the negative attribute of fear, or even hatred. If respect means anything, it means that the people concerned are 'people of account' (*Menschen*), to be taken into account, and not relegated to the status of non-persons (*Nicht-Menschen)*. Africans have always been very much people of account: by virtue of numbers, military, political and social organisation and prowess. Maori as tribal warriors, as modern soldiers, as successful farmers, and as mighty players of religious rugby, command respect. Less so the Indians of Canada, and ever so much less so the Aborigines, probably the most totally conquered minority in western history.

---

7 For example, *The Australian*, 8 December 2000.

8 The Press, Christchurch, 24 September 1997. In 1997 the Crown apologised to the South Island Ngai Tahu peoples and restored Maori authority over lakes, mountains and other property, providing at least $170 million in compensation. Two years earlier the Tainui Federation of Tribes won compensation of $170 million and restoration of 15 400 hectares in the North Island.

9 ABC News, 22 December 2000.

Has this (unprovable?) situation, this lack of respect, changed in fifty or even thirty years? Yes. Matters Aboriginal, things Aboriginal loom large in every field of endeavour. The era of contempt, neglect, dismissal, relegation and unilateral decision-making are well and truly over. The changes have been partly White-driven, but they have been largely propelled by Aborigines and by the act of fighting—politically and especially legally. Remarkably, no violence has occurred, unless one falls into the media, police and bureaucratic trap of labelling a few episodes of anger as 'riots'. That Aborigines have won sixteen out of twenty-three forays in the High Court is indicative of a people no longer totally conquered, no longer willing to submit as mute *objects* of policy. It is also indicative of something I have long argued: that Aborigines can, and will, gain more by way of recourse to law than to politics.

No government—national, state or even municipal—can dictate on matters relating to Aborigines and Islanders without first having to ask itself what effect or reaction is likely to come from Aborigines locally, or nationally, or from the strong band of non-Aborigines who act as pointers, setters and watchdogs. No one today calls the latter group 'do-gooders' or 'southern shit-stirrers'. That era has passed. No agency—whether art gallery, museum, sports organisation, literary, film or music society—would think of disregarding an Aboriginal input, or perspective, or contribution. This isn't mere political correctness.

Despite much Aboriginal antagonism towards the media, my view is that the broadsheet papers, and the ABC and SBS radio and television, have been the strongest advocates of Aboriginal rights over the past thirty years. It was the coterie of Bob Raymond, Bill Peach, Peter Luck, Stuart Littlemore, Alan Ashbolt and Paul Murphy who began pushing for recognition in the 1960s. A *few* academics spoke out and helped shape or create change. A *few* legal aid lawyers did much more than plead guilty or mitigation for their clients.

International legal and treaty obligations began to percolate into the Australian political processes. But awareness of these obligations, ratifications and subsequent reactions could not have occurred without a concomitant push from within. Malcolm Fraser, however much maligned or malignable for other matters, was, on matters of race (here and in South Africa), a reformist Prime Minister, the likes of whom we have not seen since his political demise.

Aborigines and Islanders are part of the national scene, whatever the scene. They *demand* a place, but more importantly, they *command* a place. The time span from *Nicht-Menschen* to *Menschen* has been relatively short, within my working life span and therefore within the life spans of many Aborigines who began as 'wards' and ended up, if not cabinet ministers, then as leaders, speakers, policy makers, film-makers, writers and broadcasters.

One could end this review with a long inventory of minuses, of rampant ill-health, unacceptable rates (and causes) of suicide, breakdown of family life, continuing poverty and the absence of all manner of facilities. For someone who has always been regarded as a pessimist about Aboriginal affairs, what I see now is *painful optimism* for all, but still some optimism.

Acknowledgment

An oral version of this paper was presented to AIATSIS Conference2001 Symposium B 'Knowledge and Colonialism', Session 3 'Ideas and policy and practice (development of colonial Aboriginal policy)' convened by Geoff Gray (AIATSIS).

References

Blainey, G. 2000 *A Short History of the World*. Viking, Ringwood.

Cato, N. 1976 *Mister Maloga: Daniel Matthews and his Mission, Murray River, 1864–1902*. University of Queensland Press, St Lucia.

Gruen, F. 1966 Aborigines and the Northern Territory cattle industry: an economist's view. In I.G. Sharp and C.M. Tatz (eds), *Aborigines in the Economy*. Jacaranda Press in association with Centre for Research into Aboriginal Affairs, Monash University, pp.197–215.

Sharp, I.G. and C.M. Tatz (eds) 1966 *Aborigines in the Economy*. Jacaranda Press, Brisbane, in association with Centre for Research into Aboriginal Affairs, Monash University.

Tatz, C. 1963 'Queensland's Aborigines: Natural Justice and the Rule of Law'. *Australian Quarterly* XXXV:33–49.

——1964 Aboriginal Administration in the Northern Territory of Australia, Doctoral thesis, Australian National University, Canberra.

——1972a *The politics of Aboriginal health* (special supplement to *Politics* 7(2)). Australian Political Studies Association, Sydney.

——1972b *Four Kinds of Dominion: Comparative race politics in Australia, Canada, New Zealand and South Africa*. University of New England, Armidale.

—— 1974 Aboriginal health in the Northern Territory: the paradox of innovation without change. In B.S. Hetzel, M. Dobbin, L. Lipmann and E. Eggleston (eds), *Better Health for Aborigines?* Queensland University Press, St Lucia, pp.107–120.

——1982 *Aborigines and Uranium and Other Essays*. Heinemann Educational Australia, Richmond.

——1983 'Aborigines and the Age of Atonement'. *Australian Quarterly* 55(3):291–306.

——1998 'Race Relations in the 21st Century'. *The Sydney Institute Quarterly* 2(3).

——1999 *Genocide in Australia*. AIATSIS, Canberra (Research Discussion Paper 8).

——2001 *Aboriginal Suicide is Different: A portrait of life and self-destruction*. Aboriginal Studies Press, Canberra.

——2003 *With Intent to Destroy: Reflecting on genocide*. Verso, London.

Tully, J. 1995 *Strange Multiplicity: Constitutionalism in an age of diversity*, Cambridge University Press.

Colin Tatz is now Adjunct Professor of Politics, Macquarie University, Visiting Fellow in Political Science, Australian National University, Visiting Research Fellow, AIATSIS, and Director, Australian Institute for Holocaust and Genocide Studies, Shalom Institute, Sydney.

<Colin.Tatz@aiatsis.gov.au> or <ctatz@laurel.ocs.mq.edu.au> or <Colin.Tatz@anu.edu.au>

Meriam sea rights and the resonance of tradition

Why we Meriam people want sea rights

Dave Passi

Mer Island, Torres Strait

Originality of our claim

Murray, where I come from, is a very small island—it takes about two or three hours to go round it. After we won the 1992 *Mabo* case, somebody in Cairns asked a Murray Islander, 'Where can you find Murray Island on the map?'. We have lived in the Torres Strait for over 3000 years so far. I have said many times that our language, the Eastern Island language that I speak, is so different from the Papuan language. Although its origin may be Papuan, it only has the sound. So that to me said that it was thousands of years on our own, and now it is proven – 3000 years and more.[1] This is our claim.

Once when I was on Kowanyama, just before we won the *Mabo* case, I was asked by the editor of the Melbourne *Age*, who is my friend, 'What if the government wins the case?' My answer was, 'The government can go on making fool of itself, to think that they have won the case and they own the land. They practically don't.' Truth is that I own the land 'till the end of time. That is the truth about it.

Chief Justice Marshall of the United States[2] once made this statement: 'Is might right, the symbol of justice?' We all know that might is not right. It is *never* a symbol of justice.

Another question being asked is 'Are we Australians a nation of thieves?' It is true that we are a nation of thieves. Of course we are a nation of thieves. We are telling everybody else, my elders are telling everybody else, the government, the Prime Minister, the police and whoever, many people, we have told them, 'This is our land. This is our sea. It is governed by Malo's Law.' We tell the Australian Fisheries also, 'This is our water. You have no right to claim them. These waters are governed by Malo's Law.' And Malo's Law is eternal. It has eternal character, because it doesn't change, whereas outside law is so temporal. It depends on the attitude of the reigning government—not Aboriginal and Islanders' law. Our laws are eternal. They are based on justice and truth.

Queries on authenticity of other claims

I have met queries about the authenticity of other claims. We had our fishermen once. Murray Island is known for sending 'illegally'—we don't say that, we say legally—

---

[1] Melissa Carter has reported dates in this time range from Murray Islands, e.g. Carter, M. 2003 'The Murray Islands archaeological project: results of recent archaeological analyses', *Australian Aboriginal Studies 2002/2*:75–77. – Editor

[2] John Marshall, US Chief Justice from 1801 to 1835 is famous for a trilogy of cases that determined that American Indians had the status of 'domestic dependant nations', and thus had title rights. This has been referred to as 'the Marshall doctrine'. – Editor

trawlers out from our waters. And we had people come to us from Australian Fisheries and say, 'This is the international law.' I said, 'International? Did your people come and take my ancestor, Koit, to sit and make this law become international? Do you expect me to obey that international character of the law? Sorry, when you go, you take that law with you. This water is mine till the end of time.' Sorry, I'm a Murray Islander.

Comparison of Malo's Law and colonial laws

As I said, our laws are eternal. You must not steal. You must never trespass. We claim only what is ours, whereas under other laws, not very long ago, the Premier of Queensland said that the government was going to allow trawlers into Murray Island waters anyway. He didn't care, because he didn't come to us and sit with us to see how dangerous that statement was. It was very dangerous to us. The continuity of our identity, of our race, depends on the water. And so we are suffering.

We had lots of people too that came to us at Murray to talk about laws. There were two policemen, one federal and one state. I said to them, 'Look, I am just tired of submitting to your law that destroys.' And that is a fact. Whiteman's laws destroy our small nation of Mer. We are asking for the withdrawal of these laws, because they are destroying us. I am saying it; I am an elder in my own community, and it hurts me.

Our law says that whatever falls to the ground—whether a coconut leaf or any leaves—must be left there to rot into the soil. I think your way is to burn it up. Something that you, the mainstream, have come to understand now is that we have a spiritual relationship to the land. We are part of it. We belong to it. We are one with it. And this is something that mainstream Australia must learn and accept.

Economic development of Mer Island

We are trying very hard to protect that little boundary that we have, and extend beyond it when the time comes. Our little boundary is very important to us. When I look at our younger generation, I see that the Australian government and even the Queensland government fails—it has been failing all along—to give us any meaningful industry. Nothing at all. And so we have made our own effort to start a fishing industry, because this is where our riches come from. Murray Island is very small; we cannot use Murray commercially. It has beautiful soil—of volcanic origin—but it's too small to work out commercially. So we depend on the sea. As I said, our whole future depends on it too, because we have changed from agricultural economy into cash economy.

So we have made plans to develop our own economic base. We have taken different steps. First, we have set up a freezer. At this stage we are operating at a loss but we have set up a committee to run it so that it can become more viable. Next we have taken steps to consider aquaculture. Feasibility studies have been done, and we have plans to cultivate four or five species. We can have more if we choose. This is what we Meriam people are trying to do—to set up our own economic base, or economic growth. The government is quite unable, so far, to provide any other economic developments for us.

So far we have declared an economic zone and at this stage we are vying for the sea rights in that boundary, and we are going to court for that. We are waiting for the one on Croker Island and again, we will take the government to court. I know it will be very difficult, but a Meriam is a Meriam. In the future we hope to extend that as far as Raine Island, because we have worked as far as Raine Island and we have a native name for it,

our own name for Raine Island, and it comes in our boundary. At this stage our Aboriginal brothers from the coast near us are trying to claim it, but everybody knows that it comes in our area.

The last thing I want to say is we all know that unlike America, and other places where colonisers have gone in and made treaties, Australia has not made a treaty. Not yet. So to me, Australia lives a lie. I have made that statement in the past and I make it again. I make it openly: Australia lives a lie. And I am saying that the colonial law in Australia is a foreign law being executed on foreign soil. In many ways it is very destructive. And this is being enforced by the governments.

Is might right, as a symbol of justice? Are we a nation of thieves?

So because Australia lives a lie there are lots of things that are legalised, and I call them colonial legalised injustices. To me this is truth, and I will repeat that: colonial legalised injustices. They are injustices. For how long will we have to hear about 'legislation to be passed'? Oh, come on.

Echoes of the sea and the resonance of tradition

Nonie Sharp

La Trobe University

Abstract*: During their twenty-year struggle to establish the Murray Island commercial fishery, the religious and everyday symbols of the seafaring Meriam people became agents of change. One such symbol is the* maber*, the triton or trumpet shell that was blown in classical times to announce momentous events and which is now the name of an English-language publication produced by the Meriam. An ongoing Meriam cultural renaissance has received impetus from the Meriam's recognition of their own self-worth as mirrored in the eyes of others. The vision of obtaining an independently oriented sustainable living from the sea raises questions about how cultural ways and values may be built into an economic enterprise. In Meriam social life a person's own best interests are realised not by pursuit of individualistic goals as possessive free agents: they are embedded in a system of obligations and rights. A person can't free-ride as a lone-ranger. A Meriam person cannot get away from responsibility in social life, and good custom is sanctioned ultimately by spiritual attachments.*

The presentations by Dave Passi and I are a conversation that unfolds and builds-up.

Maber is the Meriam name for the triton or trumpet shell. In classical times it was blown to announce momentous events: the imminence of battle or the death of the *Zogo le*, a priest of the sea gods, Malo-Bomai. In 1996, *Maber*, an English-language publication produced by the Meriam, resounded in the minds of younger Meriam as a reaffirmation of custom and belief. In *Maber*, the Meriam told themselves, and the whole world, that they were taking on a new set of responsibilities. They were, practically speaking, redefining the character of their social and economic independence. 'Life has changed for us', they said. 'Fishing just for ourselves is not enough'. However, in pressing for the right to take responsibility for enterprise fishing in their coastal waters, they sense a danger zone that may mean either their survival or their eclipse.

In its famous 1992 *Mabo* judgment, the High Court of Australia recognised the rights of the Meriam people to land above the high water mark. The island of Mer was recognised as theirs against the whole world. But from a Meriam standpoint this was only half a story and half a victory, for they are seafarers and fishers, and for them the sea is life.

The forebears of today's Meriam people made long voyages in fifty-foot (thirty-metre) long canoes to the New Guinea coast, to Raine Island, which they call Berik, and to mainland Australia. Officers of *HMS Beagle*, in 1838, noted their presence in warlike mood at Restoration Island, 165 miles (300 kilometres) south of Mer (Hordern 1989:253). They were a strong and fearless people whose strength came from the sea and the journeys of their sea heroes.

Dari, the Torres Strait Islanders' feathered headdress, is a condensed symbol of that strength. The central and upstanding feather of the *dari* comes from the frigate bird, a soaring bird of prey that comes to the Murray Islands in the season of the southwest winds. The feather is topped with a tassel of small white feathers. The straight feather signifies strength; the white tassel represents the foam on wind-torn, angry waves. The younger Meriam people's publication, *Maber*, featured a half-*dari* as its masthead. The absent half pointed to unrecognised sea rights.

In the *Mabo* case, the late Koiki Mabo, with Dave Passi and James Rice, made claims to sea areas. Koiki claimed portions of the Great Barrier Reef, Op Nor, seven kilometres from Mer. The Reef plays a vital part in the sea lives of the Meriam. They speak today of *maiso mer*, the murmuring of the Great Barrier Reef. Its sounds tell them whether to go out on the sea or not. One of its sounds is echoed in that of *Maber*, the sign of danger.

Maber, the publication, is a small moment in an epic journey of the Meriam people. It signifies and contributes to their cultural renaissance, which goes back into pre-*Mabo* days and has received impetus from *Mabo*, from their successes in moving towards economic independence and from their chance to see themselves mirrored in the eyes of others.

A fishing enterprise

Meriam people's efforts to establish an independent fishing enterprise is a twenty-year story. It had painful beginnings and a torrid history. Some would have given up.

Let's go back to 1981 when a fishing committee was formed by Ron Day, now Council chairperson, and other Meriam. A trial mackerel fishing enterprise got going after the Meriam put persistent pressure on the Department of Aboriginal Affairs (DAA). A professional fisherman arrived at Mer and taught Meriam fishers some new methods. He brought new gear. The men went out to sea and returned home with their catches. Records were kept daily and the quota set by the project leader was filled far ahead of schedule. Adults today remember these months of economic independence during their childhood when fish money came to their families. Men and women drank socially at the canteen after the day's work and community morale was high. 'Maybe our fishing project will happen now,' they said to me. The project instructor departed, and the Murray Islanders awaited further news. But there was only silence. When they inquired at the DAA office in Thursday Island they were told there was no support for the real project to begin. No reasons were given. Was this bureaucratic inefficiency? Or was it a question of power?

A year after *Mabo*, the Meriam drew up their maritime boundaries. Their flair for geography, noted by Rivers in 1898 (Rivers 1901:44), was not lost. In 1993, they declared an economic zone and began their fishing enterprise. At that stage, family-owned dinghies went out and catches were sold to the new Murray Island freezer facilities.

The danger zone they sense was and is many-sided. *Maber*, the publication, was born in the context of the rejection of minority moves for what I would call disembodied projects—a floating motel off the tiny and now famous Mer Island, and oil prospecting on the clan-owned beaches. These projects were rejected.

Today, Meriam look to their past traditions of independence, courage and skill to guide them into the future. In seeing themselves writ large in the refracting mirror of Matthew Flinders' perceptions of them as 'dextrous sailors and formidable warriors' (Flinders 1814:xii–xiii), they also know that their traditions have changed in important ways. As they explain, the part of their traditional law that says 'Your jaws for the god Malo's necklace' is no longer followed. Yet, in the mirror they hold up, they see themselves as fearless sea people. I believe this self-image lies behind their passionate defence of the right to offer younger Meriam the chance to make a real living from fishing.

For the Meriam, remembering tradition is enabling. Their cultural renaissance has received impetus from a growing and renewing sense of their past. The perception of themselves as a maritime people with ancient traditions has been reinforced by archaeological evidence that humans were present there some 3000 years ago, that their presumed forebears built the stone-walled fish-traps that they use today soon after the forming of the reef-flats. The fragments of pottery found by archaeologists in 1999 confirm the knowledge handed down in oral tradition that Mer was the trading centre of local sea cultures. Dave Passi's eldest brother told me just this, exactly twenty years ago—that it was a centre of trading as passed down in oral tradition and confirmed by archaeological evidence.

When the Meriam realised another dream in their making of the film *Small Island Big Fight* (Noah 2000) the reinforcement of cultural pride was visible. Ron Day's eyes lit up and his voice became more animated. He said, 'This scientific discovery gave us evidence of the occupation of Mer and, more important, of the survival of the race.' Yes, 'the survival of the race'. Here I want to say that this highlights the perils of the danger zone I mentioned previously in relation to the vision of an independent future.

The epic journey of the Meriam raises questions associated with their vision of an independently oriented sustainable living from the sea. In Meriam social life, a person's own best interests are realised not by pursuit of individualistic goals as possessive free agents: they are embedded in a system of obligations and rights. A person cannot free-ride as a lone-ranger. A Meriam person cannot get away from responsibility in social life, and good custom, good *tonar*, as they say, is sanctioned ultimately by spiritual attachments.

Researchers and policy makers must urgently find a new paradigm to analyse the situation of Indigenous peoples living on their own lands. As I have said before, it has been obvious for years now that some see Native Title as a stepping-stone to economic and other forms of independence. But this should not be confused with a new paradigm for Indigenous peoples which breaks with the traditions in whose name they have sought Native Title. The Meriam rejected economic projects for a super-economy—the

floating motel—which would take power out of their hands. Their current concern is an exodus of young persons and the stultifying effects of total reliance on welfare. This is the paramount feature of a current danger zone as they see it today.

The Meriam today remain steeped in the custom of generosity with food. Sharing harvested food—wild or cultivated—is its own reward, and to expect a return in kind is like not sharing at all. Meriam hold their sea hunters in high esteem, and in turn the hunter takes pride in being generous, for to be greedy is shameful. These practices and values go to the heart of Meriam life. Its richness and depth may be found in such practices as 'felt experience'. Take the example of *kopat*, the sacred rite of sharing the first turtle for the season with the whole island. Held at a time of turtle scarcity in the seasonal round, *kopat* binds the Meriam to one another, to the sea and to the island. Because they are vivid experiences, intense moments of feeling and emotion, they are held in people's minds as central to their self-understanding. But this cultural way or *tonar* is qualitatively distinct from the law of the market.

Maber¸ the publication, is sounding into a contemporary danger zone in which there are new questions and new perils, as well as new challenges. How may these cultural ways and values be built into Meriam economic enterprise? How might responsibility and accountability be carried forward in the newly redefined character of social and economic independence?

Acknowledgment

An oral version of this paper was presented to AIATSIS Conference2001 Symposium A 'Land Resources and Knowledge: Indigenous people in country', Session 4 'Living in Country', convened by Debbie Bird Rose (ANU), Luke Taylor and Graeme K Ward (AIATSIS).

References

Flinders, M. 1814 *A Voyage to Terra Australis Undertaken ... in the Years 1801, 1802, and 1803, in His Majesty's Ship the Investigator ...* (volume 2). G. and W. Nicol, London.

Hordern, M. 1989 *Mariners are Warned! John Lort Stokes and HMS Beagle in Australia 1837-1843*. Melbourne University Press.

Noah, A (director) 2000 *Small Island, Big Fight* (documentary film). Film Australia, Sydney.

Rivers, W.H.R. 1901 'Vision'. In A.C. Haddon ed., *Reports of the Cambridge Anthropological Expedition to Torres Straits* (volume 2). Cambridge University Press.

Dave Passi, Mer (Murray) Island, Torres Strait Islands 4875

Nonie Sharp was involved in the Mabo case from its very beginning. Her book, *No Ordinary Judgment: Mabo, the Murray Islanders' Land Case* (Aboriginal Studies Press 1996) tells the inside story of a unique court drama that culminated in the recognition of native title to land at the Murray Islands and the overturning of the legal fiction of terra nullius. Another book, Saltwater people: the waves of memory (Allen and Unwin 2002) was the result of a study over five years as an Australian Research Fellow at La Trobe University, Victoria.

School of Sociology, Politics and Anthropology, La Trobe University, Bundoora 3086
<n.sharp@latrobe.edu.au>

Ancestral precedent as creative inspiration: The influence of Soft Sands on popular song composition in Arnhem Land

Aaron Corn

The University of Melbourne

with

Neparrŋa Gumbula

Galiwin'ku Community Incorporated

Abstract: *In 1970, Soft Sands from Galiwin'ku on Elcho Island (Northern Territory, Australia) was one of the first popular bands to form in Arnhem Land. This article addresses the wide influence of Soft Sands on popular song composition in this region, and culminates in a discussion of original repertoire recorded in 1997 by one of its long-standing members, Neparrŋa Gumbula, for his debut solo album, Djiliwirri, and its companion music-video. Yolŋu musicians from Northeast Arnhem Land draw themes and musical materials from their durable canons of hereditary names, songs, dances and designs in the composition of their original repertoires for popular band, and, through them, project their profound religious and legal ties to family, ancestors and country. Both the naming and repertoires of popular bands from Northeast Arnhem Land can deliberately express the following of ancestral precedent by contemporary Yolŋu, and hold significant philosophical implications and creative possibilities for Yolŋu cultural intermediaries seeking to engage with new media and technologies.*

From the mid-1960s, a new movement of musical expression took form in Arnhem Land (Figure 1). The Sunrize Band at Maningrida, the Yugul Band at Ngukurr, Black Wizard (now the Wirrinyga Band) at Miliŋinbi and the Dharrwar Band at Galiwin'ku were founded by young men from the first generation of Arnhem Landers to have regular access to commercial recordings, public radio and urban centres.[1] Over the following decades, popular bands of this seminal generation would encourage the development of dozens of other bands throughout the region, including Yothu Yindi and the Saltwater Band, and foster the now-common usage of traditional themes and materials in band repertoires.

Perhaps the most influential of these early popular bands from Arnhem Land is Soft Sands. This band was founded at Galiwin'ku on Elcho Island in 1970 and was joined by Neparrŋa Gumbula following his relocation there from Miliŋinbi in 1971. Neparrŋa began contributing to the composition of original repertoire for Soft Sands in 1985 and since then he has developed a culturally-significant œuvre that has become much-loved by regional audiences.

[1] Spellings for Yolŋu-Matha words in this article follow the orthographic conventions used by Yolŋu communities and the Yolŋu Studies programme at Charles Darwin University. Further information is at <http://learnline.cdu.edu.au/yolngustudies/index.htm>.

Figure 1. Map of the Arnhem Land and the Yolŋu homelands (shaded pink)

This article documents the career of Soft Sands and its pivotal role in the development of popular bands in Arnhem Land. It then explores Neparrŋa's original repertoire through detailed socio-contextual analyses and discussions of their thematic, lyrical and musical materials. It demonstrates how Yolŋu understandings of existence through ancestrally-bestowed *maḏayin* (sacra),[2] *rom* (law, culture, correct practice, the way)[3] and property rights regulated through *gurruṯu* (kinship) have informed Soft

[2] *Maḏayin* is a term that connotes great beauty and pertains to the sacred properties in language, songs, dances and designs that are owned in perpetuity and deployed in ceremony by each Yolŋu *mala* (patrifilial group) (Williams 1986:29). In a pragmatic sense, these sacra function as title deeds, and represent the ancestrally-bestowed proprietary interests of each *mala* in the discrete tracts of land and sea that comprise their hereditary *wäŋa* (estates, homelands).

[3] *Rom* is most commonly described as 'law' or 'culture' in English. However, Keen (1994:137) suggests that it can also be translated from Yolŋu-Matha as 'right … or proper practice' or, to capture something of its religious connotation, 'the way'. *Rom* is formally expressed and upheld through ceremonial performances in which participating *mala* (patrifilial groups) deploy their sacred properties in language, songs, dances and designs. Following ancestral precedent, whether they be precedents for *rom* (proper practice) established by *waŋarr* (progenitorial ancestors) or introduced by forebears known in life, is a most profound Yolŋu virtue (Keen 1994:149). Yolŋu conventionally demonstrate this virtue through their knowledge of *rom* (proper practice) for the deployment of their *maḏayin* (sacra) in ceremonies. Moreover, it is necessary for mature Yolŋu to have arduously attained consummate knowledge of their hereditary

Sands' creative project and Neparrŋa's compositional practice in ways that have since become typical of the region's popular bands.

This article was originally conceived as a dialogue between me and Neparrŋa about his compositional practice, his career as a musician with Soft Sands, and his role as a *l̲iya-ŋärra'mirri* (learned, wise) Yolŋu leader in the tradition of his prolific late *bäpa* (father), Djäwa Dhäwirrŋu. It is based on an extensive interview with Neparrŋa that was taped between 11 and 13 November 1997 during my first visit to Galiwin'ku, and has been tempered and augmented through further discussions with Neparrŋa Gumbula and other members of Soft Sands over the years that have followed. Ultimately, this article will show how the deliberate expressions of *dhud̲akthun* (the 'following' of ancestral precedent) with which Soft Sands' creative project and Neparrŋa's original repertoire are imbued have come to hold significant philosophical implications and creative possibilities for other contemporary Yolŋu who have sought to engage with new media and technologies.

Floating on the tide

My contact with Soft Sands began when I met Djirrimbil̲pil̲wuy Garawirrtja at the Fulbright Symposium in Darwin (24–27 July 1997). There he spoke about the Top End Aboriginal Bush Broadcasting Association (TEABBA) of which he was the founding Deputy Chair.[4] Over lunch, after his presentation on 26 July, we discussed his career as a musician and radio broadcaster, his love of old recordings by ethnographers such as Moyle (1967), the band scene in Arnhem Land and my interest in this field as a doctoral candidate in music. My interest sparked his and so he invited me to the Galiwin'ku Memorial Festival (15–17 August 1997) that he was organising and at which several popular bands from Arnhem Land would be performing.

This festival was held in memory of Biyarranyd̲jarrwuy and Murrlanawuy Garawirrtja who had died together in a tragic road accident near Katherine in September 1996. They had had been long-standing members of Soft Sands, along with: their *wäwa* (brothers), Djirrimbil̲pil̲wuy Garawirrtja, Djan̲girrawuy Garawirrtja, Bakpirr Garawirrtja and Neparrŋa Gumbula; their *waku* (sister's children), Garadhawal Garrawurra and Boli Garrawurra; and their *gutharra* (sister's daughter's child), Djati Yunupiŋu. This event precipitated my very first visit to Galiwin'ku. I helped Djirrimbil̲pil̲wuy, who then coordinated the Broadcasting for Remote Aboriginal Communities Scheme (BRACS) at Galiwin'ku, film the Galiwin'ku Memorial Festival in its entirety, and stayed there until late November 1997 to consult with local musicians from Soft Sands, the Dharrwar Band, the Saltwater Band and My Boys Are Good Boys.

In June 1998, Soft Sands (with the assistance of AIATSIS) attended Musical Visions '98 in Adelaide which incorporated a conference on Arnhem Land Performance. The conference was convened by Fiona Magowan to commemorate the

---

canons of names, songs, dances and designs before they can be recognised as *l̲iya-ŋärra'mirr(i)* (wise, learned) elders with the authority to undertake social and ceremonial leadership roles.

[4] TEABBA is a network of some thirty community radio broadcasters founded in 1989 to service indigenous communities throughout the north of the Northern Territory.

fiftieth anniversary of the American-Australian Scientific Expedition to Arnhem Land (Mountford 1956–64). As pictured in Figure 2, the band performed original songs by Neparrŋa Gumbula at the conference's opening ceremony and dinner. Led by Djangirrawuy Garawirrtja, the band also performed hereditary Gupapuyŋu *manikay-buŋgul* (song-dance) items on the subjects of *lorrpu* (sulphur-crested cockatoo) and *gana'kana* (juvenile stringy-bark tree), and participated in a panel discussion about tradition and change in contemporary music from Arnhem Land that I chaired for the conference's penultimate plenary session.

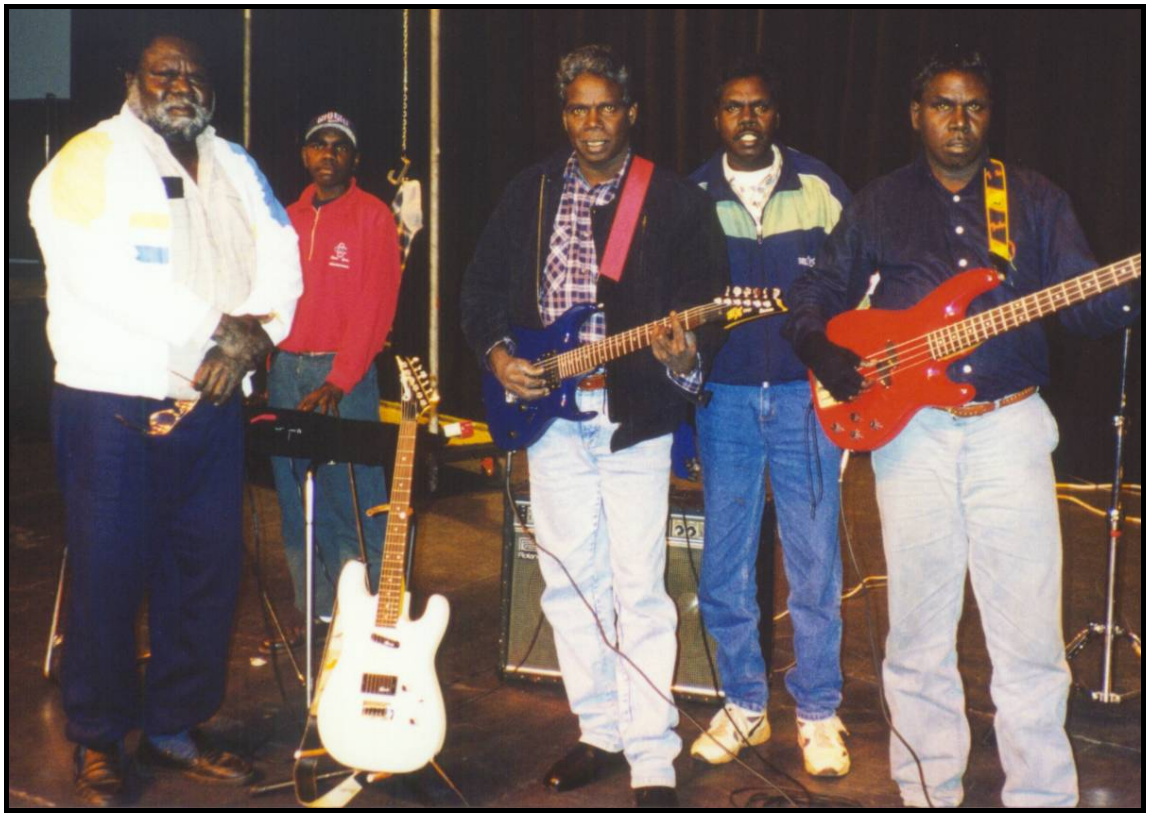

Figure 2. Djirrimbilpilwuy Garawirrtja, Banul Garawirrtja, Neparrŋa Gumbula, Bakpirr Garawirrtja and Djangirrawuy Garawirrtja (from left to right) rehearse before Soft Sands' performance at the opening of Musical Visions '98 in Adelaide on 25 June.[5] *(Corn, phot. 1998)*

Following Musical Visions '98, I was reunited with Soft Sands' members at a memorial festival in Ramaninŋ in June 1999, and returned to Galiwin'ku in July 2000 to check information gathered there in 1997 and at Adelaide in 1998 for my doctoral thesis. On this latter occasion, I was summarily invited by Djirrimbilpilwuy Garawirrtja to film his son's *dhapi* (circumcision) ceremony which was led by Anjawartunga Maxwell of the Letterstick Band from Maningrida who sung the hereditary *borrk* series composed by his father, Mulumbuk Diyama, and recorded in part by Hiatt (1966:7).

During this ceremony I began working more closely with Neparrŋa Gumbula and came into a fuller understanding of the role of his late *bäpa* (father), Djäwa Dhäwirrŋu,

[5] Banul Garawirrtja is a son of Djangirrawuy who toured to Adelaide with Soft Sands on this occasion.

as one of the most influential Yolŋu leaders of the twentieth century in terms of local community leadership, his bi-cultural dialogues with church and government administrations, and his contributions to the scholarly record on Yolŋu society, religion and languages. In turn, I also came into a much greater awareness of the significance which Neparrŋa had vested in his original œuvre by directly referencing his father's ceremonial and executive leadership in the ethnographic film, *Djalambu* [sic *Djaḻumbu*], which Cecil Holmes directed for AIA[TSI]S at Miliŋinbi in 1964. I therefore arranged for Neparrŋa to present with me at AIATSIS's fortieth-anniversary conference in September 2001 and to teach with me at the University of Melbourne where I had begun to lecture on Yolŋu culture in the Australian Indigenous Studies Program with Marcia Langton.

The Soft Sands of Galiwin'ku

Immortalised by the Warumpi Band's song, 'My Island Home' (Murray and Rrurrambu 1987), Galiwin'ku has long been home to a vibrant musical culture.[6] In addition to hosting routine performances of *manikay-buŋgul* (song-dance) series and other hereditary performance traditions in both ceremonial and casual contexts, Galiwin'ku has supported numerous gospel choirs and ensembles, and at the turn of the 1970s it gave rise to Soft Sands and the Dharrwar Band. It was also the childhood home of the Warumpi Band's lead singer, Rrurrambu Burarrwaŋa. In the late 1990s, Rrurrambu returned briefly to Galiwin'ku to form My Boys Are Good Boys with his close Gumatj *walkur* (agnates) while the virtuosic and congenitally-blind Gumatj multi-instrumentalist, Gurrumul Yunupiŋu of Yothu Yindi, retired there to foster the talents of a gifted cohort of younger musicians with the formation of the Saltwater Band.

Despite its formative role in the development of popular bands throughout Arnhem Land, scholarly literature on Soft Sands was scant in the years of my doctoral research with only cursory references to the band by Schultz (1989:50), Dunbar-Hall (1994) and Walker (2000). Soft Sands was, nevertheless, the first band from Arnhem Land to tour both within Australia and internationally, and to have its music recorded on an album for commercial release. Individual members of Soft Sands and their immediate families have also made significant contributions to scholarly discourse through the writings of Cawte (1993, 1996), Cooke (1996), Davis (1989), Djandilŋa and Barlow (1997), Keen (1978, 1994), Magowan (1994), Rudder (1993), Tamisari (1995, 1998) and Williams (1981).

Alongside the Sunrize Band at Maningrida, the Yugul Band at Ngukurr, Black Wizard (now the Wirrinyga Band) at Miliŋinbi and the Dharrwar Band at Galiwin'ku, Soft Sands was among the first bands in Arnhem Land to use electric guitars and drum kit, and to adopt popular styles and musical technologies that had been introduced to the region through broadcast media and its members' cross-cultural experiences in nearby urban centres such as Darwin and Katherine. Formed at Galiwin'ku in 1970, Soft Sands has since become renown throughout Indigenous communities Australia-wide for its extensive repertoire of country and gospel songs, including originals by

[6] Galiwin'ku was founded as a Methodist mission in 1942 following the establishment of Methodist missions to the Yolŋu at Miliŋinbi in 1922 and Yirrkala in 1934. The church began to cede its powers over local governance to more representative town councils in 1973.

Djirrimbi<u>l</u>pi<u>l</u>wuy Garawirrtja, Bäriya Garrawurra, Dja<u>n</u>girrawuy Garawirrtja and Djati Yunupiŋu.

Over the three decades of its career, Soft Sands has performed at countless Christian rallies, cultural festivals and concerts in communities throughout northern and central Australia. In 1980, it toured to Tamworth in New South Wales for the National Aboriginal Country Music Festival and, in 1982, it travelled to North America for the World Celebration of Indigenous Peoples (with the assistance of the Australia Council for the Arts and the Aboriginal Artists' Agency). This tour took Soft Sands to Los Angeles in the USA, and to the Canadian cities of Regina and Toronto. In 1985, Soft Sands' eponymous debut album was recorded in Galiwin'ku for release by Imparja (now CAAMA Music) in Alice Springs. The photograph selected for the cover of this album, as shown in Figure 3, depicts the band after its return from North America. The shirts worn in this photograph originally belonged to a Cree band that Soft Sands met in Regina at the World Celebration of Indigenous Peoples. They were gifted in exchange for Soft Sands' own shirts which featured Yolŋu designs with captions in Yolŋu-Matha.

Soft Sands' eponymous debut album (1985) is dominated by original songs with gospel themes and lyrics in English and Yolŋu-Matha composed by: Djirrimbi<u>l</u>pi<u>l</u>wuy Garawirrtja, Boli Garrawurra and Bäriya Garrawurra who were then members of the band; the Dhurrkay Singers (now Dhurrkay Praise) from Galiwin'ku;[7] Gambuŋ Gaykamaŋu from Ramangi<u>n</u>iŋ; and Munuŋgu Ga<u>n</u>daŋu and Leku Buku<u>l</u>atjpi (former members of the Elcho Island Strings with Djirrimbi<u>l</u>pi<u>l</u>wuy).[8] Soft Sands would not feature on a commercially-released album again until Bäriya's funk-styled gospel song, 'Promised Land', was recorded at Maningrida in September 1996 by Triple J for a compilation of indigenous music entitled *Meinmuk* [sic *Manymak*]*: Music from the Top End* (My Boys are Good Boys et al. 1997:20). Soft Sands released a second eponymous album through TEABBA in 2000.

The Soft Sands of <u>L</u>uŋgutja

Following the 1996 deaths of Biyarranydjarrwuy and Murrlanawuy Garawirrtja, Soft Sands' standing members have been Djirrimbi<u>l</u>pi<u>l</u>wuy Garawirrtja (voice, guitar), Neparrŋa Gumbula (voice, guitar), Djati Yunupiŋu (voice), Boli Garrawurra (guitar), Garadhawal Garrawurra (guitar), Dja<u>n</u>girrawuy Garawirrtja (bass guitar), Bäriya Garrawurra (voice, guitar, keyboard) and Bakpirr Garawirrtja (drums). Listed in Table 1 are their relationships to each other through *gurru<u>t</u>u* (kinship), and alignments to *mala*

[7] The harmony singing of the Dhurrkay Singers on *Soft Sands* (1985:11–13) can be heard as an inter-generational influence in newer music by the Saltwater Band (1998) in which Ŋu<u>l</u>upani Dhurrkay is a lead singer. Ŋu<u>l</u>upani is a *gäthu* (brother's child) of the female singers who recorded with this ensemble on *Soft Sands* (1985:11–13).

[8] Formed in 1958, the original instrumentation of the Elcho Island Strings was ukulele, acoustic guitars, tea-chest bass and tin-pan cymbals. The ensemble continued after Djirrimbi<u>l</u>pi<u>l</u>wuy's graduation to Soft Sands in 1970. As pictured in Figure 3, Munuŋgu Ga<u>n</u>daŋu, whose own œuvre comprises hundreds of original country and gospel songs, joined Soft Sands' tour to North America in 1982. Munuŋgu is a member of the Golpa *mala* (patrifilial group) who was socially parented by Djirrimbi<u>l</u>pi<u>l</u>wuy Garawirrtja's *bäpa* (father), Djupandawuy. He and Djirrimbi<u>l</u>pi<u>l</u>wuy identify each other as *wäwa* (brothers).

patrifilial group) and patri-moiety groups which together comprise the primary logic for Yolŋu social organisation. [9] These systems provide the organising logic through (progenitorial ancestors). In turn, it is this very same logic that informed the formation of Soft Sands in 1970 by close kin and the creative choices that its members have made since.

Figure 3. Djirrimbilpilwuy Garawirrtja, Biyarranydjarrwuy Garawirrtja, Garadhawal Garrawurra, Munuŋgu Gandaŋu, Djangirrawuy Garawirrtja, Djati Yunupiŋu and Murrlanawuy Garawirrtja (from left to right) wear gifted Cree shirts following the return of Soft Sands from its tour of North America (Lapointe, phot. 1982).

As members of the Birrkili Gupapuyŋu *mala* (patrifilial group), Djirrimbi<u>l</u>pi<u>l</u>wuy, Dja<u>n</u>girrawuy and Bakpirr Garawirrtja are hereditary owners of the coastal *wäŋa-ŋaraka* (bone country) of <u>L</u>uŋgutja on Hardy Island in Arnhem Bay. As a member of the <u>D</u>aygurrgurr Gupapuyŋu *mala*, Neparrŋa Gumbula is a hereditary owner of Djiliwirri on the western coast of Buckingham Bay. Despite having different *wäŋa-ŋaraka*, the Birrkili and the <u>D</u>aygurrgurr nevertheless share ownership in Gapuwiyak, possess

[9] Yolŋu society is an expansive network of more than 60 patrifilial groups, known generically as *mala*, whose agnatic members each share hereditary ownership in discrete physical estates, known generically as *wäŋa* ('place', 'home(land)', 'country'), comprising tracts of land, bodies of water and their natural resources. Seven mutually-unintelligible Australian languages, known collectively as Yolŋu-Matha ('People's Tongues'), are spoken among the members of these *mala* and are linguistically typed by their respective words meaning 'this, here': Dhuwal/Dhuwala, Dhaŋu/Djaŋu, Dhay'yi, Nhaŋu, Djiniŋi, Djiniŋ and Yakuy. Each *mala* speaks its own patrilect or *matha* ('tongue') with its own discrete lexicon of hereditary and sacred *yäku* (names). This is a most important component of patrifilial identification among Yolŋu and has binding legal ramifications for individual and group claims to ownership in *wäŋa* (country) and other hereditary properties. Comprehensive exegeses of Yolŋu sociality are provided by Williams (1981), Keen (1994:62–100) and Cooke (1996:65–85). The Yolŋu patri-moieties are exogamous, and are named Dhuwa and Yirritja.

common *madayin* (sacra), share a common *matha* (patrilect; 'tongue') of the Dhuwala type in Gupapuyŋu and stand equally as close *yapapulu* (sister groups).[10] Being a

Table 1. The gurrutu *(kinship) of Soft Sands from 1997.*

Yäku (Name)	*Gurrutu* (Kinship) to Ego	*Mala* (Patrifilial Group)	*Matha* (Language)[b]	Moiety	*Mälk* (Subsection)
Djirrimbilpilwuy Garawirrtja	Ego	Birrkili Gupapuyŋu	Dhuwala, Djaŋu	Yirritja	Bulany'
Neparrŋa Gumbula	*wäwa* (brother)	Daygurrgurr Gupapuyŋu	Dhuwala	Yirritja	Ɗarritj
Djati Yunupiŋu	*gutharra* (sister's daughter's child)	Gupa-Gumatj	Dhuwala	Yirritja	Baŋadi'
Garrawurra Boli	*waku* (sister's child)	Liyagawumirr	Dhuwal	Dhuwa	Gamarraŋ
Garadhawal Garrawurra	*waku* (sister's child)	Liyagawumirr	Dhuwal	Dhuwa	Gamarraŋ
Djangirrawuy Garawirrtja	*wäwa* (brother)	Birrkili Gupapuyŋu	Dhuwala, Djaŋu	Yirritja	Bulany'
Bäriya Garrawurra	*waku* (sister's child)	Liyagawumirr	Dhuwal	Dhuwa	Gamarraŋ
Bakpirr Garawirrtja	*wäwa* (brother)	Birrkili Gupapuyŋu	Dhuwala, Djaŋu	Yirritja	Bulany'

Daygurrgurr Gupapuyŋu man of the same generation as his Birrkili Gupapuyŋu bandsmen, Neparrŋa Gumbula therefore recognises Djirrimbilpilwuy, Djangirrawuy and Bakpirr Garawirrtja both as *wäwa* (brothers) and as *yapa-waṯaŋu* (sister-holders) of Djiliwirri.

Garadhawal, Boli and Bäriya Garrawurra are *wäwa* and Liyagawumirr *wäŋa-waṯaŋu* (country-holders) of the *wäŋa-ŋaraka* (bone country) of Gärriyak on Point Napier. They are also the *waku* (sister's children) of their Gupapuyŋu bandsmen and *ŋändi-waṯaŋu* (mother-holders) for Luŋgutja. In turn, Djati, the sole Gumatj member of Soft Sands and an older *wäwa* to Mandawuy Yunupiŋu of Yothu Yindi, stands as the *waku* (sister's child) of his Liyagawumirr bandsmen, as the *gutharra* (sister's daughter child) of his Gupapuyŋu bandsmen and as a *märi-waṯaŋu* (mother's mother-holder) for Luŋgutja. The contiguous uterine relations between the Gumatj, Liyagawumirr and Gupapuyŋu members of Soft Sands, as modelled in Figure 4, include both the cross-moiety *yothu-yindi* (sister's child-mother) relationship and the same-moiety *gutharra-märi* (sister's daughter's child-mother's mother) relationship through which all Yolŋu

[10] In addition to speaking Gupapuyŋu, the Birrkili Gupapuyŋu *mala* (patrifilial group) also possesses its own Djaŋu-type *matha* that is specific to its ownership of Luŋgutja (Djirrimbilpilwuy 1999).

mala (patrifilial groups) are legally and inevitably responsible to others under *rom* (law, culture, correct practice, the way).

Despite its members' passion for country and gospel songs, the deeper *waŋarr* (progenitorial ancestral) underpinnings of Soft Sands' creative project were made evident to me during my first visit to Elcho Island for the Galiwin'ku Memorial Festival (15–17 August 1997). Several popular bands from Arnhem Land had answered Djirrimbi̲pi̲lwuy Garawirrtja's request to perform at this event with Soft Sands in memory of his late *wäwa* (brothers). For two long evenings, an enthusiastic multi-generational audience was treated to performances by: Soft Sands, the Elcho Island Strings, Dhurrkay Praise (formerly, the Dhurrkay Singers), My Boys Are Good Boys, the Dharrwar Band and the Saltwater Band from Galiwin'ku; the Sunrize Band and Anjawartunga Maxwell of the Letterstick Band from Maningrida; the Wirrinyga Band and the Baby Hermits from Miliŋinbi; and East Journey and Yothu Yindi from Yirrkala. In the case of this latter band, Wi̲tiyana Marika led with his hereditary Rirratjiŋu *manikay* (song) items while Mandawuy Yunupiŋu performed the as yet unreleased 'One Blood' (Mandawuy and Kelly *c*.1997) with the Saltwater Band.

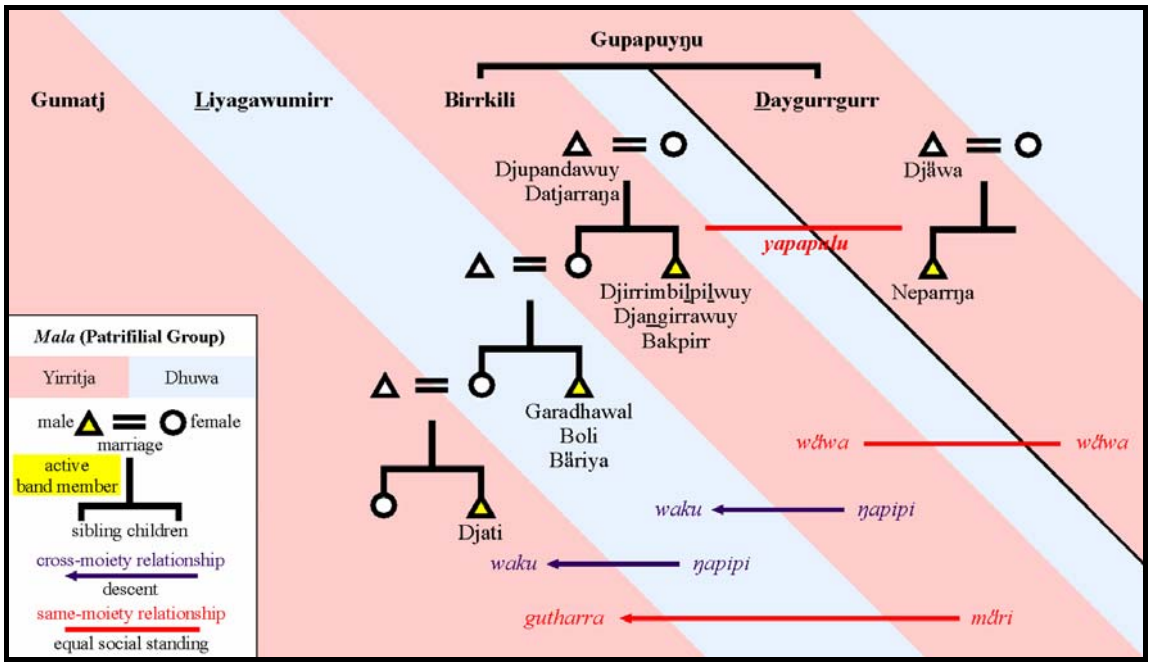

Figure 4. A socio-centric projection of gurrutu (kinship) between musicians in Soft Sands.

Also integral to the Galiwin'ku Memorial Festival were Christian memorial services, wreath laying, action dancing and gospel singing. However, perhaps the most important component of this event was a *manikay-buŋgul* (song-dance) procession on 16 August that was performed for the late Biyarranydjarrwuy and Murrlanawuy Garawirrtja by their Gupapuyŋu *walkur* (agnates), and the Warramiri, Dha̲lwaŋu and Wangurri members of their *wayirrilili* ((sister's) daughter's children's groups). That afternoon, Djirrimbi̲pi̲lwuy asked me to film this procession saying that he would be otherwise engaged. Before it started, he dropped me at a private home in Bottom Camp where participants of both sexes had gathered in the house's side yard around a nucleus of senior men. Some of these men sat lashing two large painted cloth banners between tall poles while others performed *manikay* (songs) over their work.

With their completed banners raised, the entire party then wound through the streets of Galiwin'ku to the festival's venue at the local basketball courts where immediate kin of the deceased brothers, including Djirrimbil̲pil̲wuy, stood to receive them. *Manikay* continued to be sung as they processed and, at strategic intervals, the male *l̲iya-ŋärra'mirri* (learned, wise) leaders with *bil̲ma* (paired sticks) who led the procession paused to sing *l̲ikan yäku* (sacred 'elbow name') invocations accompanied by *yid̲aki* (didjeridu) and *mum'mumthun* male chorus.[11] On arriving at the basketball courts, *l̲ikan yäku* invocations with *mum'mumthun* chorus were executed again before the deceased brothers' immediate kin, and the two fluttering banners that the people in the procession had carried with them were rocked back and forth on single points like flags to signify the embedment of *rom* (law, culture, correct practice, the way) and *mad̲ayin* (sacra) by their *waŋarr* (progenitorial ancestors) into the Birrkili Gupapuyŋu *wäŋa-ŋaraka* (bone country) of L̲uŋgutja.

Figure 5. Malaluŋ Garawirrtja, Gurrumul Yunupiŋu, Anjawartunga Maxwell of the Letterstick Band, Mungula Dhurrkay, Ŋulupani Dhurrkay, Rrupanda Garawirrtja (from left to right) perform with the Saltwater Band at the Galiwin'ku Memorial Festival on 16 August 1997. The two banners before them were erected to commemorate the two late members of Soft Sands. (Corn, phot. 1997)

Afterwards, the two banners were unfurled and, as shown in Figure 5, attached to the base of the stage on the basketball courts which had been decorated with floral wreaths and bouquets. One of these banners had been custom woven. It was dark blue

[11] *L̲ikan yäku* (literally, 'elbow names') are sacred names that *waŋarr* (progenitorial ancestors) bestow on *mala* (patrifilial groups) of their descent along with *wäŋa* (country) and other *mad̲ayin* (sacra). Referring to the *waŋarr* themselves and to their *mad̲ayin*, they signify ancestral connections between *mala* and their hereditary *wäŋa* (countries). *L̲ikan yäku* invocations are performed at focal and climactic junctures during *garma* (public) ceremonies. In Yolŋu epistemology, the more *yäku* (names) something has, the more important it is. These invocations therefore comprise strings of *l̲ikan yäku* sung by *l̲iya-ŋärra'mirr(i)* (learned, wise) men beating *bil̲ma* (paired sticks) who are accompanied by a male *yidaki* (didjeridu) player and a dancing male chorus. *Mum'mumthun* choruses are performed by men of the Yirritja patri-moiety, while *marrawinydjun* choruses are preformed by men of the Dhuwa patri-moiety. Both choruses are onomatopoeically named for the distinguishing vocables that male dancers perform in each of them.

and, in white print flanked on either side by an image of a red-and-white electric guitar, bore the words: 'Soft Sand Band / Country & Gospel Music'. The other banner was painted with a lighter blue background. Its central image was a white crucifix with yellow rays of light radiating outwards and flanked on either side by the image of a white guitar and, beyond them, the green fronds of a *galuku* (coconut) palm. Above this design were painted the words 'Soft Sands' and, below it, 'Munatha Yandha*l*a'.

As Djirrimbi*l*pi*l*wuy would soon explain to me, Soft Sands is a reasonably direct English translation of *Munatha Yandha*l*a* which describes the fine soft sands (*yanhdhala*) that cover the ground (*munatha*) at a coastal *l*uku* (foundation) site named Yandha*l*a on the Birrkili Gupapuyŋu *wäŋa-ŋaraka* (bone country) of L*u*ŋgutja. It was originally chosen as a suitable name for the band by one of its founding members, Datjarraŋa Garawirrtja, who is the youngest brother of Djirrimbi*l*pi*l*wuy's late *bäpa* (father), Djupandawuy. It was Djupandawuy's purchase of his family's first shortwave radio from the local store in the mid-1950s that sparked the young Djirrimbi*l*pi*l*wuy's life-long passion for country and gospel music. In Figure 6, Djupandawuy is pictured with the musicians whose formation of Soft Sands he helped to inspire.

Figure 6. Djupandawuy Garawirrtja with Djati Yunupiŋu, Murrlanawuy Garawirrtja, Djirrimbilpilwuy Garawirrtja, Biyarranydjarrwuy Garawirrtja, Djangirrawuy Garawirrtja, Garadhawal Garrawurra, Bakpirr Garawirrtja and Neparrŋa Gumbula (from left to right) of Soft Sands on the beach named Ðalumara at Galiwin'ku. (Sivyer, phot. c1987)

As I later came to understand, banners or, more precisely, flags of different colours and design traditionally represent the *nirrpu* (ancestrally-bestowed esoteric knowledge) of certain groups of the Yirritja moiety. In their iconography, the two banners at the Galiwin'ku Memorial Festival codified other *ma*d*ayin* (sacra) incumbent with the Birrkili Gupapuyŋu *wäŋa-ŋaraka* (bone country) of L*u*ŋgutja.[12] The blue of the banner

[12] Hereditary rights to a *mala*'s (patrifilial group's) *ma*d*ayin* (sacred) properties in language, song, dance and design are always incumbent with (that is, inalienably bound to and passed on with) hereditary rights in *wäŋa* (homeland, country).

at the centre of Figure 5 is the same colour as the *djärritjarri* (blue flag) shown in Figure 7 and is a Birrkili Gupapuyŋu *maḏayin* (sacred) subject incumbent with Luŋgutja. The *nirrpu* (tip) of its pole is embedded by *waŋarr* (progenitorial ancestors) at the *luku* (foundation) site, Yandhala, and represents both the knowledge of and sovereignty in Luŋgutja that the Birrkili Gupapuyŋu have inherited from them. The *djärritjarri* at Yandhala is also the subject of the song 'Blue Flag' (1997) by the Wutjara Djambarrpuyŋu *wäwa* (brothers), Gutiwa and Wulawula Dhamarrandji, of the Dharrwar Band. It was composed as an homage to their Birrkili Gupapuyŋu *ŋändipulu* (mother-group) and *ŋapipi* (mother's brothers) in Soft Sands.

Figure 7. A Birrkili Gupapuyŋu blue flag at Galiwin'ku. (Corn, phot. 1997)

The green palm fronds painted on the banner shown in Figure 5 represent *galuku* (coconut) which is another Birrkili Gupapuyŋu *maḏayin* (sacred) subject incumbent with Luŋgutja. *Galuku* is the named subject of two songs performed by related popular bands.[13] The first of these is sung by Lapuluŋ Dhamarrandji (*c*.1986) of the Wirrinyga Band to the music of 'A Touch of Paradise' as performed by John Farnham (1986:9) with lyrics gifted to him by his Birrkili Gupapuyŋu *ŋapipi* (mother's brother) in Soft Sands, Djangirrawuy Garawirrtja. The second is by the Wangurri singer, Ḏulupani Dhurrkay (1997), of the Saltwater Band who composed the song as an homage to his Birrkili Gupapuyŋu *märipulu* (mother's mother-group) and *märi* (mother's mother's brothers) in Soft Sands. Both *galuku* and Yandhala are cited again in 'Baŋadi' (1998) by Ḏulupani and his Gumatj counterpart in the Saltwater Band, Gurrumul Yunupiŋu. Both musicians are *gutharra* (sister's daughter's children) of the Birrkili Gupapuyŋu.

[13] A third song with *galuku* (coconut) as its named subject features on the debut solo album of Rrurrambu Burarrwaŋa, *Nerbu* [sic *Nirrpu*] *Message* (2000:2), who is a Gumatj owner of this shared *maḏayin* (sacred) subject.

Pulled by the current

Through these homages by other bands to Soft Sands and the array of musicians who converged on Elcho Island to honour its late members at the Galiwin'ku Memorial Festival, the enormity of Soft Sands' contribution to the development of popular music in Arnhem Land becomes evident. Throughout the 1980s and 1990s, Top End Bärra', Black Iron, Yothu Yindi and the Saltwater Band have each benefited from the mentorship of Soft Sands' members. Indeed, it was with close kin in Soft Sands that Mandawuy Yunupiŋu (2001) composed his first song for popular band, 'Djäpana: Sunset Dreaming' (Mandawuy and Djati 1983). One night, he and his elder *wäwa* (brother), Djati Yunupiŋu, who had recently returned from Soft Sands' 1982 tour of North America worked on this song into the early hours of the morning and, later that day, rehearsed it for the first time with Soft Sands.[14] Within a decade, it had become one of Yothu Yindi's best known songs and had set a new direction for popular song composition in Arnhem Land. The incorporation, within original band repertoires, of themes and materials drawn from local musical traditions has since become common.

Neparrŋa Gumbula, who had joined Soft Sands in 1971, had also been inspired to compose original songs by his bandsmen's 1982 tour of North America and the release of their debut album in 1985. In 1986, he composed 'Gunbirrtji' with assistance from the late Biyarranydjarrwuy and Murrlanawuy Garawirrtja to mark the opening of a new general store at Galiwin'ku by the Arnhem Land Progress Association (ALPA). While the established popularity of Soft Sands as a country and gospel band would continue, this new rock song—like 'Djäpana: Sunset Dreaming' before it—indicated the potential that the incorporation of themes and materials drawn from local musical traditions presented for new compositions and the development of band repertoires. In his songs, Neparrŋa shares his life experience with reference to momentous events and aspects of his personal cosmology. By 1997, Neparrŋa's œuvre of original songs had grown substantially and he was ready to record a solo album entitled *Djiliwirri*.

Songs for *Djiliwirri*

Neparrŋa Gumbula, the seventh son of the prolific Yolŋu leader, Djäwa Dhäwirrŋu, was born at Miliŋinbi on 9 November 1954 and was admitted to the *liya-ŋärra'mirri* (learned, wise) Yolŋu leadership by his elders in 1996. As a young musician, he understudied as a drummer with local bands, the Trogs and Black Wizard (now the Wirrinyga Band), before moving to Galiwin'ku where he became a singer and guitarist with Soft Sands in 1971. In 1985, he began to compose a personal œuvre of original rock songs that differed markedly in style and thematic content to Soft Sands' original country and gospel repertoire, and began recording his debut solo album, *Djiliwirri*, at Kakadu Studios in Darwin in 1997. The album, though as yet unreleased, features songs accompanied by Soft Sands that date from 1985.[15]

---

[14] Before joining Soft Sands, Djati Yunupiŋu was in a band at Yirrkala named the Diamond Dogs with his yukuyuku (younger brother), Mandawuy (then Bakamana).

[15] Intractable delays to the release of *Djiliwirri* mean that the only song by Neparrŋa to have been released to date is 'Land, Our Mother' (Neparrŋa and Djirrimbilpilwuy 1988). This was recorded in September 1989 by the Central Australian Aboriginal Media Association (CAAMA) at the Second Festival of Aboriginal Rock Music in Darwin for *Sing Loud, Play Strong* (Blekbala Mujik et al. 1990:3).

Neparrŋa's choice of Djiliwirri as the name for his album follows the same logic as Datjarraŋa Garawirrtja's naming of Soft Sands after *Munatha Yandhaḻa*, the fine soft sandy ground of Yandhaḻa at Luŋgutja. Both names are direct references to the *wäŋa-ŋaraka* (bone-countries) of their respective *mala* (patrifilial groups)—the Daygurrgurr and Birrkili Gupapuyŋu—and foreground their direct descent from *waŋarr* (progenitorial ancestors) and inheritance from them of *rom* (law, culture, correct practice, the way), *maḏayin* (sacra) and *wäŋa* (country, physical estates) through *yarraṯa* ('string', 'line', direct patri-lineage).

However, whereas references to *maḏayin* incumbent with Luŋgutja are found only in the name of Soft Sands and in homages to the Birrkili Gupapuyŋu in the repertoires of other bands, Neparrŋa makes extensive use of themes and materials drawn from the *maḏayin* of his Daygurrgurr Gupapuyŋu *ŋapawanditj* ('bone-group', own patrifilial group) in the album's eponymous song, 'Djiliwirri' (Neparrŋa and Ŋanganharralil 1997), and of his Ŋurruwula Walamaŋu *märipulu* (mother's mother-group) in the song 'Ruḻku' (Neparrŋa 1989). Here, the virtue of *dhuḏakthun*—the 'following' of ancestral precedent—underscores both the naming of Soft Sands for Luŋgutja and Neparrŋa's personal project in recording *Djiliwirri* in his capacity as a newly-appointed *liya-ŋärra'mirri* (learned, wise) leader.

Table 2. Songs for Djiliwirri *by chronology of composition.*

Year	Song Title	Composer(s)	Language(s)
1985	'Little Baby Boy'	Daynkuli Garrawurra, Neparrŋa Gumbula	English
1986	'Guṉbirrtji'	Neparrŋa Gumbula, Biyarranydjarrwuy Garawirrtja, Murrlanawuy Garawirrtja	Guṉbirrtji (Nhaŋu)
1988	'Land, Our Mother'	Neparrŋa Gumbula, Djirrimbiḻpiḻwuy Garawirrtja	English, Gupapuyŋu (Dhuwala)
1989	'Ruḻku'	Neparrŋa Gumbula	Walamaŋu (Nhaŋu)
1991	'Why Forgotten Me?'	Neparrŋa Gumbula	English
1992	'My Life'	Neparrŋa Gumbula	English
1994	'Yolŋu Children'	Neparrŋa Gumbula	English
1995	'Sorrows and Sadness'	Neparrŋa Gumbula	English
1997	'Djiliwirri'	Neparrŋa Gumbula, Ŋanganharralil Dhamarraṉdji	Gupapuyŋu (Dhuwala)
1998	'The Remembrance of You Two'	Neparrŋa Gumbula	English

Neparrŋa's direction of the music-video that accompanies 'Djiliwirri' is also a deliberate and compelling expression of *dhuḏakthun* (the 'following' of ancestral precedent) which demonstrates the continuous passage of *rom* (law, culture, correct practice, the way) and *maḏayin* (sacra) from the *waŋarr* (progenitorial ancestors) of the Ḏaygurrgurr Gupapuyŋu to their contemporary descendants through the *yarraṯa* (direct patri-lineage) of his late *bäpa* (father), Djäwa, and *märi'mu* (father's father) Ŋarritjŋarritj. Directed and produced by Neparrŋa at Kakadu Studios, this music-video incorporates ceremonial footage from the ethnographic film, *Djalambu* [sic *Djaḻumbu*] (Holmes et al. 1964), in which Djäwa leads a Djaḻumbu (hollow log coffin) ceremony at Miliŋinbi for Ŋarritjŋarritj's final burial in 1963 and new footage that features their descendants performing the same ceremony at Miliŋinbi in 1996. Neparrŋa's ideology of cherishing the old while embracing the new through his music is closely aligned with those of his contemporaries in Yothu Yindi and the Wirrinyga Band. The Nhaŋu type *matha* (patrilect; 'tongue') in which he sings 'Ruḻku' is all but extinct as is that in which he sings 'Guṉbirrtji' (Neparrŋa, Biyarranydjarrwuy and Murrlanawuy 1986) while *Djalambu* [sic *Djaḻumbu*] had remained unseen by his family for decades until he retrieved it from AIATSIS for incorporation to his music-video.

The discussion that follows addresses Neparrŋa's songs in order of composition as they are listed in Table 2. With the exception of 'The Remembrance of You Two' (Neparrŋa 1998) which was composed for Biyarranydjarrwuy and Murrlanawuy Garawirrtja in the second year following their deaths, each of the songs discussed was recorded by Neparrŋa and Soft Sands for *Djiliwirri* at Kakadu Studios in 1997 with assistance from the Australia Council for the Arts. Transcripts and translations are presented for each song along with my own explanatory notes and, in all but the case of 'The Remembrance of You Two', commentary offered by Neparrŋa during our initial interviews at Galiwin'ku in November 1997. In preparation for these interviews, we worked with video recordings of performances led by Neparrŋa that I had taken at the Galiwin'ku Memorial Festival in August 1997 and at the Miliŋinbi Sound and Lightning Festival in November 1997.

'Little Baby Boy'

Verse 1	Once I had a little baby boy He was sweet as he could be His eyes twinkled like stars in the night And he smiled like sweetest smile
Chorus	I had a chance of holding him that day And a chance of kissing him For my little baby boy Has meant the world to me
Verse 2	One day a sadness filled my heart My dearest baby boy left me To the glorious home above To be sweet like an angel up above
Chorus	…

(Daynkuli and Neparrŋa 1985)

This first song by Neparrŋa was composed with Daynkuli Garrawurra, a close Liyagawumirr *waku* (sister's child) from Ramanginiŋ, in memory of Daynkuli's late infant son.

> The story behind this song is that Daynkuli once had a woman from central Australia, and they had maybe two or three children. They lost one of the boys at Ramanginiŋ. It was sad for Daynkuli and afterwards, a couple of years back, he wanted to write a song about it. About three or four years after it had happened, he was looking back on it and thought, 'This is my real life. It's happened in my life so I might as well write a song about it, and the title is 'Little Baby Boy.' He had a little boy once. He was sweet as he could be. His eyes twinkled like the stars in the night and he smiled the sweetest smile,' and all that. Then the last verse is 'One day a sadness filled my heart. My dearest baby boy left me' and that was a sad thing too. He asked me to sing this song too, so that's when I sat in. We changed a little bit of the lyrics for me to sing for my album, *Djiliwirri*. [Neparrŋa 1997a]

'Gunbirrtji'

Verse	*Waŋgala nhaŋu lima mana nhina*	This place where we are living
	Rulka lima yini gurrku shame	We have not looked after it
	Gana' nhänha nhaŋu waŋgala	At this place will be found enough
	Limalama muruway yolŋuku	Food for all of our people
	Gana lima warrtjirri yolŋu mirrtji	We are following those before us
	Djinhiku waŋgalaku limalama	We all are of this place
	Gana' nhänha nhaŋu waŋgala	At this place will be found enough
	Limalama muruway yolŋuku	Food for all of our people
Chorus	*Nhakali lima dälkuma*	In return, we look after
	Djinhiku waŋgalaku muruway	This place for its food
	Nhaŋu mana bam'parra Gunbirrtji	This place stands for the Gunbirrtji
	Gunbirrtji Gunbirrtji nhaŋu waŋgala	This place is of the Gunbirrtji
	Nhaŋu mana bam'parra Gunbirrtji	This place stands for the Gunbirrtji
	Gunbirrtji Gunbirrtji nhaŋu waŋgala	This place is of the Gunbirrtji

(Neparrŋa, Biyarranydjarrwuy and Murrlanawuy 1986)

'Gunbirrtji' was composed by Neparrŋa with Biyarranydjarrwuy and Murrlanawuy Garawirrtja, and premièred with Soft Sands in 1986 at ALPA's official opening of the current general store at Galiwin'ku. It acknowledges the extinct Gunbirrtji *mala* (patrifilial group) as the *wäŋa-waṯaŋu* ('country-holders', owners) of Galiwin'ku, and features lyrics in its lapsed *matha* (patrilect; 'tongue') in recognition of the Gunbirrtji *waŋarr* (progenitorial ancestors) who remain eternally consubstantiated and sentient there in their *wäŋa-ŋaraka* (bone-country). In the spirit of *dhuḏakthun* (the 'following' of ancestral precedent), the song calls on the contemporary residents of Galiwin'ku to care for their town so that the Gunbirrtji *waŋarr* will continue to sustain their livelihoods and not move against them malevolently (Williams 1986:85; Tamisari 1998:256, 267).

> 'Gunbirrtji' is a song that I wrote in 1986 and that was the time that the ALPA store was opened in Galiwin'ku. I opened it with this song, and then the other traditional people

came and opened it [through ceremony] at the same time that I was playing on the stage. *Yo*, I think Djirrimbilpilwuy has that on video from a long time ago, and I think that it was shown on the local Aboriginal news.

That was a special song I composed for the opening of the store. 'Boom', it went and then old people came to open it through ceremony as well. It was during my music that this traditional opening happened also. Both were performed there to open the store.

The Gunbirrtji were the traditional people of Galiwin'ku. There was a group here called Gunbirrtji. No longer are the Gunbirrtji tribe here. Other people, the Mälarra, came in and took the place of the Gunbirrtji because they had shared the same language and had land in the same area. This is Dhuwa country. When Frank's father, Djupandawuy, was still alive during that time, I said to him, 'I want to write a song called 'Gunbirrtji' for the opening of the store', which I did.

'Gunbirrtji' is about maintaining the store. You know, don't muck it up or bash it around, or smash the windows or anything like that. This is our store, food will come inside here, and we'll be able to go and get some food here—tucker for our living. [Neparrŋa 1997a]

'Land, Our Mother'

Verse 1	We are celebrating to mark this special day	
	The people have come to us to see their friends again	
	Let us join hands and shout with joy, we welcome, you have come	
	Come *hatamariki* from Ujung Pandang	
Verse 2	Our people have lived for thousands of years in peace and harmony	
	But now we have our struggles for rights and have survived	
	Let us get together for the benefit of all	
	Land is our mother, it's what we call	
Chorus	*Wäŋanydja dhuwala ŋändi limurruŋgu*	This land, our mother
	Dhiyala limurru ŋäthili gulyurruna	We've walked here a long time now
	Wäŋanydja dhuwala ŋändi limurruŋgu	This land, our mother
	Ðunhi yolŋuwa dhuwala wäŋanydja	This land is for Yolŋu
Verse 3	Oh my people will mourn to this very day for many a friend we have lost	
	But now we shall stand together: one mob, one voice, one land	
	Let us show our pride together and spread the news around	
	Australia's our country for where we will be	
Chorus	…	

(Neparrŋa and Djirrimbilpilwuy 1988)

Neparrŋa composed 'Land, Our Mother' with Djirrimbilpilwuy Garawirrtja in 1988 to celebrate the arrival of Indonesian visitors who sailed to Galiwin'ku in a traditional wooden *prahu* (vessel) from the port of Ujung Pandang (known historically as Macassar) on Sulawesi (Macknight 1976). These visitors were greeted on the beach at Ðalumara with impromptu ceremonial performances by their Yolŋu hosts (McIntosh 1996:74) and, later, Neparrŋa premièred 'Land, Our Mother' with Soft Sands in their honour.

For centuries prior to unsolicited intervention by the State Government of South Australia in 1906, Yolŋu enjoyed extensive trade and cultural relations with Maŋatjay (Macassan) seafarers. Their annual voyages to Northeast Arnhem Land to harvest *dharripa* (trepang, sea cucumber) and other goods for sale throughout East Asia were recorded by Yolŋu in hereditary canons of *manikay* (song), *buŋgul* (dance) and *miny'tji* (design) that survive to this day while contemporary Yolŋu languages retain hundreds of Macassarese loan words (Cooke 1996:1–20). As discussed later, the song 'Djiliwirri' cites an ancestral Maŋatjay *buŋgawa* (captain) named Nuwa who is recorded in Daygurrgurr Gupapuyŋu *madayin* (sacra) as having visited and met *waŋarr* (progenitorial ancestors) at Djiliwirri.[16] Neparrŋa's declaration of continuing Yolŋu sovereignty in Northeast Arnhem Land in the remainder of 'Land, Our Mother' (Neparrŋa and Djirrimbilpilwuy 1988) is not incongruent with the Maŋatjay theme of its first verse. Yolŋu maintained extensive trade and cultural relations Maŋatjay seafarers for centuries until 1906 with no contestation from them to their sovereignty.

> This song is about survival and that we have survived. The land is our mother. '*Wäŋanydja dhuwala ŋändi limurruŋgu*' means '[this] land, our mother' and land is something very very special to us. Land is the source of creation and the land created us. The land that you see is involved with us and we are involved with the land. We are mixed with the land. The land speaks to us and we speak to the land.
>
> This is Yolŋu land. From the beginning, it was Yolŋu land. Whoever arrived later came here after it was Yolŋu land already. I mean going back 2000 years—more than 2000 years—this was Yolŋu land before we had visitors arrive. It's not politics but history, for anyone who knows our stories, that this is Yolŋu land. I'm not talking about the politicians. I'm thinking about the Yolŋu society—of how we look at the land and maintain the land.
>
> *Hatamariki* is a boat. It's a *prahu*. It's an Indonesian ship—the type of boat that used to sail from the port of Ujung Pandang in Indonesia. Ujung Pandang is in Macassan country on the island of Sulawesi. Yeah, they sailed down to celebrate with us in 1988. They came along the northern coast and visited people from Yirrkala all the way to Elcho Island. When I heard that they were coming over here for this festival I started to write 'Land, Our Mother' in the week before they came. Those people visited us for a long time, you know? Yeah, I gave them a warm welcome with this song, and they were welcomed by the community with *buŋgul* (dance) and ceremony as well. [Neparrŋa 1997a]

'Ru*l*ku'

Nerparrŋa's inspiration for 'Rulku' was his *gutharra-märi* (daughter's child-mother's mother) relationship to the Ŋurruwula Walamaŋu *wäŋa-ŋaraka* (bone-country) of Miliŋinbi where, as pictured in Figure 8, an imposing *baltha* (shade tree) named Rulku towers over the beach.[17]

---

[16] Other songs by popular bands from Arnhem Land with Maŋatjay (Macassan) themes include 'Lembana Manimani [Farewell Maningrida]' (Sunrize Band 1989:3; 1993:7), 'My Sweet Takarrina [Galiwin'ku]' (Wirrinyga Band 1990:2; 1995:13) and 'Macassan Crew' (Yothu Yindi 2000:1).

[17] According to Bagshaw (1998:155–73), the Walamaŋu comprise the Ŋurruwula Walamaŋu, the Gamal Walamaŋu and the Bindararr Walamaŋu *mala* (patrifilial groups).

> The [Ŋurruwula] Walamaŋu are my *märipulu* [mother's mother-group] and 'Rulku' is my *märi* song [mother's mother's *manikay*]. [Ŋurruwula] Walamaŋu is a small tribe [*mala*] of people but a few of them remain now and this is their song. On one occasion, I was at Miliŋinbi and I looked through the area. I started to write a song there and 'Rulku' came out like that. The song came out like that. I wrote 'Rulku' in 1989 at Miliŋinbi. Then I went back to Elcho Island, and asked the boys in Soft Sands to sit down and play the chords.
>
> 'Rulku' is mainly a traditional song in *manikay* series. One day, I had a guitar with me and I said to myself, 'Okay then, I'll mix up the song like a combination of both rock and *manikay*'. It's a combination of both. So instead of using *bilma* [paired sticks] and *yidaki* [didjeridu] alone, I use the guitar as well because people like to hear these instruments together. They want to listen to this music with … guitars in a modern setting, but they also want to hear traditional songs with *bilma* [paired sticks] and *yidaki* [didjeridu] so I thought that I would write about Rulku which is in my *märi* [mother's mother's] country. *Yo* [Yes], [Ŋurruwula] Walamaŋu is my *märipulu* and Rulku is [in] my *märi* [mother's mother's] country. [Neparrŋa 1997a]

'Rulku'

Verse 1	*Waŋgalaŋa ŋarramana bam'parra* *Gadupuŋa nhämamana gumurr nhaŋu* *Waŋgala dholway binamunu-wanha*	I stand at this place, Gadupuŋa,[18] surveying the coast This place has always been muddy
	Waŋgala nhaŋu dälkuma mandjikay *garra ŋätjili baman'* *Yolŋu mananha nhininya ŋurrunaŋgal,* *wo*	This place first held by the sandfly groups long ago Ever since their ancestral people first lived there, oh
Chorus	*Rulku mana bam'parra maŋutji mani* *bul'thun mandjikay garra* *Baltha yirrpana gumurr walirr-* *garanha Gamal wulaŋani*	Rulku stands, swollen entrance to the seed of the sandfly groups Shade trees taking root along the coast to the Gamal in the West
Verse 2	*Baltha gänana nhaŋkana Yilan* *Bunbuwa gumurr walirr-ŋupana* *Gäŋada Yilan, Mawukuwuku*	Different shade trees there toward Yilan in the west From Yilan[19] to Mawukuwuku[20]
	Naŋkana nhani baltha yirrpana *ŋurruwulugu* *Gamal manaritj nhaŋkana Rulkuŋa, wo*	There, he founded shade trees at their entrances The Gamal fish[21] there at Rulku, oh

(Neparrŋa 1989)

The specific site on which Rulku stands is named Dham'tham and this is where the *waŋarr* (progenitoral ancestral) fish, commonly known as a *ratjuk* (barramundi), beat

[18] A *wäŋa* (estate) of the Ŋurruwula Walamaŋu *mala* (group) also named Miliŋinbi.

[19] A *wäŋa* (estate) of the Gamal *mala* (group).

[20] A *wäŋa* (estate) of the Maŋgalili Walamaŋu *mala* (group).

[21] This class of *waŋarr* (progenitorial ancestral) fish includes *ratjuk* (barramundi) and *ŋuykul* (trevally).

his tail against the shore to plant the *maŋutji* (seed) of this tree.[22] Through this action, the ground around the base of Ru̲lku—described in the song's chorus as the *mani* (neck, entrance) to its *maŋutji*—became discernibly *bu̲l'thun* (swollen, bumpy). So emblematic is that *waŋarr* act of Miliŋinbi that a Ɒurruwula Walamaŋu *miny'tji* (design) of *ratjuk* superimposed over the roots of Ru̲lku on a background of raised earth is used as the insignia of numerous organisations in this town.[23]

Figure 8. The site of Rulku at Dham'tham in Miliŋinbi. (Corn, phot. 1997)

> Ru̲lku is a tree near the beach at Miliŋinbi. It represents Miliŋinbi. It's a big tamarind tree and you can see it from the Miliŋinbi council office. Underneath the tree is a sacred fish [*ratjuk*] and that place is Ru̲lku which belongs to the [Ɒurruwula] Walamaŋu clan [*mala*] from the Cape Stuart area West of Miliŋinbi. All the tribal people, the Walamaŋu and the Ma̲darrpa people—that is, the *bäru* [saltwater crocodile] people like Marrjarra Pascoe from the Sunrize Band—are involved with Miliŋinbi as well.
>
> The Miliŋinbi Council uses Ru̲lku as its symbol. The council uses the symbol of the big tamarind tree that is there. That's where my father [Djäwa] used to stay when I was a little kid. I used to hang around and climb that same tree. You'll see the picture [design] down there at the council office. It's a big tamarind tree with the skeleton [*ŋapa*] of *ratjuk* underneath because this is where that fish hit this area. Before, it was bumpy. There were a big ripples in the ground at the bottom of the tree but now that area is flat because we've been staying there and we've cleaned it up a bit. You can hardly see the

[22] The *waŋarr* (progenitorial ancestral) origins of *baltha* (shade trees) and *ratjuk* (barramundi) are discussed further by Cawte (1993:40).

[23] These insignia can be viewed at the Miliŋinbi Community URL (2004).

> humps there now, but they were there before in the olden times. The *mandjikay* [sandfly] people are involved with this traditional *ratjuk* story. [Neparrŋa 1997a]

As stated in the second verse of 'Rul̲ku', other *baltha* (shade trees) are also founded through the ancestral travels of *ratjuk* (barramundi) and *ŋuykal* (trevally), and *l̲uku* (foundation) sites of this type are homologous to an inflatable internal organ that is common to fish of both species. However, the Gamal Walamaŋu estate of Yilan is different in that it is homologous to a strip of brown tasty meat that is located above the spines of these fishes (Neparrŋa 2000). *Mala* (patrifilial groups) that share in this *mad̲ayin* (sacra) subject with the Ŋurruwula Walamaŋu include Gamal Walamaŋu, Maŋgalili, Guyamirrilili, Wubulkarra and Wangurri. Each of these *mala* also shares *mad̲ayin* in *mandjikay* (sandfly) and, in the first verse and chorus of 'Rul̲ku', they are collectively cited as '*mandjikay garra* [sandfly groups]'.

> Miliŋinbi is a place that was hit by a fish called *ratjuk*. It's *mandjikay* land and the lyrics of 'Rul̲ku' are in Walamaŋu. People speak Walamaŋu at Miliŋinbi and at Yilan [Gamal Walamaŋu estate] in the Cape Stuart area, and this fish travelled all the way to a place near Yirrkala named Mawukuwuku [a Maŋgalili site] and then came back again. All the *mandjikay* people sing this in ceremony [*manikay*]. *Ratjuk* is related to Rul̲ku because this fish had been heading West to Yilan. It got to Yilan in the Cape Stuart area and then went to the other side in the East at Mawukuwuku near Yirrkala. Actually, there were two fish. One went towards Yirrkala to the Dhurrkay mob [Wangurri group] at Dhäliny and the Maymuru mob [Maŋgalili group] at Mawukuwuku, and another, representing *mandjikay*, came back. That's why all the groups along the *ratjuk* track are also called *mandjikay*.
>
> *Ratjuk* came out from Miliŋinbi on his way to Yirrkala. Near Yirrkala, there's another place called Mawukuwuku. The *ratjuk* went over there and was met there by the *mandjikay* people of the Maŋgalili group. The fish went travelling for *mandjikay* groups only and that's why they are close together [share *mad̲ayin*]. *Mandjikay* groups are all the same from Yilan and Bun̲buwa [Gamal Walamaŋu estates] right up to Miliŋinbi [Ŋurruwula] Walamaŋu estate] and Baltharriny [Wubulkarra estate] here near Elcho Island on Howard Island, straight up this channel, right up to Dhäliny [Wangurri estate] and all the way to Mawukuwuku Gäŋad̲a at Djarrakpi [Maŋgalili estate] in the East near Yirrkala. He went East toward Yirrkala first and then back again the same way through Miliŋinbi to Yilan. That's the story that was told by the elders but every song [*manikay*] is linked. If we sing songs, especially from the Yirrkala area—if we sing about *ratjuk*—then those groups would be able to play a part too. We're all connected with the whole and it's a strong connection for the *mandjikay* tribes [*mala*] these days as it was before. [Neparrŋa 1997a]

'Why Forgotten Me?'

Neparrŋa's next song, 'Why Forgotten Me?', is about broken love and was composed in 1991 to bring thematic contrast to his repertoire following the sacredness of 'Rulku' and the politics of 'Land Our Mother'.

> Soft Sands had to have a mixture of songs whether they're traditional Yolŋu songs drawn from *manikay* series, contemporary music, or a mixture or combination of the two. Our fans in the community like to hear love songs and all that, so that's what I did. I wrote a love song instead of a song about land rights and all that. I said, 'Okay then, I'll make something about love. Okay, 'Why Forgotten Me?' Okay, 'Here I'm standing'. 'I was lonely tonight without you'. 'We used to care for our love together'.

Balanda [Euro-Australians] like these songs too, you know? It's from their language and they will know it straight away. [Neparrŋa 1997a]

'My Life'

In 'My Life', Neparrŋa reflects on the twenty years that he had lived at Galiwin'ku and raised his family away from the community at Miliŋinbi where he himself was born and raised. It is set against the picturesque backdrop of the sun setting over the sea as Neparrŋa watches from Ganapay cliff at Galiwin'ku which is a Gu̲nbirrtji *d̲amala* (sea eagle) site.

'Why Forgotten Me?'

Verse 1	I was lonely tonight without you We used to care for our love together I remember the good times we had but it's not over now I used to be in your arms before
Verse 2	Here I'm standing now, I can hear you crying Your teardrops run like falling rain I can hear you crying from the distance Calling for me for loving you
Chorus	Why forgotten me? It's not over now We used to care for our love together Why forgotten me? I like the way you smile The future is waiting or me and you
Verse 3	Here I am now holding your arms again With a million stars shining above me For now and forever I'll be with you Darling, you're the only love for me
Chorus	…

(Neparrŋa 1991)

This song reflects the same life that everybody's living. It's about my personal life when I had been staying at Elcho Island for twenty years. I tried to reflect on what I was doing then so I started to write a song about myself and my life. It's just about my life and that I'm married with three kids in Galiwin'ku but maybe I should go back home to Miliŋinbi again sometime, because that's where I started my musical career.Ganapay is a place just near the health clinic here in Galiwin'ku. The view is good. At that time, I was really worried so I went over to that cliff and started writing this song. I didn't have a pen, and paper or a pad at the time. It was just in my mind and, when I sung the story, I was standing on the cliff of Ganapay. I was a bit worried and when I saw the Sun set at Galiwin'ku, I remembered the place that is Miliŋinbi.

Ganapay was an important place for the Gu̲nbirrtji as well. When I had that idea of writing a song about my life, the area where I was standing was Gu̲nbirrtji land and it represents *d̲amala* [sea eagle] and its *ŋalkanbuy* [rookery] just on top of Ganapay. That's also why the health clinic there now is named Ŋalkanbuy. [Neparrŋa 1997a]

'My Life'

Verse 1	I was living for twenty years Here I'm standing on the cliff of Ganapay Watching the water, sunset of Galiwin'ku I remember the island I came from
Chorus	A place called Miliŋinbi where I grew up With my friends and family One of these days I'm coming home again O my life
Verse 2	Things have changed when I grew older I have families to start new life again Here I'm walking, which way to go? I have friends here and I've got friends there
Chorus	…

(Neparrŋa 1992)

'Yolŋu Children'

This song was composed by Neparrŋa in 1994 to celebrate the High Court of Australia's recognition of Meriam Native Title over Mer (Murray Island) in the Torres Strait, Queensland, in 1992. This decision overturned the legal fiction that Australia had been *terra nullius* at the time of British settlement at Sydney in 1788 and led to the passage of the *Native Title Act 1993*. By the time of this interview in 1997, the Federal Government had, to our mutual dismay, reneged on provisions made under this Act in response to a Native Title claim brought to the High Court by the Wik of Cape York in Queensland.[24]

> This is something that worries me. I don't like to sing or write political songs. Originally, I was just saying, 'What's the next step for the Yolŋu children? Where's this generation going and how are we trying to tell the story's message to the kids?' But now, you have all these things going on in this world like this fighting for the land—land rights—and you have this Native Title debate. You have this Ten Point Plan. You know, you have all this nowadays. I thought we had been given back the land before. This land was given back to us—you know, half and half. We should share and work together. That's what we'd like to see—everybody working together. The white and black have to work together in this country so there's the future for the next generation. That's why I wrote 'Yolŋu Children', but now it seems that they will not own our things. Through my generation, they can probably own the traditional way of living and traditional way of thinking—you know, hunting and all that—but the politicians can't even come to the close of what they're talking about nowadays.
>
> This song is all about the Yolŋu children and asks what the future of this next generation is. Look at this part here; 'When I heard the Yolŋu children singing sweet songs like that river flows to the open blue sea. Can't you hear the Yolŋu children crying out for freedom and rights? This land and its heritage', and all this; 'This land

[24] Further information about these political developments has been provided by ATSIC (1979).

and its heritage has been given back again. Yolŋu children must live in the Yolŋu way of life. We have fought back this land for our new generation'. I thought that was true but the game's still on. The battle's still on. It's not over yet. It's not over. [Neparrŋa 1997a]

'Yolŋu Children'

Verse 1
I was sitting on the beach under the shade
Late three in the afternoon
It was cold, windy and smoky that day
I was lonely as the day went by
I look into the horizon
I thought I was only day-dreaming
When I heard the Yolŋu children
Singing sweet songs like the river flows into the open sea

Chorus
Can't you hear the Yolŋu children
Crying out for freedom and rights
This land and its heritage
Has been handed back again
Yolŋu children must live in the Yolŋu way of life
We have fought back the land for our new generation
It's beauty and the land of ours will remain the same
For the future of Yolŋu children

Verse 2
I went back home that evening
I could hear children dancing along around the campfire at night
It was on the news today
The land was given back to the Yolŋu children
Yolŋu children you are our future
For this generation and for the years to come
Your voices can be heard by the world today
So no one can take the land from you again

Chorus
…

Coda
For the future of Yolŋu children
For the future of Yolŋu children
For the future of Yolŋu children
For the Yolŋu children

(Neparrŋa 1994)

'Sorrows and Sadness'

'Sorrows and Sadness' was composed by Neparrŋa in 1995 in response to the recent destruction of the mudbrick house at Miliŋinbi in which his late *bäpa* (father), Djäwa Dhäwirrŋu, had lived. In its second verse, he describes the broken ground where this house once stood as a source of ancestral 'knowledge and wisdom'. Built in the early 1950s, two mud brick houses of this vintage remain and were heritage-listed with the Northern Territory Government in 1997.

> One time, I stayed at Ramanginiŋ for three months before I went back home to Miliŋinbi. During the mission times, they used to build houses out of mud brick in Miliŋinbi. They were the first that the missionaries built. My house—my father's house—was built during that time and when I saw that old building it reminded me of my father. My father died in that building—in that same old mud brick building—and this is what reminded me of him, but when I came back from Ramanginiŋ that time, new building contractors had come and I saw that it was ruined. The house had been pushed over by a bulldozer and all that. That was a bit of my sorrow—my sorrow and my sadness—and I started to think about writing a song called 'Sorrows and Sadness'. [Neparrŋa 1997a]

'Sorrows and Sadness'

Verse 1	The new white man's law all around us Destroying our heritage and our lives Digging up the soil beneath the sacred ground Changing all our Dreamtime stories
Verse 2	Once we're there before I've seen my father's grave was open wide Knowledge and wisdom Were blowin' with the wind
Verse 3	So here I'm standing now With an emptiness Echoes are sounding Can't you hear our children crying?
Chorus	Sorrows and sadness across the land Weeping and crying like rain falls from the sky Through the valleys and the mountains high Echoes are sounding the sadness is here
Verse 1	…
Chorus	…

(Neparrŋa 1995)

'Djiliwirri'

This song was composed by Neparrŋa with his late Djambarrpuyŋu *waku*, Ŋanganharralil Dhamarrandji, following revelatory visit to Djiliwirri, the Daygurrgurr Gupapuyŋu *wäŋa-ŋaraka* (bone-country), in May 1997. As shown in Figure 1, Djiliwirri lies on Point Napier along the Western coast of Buckingham Bay, and both the song and the music-video of the same name attest to Neparrŋa's consummate knowledge of this *wäŋa-ŋaraka* and its incumbent *madayin* (sacra) as a *liya-ŋärra'mirri* (learned, wise) *wäŋa-wataŋu* (hereditary owner).

'Djiliwirri' recounts the revelation experienced by Neparrŋa at his *wäŋa-ŋaraka* (bone-country) in May 1997. In the song's first verse, Neparrŋa describes sitting at

'*Ganbirr*,' the focal site where *birrkuḏa* (honey bee) consecrates Djiliwirri as a home for the Ḏaygurrgurr Gupapuyŋu. There he heard the approach of this *waŋarr* (progenitorial ancestor) as he called the *l̪ikan yäku* (sacred 'elbow' names), '*Djirranygay Wäpana*,' and he heard the country respond, '*Ḏarranydja l̪ikan Gaykamaŋu* [I am of the Ḏaygurrgurr Gupapuyŋu]'. In the song's chorus, these *l̪ikan yäku* are stated again as part of a fuller string of sacred names—'*Warragaḏi Ḏiwuthurru Marrilama Mayku Rarrathirri Djirranygay Wäpana*'—that connotes *mayku* (paper bark tree). It is through his progenitorial entry to the ancestral *mayku* at Ganbirr that *birrkuḏa* bestowed Djiliwirri as a *wäŋa-ŋaraka* on the Ḏaygurrgurr Gupapuyŋu *mala* (patrifilial group).

'Djiliwirri'

Verse 1	*Ḏarra ganha nhinana, Ganbirrŋura*	I was sitting at Ganbirr	*birrkuḏa*'s foundation site
	Ḏunhiliyi wäŋiya Gurŋan Yalundu	There at Gurŋan Yalundu	
	Rirrakay ŋarra ŋäkula watthunawuy	I heard a voice calling	of *birrkuḏa* (honey bee)
	Ḏunhili, 'Djirranygay Wäpana'	There, 'Djirranygay Wäpana'	*l̪ikan yäku* for the ancestral paper bark
	Ḏayinydja waŋana lakaranhamina	The country, it proclaimed	
	'Ḏarranydja l̪ikan Gaykamaŋu,' wo, wo	'I am of the Gaykamaŋu', oh, oh	*Ḏaygurrgurr Gupapuyŋu owners of Djiliwirri*
Chorus	*Wa! Djiliwirri ganha dhärranhana, wäŋa limurruŋgu*	Djiliwirri is standing, home for us all	
	Galŋa ŋarranha Yambuŋala Ganinydhu	Into my bark thrusts a ritual digging stick	used by Murayana to extract honey
	Likandja ŋarra Warragaḏi Ḏiwuthurru Marrilama	I am of the paper bark tree	
	Mayku Rarrathirri Djirriŋgay Wäpana	The paper bark tree	
Bridge	*Wa!* [× 3]	*birrkuḏa* entering the paper bark tree	vocable from *mum'mumthun* male chorus
Verse 2	*Ḏayinydja ganha dhärranhana, l̪uku Djipara*	It is standing, the root of Djiliwirri	
	Ḏunhiliyi wäŋiya Lun'puŋura	There at Lun'pu	
	Ḏayinydja ganha dhurrwaraŋura nyarrkthurruna	He was prising the entrance	of Djiliwirri's ancestral hive
	Nuway ganha ḏitjpurrk wutthurruna	Noah was prising	
	Nyarrkthurruna barrarawaŋa, Nuwa'wuŋu	Prising with his crowbar, from Nuwa	used by the Macassan captain, Nuwa
	Gurtha nhärana Buŋuŋura	Fire blazed at Buŋu	
Chorus	*…* [× 3]		

(Neparrŋa and Ḏanganharralil 1997)

Djiliwirri is a place just South of Galiwin'ku. It is my people's land. It's on the mainland. Djiliwirri is the place for Ḏaygurrgurr Gupapuyŋu people. You can hardly see or hear Gupapuyŋu people down there now, because we're all over the joint. We're

at Galiwin'ku. We're at Ramangi<u>n</u>iŋ. We're at Miliŋinbi. We're at Gapuwiyak, but Djiliwirri is our homeland even though we haven't been there for half a century now. All our people were there before, for a long time, but when the missionaries came into the region they used tea, sugar, damper, flour, tobacco and all that to draw us away. Our people used to come from our own lands in the bush and went to the mission where there were lights at night. They were given rations there and would go, quite often, back home but, maybe when they'd seen sugar and tea in the one place or area over time, they'd all stay there as a family. I was raised in that situation. I had to stick with the missionary people, go to school and leave my country alone. I had to because Yolŋu didn't write books then. We don't write books, you know?

You see, I remember that on one occasion, I thought, 'I have to write something down about our country, so that children in generations to come will know the country to which they belong'. It had to be a really professional or a really modern thing. You see, if they want to see Elvis Presley or Cliff Richard, or whatever—they want to see all this rap dancing and all that—then they want to listen to 'Djiliwirri' with their big radio, and take it around the streets and all that. You know, those people do listen to 'Djiliwirri'. Okay, this is our land. We have to go back one of these times. We'll make an outstation. We'll make a home now. We'll build a house there. Go back to our own country instead of staying in this wrong area. This is wrong for us. We must go to our land.

'Djiliwirri' mainly says that this has happened in ancestral times. You know, the young fellow was there at Djiliwirri. He was listening to the sound [*rirrakay*] calling from the distance and calling the names [*yäku*]. You know, my ancestor is calling on me because I am Gaykamaŋu. I am the tree. I'm the paper bark tree [*mayku*], and every group [*mala*] is looking at me because I'm a paper bark and I'm Gaykamaŋu. Some of these names are *<u>l</u>ikan Gaykamaŋu <u>D</u>iwuthurru Marrilama Djuŋgarrkal* and *Warraga<u>d</u>i*. This is me and my *<u>l</u>ikan* [connectedness to estates, ancestors, people and ceremonies; literally, 'elbow']. This is me and my foundation here at Djiliwirri. I am the *mayku* tree. I am the paper bark tree and every other group is recognising me. Who am I? Why am I here standing up front for other tribal people in the community to look at me? These are my tribal people. This is my chosen land. Djiliwirri is my tradition and my belief is there. My *raŋga* [restricted objects] are there from my fathers and fathers' fathers. This is our land. You can see, outside, people participating in *buŋgul* [dance] and all that. We are allowed by Yirritja or Dhuwa groups alike to come and participate. We are allowed to come and join the other tribal people. Everything is connected by *ma<u>d</u>ayin*—the Yolŋu system of sacred objects.

My *waŋarr* [progenitorial ancestor] is from the paper bark tree and I too am a honey bee [*birrku<u>d</u>a*]. Djiliwirri is like a home. That's where we belonged in ancestral times before everything started. That is the main area for the Gaykamaŋu. There's nobody living there now but we'll be going over there very soon to establish an outstation and, in the future, make it a small community. Djiliwirri is the main area for the Gaykamaŋu group.

'*Gaykamaŋu <u>D</u>iwuthurru Marrilama Djuŋgarrkal Warraga<u>d</u>i*'. I think we discussed earlier about how we have ceremonial events like when you, Aaron, were recently in Darwin at a purification bath [*buku-<u>l</u>up*]. Another holy thing is that you've got to smoke branches around a house when somebody passes away. You take their spirit away from the living because they're dead people. You can't have them back again, you know? We do the same thing in our group too. Our language has very important words [*<u>l</u>ikan yäku*] that special authorised [*<u>l</u>iya-ŋärra'mirri*] persons call in a loud voice during purifications. That's the healing of the power of Yolŋu creation things. Afterward, you can feel better and think, 'Yes, I'm free of whatever burdens I had.' When a person in your nearest family has been with you all the time—like when your brother or sister, who you have seen nearly every day, has gone—after purification you can have a meal, you can laugh, and you can sing along now that she or he is gone. That's the end of the

> time that you want to mourn. The wording of those particular *likan yäku* is very very significant. This is important for the Gaykamaŋu. [Neparrŋa 1997a]

In the 1964 film *Djalambu* [sic *Djalumbu*], Neparrŋa's late *bäpa* (father), Djäwa Dhäwirrŋu, holds a calculated command over the filming process as he methodically demonstrates the preparation of a *dupun* (hollow log coffin) from the selection of a termite-hollowed tree through to its decoration with hereditary Daygurrgurr Gupapuyŋu *miny'tji* (designs). The film also demonstrates his expert leadership of Daygurrgurr Gupapuyŋu *manikay-buŋgul* (song-dance) items on the subjects of *wurrpan* (emu), *manbiri* (catfish) and *wurran* (diver duck). Thirty-four years later, this ethnographic film would inspire his son, Neparrŋa, to direct the re-enactment of its scenes at Miliŋinbi for the 'Djiliwirri' music-video (Neparrŋa et al. 1997).

This new footage features aerial passes over Djiliwirri, and Gupapuyŋu men dancing in *mum'mumthun* chorus with ornate sacred *buldji* (bags) around their necks. Neparrŋa stands in a *mayku* (paper bark tree) stance as these men thrust elongated *ganiny* (digging sticks) toward him and, then, into the trunk of an enormous paper bark tree. Men, women and children perform *manikay-buŋgul* (song-dance) items on the subjects of *wurrpan* (emu), *mokuy* (ghosts) hunting with spears and camouflaged behind *gana'kana* (juvenile stringy-bark trees), and *gurrutjutju* (kite). These new scenes are each juxtaposed against old footage from *Djalambu* which was originally filmed in colour but has been rendered sepia to distinguish them.

In the old footage, hereditary Daygurrgurr Gupapuyŋu sounds and imagery abound. Djäwa directs the preparation of a *dupun* (hollow log coffin); *burala* (darter) bullroarers are made for a subsequent performance of *manbiri* (catfish) *manikay-buŋgul* (song-dance) items; *manbiri* (catfish), *burala* and *ŋayŋura* (fresh-water tortoise) *miny'tji* (designs) are painted on the *dupun*; and *gakundurr* (yam), *burala* (darter) and *wurrpan* (emu) *miny'tji* (designs) are painted on male dancers. This deliberate juxtaposition of these old scenes against the new was Neparrŋa's way of demonstrating that the contemporary Gupapuyŋu still follow ancestral precedent in the spirit of *dhudakthun* while embracing the new as exemplified by Djäwa's original engagement with the medium of film in 1963.

> Yeah, the video clip starts with '*Gaykamaŋu Diwuthurru Marrilama Djuŋgarrkal Warragadi*'. Then, in the first verse, it says, 'a man was sitting in the holy place and the country calls out that 'the country and the Gupapuyŋu people are one'. We are together, the Gaykamaŋu and all this'. That's the first verse of the song. You can actually see this on the video as well. I've done this video as an emotional thing. When I sing the song, at every step, the lyrics go with the actions they do in the video footage. If you're having difficulty understanding the song as recorded on the cassette or CD, you can actually see the song on the video that I've done with my tribal people at Miliŋinbi.
>
> The actions in the video and the lyrics of the song follow the main story. It's the roots of the story and the beginning of the creation. It follows the story but shows other things like me singing and the guitar solo. It then moves around with the children and the women dancing. That is part of the spiritual experience. It's part of the dreaming.
>
> That ceremony, Djalumbu, is the main one. Another part of the Djalumbu ceremony was on another film and edited for the video clip. It was filmed in 1964 by my father who, during that time, was the leader of the Gupapuyŋu people. He made that film in 1964. I called the archives in Sydney and they dubbed it for me from sixteen millimetre to betacam, and then sent it over to Darwin where I was editing my video clip. That's

> what I've done. I've got footage of the Djalumbu from this old film, and added it to new technologies to show that that was the old time and that this is the new time of Djalumbu. That's what I'm doing now. We just finished the new Djalumbu film two months ago. All the other people who were in the film from 1964 are all gone. They're all dead. So we, the younger people of this generation, have made another Djalumbu film which is also in the video. I've got the footage here now and I'll have a chance to edit it again for that video clip of the 'Djiliwirri' song.
>
> Actually, there was more unused video footage taken at Djiliwirri itself, not the place at Miliŋinbi, and there are other *buŋgul* [dances] for Djiliwirri too. The main dances are the *manbiri* [catfish] dance, the *wurrpan* [emu] dance, the *lorrpu* [sulphur-crested cockatoo] dance, the *mayku* [paper bark tree] dance and *birrkuda* [bee]. We were talking about *birrkuda* [bee] before. [Neparrŋa 1997a]

The string of sacred names for *mayku* (paper bark tree) presented in the chorus of 'Djiliwirri' is drawn from a *likan yäku* (elbow name) invocation used in *garma* (public) ceremonial contexts which has itself been incorporated as an introduction to the 'Djiliwirri' music-video. This *likan yäku* invocation is led by another *liya-ŋärra'mirri* (learned, wise) Daygurrgurr Gupapuyŋu leader, Walarri Gaykamaŋu, who also alternates with Neparrŋa in singing the melody of the two verses, and sings a counter melody to his at the end of the second and throughout the Chorus. In the *likan yäku* invocation that introduces the 'Djiliwirri' music-video, Walarri accompanies himself with *bilma* (paired sticks) as he leads a male *yidaki* (didjeridu) player and males dancers in their *mum'mumthun* chorus.

These dancers repeatedly vocalise '*mum'mum*' in hocket which represents the *rirrakay* (sound) of *birrkuda* (honey bee) as he approaches Ganbirr to consecrate Djiliwirri as a home for the Daygurrgurr Gupapuyŋu. The exclamations of '*Wa!*' by the dancers at the end of this *likan yäku* (elbow name) invocation represent *birrkuda*'s entry into the ancestral *mayku* (paper bark tree) there. After this act of consecration is described in the song's first verse, it is similarly followed by a terminal '*Wa!*' vocable. Re-statements of this vocable throughout the song establish its aural and thematic unity with the canonical *likan yäku* invocation that introduces the 'Djiliwirri' music-video.

Preceding the string of names for *mayku* in the song's chorus is an allusion to the ancestral *mokuy* (ghost), Murayana, who is also associated with Gapuwiyak. The elongated digging stick, '*Yambuŋala Ganiny*', that Murayana uses to harvest *guku* (honey) from the *mayku*'s trunk is cited in the second line of the chorus. In the forested habitats of Gapuwiyak and Djiliwirri, natural bee hives are protected by elongated narrow wax entrances known as *dhapi-weyin* (long foreskins) that can be seen protruding from the bark of trees. The use of elongated *ganiny* (digging sticks) in their removal to harvest the *guku* (honey) concealed inside is homologous to the removal of *dhapi* (foreskin) from young male initiates in ceremony and their subsequent instruction in esoteric knowledge by elder agnates.

> *Ganiny* are traditional objects that reopen the script of the *mayku*. There is thousands and thousands, and thousands and thousands of years of knowledge in the script of the *mayku*. That particular object, we use in *buŋgul* [dance] in big ceremonies. It went through the *mayku*, and opened and split the *mayku*. In that *buŋgul* on the video clip, there were *ganiny*. We call them *ganiny*.
>
> *Ganiny* is thrust towards the paper bark. Firstly, I was there with the other singer Walarri. We were pretending to do it as it's done when new young people come around

> to their *dhapi* [circumcision] business. You know, they would bow, turn this way until the old people are ready—authorised people—and then they turn you and you look at the *raŋga* [restricted objects]. They're what was in me and the other singer. We went over there, they shoved that *ganiny* like a spear towards us and then towards the main paper bark tree. These are all traditional things for Gaykamaŋu people.
>
> '*Wa*'—that's the *madayin*. That's the sound of *birrkuda* [bee] heading for the paper bark. When all those people make the sound, '*ss—u sup*' that's the bees' wax. You can hear on the recording what I've done and you can see '*Wa*' done on the video. That's traditional. That's not a modern thing. That's a traditional thing. I've combined and mixed it with rock but, really, it's like a *buŋgul*. We do that in *buŋgul* every time you see that ceremony. That's the one. [Neparrŋa 1997a]

The paintings by Neparrŋa (1997b) and Djandilŋa Gaykamaŋu (2000) shown in Figures 9 and 10 respectively exemplify the parallel representation of these liturgical subjects in hereditary Daygurrgurr Gupapuyŋu *miny'tji* (design). In Figure 9, the central motif is an elongated *ganiny* set amid a background of diamond-shaped honeycomb cells while the columns of dots represent *birrkuda* (honey bee) larvae. In Figure 10, the central motif is a *dhapi-weyin* (beehive entrance; 'long foreskin') which is flanked by two *ganiny* points and dotted columns of *birrkuda* larvae over a similar background of diamond-shaped honeycomb cells. Closely-related diamond-shaped honeycomb cells are also painted on the *buldji* (bags) decorated with feathered *wana* (arm) chords that are worn around the necks of male dancers in the 'Djiliwirri' music-video and on the hooked ends of the *bulman* (spear throwers) that they carry.

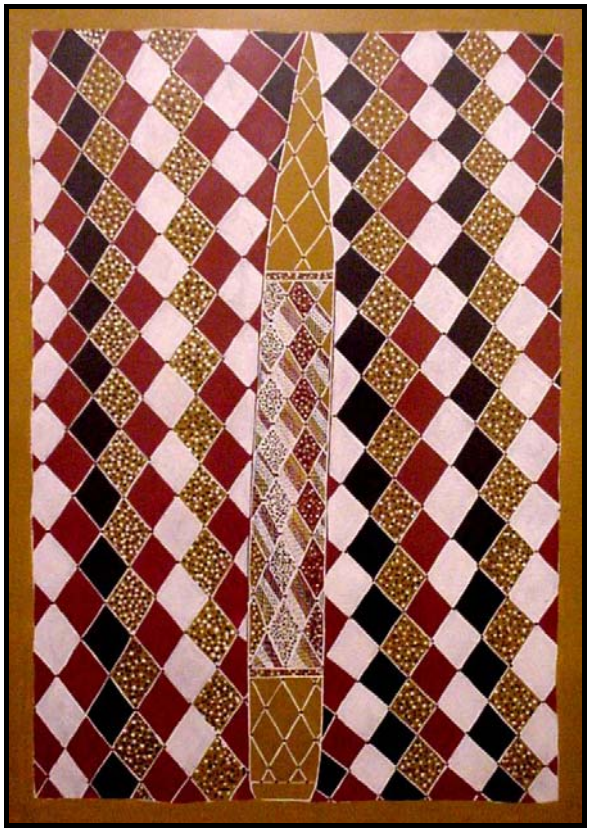

Figure 9. Painting [Ganiny ga Guku]. (Neparrŋa 1997b)

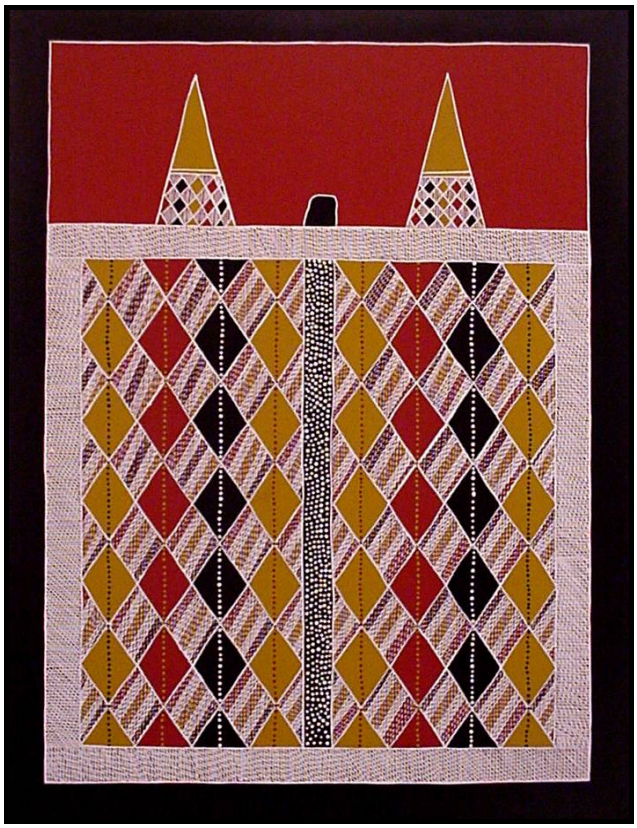

Figure 10. Painting [Dhapi-Weyin, Ganiny ga Guku]. (Djandilŋa 2000)

The subject of the song's second verse, Nuwa, was chosen by Ŋanganharralil Dhamarrandji, Neparrŋa's late Djambarrpuyŋu *waku'mirriŋu* (close sister's child) from Miliŋinbi, who was then a senior *ŋändi-waṯaŋu* (mother-holder) or *djuŋgayi* (ceremonial manager) for the Daygurrgurr Gupapuyŋu and held decisive powers over their proposed uses of *maḏayin* (sacra). Nuwa is the *buŋgawa* (captain) of an Macassan *prahu* that landed at Djiliwirri in ancestral times (*waŋarrya*). According to Keen (1978:62–5), Nuwa sailed to Djiliwirri where he was spurned by its resident *waŋarr* (progenitorial ancestors), *birrkuḏa* (honey bee) and *djuranydjura* (dingo). His deeds are sung by the Gupapuyŋgu in *manikay* (song) and are represented in *molk* (ground sculptures) upon which *ḏaḏa* (fire purification) ceremonies are performed.

The second verse of 'Djiliwirri' describes how Nuwa stands at '*Luṉ'pu*', the *luku* (foundation, 'root') of Djiliwirri, and attempts to prise open its entrance with his elongated '*barrara* [metal crowbar]'. This is an act that, in itself, is homologous to Murayana's harvesting of *guku* (honey) from the ancestral *mayku* (paper bark tree) by prising open its *dhapi-weyin* (entrance) with his elongated *gaṉiny* (digging stick). The second verse concludes by stating that, through this action, sparks flew from Nuwa's metal crowbar down an escarpment to ignite fires at a sacred spring named '*Buŋu*' where they are now manifested as termite mounds embedded in the ground.

Neparrŋa and Ŋanganharralil chose Nuwa as the subject for this verse to dispel claims by local Yolŋu Christians that he is the Biblical Noah. Indeed, Nuwa's altercations with both *birrkuḏa* (honey bee) and *djuranydjura* (dingo) traditionally extolled the virtues of Yolŋu independence from foreign influences (Keen 1978:62–5). Moreover, Neparrŋa's late *gäthu* (father's father's father), who died in the mid-1930s, was named Nuwa after this ancestral Macassan *buŋgawa* (captain) long before the introduction of Christianity to Northeast Arnhem Land at Miliŋinbi in 1923.

> The lyrics with Nuwa are in the second verse. People have to see that, although he's in the Bible, Nuwa was actually around before the Bible came to Northeast Arnhem Land with the missionaries. Nuwa was already introduced before the missionaries came here. Nuwa was there too. He was there building a boat during the creation as well, and he is also involved with the Warramiri and the Dhalwaŋu groups. The Warramiri do part of this song too and Djiliwirri is actually the place where Nuwa was building his boat.
>
> Nuwa was building his boat. He made a boat. He was working on his boat with hammer and saw. Metal sparks flew off and struck the land catching fire, and then a fire began at Djiliwirri. It's like this in our traditional belief. It happened and you can see evidence of it at the area. I've been to the area and I've looked around there. That's where Nuwa built his boat. That's where all the metal pieces flew in different directions, and one of the steel pieces went over to hit the land setting it on fire.
>
> Djiliwirri was there before anyone came here and it has this ancestral story. Although this story is similar to the Bible's, when Noah was building his Ark, it was here before the missionaries came. As I explained earlier, Nuwa's name was here before the missionaries came. [Neparrŋa 1997a]

There is both beauty and symmetry in the way that the lyrics of 'Djiliwirri' unfold to connote the rich framework of connections between places, ancestors, people and ceremonies upon which this song is premised. The focal site where *birrkuḏa* (honey bee) performs his act of bestowal in the first verse is itself homologous with the ancestral *mayku* (paper bark tree) while the elongated *gaṉiny* (digging stick) that Murayana uses to harvest the *guku* (honey) that this tree bears in the chorus is

homologous to the *barrara* (crowbar) with which Nuwa attempts to prise open Djiliwirri's *l̲uku* (foundation) site, L̲un'pu , before being repelled.

The '*rirrakay*' (call) of the approaching *waŋarr birrkud̲a* (progenitorial honey bee ancestor) in the first verse, '*Djirranygay Wäpana*', is stated more fully in the string of sacred names for *mayku* (paper bark tree) that is presented in the chorus. The chorus is prefaced by the terminal '*Wa!*' vocable from the first and second verses and, in the song's companion music-video, is preceded by the original *l̲ikan yäku* ('elbow' name) invocation from which these materials were originally drawn. Ultimately, 'Djiliwirri' and its companion music-video demonstrate a highly-sophisticated synthesis of traditional and new creative approaches to meet the specific spiritual and educational needs of his D̲aygurrgurr Gupapuyŋu *walkur* (agnates) and, in particular, their younger kin.

> I'm an owner of Djiliwirri. I'm a song writer, and an elder of my group and its songs. As I said, this song is going to lead me back to my homeland. I'll go to the bush. I'm a song man. I'm recognised by the older elder people too. I'm a song man. If I go to ceremony there are *bil̲ma* [paired sticks] for me. I paint myself and I can handle the whole thing by myself with the crowd following me—big mob of a crowd—to the ceremony. I'm a ceremony man too. I'm a *buŋgul* man as well as a songwriter for 'Djiliwirri'. The two things are really the same in a way. I mean, Balanda [Euro-Australians] can see me on the stage and say, 'Who's that Joe Gumbula singing on the stage?' but I'm recognised by my people in a tribal way too and I'm an authorised person.
>
> I think that music spreads around here. Music is the voice of the town or the people. That is the difference. That is the difference. Combine any sort of musical instrument to the vocal talent of the human being. That is very important, *yo*. Traditionally, the combination of songs that we play, we get from our ground [*munatha*] and people should understand that. We are getting it from our traditional lands but we're taking your Balanda [Europeanist] *manikay*—your *buŋgul*—and introducing these European instruments, these modern guitars and all that. We are bringing our art work to the world and mixing it up. We're sending a message and this is part of the message too. We're telling the stories and, when we sing, that is the story. That's what I'm saying through my songs here. It's all part of the story. That's what our old people are satisfied by nowadays. During their time, it was very strict. I could not have sung 'Djiliwirri' with guitar. Twenty years ago, I wouldn't have played this 'Djiliwirri' but now those older people are gone. We've got a little bit of responsibility now and are authorised to sing because of the other influences coming here—too many radios and too many tape recorders. You don't want to listen to them and their music. Their music is not teaching you. We'll make your music. Listen to your traditional music so that this generation of children will learn something. That's not an education but what we're doing is an education.
>
> We're giving it our own values so that our songs are educational. This is education to my people. They want to mix up with other countries but I don't know what their beliefs are. My belief is that this is my country and that these are my belongings, and I'd like to share this with others around the world. There could be people watching—Indigenous people watching. I could be sharing my point of view with them and could learn something myself. I wouldn't have written this 'Djiliwirri' twenty years ago, no. My father or my great grandfather would have said, 'No, this one will be done only on *bil̲ma* [paired sticks] and *yid̲aki* [didjeridu], and it remains that way'. This new 'Djiliwirri' happened because of new generations and changing technologies. I have to do this one for my countrymen. This 'Djiliwirri' song is education. [Neparrŋa 1997a]

'The Remembrance of You Two'

'The Remembrance of You Two' was composed by Neparrŋa in the second year following the deaths of Biyarranydjarrwuy and Murrlanawuy Garawirrtja who, as his *wäwa* (brothers) and bandsmen, had profoundly influenced his appetite for musical composition following the release of Soft Sands' debut album in 1985. Its finger-picked arpeggiated guitar introduction harks back to the country style that was locally pioneered by Soft Sands in the 1970s, and its chorus alludes to the return of *birrimbirr* (souls) to their metaphysical ancestral homes in *Milŋ'guya* (Milky Way). The very root of this place name, *milŋ'*, means to 'shine' like a light in the distance. Composed after my initial interview with Neparrŋa (1997a), 'The Remembrance of You Two' was premièred at the launch of the Saltwater Band's debut album, *Gapu Damurruŋ' [Saltwater]* (1998), at Galiwin'ku with permission from the late brothers' widows.

'The Remembrance of You Two'

Verse 1
Oh I remember the days
In the years of the 1970s, the good times we used to have
Oh its such a long time ago as the years went by

Verse 2
Oh the music we used to play
The sounds of country, and a bit of rock and roll
Can you hear the bands playing now as the music lives on?

Verse 3
Oh I miss you two
Even all our brothers out there, oh we miss you two
My tears are falling now like the rain from the sky

Chorus 1
There you two are shining like the stars in the night
Glowing in the heavenly skies above
We can hear the music like you two are here with us tonight
The music will play in remembrance of you two
The music will play in remembrance of you two

Verse 4
Oh in the year 1997
Like a thunder and lightening strike, it was on the news today
The sadness filled my heart as they were gone

Verse 5
Oh I miss you two
Even our brothers out here, we all miss you two
May you two rest in peace now as your music lives on

Chorus 2
There you two are shining like the stars in the night
Glowing in the heavenly space above
We can hear the music like you two were here with us tonight
The music will play in remembrance of you two
The music we're playing
The remembrance of you two
The remembrance of you two

(Neparrŋa 1998)

> It's just that I had a life with those two and the life was as brothers go. We started off. We had Soft Sands going as we wanted it to go. We started with the band together. Then from 1985, I started to write songs after those for Soft Sands' first album. That was the 1985 album. After making that album, we wrote 'Gu<u>n</u>birrtji' (1986) together so setting the next direction that Soft Sands was going to take. It's a break from any other cover songs before. It was our first gift that we wrote 'Gu<u>n</u>birrtji' for the ceremonial opening of the ALPA store.
>
> We helped each other on that song. Those two were really keen on the music that I played—the melody that I found—and they actually went through that with me. Since 1996, I've really missed them, you know? I and the bass man were only a month apart. I was only a month older than Biyarranydjarrwuy, but Murrlanawuy was a young fella. I'll never find blokes like those two so, when I lost them, I seriously lost them. There was nothing that I could do this time around so, after time to think, this was the song that I wrote. It was 'The Remembrance of You Two' for both of them and I just miss them.
>
> It took me a while to write this song, and then there was the smoking ceremony and all that. Then, at last, I decided to put it in the public which I did. There was agreement between their wives and myself. Dja<u>n</u>girrawuy and myself were all right but we asked their wives if we could sing this song and they said, '*Yo, w*ork it out, *manymak*, because you can sing that song.' The first time I sung this song publicly was at the launch of the Saltwater Band's album [in 1998]. That's the time I first sung it. [Neparrŋa 1997a]

Washed upon the shore

Soft Sands has had a seminal influence on the development of popular song composition in Arnhem Land. Its members have both inspired and collaborated musically with their contemporaries in younger popular bands including Yothu Yindi and the Saltwater Band. Through its discussion of the naming of Soft Sands, the presentation of autochthonous Birrkili Gupapuyŋu iconography at the Galiwin'ku Memorial Festival, and the composition of original songs for *Djiliwirri* by Neparrŋa Gumbula, this article has further demonstrated how the incorporation of themes and musical materials drawn from durable hereditary canons of Yolŋu sacra (language, song and dances) has become integral to the original repertoires of popular bands from Northeast Arnhem Land in particular, and how this serves to project the profound religious and legal ties of their members to family, ancestors and country.

> *Yo, manymak* [Yes, good]. I'd like to express one more concern. As you said earlier, Aaron, when we spoke at my house, Balanda [Euro-Australians] want to know about this music because it's contemporary or rock 'n' roll. We mix things too. We can mix *bi<u>l</u>ma* [paired sticks] and *yi<u>d</u>aki* [didjeridu], our main instruments, and the lyrics of the songs. See, if the group wants to make an album or write songs, we are able to bring our cultural things to the rock 'n' roll world. We can do that. You listen to Yothu Yindi. You can listen to the heavy metal Sunrize Band. They got their lyrics from their own private beliefs [*ma<u>d</u>ayin* (sacra)] too but, as you asked, 'Why are these traditional things mixed with rock 'n' roll?' We want it that way. We want to satisfy the crowd with a favourite song so that people enjoy our music. A lot of my people have come to be in rock 'n' roll groups and you've heard them. You know, a lot of bands are rock 'n' roll these days. [Neparrŋa 1997a]

This parting statement by Neparrŋa underscores a fundamental tenet of contemporary expression among Arnhem Landers that is all too often overlooked. No

matter how alien the popular band as a social institution in this region may seem from afar, the naming of Soft Sands for the fine soft sandy ground of Yandhala at Luŋgutja vests their repertoires and activities with an entirely Yolŋu significance for their members and their families, and their primary audiences in the region. As my discussions with Neparrŋa about his songs for *Djiliwirri* have also shown, his direct quotations of traditional themes and materials in 'Rulku' and 'Djiliwirri', and allusions to the virtues of ancestral knowledge and practice in 'Gunbirrtji' and 'Sorrows and Sadness' demonstrate that contemporary Yolŋu intermediaries can and do follow ancestral precedent through their creative, ceremonial and other endeavours while simultaneously engaging with new media and technologies.

Postscript

Much has transpired since I submitted this article to AIATSIS in 2001. That year, Neparrŋa and I began teaching together in the Australian Indigenous Studies Program at the University of Melbourne. In 2003, I was admitted to the degree of Doctor of Philosophy for my thesis on tradition and innovation in the popular band movement of Arnhem Land and, in the same year, I was awarded an Australian Post-Doctoral Fellowship by the Australian Research Council which enabled me to continue my research into the application of performance traditions from Arnhem Land to new media and contexts at the University of Sydney. Meanwhile, Neparrŋa became the Liaison and Training Officer at the Galiwin'ku Indigenous Knowledge Centre in 2002, and was appointed as the Inaugural Liya-Ŋärra'mirri Visiting Senior Fellow at the University of Melbourne in 2003. In this same year, the Saltwater Band's latest homage to Soft Sands and the Birrkili Gupapuyŋu came with the naming of its second album, *Djärritjarri (Blue Flag)* (2003).

Together, Neparrŋa and I have written two articles about the song 'Djiliwirri' and its companion music-video (Corn with Gumbula 2002, 2003), and presented these findings at numerous conferences. Most significantly, we were able to stay at Djiliwirri with some sixty other visitors in July 2004 and record a full performance led by Neparrŋa of the Daygurrgurr Gupapuyŋu *manikay* (song) series incumbent with this homeland on the bank of a fresh water creek that runs through it. This experience has deepened my own understanding of 'Djiliwirri' as has my recent transcription and translation with Neparrŋa of the lyrics of the *likan yäku* (sacred 'elbow' name) invocation that introduces this song and the descant that Neparrŋa sings above the terminal repetitions of its chorus.

That *Djiliwirri*, the album, remains unreleased highlights the very real difficulties that talented and highly-trained performing artists and intellectuals such as Neparrŋa face in having their creative works recognised outside their communities. We nonetheless continue to work towards the release of this album in the near distant future and, with a body of information about 'Djiliwirri' and the country about which it was composed now at hand, we expect to continue writing about this song for some time.

Acknowledgments

I extend my sincerest thanks to the members of Soft Sands, the Dharrwar Band and the Saltwater Band for their substantial and invaluable input to my understanding of popular music history in Arnhem Land; to Rrikawuku Yunupiŋu who taught me how to work with Yolŋu-

Matha speakers and texts; to Michael Hohnen and Mark Grose of Skinny Fish Music for their dedication to creating new opportunities for musicians from Arnhem Land; to Cath Suringa and Tony Joyce for their hospitality in Darwin; and to Cathy Falk, Allan Marett, Ian Keen, Howard Morphy, Fiona Magowan and Guan Lim who assisted with the development of the ideas presented in this article. The research presented in this article would not have been possible without: the interest and generosity of Djirrimbi̲pi̲lwuy Garawirrtja who facilitated my early visits to Galiwin'ku; the overwhelming hospitality of the Galiwin'ku, Miliŋinbi and Ramangini̲ŋ communities; and financial assistance from Griffith University, the University of Melbourne, the North Australia Research Unit of The Australian National University, the Queen's Trust for Young Australians, the Musicology Society of Australia and AIATSIS. Finally, to my wife, Melinda Sawers, my parents, David and Clare Corn, and my adoptive parents, Neparrŋa Gumbula and Gawura Ganambarr, whose support over the years has been constant, a most heartfelt thank you.

An oral version of this paper was presented to AIATSIS Conference2001 Symposium A 'Land Resources and Knowledge', Session 3 'Indigenous people in country: Significance of place in art', convened by Debbie Bird Rose (ANU), Luke Taylor and Graeme K Ward (AIATSIS).

References

ATSIC 1997 The Ten Point Plan on Wik and Native Title Issues for Indigenous Peoples. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission, Canberra <http://www.atsic.gov.au/issues/land/native_title/10_point_WIK_plan.asp>

Bagshaw, G. 1998 *Gapu Dhulway, Gapu Maramba*: Conceptualisation and Ownership of Saltwater Among the Burarra and Yan-Nhaŋu Peoples [Yolŋu] of North-West Arnhem Land. In N. Peterson and B. Rigsby (eds), *Customary Marine Tenure in Australia*. The University of Sydney, pp.154–77.

Blekbala Mujik 1990 *Sing Loud, Play Strong* (Rec. I. Davies and M. Manolis). CAAMA Music 339.

Cawte, John. 1993. The Universe of the Warramirri: Art, medicine and religion in Arnhem Land. University of New South Wales Press, Sydney.

——1996 *Healers of Arnhem Land*. University of New South Wales Press, Sydney.

Cooke, M. (ed.) 1996 *Aboriginal Languages in Contemporary Contexts: Yolŋu-Matha at Galiwin'ku*. Contemporary Uses of Aboriginal Languages Research Project, Batchelor College, Batchelor.

Corn, A. with J. Neparrŋa Gumbula 2002 Nurturing the Sacred through Yolŋu Popular Song. *Cultural Survival Quarterly* 26(2):40–2.

——2003 *Djiliwirri Ganha Dhärranhana, Wäŋa Limurruŋgu* [Djiliwirri Stands, Home for Us All]: The Creative Foundations of a Yolŋu Popular Song. *Australian Music Research* 7:55–66.

Davis, S. 1989 A Man of All Seasons: An Aboriginal perspective of the natural environment. Angus and Robertson, Sydney.

Djandilŋa Gaykamaŋu, E. 2000 Painting [*Dhapi-Weyin, Ga̲ni̲ny ga Guku*]. Galiwin'ku.

Djandilŋa Gaykamaŋu, E. and A. Barlow 1997 *Yolŋu of the Island: Galiwin'ku*. Heinemann Library, Melbourne.

Djirrimbi̲pi̲lwuy Garawirrtja, F. 1999 Ratification meeting with A. Corn and J. Neparrŋa Gumbula, Ramangini̲ŋ, 25 June.

Djirrimbi̲pi̲lwuy Garawirrtja, F. and J. Neparrŋa Gumbula. 1988 'Land, Our Mother'. Perf. Soft Sands. (Blekbala Mujik et al.1990:3)

Dunbar-Hall, P. 1994 Style and Meaning: Signification in contemporary Aboriginal popular music, 1963–93. Doctoral thesis, University of New South Wales, Sydney.

Farnham, J. 1986 *Whispering Jack*. Wheatley–BMG.

Gutiwa Dhamarrandji, B. and J. Wulawula Dhamarrandji 1997 'Blue Flag' (Perf. Dharrwar Band). Galiwin'ku.

Hiatt, L.R. (rec. and ed.) 1966 *Songs from Arnhem Land*. AIAS, Canberra (AIAS/6).

Holmes, C. (director) 1964 *Djalambu* [sic *Djalumbu*] (16mm film; 55 minutes). AIAS, Canberra (AIATSIS Film 001).

Keen, I. 1978 One Ceremony, One Song: An economy of religious knowledge among the Yolŋu of northeast Arnhem Land. Doctoral thesis, Australian National University, Canberra.

——1994 Knowledge and Secrecy in an Aboriginal Religion. Clarendon Press, Oxford.

Lapuluŋ Dhamarrandji, K. *c*.1986 'Galuku' (Perf. Wirrinyga Band). Miliŋinbi.

Macknight, C.C. 1976 The Voyage to Marege': Macassan Trepangers in Northern Australia. Melbourne University Press.

Magowan, F. 1994 Melodies of Mourning: A study of form and meaning in Yolŋu women's music and dance in traditional and Christian ritual contexts. DPhil thesis, Oxford.

Mandawuy Yunupiŋu 2001 Taped interview with A. Corn, 8 March, Melbourne.

Mandawuy Yunupiŋu and S. Djati Yunupiŋu 1983 'Djäpana: Sunset Dreaming' (Yothu Yindi 1989:5)

Mandawuy Yunupiŋu and P. Kelly *c*.1997 'One Blood' (Yothu Yindi 1999:2).

McIntosh, I. S. 1996 Islam and Australia's Aborigines? A Perspective from Northeast Arnhem Land. *Journal of Religious History* 20(1):53–77.

Miliŋinbi Community 2004 *Milingimbi* [sic *Miliŋinbi*] *Community Incorporated* <http://www.milingimbi.nt.gov.au>

Mountford, C.P. (gen. ed.) 1956–64 *Records of the American-Australian Scientific Expedition to Arnhem Land* (four volumes). Melbourne University Press, Melbourne.

Moyle, A. (rec. and ed.) 1967 *Songs from the Northern Territory* (five albums). AIA[TSI]S, Canberra (AIAS 1–5).

Murray, N. and G. Rrurrambu Burarrwaŋa *c*.1987 'My Island Home' (Warumpi Band 1987:5).

My Boys are Good Boys 1997 *Meinmuk* [sic *Manymak*]*: Music from the Top End* (Prod. Chris Thompson). ABC Music (7243 8 33193 2 9).

Neparrŋa Gumbula, J. 1989. 'Rulku'. Perf. Soft Sands.

——1997a Taped interviews with Aaron Corn, 11–13 November, Galiwin'ku.

——1997b Painting [*Ganiny ga Guku*], Galiwin'ku.

——1998 'The Remembrance of You Two'. Perf. Soft Sands.

——2000 Personal conversation with Aaron Corn, 15 July, Galiwin'ku.

——2001 Taped telephone interview with Aaron Corn, 27 February, Melbourne–Galiwin'ku.

Neparrŋa Gumbula, J. and F. Djirrimbilpilwuy Garawirrtja 1988 'Land, Our Mother'. Perf. Soft Sands. (Blekbala Mujik et al.1990:3)

Neparrŋa Gumbula, J., P. Biyarranydjarrwuy and P. Murrlanawuy Garawirrtja 1986 'Gunbirrtji'. Perf. Soft Sands.

Neparrŋa Gumbula, J. and F. Ŋanganharralil Dhamarrandji. 1997. 'Djiliwirri'. Perf, Soft Sands.

Neparrŋa Gumbula, J. et al. 1997. [Music–video.] Djiliwirri. Perf. Soft Sands. Kakadu Studios.

Ŋulupani Dhurrkay, M. 1997 'Galuku' (Saltwater Band 1998:10).

Ŋulupani Dhurrkay, M. and J. Gurrumul Yunupiŋu 1998 'Baŋadi' (Saltwater Band 1998:12).

Rrurrambu Burarrwaŋa, G. 2000 *Nerbu* [sic *Nirrpu*] *Message* (Prod. N. Bomba). Transmitter (TRGR732).

Rudder, J. 1993 Yolŋu Cosmology: An unchanging cosmos incorporating a rapidly changing world. DPhil thesis, The Australian National University, Canberra.

Saltwater Band 1998 *Gapu Damurruŋ'* [Saltwater] (I. Moŋgunu Gumbula et al. (prod.)). Skinny Fish Music (SB 001).

——2003 *Djarridjarri [*sic *Djärritjarri] (Blue Flag)* (Prod. M. Ŋulupani Dhurrkay and M. Hohnen). Skinny Fish Music (SFSW 040102cd).

Schultz, C. (contributor) 1989 M. Breen (ed.) *Our Place, Our Music*. Aboriginal Studies Press, Canberra (Aboriginal Music: Australian Popular Music in Perspective 2).

Soft Sands 1985 *Soft Sands*. Imparja.

——2000 *Soft Sands*. TEABBA.

Sunrize Band 1989 *Sunset to Rize!* Maningrida.

——1993 *Lunggurrma* (Prod. Chris Thompson). ABC Music (518 832 4).

Tamisari, F. 1995 Body, Vision and Movement: Images of identity among the Yolŋu of northeast Arnhem Land. DPhil thesis, London School of Economics and Political Science.

——1998 Body, Vision and movement: in the footprints of the ancestors. *Oceania 68*:249–70.

Walker, C. 2000 Buried Country: The story of Aboriginal country music. Pluto, Sydney.

Warumpi Band 1987 *Go Bush!* (Prod. Neil Murray). Festival (D 38707).

Williams, D. 1981 Exploring Aboriginal Kinship. The Aboriginal Australian in Northeastern Arnhem Land. Curriculum Development Centre, Canberra.

Williams, N. M. 1986 The Yolŋu and Their Land: A system of land tenure and the fight for its recognition. AIAS, Canberra.

Wirrinyga Band 1990 *Dreamtime Shadow*. CAAMA Music, M215.

——1995 *Dreamtime Wisdom, Modern-Time Vision.* Prod. Shane Howard. CAAMA Music, 248.

Yothu Yindi 1989 *Homeland Movement* (Prod. L. Karski). Mushroom (D19520).

——1999 *One Blood* (Prod. C. Carlton), Mushroom (MUSH33229.2).

——2000 *Garma* (Prod. A. Farriss and L. Lowder). Mushroom (MUSH33282.2).

Dr Aaron Corn is an Australian Post-Doctoral Fellow in the Department of Music at the University of Sydney and is Secretary to the annual Symposium on Indigenous Music at the Garma Festival of Traditional Culture. He obtained his Doctorate in Music from the University of Melbourne in 2003, and lectured in the Australian Indigenous Studies Program there for three years.

Department of Music J09, The University of Sydney NSW 2006
<aaron.corn@arts.usyd.edu.au>

Neparrŋa Gumbula is a *liya-ŋärra'mirri* (learned, wise) leader of the Gupapuyŋu Yolŋu. He is the Liaison and Training Officer at the Galiwin'ku Indigenous Knowledge Centre and became the Inaugural Liya-Ŋärra'mirri Visiting Senior Fellow to the Australian Indigenous Studies Program at the University of Melbourne in 2003.

The Inaugural Liya-Ŋärra'mirri Visiting Senior Fellow, Australian Indigenous Studies Program, The University of Melbourne VIC 3010 <gumbula@unimelb.edu.au>

Changing people: experiences from teaching and learning about Indigenous issues in environmental management

Jocelyn Davies

University of Adelaide

Abstract*: The big picture of reworking the culture/nature divide in environmental management is made up of thousands of small encounters that change people's perspectives. The culture/nature divide is embedded in government and industry approaches to environmental management, but government and industry are made up of individuals whose personal attitudes and professional approaches are critical elements in facilitating change. 'Indigenous Australians and Environmental Management'—an elective course which I coordinate at the Roseworthy Campus of the University of Adelaide—has contributed to changes in both personal attitudes and professional approaches that advance the reworking of the culture/nature divide. Graduates from this program recently have been asked to reflect on the ways in which the course, and its experiential, field-based approach to learning about Indigenous issues, has influenced their professional work in natural resource management and their professional encounters with the culture/nature divide. Their comments suggest that experiential learning has helped them reconceptualise the culture/nature divide, either by opening their eyes and minds to new ways of seeing, feeling and behaving, or by reinforcing existing attitudes towards the relationships between culture and environment.*

The culture/nature divide is embedded in the approaches of government, industry, science and natural resource management professionals to 'the environment', but it is changing. Jacobs and Mulvihill (1995:9) have described the process of change towards multicultural perspectives on the management of the environment in which terms such as 'co-operative, horizontal, inclusive and adaptive become key indices and signposts of appropriate attitudes and behaviour'. Those of us who are educators—and I think there would be few interested in Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander Studies who do not consider themselves educators at some level—are conscious that government, industry and other powerbrokers in non-Indigenous society are made up of individuals whose personal attitudes and professional approaches are critical elements in maintaining or changing values and understandings about culture and nature. Changing these people's personal attitudes and professional approaches is critical to broader processes of change. The practice of reworking the culture/nature divide thus involves thousands of small encounters that change individual people's perspectives.

In preparing this paper I have taken the opportunity to review and reflect on some of these encounters—those associated with my formal activities in natural resource management education. As coordinator of a teaching program on issues for Indigenous persons in environmental management at the Roseworthy Campus of the University of Adelaide from 1996 to 2002, my broad task has been to facilitate personal attitudes and professional approaches which will advance the reworking of the culture/nature divide and promote 'multicultural literacy in landscape management' (Jacobs and Mulvihill 1995).

This teaching program is a small-scale endeavour—an average of thirty students each year have studied an elective semester course in 'Indigenous Australians and Environmental Management' (IAEM). Mostly the students are of non-Indigenous heritage, in their final year of university study. Core teaching/learning activities are field-based, mainly hosted by Aboriginal landowners and Aboriginal organisations in northern South Australia.

In the second year that I coordinated this teaching program, one student commented after the nine-day IAEM field trip:

> I was told by a former student that the camp changes people. I think this is true as my perception and idealism of Aboriginal life in present day society has changed, and questions about my own culture and background have arisen.

Comments made by other students reinforce a conclusion that the students' experiences in learning about Indigenous issues in environmental management in the field pose fundamental challenges to their received attitudes and values not only about Indigenous peoples and cultures, or relationships between peoples and the environment, but also about Australian landscapes, local and global political economies, and their own relationships to society and country.

This paper is written around my reflections and those of my former students about these challenges. It draws from responses, by a sample of former students, to a questionnaire designed to explore the impact and relevance of their university learning about issues for Indigenous persons in environmental management in their early careers in natural resource management and in other situations.

Kawagley and Barnhardt (1998) have pointed out that much of the available literature on cross-cultural education focuses on 'how to get Native people to understand the western/scientific view of the world'. Like them, I have found there is little literature that addresses how western scientists might develop an understanding of Indigenous worldviews. In Australia, Liddle (2001) has drawn attention to the need for such understandings, as I (Davies et al. 1999) and others undoubtedly have, but there remains little literature on whether and how scientists' understandings are changing. This paper is thus a contribution to a limited literature in a field that deserves more attention.

The experiences of my former students are that experiential learning about issues for Indigenous persons in environmental management does contribute to their reconceptualising the culture/nature divide, either through opening their eyes and minds to new ways of seeing, feeling and behaving, or by reinforcing their existing attitudes towards the integral relationships between cultures and environments.

Teaching and learning about cultural perspectives in environmental management itself takes place in a cultural context. The cultural context for my teaching is provided by the academic and professional approaches characteristic of the field of natural resource management and by the cultural traditions of the institution where I am based. I first discuss these cultural contexts before going on to describe the teaching program and its impacts on young persons' attitudes to culture and nature.

Tradition in natural resource management

I distinguish between natural resource management (NRM) and environmental management in that the latter is increasingly understood to include cultural and social dimensions, while these are less transparent in the former. However, the concept of NRM does embed cultural values because natural resources are by definition 'properties of the physical environment that are considered useful for satisfying human wants' (Johnston et al. 1994:407). As Kimmerer has pointed out in her commentary on her own approaches to introducing non-Indigenous students to cross-cultural perspectives on land use: 'Referring to the gifts of the land as 'natural resources' conveys a sense of a value system which regards land as a commodity to be transformed by humans, rather than a homeplace with spiritual and material dimensions' (Kimmerer 1998:16).

Within approaches to NRM which derive from ecology, biology and physical geography, there is a tension between the conception of natural resources as 'commodity' and an alternative conception of natural resources as 'priceless legacy'. The former conception is linked to projects of modernisation, industrialism and development through which technology transforms natural resources to realise material benefit for people. The latter conception is linked to countervailing actions to save unharnessed nature for its intrinsic values and for human contemplation, as encapsulated in the 'wilderness' movement. What both value systems have in common is that they ascribe value to nature remotely, asserting ownership of places by and for the benefit of non-local people. In this they perpetuate a Eurocentric colonisation of nature and are challenged by the centrality of immediate connections to local place in Indigenous worldviews.

However, it is not just the worldviews of Indigenous peoples that challenge such values. Other community-based approaches to management of local environments make a strong contribution. NRM has been dominated professionally by Hardin's (1968) 'tragedy of the commons' thesis, which dismissed the prospect that local people could effectively manage natural resources sustainably. The received wisdom is that external government regulation is necessary to counterbalance individual self-interest in situations—such as fishing, forestry, biodiversity, air and water quality—where natural resources are not privately owned, but represent a common good. This paradigm has made invisible to professionals thousands of local, self-regulated natural resource management systems with long records of sustainability. Research on common property resources management systems (Berkes 1989; Goldman 1998; Ostrom 1990; Pinkerton 1989) has demonstrated the need for resource management professionals to work with local people in developing and maintaining strong governance institutions for communally owned natural resources, rather than trusting in government regulation and action to achieve sustainability.

In Australia the need for government and community to work in partnership in NRM is widely recognised as a principle behind the Landcare movement and the Natural Heritage Trust, but the basis for this partnership is largely pragmatic—a recognition that governments do not have the resources to address the declining health of Australia's natural resources without community input, and that community participation in government-led projects can build support for government objectives and government regulated management institutions. Challenges to the view that directions for NRM are established by government experts, with only token contributions from communities, come not only from the literature on common property resource management but also from sources such as Healy's (1996) analysis of

collaborative planning processes for regional development and Pretty's and Chambers' (Pimbert and Pretty 1995) scoping of the values and skills needed for a 'new professionalism' in NRM which emphasises community-based NRM and enabling policy frameworks.

The tensions between community-based and 'expert' approaches to NRM are most apparent in Indigenous cultural contexts because Indigenous communities hold the legacy of very long-standing expertise in environmental management while their marginalisation elevates the sense of duty and of paternalistic authority that professionals may feel when they 'help' Indigenous groups work towards effective management of natural resources.

Indigenous encounters with scientific natural resource management

In describing the process where 'western science meets Indigenous reality' Kawagley and Barnhardt recounted a meeting between staff of United States government fisheries and other natural resource management agencies and Indigenous elders at Minto, Alaska. The government agenda for the meeting was to explain 'what they were going to be doing [through their ecological work] in Minto Flats to help the people of Minto'. The authors discuss how this experience pointed to the huge gap between the well-intentioned scientists with their specialised knowledge and elaborate tools and their 'compartmentalized, limited-time-frame view of the world' and the 'holistic, multi-generational perspective' of the local people (Kawagley and Barnhardt 1998).

Such scenes have also been played out many times in Australia. Many of the students I teach end up in jobs like those of the US government wildlife managers described above. They become ecologists working on endangered species, wildlife harvesting, catchment management, or ecological rehabilitation. Some end up deciding policy on how such issues will be approached, or managing government funded projects or local government responsibilities in these fields. Others end up teaching young persons about the environment. I agree with Kawagley and Barnhardt (1998) that one of the fundamental challenges before us is to foster connections between the disparate world views of Indigenous peoples and such scientists 'so that we can enter into joint ventures that are mutually respectful and recognise the validity of diverse sets of knowledge, as well as the benefits to be gained if they are pooled together in complementary ways'. This is an important goal for NRM education.

While Indigenous perspectives have influenced scientific practice in recent years, at a policy level scientific-Indigenous interactions in Australia are still premised on the goal of scientists learning about traditional ecological knowledge and realising its value for scientific inquiry and for government conservation goals (DEST 1996), rather than on mutual approaches and benefits. Traditional ecological knowledge is indisputably valuable, in its time-perspectives and its embedded understandings of ecological connections. But, when scientific education simply focuses on scientists learning about such knowledge and its value for ecological management, the outcome risks being, to borrow an observation from Debbie Bird Rose (personal comment 1999), nothing more than 'lists'. Lists of the uses of plants, for example, might form impressive catalogues of the depth of Indigenous knowledge, but they are still nothing more than 'lists'. Quite apart from its implications for Indigenous ownership of cultural property, a frozen-in-time, static snapshot of components of an ecosystem does little to advance scientists'

understandings of how they might approach collaborative research and management with Indigenous peoples.

To work effectively with Indigenous peoples, many scientists need 'a new set of lenses through which to view the world' (Kawagley and Barnhardt 1998). In parts of Australia, these lenses are being shaped by the efforts of Indigenous organisations to build scientific land management expertise into their management approaches and the efforts of some government scientists to adopt cross-cultural approaches to biological survey. When different cultural perspectives on nature and natural resource management are addressed collaboratively at the planning stage, scientists and Indigenous peoples can learn a lot from each other (Baker et al 1992; Davies et al. 1999; Kennet et al 1997; Nesbitt et al. 2001). The education system for NRM has also seen innovation to equip professionals for cross-cultural approaches—by educating Indigenous persons in scientific NRM, notably through the programs at Charles Darwin University and the Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education; and by including teaching about Indigenous cultures and Indigenous environmental issues in NRM curricula, such as at James Cook University, Charles Sturt University, in my own teaching program at the University of Adelaide. In general, however, while teaching concerned with the diversity of cultural perspectives on environmental issues is well developed in study programs which draw their discipline base from human geography—a consequence of that discipline's concern with the situatedness of knowledge—it is far less developed in biology and ecology whose graduates also make strong contributions to NRM practice.

Thus, in spite of achievements in building bridges across the culture and nature divide in environmental education, Kimmerer's (1998) observations from North American experience continue to have relevance in Australia. She commented that the field of NRM is 'dominated by scientists who have minimal awareness of political, legal and cultural issues which make resource management on tribal lands unique'. They 'may be well versed in federal policies concerning timber harvest but are unaware of the treaty rights regarding fishing in ceded territories, or Indian water rights or sacred sites protection…' and 'this ignorance is a roadblock to successful co-operation' (Kimmerer 1998:16).

Part of this blockage is an uncritical acceptance by scientists that theirs is a value free objective knowledge system. Exposure to different cultural perspectives on the environment can help scientists to understand how their own knowledge is culturally situated. Kimmerer's (1998) accounts of her use of case studies in teaching show one effective approach this task. Another approach has been described by Kawagley and Barnhardt (1998): an educational program in Alaska where the learning comes through participation in activities that elders arrange for students over a week at their camp. These authors discuss the gradual process though which students begin to question their presuppositions, discard the filters they have brought with them from previous 'camping' experiences, and allow new insights to emerge. These comments resonate with some of my own experiences in observing non-Indigenous NRM students learning about issues for Indigenous peoples in environmental management.

Traditions of NRM at Roseworthy Campus

When I joined the academic staff of Roseworthy Campus at the University of Adelaide in 1996, my vision for the teaching program that I would coordinate on Indigenous

issues in environmental management was that forthcoming generations of public and private sector natural resource managers would do a far better job of consulting with, negotiating with, and reaching socially-just agreements with Indigenous peoples than their predecessors. The values that I found on campus illustrated the tension between the 'commodity' and the 'priceless legacy' approaches that characterise the NRM profession generally; while the utility of Indigenous knowledge to science was appreciated, there was little understanding of (though much interest in) Indigenous peoples' interests and priorities.

Roseworthy's educational traditions originate in scientific approaches to nature as 'commodity'. It was founded in 1883 as Roseworthy Agricultural College, Australia's first agricultural college and its establishment 'signalled a commitment on the part of government to put the resources of science to work with farmers to ever more efficiently manipulate natural systems to agricultural ends' (Murray n.d.). Eurocentric constructs of the culture/nature divide are embedded in the very foundations of the institution. In the main campus dining room, today's students eat lunch under gilt honour rolls listing all the holders of the College's diplomas in Agriculture, Dairying and other rural enterprises (most famously Oenology or Wine-making) up to the mid-1970s. The vanguard of scientific transformation of South Australian rural production, these graduates were all White and, until 1973, all male.

Educational approaches at Roseworthy changed from the 1970s and the discontinuation of the honour rolls was undoubtedly part of this change. The introduction of the Natural Resource Management degree in the early 1980s, one of Australia's first degrees in this field, was another change. This attracted students who wanted to preserve and nurture, rather than transform, nature. Their education focused on scientific approaches to the protection of the natural environment and later to biodiversity conservation as this emerged as a global focus. A further change at Roseworthy by the mid-1980s was the initiation of a program to attract Aboriginal students. This had its seeds in the realisation by some academic staff in the late 1970s that Aborigines had very limited opportunities to learn about scientific approaches to land management, and that there would likely be government assistance available for educational initiatives in this area.

Under the coordination of Derek Mitchell from the mid-1980s, the Program for Aboriginal Students at Roseworthy Agricultural College promoted interaction between Aboriginal community members and the campus through orientation programs, cultural events and training/employment opportunities. It also led, by the start of the 1990s, to several Aborigines graduating with qualifications in natural resource management or agriculture. Roseworthy graduates—Tracker Tilmouth, Rose Turner, Lynette Liddle and Peter Peckham—were among Australia's first Aboriginal graduates in these fields.

In 1991 NRM students at Roseworthy had a brief opportunity to include Indigenous perspectives on environmental management in their study program as a result of Derek Mitchell's initiative to introduce a course in Aboriginal Land Management. Action commenced in the early 1990s to secure academic staff with expertise in 'the ecology and management of Aboriginal lands' to give this initiative a longer-term future and this led to my recruitment in 1996. Introduction of this new teaching area had a two-fold purpose: to equip NRM graduates with knowledge and skills about Aboriginal land management; and to provide a course that would increase the appeal of the Roseworthy degree programs to Indigenous students.

In spite of these innovations, core teaching at the campus has remained embedded in the traditions of positivist science. Indeed, after Roseworthy College merged with the University of Adelaide in 1991, the NRM curriculum focused more upon ecology and less on planning and decision-making processes. This seems to have been a response to perceptions by academic staff of the former College that their 'applied science' teaching program was viewed by academics at the University of Adelaide's other campuses as lacking scientific rigour. These perceptions were in tension with the strong reputation of Roseworthy's programs in delivering graduates with good problem solving skills, capability in field techniques and confidence in their professional approaches. The curriculum shift towards ecology also served to further disguise the culturally bound assumptions on which scientific approaches to NRM are based.

Student backgrounds and values

There is a division among Australians in their attitudes and values towards Indigenous cultures and this quite possibly reflects a more fundamental division in attitudes towards nature as 'commodity', as 'priceless legacy', or as 'home'. Over the past five years I have experienced the division at close hand among Roseworthy students.

When I started at Roseworthy in 1996 I found a student body of some 250 persons, including a couple of Aboriginal students. The student body divided itself into two main groups: the 'Aggies' (students studying for Agriculture degrees or diplomas) and the 'NatRats' (students studying for degrees in NRM). Both groups were about the same size, of mixed gender and overwhelmingly of Anglo-Celtic heritage, but with different worldviews and value systems. The cultural divide between these two groups is still present, though it has been eroded by lower student numbers, closer links between the two study programs and efforts by academic staff to bring about cultural change.

The Aggies and the NatRats each have stereotypical images, which while very simplistic and potentially offensive to the many individuals who have self-identified with these groups over the years, are useful in portraying the contrasts between the groups. 'Aggies' are likely to come from a farming family in the dry-land agricultural regions of South Australia—rarely rich in income, given the fluctuating fortunes of the agricultural sector, but likely to be well endowed with farm assets including land-ownership. They are often studying at Roseworthy because it is part of a family tradition or aspiration. They hold conservative political views, and are typically part of a rural youth culture that includes utility vehicles, binge-drinking and bachelor and spinster balls. They are not likely to have had personal interaction with Aborigines, but may well have strong views about Aboriginal issues. Typically they believe that everyone should be treated equally, and that Aborigines need to put in more effort to build the economy if they want to overcome their disadvantaged situation; and they often reject Aboriginal claims to land because Aborigines have not contributed to the land's productive capacity.

'NatRats' form a more diverse group than the 'Aggies'. The typical 'NatRat' has grown up in Adelaide and is from a professional or para-professional family background, though there are also those 'NatRats' who come from country towns and those who are the first in their family to study at university. They have a passionate commitment to protecting the natural environment from the impact of modern technology and, if they hold broader political views at all, these are likely to be sympathetic to 'green' political stances against globalisation, capitalism and the

commodification of nature. They have often had some limited personal relationships with Aborigines who were at the same school, and they have often lived in an Aboriginal community where their parents worked or have close friends who grew up in that situation. 'NatRats' include a high proportion (up to one-third) of students who are of mature age and are studying NRM as part of a career change, some single mothers, and a smattering of high academic achievers whose decision to study NRM at Roseworthy is motivated by the course's strong reputation and their own personal values. Generally 'NatRats' have an intrinsic sympathy towards Indigenous peoples as the 'custodians of the land' and an interest in learning more about Indigenous cultures.

About two-thirds of the students who enrol in the IAEM course are 'NatRats' from Roseworthy Campus and the attitudes and values of the rest of the students in the course (who come from other campuses or universities) are typical of the 'NatRat' profile. In 2001, the course attracted its first 'Aggie'.

Indigenous Australians and Environmental Management teaching program

Aims and structure

Indigenous Australians and Environmental Management (IAEM) has been an elective, rather than compulsory, course within the Bachelor of Natural Resource Management and Bachelor of Environmental Science degrees. It is equivalent to a quarter of one semester's workload. It focuses on NRM issues of concern to Aborigines and is built around a nine-day field trip to northern South Australia. I coordinate the trip which is hosted by Aboriginal organisations and homeland groups. The aims and learning outcomes for the course are given in Box 1. The focus is more on norms, attitudes and values than on specific knowledge or skills.

Course Aims

- to equip you with knowledge and practical understanding of the relationship between Aboriginal Australians and contemporary land and resource management issues;
- to develop your interest and capacity to continue learning about indigenous cultures and ecological knowledge, in ethical and culturally appropriate ways;
- to develop critical attitudes and skills relevant to the involvement of indigenous people in resource management decisions.

Learning outcomes

On successful completion of the course, I hope that you will:

- understand the importance of providing environmental management advice to indigenous land owners in ways that recognise and respect cultural differences;
- appreciate that environmental decision making needs to be undertaken in a way that takes account of indigenous rights and interests; and
- have developed an understanding of environmental management decision making processes that are appropriate to the recognition of indigenous people's rights and interests.

Box 1: Indigenous Australians and Environmental Management Course

The course structure has evolved over several years and the course is now offered in a modified block format: two days on campus in the classroom and laboratories precede the field trip by about a month. A couple of weeks after the field trip there are two follow-up 'classroom' days on campus. The block format makes the course accessible to persons who are not based full time on the Roseworthy—a necessity given the small population of students on the campus. The course has a quota of 35 students because of the logistics of the field trip and in recent years there has been a waiting list. Apart from 'NatRats' the students in the course now include those studying environmental science, park management and similar degrees or postgraduate programs at other campuses or universities, and occasionally one or two students doing arts degrees.

There is always strong interest in the course from Aboriginal students. However the vast majority of the students are non-Aboriginal, a reflection of the demography of students in land and environmental management degree programs at universities in Adelaide. Of 180 students who have studied the course to date, only seven have been Aboriginal, and most of these are normally based at other campuses or universities and enrolled specifically in this course, rather than doing the course as part of a Roseworthy-based degree program. The course has not therefore extended the appeal of the Roseworthy degree programs to Aboriginal students. There are however very complex reasons for low enrolments and completions by Aboriginal students in Roseworthy degree programs, as in other science-based degrees, and these are difficult to address by any single initiative.

As a Whitefella I find that one of the biggest challenges in teaching this program is to teach classes where Aboriginal students are in a minority. The challenge is to foster respect and acknowledgment, among other students and by me, for the distinctive personal experience, knowledge and networks of the Aboriginal students, without 'shaming' them by personal attention or through any expectation that they will have knowledge or experience of particular issues, or want to share it. The challenge has been made more difficult in the block-teaching format that the course now follows as it means that I meet the students intensively over two days, with little time to talk to them individually before the field trip. This challenge is however merely one of the factors that might prompt the question:

What is a Whitefella doing teaching Aboriginal Studies?

I pose this question here because it is never far below the surface whenever my teaching program, or indeed my research and consultancy efforts, is scrutinised by Indigenous persons with academic experience, though it is rarely asked out loud. It is also an unsurprising question given the depth of knowledge and experience in the Indigenous academic community and the dominance, in academic publication and in conferences, of non-Indigenous perspectives. As such it is a question worthy of reflection and comment. My experience is that there are no answers to this question that satisfy trenchant critics. Nevertheless I respond to it in the following terms.

- The approach I have developed to my teaching is to coordinate a program that involves Aboriginal people as teachers in the field and classroom. This involvement is extensive although it is inevitably constrained by funding and other logistic factors.
- Coordinating tertiary teaching about issues for Indigenous people in environmental management does require an academic background in a congruent discipline. It is

difficult to attract the few Indigenous academics who have this disciplinary base to 'routine' academic positions such as that which I occupy.

- Whitefellas are dealing with environmental management decisions all the time. They need to be challenged to do so in more culturally inclusive ways. To argue that only Indigenous persons can contribute to this goal is to elevate political correctness above the achievement of outcomes.

The role of fieldwork in learning

I see fieldwork as a critical part of my teaching program because my own learning about working in environmental management in cross-cultural situations has been in the field. Much of this learning has been informal—real encounters with real people and real places have challenged my own cultural readings of landscapes, developed my understandings of what are 'environmental issues' for Indigenous peoples, fostered opportunities to develop and share common understandings with Indigenous peoples about natural resource management, and initiated networks for action and further learning.

I was told by one Aboriginal colleague when I started to work on environmental issues with Indigenous persons twelve years ago that 'the answers are not in the books'. I agree. There is much written in books that is of value, but first-hand encounters with Indigenous peoples on their country are necessary for NRM professionals to work out what are the relevant 'questions'. Such perspectives are shared by Aborigines who have been involved with me in teaching IAEM. I recall (paraphrased in my own words) Anangu Pitjantjatjara lands elder Peter Nyanangu saying to my class the first time my teaching program took me to the AP lands, in 1997:

> I am so very happy that you have pulled back the curtains on that classroom window and stepped out through that window and come up to my country to learn properly.

In geography, my 'home' discipline, fieldwork has a well developed role in teaching and research, as it also does in other discipline areas involved in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander studies, notably anthropology and archaeology. As Higgitt (1996) discusses, geographical fieldwork can further the development of a range of student skills, such as:

- personal skills, including responsibility, autonomy, and motivation;
- technical skills, such as measuring and mapping; and
- intellectual skills, such as observation, interpretation, evaluation, critical thinking and hypothesis design.

Other associated skills are acquired simply by virtue of being in the field—personal or affective skills concerning values associated with the environment; personal discovery, and social integration; and experiential skills, such as stamina and first-hand experience.

Fieldwork is central to stimulating 'deep learning' in which students draw relationships between: new ideas and previous knowledge; argument or opinion and fact; and concepts and everyday experiences. This represents a very different style of learning to the 'shallow' learning engendered when students focus on completing tasks in order to achieve satisfactory assessment. To stimulate deep learning, fieldwork should be located in a learning context. The 'doing' of fieldwork is not a discrete experience, but part of a cycle of experiential learning that begins with thinking about, and planning for, the fieldwork experience, and is followed by reflection on the

experience. Linking this cycle to assessment criteria is a further challenge that must be addressed for effective teaching in a formalised university context (Higgitt 1996; Kent et al. 1997).

Fieldwork has been criticised from a human geography perspective because it puts forward the new and unfamiliar as different and exotic (Rose 1993 cited by May 1999). In a field situation students can be overly reliant on the 'expert' knowledge of teachers to define and explain the situation that they encounter and this can obscure the unequal power relationships that are often inherent where one group is 'studying' another. However, I agree with May (1999) that, if approached with awareness, such risks can be largely avoided and that the fieldwork experience can heighten student awareness of the politics of knowledge and representation.

IAEM field trip

In the nine-day field trip that is part of the IAEM course, the class travels in two minibuses from Roseworthy Campus to central Australia. The convoy is self-sufficient with camping gear, a cooking team with a four-wheel drive vehicle, and quantities of food and water (restocked at various places). This is all made feasible by the Roseworthy Campus teaching support manager, Keith Cowley. Usually the furthest destination of the field trip has been Walalkara homeland in the south-eastern part of the Anangu Pitjantjatjara (AP) lands, about 1300 kilometres north of the campus. Twice (once by design and once when wet conditions would not allow us to travel off the bitumen), the destination has been Uluru-Kata Tjuta National Park, several hundred kilometres more distant from the campus.

I work out the itinerary for the field trip each year with Aboriginal organisations and homeland groups. It is designed to expose students to a range of activities that Aborigines are engaged in concerning land and natural resource management. Typically, this includes site protection, tourist management, Community Development Employment Program (CDEP) scheme activities, education and training, homeland and 'town camp' management, Native Title and associated negotiations about tenure and rights, cattle enterprise, Indigenous Protected Area (IPA) management, wildlife survey and management, application of traditional ecological skills and knowledge, and fire management.

In recent years the itinerary has involved the students meeting with:

- Students and teachers in the Aboriginal community ranger training program at Port Augusta
- Andrew Starkey, Department of Defence Aboriginal Liaison Officer at Woomera
- Elders of the Coober Pedy region, Kupa Piti Kungka Tjuta, Tjilpi Tjuta Karu Aboriginal Corporation and George Cooley, Manager of Iwara Kutju Aboriginal Corporation CDEP
- Yami Lester and his family at Wallatina Homeland, AP lands
- Robin and Angela Kankanpakantja and their family, and staff of AP Land Management at Walalkara homeland and IPA, and Mantua Treacle and her family at Irintata homeland, both near Fregon in the AP lands.

The success of the teaching program is due to the enthusiasm and skill of these people and many others who have been involved over the years, including representatives from

Antakarinya Land Management Aboriginal Corporation, Bungala (Port Augusta) CDEP schemes, and individuals including Joseph Lennon, Lucy (Waniwa) Lester, Ian Crombie, Peter Nyanangu, Ginger Wikilyiri, and Fraser Vickery, Kumanara, Jake Gillen and Patrick Hookey at Uluṟu-Kata Tjuṯa National Park.

Local economic inputs

The trip has a small, positive impact on local economies, though, as with most remote area travel by city-based people, the major expenditure takes place in the city where vehicles are hired and where most of the food is bought. The University pays camping fees to homeland corporations at a comparable level to those charged by commercial campgrounds—between five and ten dollars per person per night. The University also employs local individuals, whose involvement in the field trip is not part of a salaried job, paying a negotiated consultancy rate for their involvement in specific activities. In the AP lands, the University pays AP Land Management a negotiated lump sum to cover the CDEP 'top up' (at $80 per person per day) for the involvement of local persons in the teaching program plus a contribution to cover AP Land Management's costs for liaising with homeland groups. The 'top up' is a payment to individuals over and above the wages allocated through the CDEP; it allows their employment to be extended beyond the standard CDEP part-time hours. Typically the payment from the University to AP Land Management totals about $2500 for the three or four days of the field trip that is organised through them, in addition to permit and camping fees.

An additional benefit for Aboriginal organisations may occur when we make our labour and skills available for 'on the ground' environmental management projects. These can qualify as part of the matching contribution which funding bodies require to substantiate project grants. Other economic inputs to local economies come from our group-cooking and sharing of meals with the persons with whom we camp and work.

One or two Aborigines are employed as teaching assistants on the trip. I offer this work those I know or who are recommended to me and who have ties to the country we are visiting. Their knowledge and networks are invaluable for all the students. For Aboriginal students these persons have a further critical role in conveying the assurances that their 'entry to country' is invited and authorised culturally. Gender, cultural authority and family relationships are thus important 'selection criteria' for this job. Other important factors are fitness, as the travel involved is demanding, and a personal interest and capacity to relate to 'where the students are coming from'. My experience is that it is not easy to find suitable and available staff. These teaching assistants do a lot of one-on-one talking to students about country and their own experiences, some interpreting of landscape and language to the group, and they work with me on changes and refinements to the itinerary 'on the road', depending on what is happening locally. Rain, conflicting commitments by community members, funerals, and 'business' are just some of the local events that make it essential to have a degree of flexibility in the field trip itinerary.

Students on the field trip typically buy the entire stock of locally manufactured *punu* (wood crafts and artefacts) at homelands we visit as well as paintings and other arts and craft items. Although a student group is a less lucrative market than a typical tourist group, expenditure by the field trip participants on these items totalled $3097 in 2002, or an average of $83 per person. Sixty percent of this was spent in Kaltitji Arts and Crafts at Fregon and the remainder at two homelands.

Learning in the field

The field trip has been held in April each year. The days are fairly short and there is a lot of time spent travelling. Hence most of the meetings, walks, explorations of country, and other experiences are short, and can sometimes be quite rushed. Time is always a constraint on the depth of students' experience and learning.

In the field, the students do little in the way of structured activities. The emphasis is on learning through observation and participation, asking questions and discussions with our hosts, staff and each other. In the first couple of years of running the field trip, I was concerned that the students participate in structured learning activities appropriate to their scientific studies in natural resource management. As well as extending the students' field skills and teaching them about the 'science' side of arid zone management, I wanted to contribute the scientific skills of our group towards the environmental management objectives of the Aboriginal groups we were visiting, and I was also concerned that—from the students and faculty viewpoint—the trip not be seen simply as a 'look-and-see' or a 'show-and-tell'. Thus, in the first couple of years students collected data to measure differences in vegetation in a set of exclosures in the AP lands in order to quantify the impact that rabbits and other feral animals are having on vegetation; and they collected data on rock wallaby dung density to help plan a research project on monitoring rock wallaby populations.

However, I soon realised that such activities were not very important to the learning the students were doing on the trip; their purpose was often obscure to the local people who were hosting us and they also took time away from the learning activities that local people had planned. I have thus become much less concerned to incorporate these kinds of activities, although I continue to offer the time and skills we have available to our host groups for whatever projects they considered suitable. When the 2001 and 2002 field trips were being planned, Jackie Bice of AP Land Management was able to tell me that Robin Kankanpakantja wanted the students to clean out rock-holes in the Walalkara Indigenous Protected Area during our visit. I was really pleased that we would be able to contribute in a way that the local people had identified as important. The rock-hole cleaning days have been a fabulous experience of sharing, team work, and—for the students—learning to see the landscape in new ways and experiencing the practical issues of cultural heritage, feral animal and native wildlife management around this most precious of natural resources: water.

Fieldwork for IAEM is thus structured around the informal learning opportunities presented by being 'on country with Aboriginal people'. Its objectives are intellectual—related to the observation, analysis and critical thinking skills that students develop—and affective or experiential—related to the values that students pick up from their first-hand experiences during the field trip. The outcomes from such learning are difficult to quantify, as they do not relate to the development of specific technical skills. This makes the field work program particularly vulnerable as cuts to university core funding in recent years have made it harder to sustain fieldwork as an integral part of teaching and learning projects.

Justifying the expense

Together with the high cost of transporting students from Adelaide to central Australia, the costs of involving Aboriginal individuals and organisations in the teaching program have made IAEM the second most expensive course conducted by the University of

Adelaide's Faculty of Agriculture and Natural Resource Sciences—wine-tasting being the most expensive. It is a credit to the Faculty's leaders that they have accepted the costs as necessary to student learning, and supported them by cross-subsidies against other courses that cost less than 'average' to teach.

The cost in time and money of travelling 1300 kilometres does raise the question of whether the same learning objectives could be accomplished closer to Adelaide. There are many Aborigines and their organisations active in environmental management in regions closer to Adelaide, but there are also significant advantages for the students' learning in travelling further afield.

One advantage is that the course takes students out of the 'city-state' mentality of Adelaide, which structures the worldview of most South Australians. The students' exposure to the distances—physical and perceptual—involved in outback travel is an important part of their learning about the realities for Indigenous peoples of attempting to span the gulf between the centres of non-Indigenous power and government policy in the city, and their own country.

Another important reason for taking students to central Australia is that, for most South Australians, this region represents the 'remote', 'frontier' locations whose 'traditional people' embody essentialised Aboriginality (Adams and English 2001—after Cowlishaw 1999). This representation is applied by many Aborigines in southern South Australia as well as by many Whitefellas. I have noticed that when *nungas* (Aboriginal peoples of southern South Australia) talk about 'the old people' they seem to mean 'people living the old lifestyle'—those from the far north of the state—rather than those who are old in years. Ties to country and Dreaming are critical reference points for identity of many *nungas*. Engaging with these stereotypes of essentialised Aboriginality first-hand is important if students are to engage effectively with contemporary issues for Indigenous peoples in environmental management.

A third reason is that by travelling far beyond Port Augusta, the students experience arid environments, landforms and vegetation. Their exposure to these in other courses is limited to chenopod shrubland regions close to Port Augusta. Travelling further north challenges their 'common sense' readings of the landscape; the assumptions and scientifically based mental models of landform processes they have formed in more humid regions do not apply to the aeolian and ancient erosional landforms. Much of my talking on the trip is based on scientific interpretations of arid landforms and vegetation. The cultural basis of these explanations is revealed to students when they interact with Aborigines and experience Indigenous meanings of the landscapes they are camping in and moving through.

Building from fieldwork into learning

For the students, the nine-day IAEM field trip is more than just the highlight of the course—from talking to many of the students you would think that the course only consists of the field trip. However, since the classroom teaching revolves around 'briefing' and 'debriefing' students for the field trip, their perception is understandable.

The format and content for the classroom based briefing and debriefing has evolved over the last six years but has consistent elements. Classroom teaching before the field trip (the briefing) has focused on students developing some basic understandings about the cultural protocols, community and history of the people they will be visiting and an

understanding of concepts of land rights, Native Title, community development, empowerment and self-determination. Much of this is me lecturing, with videos, some computer- and map-based practical classes, and also with culturally oriented teaching by Aboriginal guest presenters.

Recently the structure for the 'briefing period' has been provided by an assignment that requires students to prepare a plan for building good relationships with Indigenous groups in the context of a project of their choice, typically a biological survey or ecological restoration project, which will involve fieldwork somewhere in rural or remote Australia. The students are required to go through the same kind of process that I go through in planning and managing the IAEM field trip and in other aspects of my own research. This involves addressing fundamental questions such as:

- Whose country is it? Whose permission and cooperation do we need for this project?
- Whose agenda does this project serve? Why would local Indigenous people even be interested in this project taking place? What potential benefits are there for local people, including economic benefits?
- At what stage in project planning do discussions with Indigenous people need to start?
- Who owns the information that will be collected?

Students also need to consider logistics:

- Who to make contact with to discuss ideas, and how to contact them;
- What permits are needed and how to apply for them;
- What will staff working on the project need to understand about working with Aboriginal people before they go into the field? What training do they need?
- How will the project give feedback to local people on results and outcomes?
- Language issues, employment of local people, transport and other logistic considerations?

The assignment forms part of the students' assessment. They are usually also keen to do it as part of their preparation for the field trip. And, since the trip includes areas where English is a second language, the students are often also keen to learn some local language and be confident in their understandings of local cultural protocols.

On return from the field trip, the two-day 'debriefing' in the classroom aims to extend from the students' field experience to more structured learning about issues for Indigenous peoples in environmental management. Again, the classroom content is designed to support their independent work on follow-up assignments. There are three assignments which have different objectives:

- A research report on an environmental management issue of the student's choice that they encounter in some way on the field trip. This aims to extend the students' literature research skills and their capacity to relate first-hand observations to published research and commentary.
- A 'picture story'. Picture stories are widely used in the AP lands to record progress and spread awareness among *anangu* about land management projects. This assignment aims to develop student skills in communicating in ways appropriate to specific audiences. The students work gives some feedback about what they learnt

on the field trip to a target audience of one of the groups they met in the field, using graphical imagery and minimal text.

- An electronic discussion forum. Here students are asked to broaden their focus from the local situations they experienced in the field to some of the 'bigger picture' issues relevant to collaboration and cooperation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people. In recent years topics have included 'Treaty—How do we get it right?' and potential conflicts between Aboriginal self-determination and sustainable land use. The electronic discussion group serves a secondary purpose in fostering ongoing contact between the students about their reflections on the field trip beyond the classroom debriefing session.

Reactions to studying 'Indigenous Australians and Environmental Management'

While studying IAEM, and particularly on the field trip, students have some dramatic encounters with landscapes, people, settlements and environments that arouse their passion and other strong emotions. Their feedback and reflections indicate that they are immensely engaged by what they learn from the persons they meet—their stories, their country and their history—and they speak with awe and respect for the cultural and environmental knowledge they have glimpsed. They are also immensely challenged by settlement conditions and shocked to encounter what they describe as 'third-world conditions' in this supposedly affluent nation. They are often uncertain about what they might personally do about this situation. What they are typically clear about is that it is not up to them to decide what should be done, but that they should provide whatever support they can to Aborigines who are trying to make and act on these decisions.

The students participate routinely in evaluations of the teaching program and these have been very positive, while also bringing forward suggestions for change and improvement. In some years, I have also asked students to write about their expectations before the field trip and then about their experiences, reflecting on how their attitudes and understandings changed. This has provided me (and hopefully the students) with some deeper understanding of the impact of the learning process. Some of the longer term learning outcomes and impacts from this teaching program are discussed below.

Longer-term impacts from studying IAEM

Survey design and sample

In order to explore the longer-term impacts of studying the IAEM course while at university, I conducted an email survey of former students in June 2001. I sent the survey by email to sixty-two of the 120 persons who had been in the class in one of the four years prior to 2000, these being the persons for whom I was able readily to obtain email addresses. The 1997 and 2000 classes were slightly over-represented. I also emailed the survey to the thirty students who had completed the course in June 2001, although some of the questions were not directly applicable to these persons because they were not yet in the workforce. The survey included both closed and open-ended questions about:

- personal experience and relationships with Indigenous people prior to studying IAEM;
- memories and attitudes retained from studying IAEM;
- changes in outlook or worldview as a result of their study, including a specific question about bridging the 'culture/nature' divide;

- encounters, in the workplace and elsewhere, with Indigenous people or with environmental management issues which involve or concern Indigenous people;
- impact on other people of their personal approaches to Indigenous people and to environmental management issues that involve or concern Indigenous people.

I received thirty responses to the survey (twenty-five percent of all former students). They provide a rich data set, encompassing memories and reflections of cultural encounters that often were deeply moving for the students involved. Readers should however recognise that these responses do not provide a particularly rigorous evaluation of the teaching program, being limited by sample size and by various biases.

The highest number of responses (twelve) was from the 1997 group, which was the first and largest class over the five years (forty-six persons). This group is slightly over represented in the sample of respondents, as is the 2000 group, while the 1998 and 1999 groups are slightly under-represented. Aborigines (two responses) are slightly over-represented in the sample compared to the proportion of former students who are Aboriginal. Two of the sample studied IAEM either before or while I supervised their Honours year, and former Honours students are also over-represented in the sample. Overall, the sample is likely to be biased towards those who were most excited by their experiences; this group is more likely to have maintained contact with me and hence to have been emailed the survey. They may also have been more likely to have responded. However, the sample did also include some who I remember as having quite negative experiences during the course.

Half those in the survey sample are twenty-five years or under, one-third is aged twenty-six to thirty and the remainder are over thirty. This reflects the age-distribution typical of the IAEM classes where the majority of students, having come to university straight from school are twenty or twentyone when doing the course, and up to a third is older. Sixteen of the sample are females and fourteen are males, which reflects the more-or-less even gender balance typical of the classes in each year.

One-fifth of the sample said they had had no experience or relationships with Indigenous peoples prior to studying IAEM. The rest had had a range of prior experience and relationships: the biggest group (one-third) saying they had a bit of experience and some relationships both with individual Indigenous persons/families and in Indigenous communities.

Enduring memories and attitudes

Everyone who responded said that memories, information, approaches or attitudes from their experiences studying IAEM have stayed with them. For many it was what they learnt from particular persons which has stuck in their memories: hearing Yami Lester's story about the British nuclear tests and the fight for justice; walking in the bush with Robin Kankanpakantja and learning about the plants, animals and fire; and the appreciation of sacred sites, why it is important to protect them and 'why I may not be allowed to go to them', gained from listening to Andrew Starkey (the Aboriginal Liaison Officer at Woomera). Some mentioned specific information, such as about Native Title, community participation methods, negotiation, family structures, land rights, government policies and global perspectives on Indigenous issues gained from my lectures or from Indigenous guest lecturers.

For most of the respondents, their memories were of experiences on the field trip. Their comments ranged from the general:

- The scenery, children and the old folks, dancing and memories are never forgotten they are always there.
- Access to peoples living and working in communities. By this I mean personal contact and therefore an increase in comprehension of what [it] is like to live and work in a remote community.

To very specific:

- I remember the more personal aspects of the course like when some of us met locals in Coober Pedy and others preferred to stand back and watch us and what we did. I also remember the bus tour through Port Augusta with a bloke named C___ and he told us some positive and negative experiences in the town, stories that would not normally be told to us.
- We (the students) were sitting on the ground, behind us a large river, in front and filling our view a section of the Musgrave Ranges. While the Elder sang I looked around at the surrounding landscape. With the air filled with his voice the appreciation of what I was looking at was one I had not experienced before, it send a quick shiver down my spine and watered my eyes. This appreciation was the most powerful experience during my visit to the Pit. Lands and was a fine beginning to my understanding of [anangu] culture and its close connection with the land.

There were many challenges to stereotypes and received notions of Aboriginality. As Aboriginal survey respondents said:

- For some people their expectations were not what they were confronted with.
- It let the European people … know not to paint everybody with the same paintbrush.

For some of the non-Aboriginal students:

- I had had visions of a pre-European settlement lifestyle and failed to anticipate that these people would have evolved with their environment much the same as all living things do. Influences of western development were a part of life from kids wearing brand name clothes to women using Johnson's baby powder for painting their bodies for ceremonies.
- We asked a woman called Y___ if we could hear what she was playing on her walkman and I was surprised to hear Christian hymns sang in Pitjantjatjara.
- [It] raised my outlook/perception above the stagnation of seeing [Aboriginal people] from non-Aboriginal expectations and ideas of how life should be led.
- [Now] if I meet an Aboriginal person I see them as a person first and don't have any pre-conceived ideas about what they should be like.

Survey respondents recalled the landscapes they visited in northern South Australia, the emotional impact of this, and how their expectations were challenged:

- Instead of going 'what a desolate shit hole' (near Woomera) I can appreciate it for what it really is (part of dreaming, water and food source).
- The realisation that dead gibber plains are more than meets the eye helped reinforce the concept that the lands we as non-Indigenous people have been led to see as empty are often rich in cultural traditions.
- ... I have learnt that South Australia is worth managing effectively. The sheer beauty of the land in northern South Australia blew me away. Driving up from Adelaide to

> Port Augusta, the land is mismanaged and cleared, and it seems to imply that South Australia is not a beautiful state, that it does not have an environment worth preserving. Sitting on the banks of Eucolo Creek, I discovered how wrong this was. Driving in to Yami's cattle station showed me more depth in the vegetation than I had expected. And the Anangu-Pitjantjatjara Lands are stunning, with the red rock, and green spinifex. These places are worth protecting, and maintaining.

Discovering a connection between culture, people, landscape and the future management of that landscape was also an important part of the respondents' field trip experience:

- I don't remember a lot about treaties and all the political stuff but I sure did experience an attitude change.
- My most significant memories are in relation to what I can only describe as 'tuning in'. That point when a basically culturally ignorant individual suddenly sees the other perspective.
- The most important thing I learnt was that the Dreaming and the Law are networking and interconnecting everywhere all over the land.
- Seeing Tjilpi Robin's little grandson dance showed me that Indigenous culture has a future. We are not trying to preserve something that is dead, something only understood by the elders. When children can dance with such pride, the culture is alive, and powerful.

The experience of being confronted and unsettled by the living conditions and the social environment in Aboriginal communities has stayed with many of the respondents:

- A lady sniffing [petrol] while breast-feeding a baby.
- The scene of all of the rubbish lying around.
- The bad state of the pet dogs.
- The young 'lost souls' who are just 'existing'.
- The current social degradation … as a result of traditional cultures meeting with forces of globalisation.
- Two different societies in a small area near Fregon: such as petrol sniffing in Fregon – sad; and traditional practice just kilometres away where rules apply.

They recalled being personally unsettled during the field trip, and how the security of their own perspectives was challenged:

- The self-isolation and mistrust of many remote communities to visitors was obvious, and the subsequent self-consciousness felt in such situations remains strong in my memory.
- The feeling of being in a foreign land while around the Anangu people … it was not the Australia I knew. If I had driven through that same land with a few mates on a camping trip, it would have been normal Australia. To experience it with its traditional owners … enlarged my outlook and feeling of what Australia is. These people in these surroundings were very new to me, yet they are the traditional people of my own country.
- I had never thought about the violence of settlement occurring where I lived. I thought of the frontiers being elsewhere, far off. I learnt that these stories are my cultural heritage as well, that these occurrences shaped what we (me included) have now.

- The victim attitude of some Indigenous people hit me as though switching on a light. I can see that we all play the victim sometimes. I still have a lot to learn.
- Probably one of the most important things I learnt was to listen to what is not said.

A change in world view

Just under two-thirds of the survey respondents said their experience of learning about Indigenous issues in environmental management had changed their overall outlook or worldview. For most, these changes were about appreciating a cultural dimension in environmental management:

> My attitude towards environmental management changed from the simple view that the environment should be preserved (first and foremost), to a more holistic outlook taking into account cultural traditions and ways of life.

For others, their own relationship with the environment changed:

> [It] gave me a strong sense of identification with my environment as opposed to my original feelings of alienation and irresponsibility towards the landscape.

For some, the link they made with global issues was important:

> It clarified the realisation that we are on a planet, not just in a country and the issues that Indigenous people experience here are reflected around the world in many countries which have been 'colonised' by developed nations.

For others it was a better understanding of where 'other people may be coming from':

> It has opened my eyes that cultural differences can directly affect your viewpoint and that the viewpoint of others, although different, is still valid.

Or a broadening of social and political outlook:

> The private schoolyard mentality and values were challenged altering not just my outlook, but opinion on a lot of the complex issues.

A third of the respondents said that there had been no change in their world view, or they were equivocal about such a change. They mostly commented that they already appreciated connections between cultural and environmental issues before this course of study, and some pointed to previous experience in Aboriginal communities:

> I wouldn't say that my worldview or outlook changed as a result of doing the [course]. However, I would say that doing the [course] significantly contributed to developing my outlook to Indigenous issues and environmental management. We are always learning.

Culture and nature

When prompted to comment specifically on their attitudes to the compartmentalisation of cultural and natural resource management issues that is typical of government and other non-Aboriginal approaches to environmental management, seventy percent of the former students surveyed said that the IAEM course had made a difference to how they think about and approach cultural and/or natural resource management issues. Of the remainder, about half said that there had been no change, and the others were equivocal, typically commenting that the course had reinforced rather than changed their attitudes to the interrelatedness of culture and nature.

Aborigines commented about the learning on culture/nature that happened through the course as follows:

- [It] lets everybody look at 'the Big Picture'.
- [It] strengthened some of my attitudes. For example, I believe that it is easy for Indigenous people to combine the two concepts of culture and natural resource management because they can relate one to the other or in other terms, you can't have one without the other. In the non-Indigenous world, because there is more understood about natural resource management than Indigenous culture, it is difficult for people to make the connection.

For some non-Aboriginal respondents, changes in their perception of culture and nature related mainly to their professional role in environmental management. Important realisations included the need to consider cultural issues and human dimensions in environmental management and that the natural environment is not separate from people:

- … taking into account multiple factors and the overflow effects or potential impacts and outcomes when any environmental or cultural intervention is considered.
- It altered my priorities a little further towards areas of cultural environmental management, instead of thinking everything in a national park needs to be left alone.
- I realised the need to link Indigenous laws with environmental laws as they are interrelated within Indigenous culture. They cannot be separated.

For others the experience was more fundamentally challenging to the 'objective' understanding of environment they had been exposed to in their scientific education:

- Experiencing just a little of how Aboriginal communities have made [conservation and sustainable management] part of their spirituality validates my own difficulty in separating emotion from objective science (is there such a thing?).
- The scientific way of looking at the land is at times dry and unfulfilling. To learn about Aboriginal culture and their perceptions and explanations allows one to develop, in addition to the western scientific view, a more spiritual, feminine view of the landscape, its shapes and its changes. Developing this appreciation of the land, I think, can bring one closer to understanding the land and hence make better management decisions. For me, learning about Aboriginal culture gave the land new depth.

What has become of the learning?

Since completing university study, some of the respondents have been working in ecological survey and wildlife management in Australia and overseas and some are in government positions in environmental project management. Others are teaching or training young unemployed persons through environmental projects. Some have been travelling or staying at environmental protest camps. Several have been working for Indigenous organisations on environmental projects, either as staff members or as volunteers. Many said that they have continued learning about Indigenous issues and that the course had stimulated them to do this.

All the respondents who completed their university studies have had some encounters since leaving university with Indigenous persons or with environmental management issues which involve or concern Indigenous peoples. Sixty-five percent had such encounters through their work in the field of NRM; twenty-seven percent through their work in other fields; twenty-seven percent through the places where they

have been living; and sixty-five percent through their interests or activities outside work. Most had these encounters in more than one geographical setting; fifty-seven percent in major cities or suburbs in Australia; forty-two percent in rural towns or small cities; thirty-eight percent in rural or remote regions; and twenty-three percent overseas. The kinds of encounters ranged from collaborative work on environmental projects, to an urban street assault and camping with the army in Indigenous settlements.

More than eighty percent of the respondents said that the learning they did at university or the attitudes they formed at that time were helpful in these encounters. Recurring words in their comments were 'interest', 'confidence', 'openness', 'respect', 'sensitivity' and 'understanding':

- The most important thing I learnt was to approach the situations with flexibility and an open mind, based on having a better broader understanding of the complex environmental, cultural and political issues.
- [It] gave me an open mind to not fall victim to the general attitude of some of the non-Aboriginal people … If I had listened to [them] I should not have visited the Aboriginal community as, to them, it was dangerous. When I did I was given a warm welcome and learnt a great deal.

For some, what they had learnt at university was not helpful in their encounters with Indigenous persons in urban situations:

- In the majority of my 'town' experiences in the NT I found my previous learning to be very unrelated due to the high level of social problems.
- When teaching, this knowledge gave me more insight into cultural views. It made me more open and sensitive to many issues. But as the school was very urban, the individuals had very different issues and backgrounds.

One respondent was disturbed by the contrast between:

> How approachable and cooperative [Aboriginal] people were on camp, but not since or in my everyday life.

Making a difference

The respondents are divided about the question of whether their personal approaches or efforts in relation to Indigenous peoples and Indigenous issues in environmental management have affected the way that colleagues, employers or other relevant persons approach these issues. Forty-seven percent said they were making a difference; twenty percent said they were not; and the remainder was uncertain. Those who were uncertain, or who felt they were not making a difference, said this was because they associate with like-minded persons, or that their personal contribution cannot make a difference to the very big issues involved given their own small sphere of operations.

For those who consider they are making a difference, both their personal attitudes and their knowledge are important factors. They mentioned being informed about Indigenous issues; being an example of compassion and understanding to others; having their specific suggestions about the involvement of Indigenous persons in environmental projects received positively; and effectively countering racist remarks and stereotypes with information and contrasting examples.

- Generally people tend to show better understanding, and compassion when they see someone else sincerely but not fanatically cares about Indigenous people, their health and their future.

- Many rural people have a strong connection to their farm or land. Often this had developed over five or six generations. I ask them what their connection to land would be like after 1000 generations. Sometimes this leads to discussion on different land management strategies and their effect on the country.
- In my professional arena, I am able to suggest to supervisors when proposing biological studies in the field that Aboriginal people need to be contacted before any work is done, and that this needs to happen before the idea is set in concrete. They are remarkably open to this, and I wonder why no one seems to do this without prompting.
- [I] encountered a guy who used all the disrespectful words under the sun. He had been exposed to Aboriginal peoples with drinking problems and only ever been influenced by people with the same view as himself. After many conversations, debates, arguments it finally sunk in. He now pulls his mates up when they say something racist in his presence.
- I hope that some of my efforts do have some type of impact, as for some people I am the first person they know to address, inform and challenge some of these [racist] views.

Overall, the most important challenge for the future that these former students recognise is achieving sustainability in land and resource use in Australia and globally. Ignorance and racism are the main challenges they see in relation to issues for Indigenous peoples in environmental management. They express concern that much effort in improving understanding about Indigenous issues, including through the IAEM course, is only 'preaching to the converted'. Some identified attitudes of Indigenous persons as significant challenges: frustration, lack of respect for Whites that comes from not being respected themselves, and lack of awareness about the environmental impacts of contemporary lifestyles. Others mentioned the particularly difficult issues facing Indigenous peoples—social dysfunction and social change, cultural transmission in a contemporary context, and conflicts over resource development.

Several respondents commented on the difficulties of going beyond the rhetoric about Indigenous and non-Indigenous persons working together in environmental management. Some of these difficulties concern power relations:

> Listening to [Aboriginal] people in the workplace and making changes to the way things are managed, not just giving someone training or a job, but actually listening to these people and letting them have a influence on environmental management today. This would be a step in the right direction to help make real changes to Australia … finding the equal ground which is needed to be able to work together.

Others recognised difficulties arising from the enormous potential for conflict between Indigenous and non-Indigenous persons about environmental management issues:

- Because of the indistinguishable nature of cultural and natural resource issues in many Indigenous communities, conservation management of the environment will often put into conflict, sectors of the community who would otherwise often benefit from co-operation … there will be instances where protection of Indigenous culture will be in direct conflict with protection of natural resources.
- The greatest challenge will be a further recognition that so much of this land is not ours, and that we don't really have a clue as to how to manage it. I think that we are beginning to have the theory of active management with an active role played by Indigenous people, but the practice will be difficult. Learning how to accept someone else's cultural norms will be difficult, particularly as we tend to think that

science is value-free. Science may aim to be, but land management certainly isn't. I believe that letting go of our (White) assumption that we know best, that we have the best tools for understanding, will be the most fundamental difficulty in the future of environmental management.

- Being able to share knowledge while keeping knowledge sacred to Indigenous people. Us non-Indigenous people need to understand that we don't need to know everything but that we can listen and have faith.

Concluding comments

Teachers do, of course, always hope that their students retain some of their learning and go on to develop and apply it to their daily experience. The feedback from a sample of students of the course 'Indigenous Australians and Environmental Management' at the University of Adelaide up to six years ago indicates that my efforts, and those of the many Aborigines involved in this teaching program, have engendered 'deep learning' in students; the course has fostered attitudinal change and is having a flow-on effect on the attitudes of persons that these former students encounter in their work and daily lives. Changes in conceptualisations of the relationship between nature and culture, people and environment are an important aspect of these attitudinal changes.

Field experiences with Aborigines on Aboriginal lands have made the most significant contribution to this learning process. Travelling away from familiar places and social settings, students have observed and interacted with cultural landscapes which are very different to those with which they grew up, and they have learned first-hand about the contemporary social and economic conditions of remote Aboriginal communities. They have developed their independent thinking about the relationships between culture and nature and their perceptions of critical challenges for natural resource management have matured accordingly.

This learning has at times unsettled the sharp focus of some former students' scientific training and made them less confident about their role as environmental 'experts'. On the other hand, it has developed their confidence in working with Indigenous persons in environmental management and in developing effective practice. It has developed or strengthened their respect for the perceptions, spirituality, knowledge and dignity of Indigenous peoples and their commitment to collaborative approaches to environmental management that involve and respond to both Indigenous and non-Indigenous cultural concerns. These outcomes are small in scale but they do demonstrate, in Kawagley and Barnhardt's (1998) words, that 'there are ways to develop linkages that connect different worldviews, at least for a few people under the right conditions'.

It is pertinent that this kind of learning only tends to reach those who are already interested and somewhat sensitised to Indigenous perspectives on environmental management. It is harder to construct 'the right conditions' for those who are not interested. My experiences in teaching Roseworthy 'Aggies' (agriculture students) about cultural diversity as it affects communication with Indigenous persons, in a one-day teaching session as part of a course on group facilitation in agricultural extension, are very different to those discussed above. After several years of trying different approaches to the task, often with Aboriginal colleagues, I find I am yet to develop effective ways of opening doors to empathy and understanding among students who are typically indifferent, if not overtly hostile, to the suggestion that Aboriginal landholders,

Native Title claimants and communities are target audiences whose communication needs should be understood and considered in extension activities.

This problem on campus reflects the broader communication challenge that everyone involved in Aboriginal studies faces: making a difference in the mindset and worldviews of those many Australians who are totally unsympathetic to the perspectives of Indigenous peoples. In this regard, it is particularly important that Aboriginal studies education moves beyond mere communication about Aborigines and the issues they face to build relationships, and to foster dialogue and conflict resolution between Aborigines and these hostile 'Others'.

It is also important to reflect on what the outcomes from the IAEM teaching program have been for the Aborigines on whom my teaching program depends for its effectiveness. These comments are purely from my own point-of-view, as I have not had the opportunity to engage with these persons in any formalised evaluation.

My own relationships with the Aborigines I work with in the IAEM teaching program have deepened over the years as I have learnt more about their language, culture and country. On the field camps, we have a lot of fun, as well as transferring some economic benefits and developing very satisfying personal and professional relationships. Back home, I often find there are parts of the reciprocal relationships—*ngapartji ngapartji*—that are established through my coordination of this teaching program that I am not fulfilling due to other priorities. For example, the teaching program has spawned some research projects on wildlife management issues of interest to people in northern South Australia, but the scope of these has been limited and continuity has been less than optimal.

I often see some of the Aborigines who have become involved in the teaching program during the year, at meetings, during their visits to Adelaide, and my visits up north, and they draw on my networks and knowledge when they need to. While I worry about the imposition on some of these people's time and energy from their engagement with my students, for others who are building tourism enterprises, working with the students develops their own cross-cultural experience—their awareness of how Whitefellas respond to their culture—and their networks. And each year, as I start to plan for the next field trip, Aborigines have welcomed us back, often talking about what they would like to teach the students. This suggests that the positive outcomes from this teaching/learning program are two-way. This was brought home to me when I changed jobs and the IAEM program was discontinued in 2003. The message I had from Robin Kankanpakantja and his family who had hosted us at Walakara homeland for several years was: 'We are sorry that the trips are finishing because they have been so good for us.'

Acknowledgments

An oral version of this paper was presented to AIATSIS Conference2001 Symposium A 'Land Resources and Knowledge', Session 2 'Nature, landscape and human presences: Reworking the culture/nature divide in environmental management: theory and practice', convened by Lesley Head (University of Wollongong).

References

Adams, M. and A. English in press 'Biodiversity is a whitefella word': Changing relationships between Aborigines and the New South Wales National Parks and Wildlife Service. In L. Taylor, G.K. Ward, G. Henderson and L.A. Wallis (eds) The Power of Knowledge, the Resonance of Tradition. Aboriginal Studies Press, Canberra.

Baker, L., S. Woenne-Green and Mutitjulu Community 1992 The role of Aboriginal ecological knowledge in ecosystem management. In J. Birckhead, T. De Lacy and L. Smith (eds), *Aboriginal Involvement in Parks and Protected Areas*. Aboriginal Studies Press, Canberra, pp.65–73.

Berkes, F. (ed.) 1989 *Common Property Resources: Ecology and community-based sustainable development*. Belhaven Press, London.

Cowlishaw, G. 1999 *Rednecks, Eggheads and Blackfellas: A study of racial power and intimacy in Australia*. Allen and Unwin, Sydney.

Davies, J., K. Higginbottom, D. Noack, H. Ross and E. Young, E. 1999 *Sustaining Eden: Indigenous community based wildlife management in Australia*. International Institute for Environment and Development, London.

DEST 1996 *National Strategy for the Conservation of Australia's Biological Diversity.* Commonwealth Department of Environment, Sport and Territories, Canberra.

Goldman, M. (ed.) 1998 *Privatising Nature: Political struggles for the global commons*. Pluto Press, London.

Hardin, G. 1968 The tragedy of the commons. *Science* 162:1243–1248.

Healey, P. 1996 *Collaborative Planning: Shaping places in fragmented societies*. MacMillan Press, London.

Higgitt, M. 1996 Addressing the new agenda for fieldwork in higher education. *Journal of Geography in Higher Education* 20(3):391–398.

Jacobs, P. and P. Mulvihill 1995 Ancient lands: new perspectives—towards multicultural literacy in landscape management. *Landscape and Urban Planning* 32(1):7–17

Johnston, R. J., D. Gregory and D.M. Smith (ed.) 1994 *Dictionary of Human Geography*. Blackwell, Oxford.

Kawagley, A. O. and R. Barnhardt 1998 *Education Indigenous to Place: Western science meets native reality*. Alaska Native Knowledge Network; Alaska University, Fairbanks <http://www.ankn.uaf.edu/EIP.html> (accessed 04/10/04)

Kennet, R., N. Munungurritj and D. Yunipingu 1997 The Dhimurru miyapunu project. In R. Kennet, A. Webb, G. Duff, M. Guinea and G. Hill (eds), *Marine Turtle Conservation and Management in Northern Australia*. Centre for Indigenous Natural and Cultural Resource Management and Centre for Tropical Wetlands Management, Northern Territory University, Darwin, pp.69–75.

Kent, M., D.A. Gilbertson and C.O. Hunt 1997 Fieldwork in geography teaching: a critical review. *Journal of Geography in Higher Education* 21(3):313–332.

Kimmerer, R. 1998 Intellectual diversity: bringing the native perspective into natural resources education. *Winds of Change* 13(3):14–18.

Liddle, L. with E. Young 2001 Bridging the communication gap: transferring information between scientists and Aboriginal land managers. In R. Baker, J. Davies and E. Young (eds), *Working on Country: Contemporary Indigenous management of Australia's lands and coastal regions*. Oxford University Press, Melbourne, pp.147–155.

May, J. 1999 'Developing Fieldwork in Social and Cultural Geography: Illustrations from a Residential Field Class in Los Angeles and Las Vegas'. *Journal of Geography in Higher Education* 23(2):207–225.

Murray, P. n.d. Exploitation, manipulation and stewardship: changing relationships with nature in the construction of an agri-ecology in Australia. Unpublished paper, The University of Adelaide.

Nesbitt, B., L. Baker, P. Copley, F. Young and A.P.L. Management 2001 Co-operative cross-cultural biological surveys for resource management. In R. Baker, J. Davies and E. Young (eds), *Working on Country: Contemporary Indigenous management of Australia's lands and coastal*. Oxford University Press, Melbourne, pp.187–198.

Ostrom, E. 1990 *Governing the Commons: The evolution of institutions for collective action*. Cambridge University Press, New York.

Pimbert, M. P. and J.N. Pretty 1995 *Parks, People and Professionals: Putting 'participation' into protected area management*. United Nations Research Institute for Social Development, International Institute for Environment and Development, World Wide Fund for Nature, Geneva.

Pinkerton, E., (ed) 1989 *Co-operative Management of Local Fisheries: New directions for improved management and community development*. University of British Columbia Press, Vancouver.

Rose, G. 1993 *Feminism and Geography: The limits of geographical knowledge*. Polity Press, Cambridge.

Jocelyn Davies is a geographer whose work focuses on issues for Indigenous people in environmental management. She is co-leader of the Desert Knowledge Cooperative Research Centre research theme on governance, management and leadership, and is also currently working for the CSIRO Centre for Arid Zone Research to foster new research directions in partnership with Aboriginal organisations. Jocelyn formerly worked at The University of Adelaide's Roseworthy Campus and continues to supervise research in the School of Earth and Environmental Sciences where her postgraduate students are exploring governance dimensions of the commercial kangaroo industry and the experiences of Aboriginal entrepreneurs and enterprise managers.

Desert Knowledge Cooperative Research Centre, PO Box 2111, Alice Springs 0872
<jocelyn.davies@adelaide.edu.au>

Conflagrations: the culture, ecology and politics of landscape burning in the North Kimberley

David Bowman and Tom Vigilante

Charles Darwin University

Abstract: *'Bushfire' is as contentious an issue in the North Kimberley region of northwestern Australia, as other parts of the continent. Landscape burning was widely practised by Aboriginal peoples in the region at the time of European colonisation and Aborigines continue to maintain the knowledge and practice of landscape burning on accessible lands around communities and outstations. Large areas of the Kimberley became depopulated during the early-to-mid 1900s due to population decline and exodus. The absence of Aboriginal landscape burning in depopulated areas has given rise to fire regimes dominated by intense fires. Ecological studies suggest that this shift in burning patterns is having a detrimental effect on the environment. The issue is complicated by conflicts over native title and the land-use objectives of different interest groups. Collaborative research projects between Aborigines and Western scientists offer a means by which different knowledge systems can be communicated and exchanged so that land management decisions can be more effective and equitable.*

There is an ongoing, rapidly changing relationship between settler Australians and their adopted land, driven in part by the increasing depth of ecological knowledge and practical experience. Over the last one hundred years, attitudes towards land have swung from the colonial view that resources were there to be exploited to the idea that 'natural' landscapes should be 'preserved'. Only in the last few decades has the depth of Aboriginal peoples' cultural and ecological connection to their lands become widely appreciated, and to some degree legally recognised. The current process of granting Native Title to large areas of Australia will further reinforce the importance of incorporating the views of Aborigines in the formulation of land management objectives.

The realisation that no landscape in Australia is 'natural' has raised profound and perplexing issues for land managers. These problems are well illustrated by the debates surrounding the use of fire in the management of landscapes in northern Australia. Unlike southern and eastern Australia, the northern Australian savannas have not been subjected to any significant degree of land clearance or other forms of habitat destruction. Nonetheless, there is mounting evidence that the current regime of landscape fires is damaging the ecological health of large areas of the savanna by causing species extinctions, destruction of fragile habitats such as rainforests, and degrading ecosystem services like carbon storage and soil fertility.

Differing views

Some scientists believe that the primary reason why fire is currently damaging savanna landscapes is because of the breakdown of traditional Aboriginal fire management practices. For example, Yibarbuk (et al 2001) concluded that Aboriginal landscape burning is a highly sophisticated activity that managers should try to emulate in order to

maintain biodiversity at the levels present at the time of colonisation. However, there are opponents to this view who often focus on the lack of published scientific evidence and the enormous gaps in knowledge about the operational details of Aboriginal landscape burning. Further, some authors suggest that Aboriginal landscape burning is irrelevant to current land management given the enormous changes that have occurred to both ecosystems and Aboriginal cultures following colonisation. For example Graetz et al. (1992) and White (1997) stated that current Aboriginal landscape burning can no longer be considered traditional because of the tremendous cultural changes that have occurred over the last two hundred years of colonisation. Some scientists claim that rigorous scientific research into Aboriginal burning is required to enable the design of landscape burning practices that achieve specific conservation outcomes (Andersen 1999).

It is remarkable how little is actually known by scientists, and the wider community, about Aboriginal landscape burning. Collaborative projects between scientists and Aboriginal land managers in northern Australia have only recently commenced.

A good example of collaborative research is the current project being undertaken in the North Kimberley region of Western Australia (Vigilante 2004). It involves recording traditional Aboriginal knowledge about landscape burning and comparing this perspective to the findings of a range of concurrent landscape ecology studies. Here we summarise some outcomes of that project. Specifically, we record an Aboriginal perspective on fire management; consider how landscape burning patterns have changed following colonisation and reflect upon the management implications of this research. First we provide a brief sketch of the geography of the North Kimberley region.

Geographical sketch

The North Kimberley region is located in the far northwest of Western Australia. It has a monsoonal climate consisting of a hot, wet summer (annual rainfall greater than 700 mm) and a warm, dry winter. Like the rest of the Australian monsoon tropics the vegetation of the region is tall-grass *Eucalyptus* savanna, however there are a sufficiently large number of plant and animals species for it to be recognised as a distinct biogeographic zone. The geology is characterised by Precambrian age basalts and sandstones. These rocks have been deeply weathered since the Tertiary period and subsequent erosion has produced residual caps of laterite. The landscape features sandy plains, subdued hills on basalts and rugged sandstone plateaux with abrupt escarpments. The rivers have massive seasonal variation in flow and, owing to the overall low elevation of the landscape, have meandering drainage lines with broad estuaries that have enormous tidal ranges.

Burning country—an Aboriginal perspective

The reasons Aborigines use fire vary according to the time of year and the characteristics of the country. Below we summarise a variety of these reasons contributed by Mr Sylvester Mangolamarra, a senior member of Kalumburu Community with a strong interest in land management.

- In the past, Aboriginal people took shelter on high ground during the wet season. After the rains had stopped and the ground began to dry out they moved down from the high ground. Burning at the very start of the dry season was only done to clear campsites.

Burning green grass was considered to be an ecologically destructive practice because the smoke from these fires can make animals sick.

- During the dry season, strong southeast winds dry out grass over large areas. At this time burning was practised on a large scale to clear grass for walking, hunting and locating honey. It was also practised so as to make new, green grass for animals, as discussed below.
- Late in the dry season, in late September and early October, large fires were lit to prepare the bush for the onset of rain and to bring the rain itself. These late dry season fires are particularly important to make bush fruit trees healthy and productive because after the fires the trees start to flower. At this time, people ask Wandjina, the rainmaker spirit, to bring the rain and make the fruits fat. Fruiting lasts for about one month after the first rains.
- The grass is burnt to make it easier to hunt animals as well as to create new growth for other animals to eat and grow fat. In the winter time grass is burnt in the lowlands to make new grass for kangaroos and other animals. In the hot time of the year the hills are burnt to make the animals move down to the lowlands and riverside where they are easily hunted. Using fire this way means that there are always some animals that are fat and therefore suitable for harvest.
- If sandstone country is left unburnt for a few years, spinifex grasses (*Triodia* spp.) develop into large hummocks and become very sticky with resin that makes the kangaroos sick. It is important to burn the spinifex at this stage so that fresh new shoots can come out. Old spinifex burns with a black smoke and this is a clear sign that the fire is doing the country good.
- Aboriginal people use fire with respect and treat it as a living thing. The landscape is divided into areas under the jurisdiction of spiritual beings. Gulingi (Wandjina) and Gwion control the land while Wunggurr (rainbow serpents) control the rivers. When people burn in a place they have to do so according to the laws laid down by these beings. People seek these beings to ask them for wind when they want to make fire. They know if they are doing something wrong because they get a bad feeling in their spirit. They then need to seek their elders to put things right again. People go according to this feeling and know if they are doing things the right way.

Key points

The reasons for burning set out above demonstrate several key points. First, Aboriginal landscape burning is based on a knowledge system that contains detailed ecological information. It includes an understanding of plant and animal ecology, animal behaviour, fire behaviour and climate. Second, landscape burning is used to achieve clear ecological objectives. Fire is used to modify the landscape to make resources more accessible and to manipulate and benefit important plant and animal species. Third, many of the principles are compatible with western ecological perspectives of land and species management. Therefore, Indigenous ecological knowledge can be considered as legitimate as western knowledge systems. Finally, Aboriginal burning is also influenced by belief systems that are at odds with western scientific thought. Nonetheless, it should be accepted that western land management is neither value-free nor based purely on rigorous ecological research.

Changed landscape burning patterns

Landscape burning is an essential part of the traditional hunter-gatherer lifestyle that has probably been practised for over 40 000 years of human occupation in the North

Kimberley (Mulvaney and Kamminga 1999). However, it is unknown how this practice may have changed through time in response to environmental upheavals such as the end of the last ice-age some 10 000 years ago. Historical records show that at the time of European colonisation landscape burning was a characteristic feature of the North Kimberley (Vigilante 2001). The colonisation of the region over the last one hundred years dramatically disrupted this tradition of land management. By the time of the Second World War, about sixty years ago, the majority of Aborigines in the North Kimberley region had moved to permanent settlements associated with missions and pastoral properties. Between 1918 and 1950 there were also massive population declines due to disease, and other factors, and large areas of the region became depopulated (Crawford 1969). As a consequence, traditional landscape burning contracted to the country accessible from these settlements. In depopulated landscapes the cessation of traditional Aboriginal landscape burning resulted in fuel build-up followed by conflagrations, ignited by lightning, which burnt across the vast uninhabited areas. For example, a missionary remembers enormous fires that occurred in the Drysdale and King George River region in the 1950s (Fr Sanz, personal communication 2001). These conflagrations have continued into the present day and have become a major land management issue.

Land tenure issues and different interest groups complicate fire management. Traditional owners represent the major demographic group occupying the remote communities and outstations across the North Kimberley. Aboriginal landscape burning continues to be practised around communities and outstations. However, many areas remain depopulated because of a lack of vehicular access and the passing away of traditional owners. Some land has become legally alienated through pastoral and mining operations. While Aborigines are reasserting control over traditional lands in the form of two large Native Title claims, the legal right to practise Aboriginal burning on such land remains uncertain.

Tenure, tourists and burning

Fire on Crown Land, National Parks and other nature reserves is managed by the Fire and Emergency Services Authority (FESA) and the Department of Conservation and Land Management of Western Australia (CALM). Controlled burning is typically carried out each year using aerial incendiaries. Pastoralists in the region often use fire to facilitate mustering or to create new growth, often called ‘green pick’. However, uncontrolled wildfires are a major problem because they can destroy pasture and infrastructure. Tourists represent another major interest group in the region because they increasingly visit the remote landscapes of the North Kimberley during the winter months of the dry season. Management of tourists has become a major conservation issue. Furthermore, tourists often have strongly held negative opinions about landscape burning, particularly if they come from areas of southern Australia where bushfires are seen as natural disasters, and their views can affect land management decision-making. There can be conflict between the use of fire by Aboriginal landowners and tourists in this area. For example, a tourist operator called the police to Mitchell Plateau in the 1980s when landscape burning by a traditional owner threatened his infrastructure.

Conflicts relating to land tenure and management in the region are especially evident at Ngauwudu (Mitchell Plateau). Ngauwudu is part of the traditional lands of the Wunambal people and is part of the Wandjina/Wunggurr-Uunguu Native Title claim. The area is a major destination for four-wheel-drive tourism with more than three

thousand visitors per year. In 2000, the Court Government annexed 150 000 hectares of the area for two national parks and two conservation parks. This was done without consultation with the traditional owners, arguably a breach of *the Native Title Act* and the *Racial Discrimination Act* (Wunambal-Gaambera Aboriginal Corporation 2000). Because of the way they were created, the conservation reserves are invalid under the Native Title Act and technically are non-existent. The action drew strong criticism from traditional owners, the Kimberley Land Council, government opposition parties and conservation groups. This case demonstrates that Aborigines are still being left out of land management decisions and their traditional knowledge and property rights are not being adequately recognised. Wunambal traditional owners have now produced their own management plan (W-GAC 2000), and are seeking partnership with non-Aboriginal agencies to help manage tourism at Ngauwudu.

Implications for management

Managing landscape fire is a complex problem that involves the objectives of the management, the availability of resources to implement these objectives and, increasingly, questions of legal rights and responsibilities. There is no doubt that landscape burning was an integral part of traditional Aboriginal economies, which were, at least compared to modern economies, ecologically sustainable (Bowman 1998). Equally, there is no doubt that many Aborigines have a detailed knowledge of how fire can be used to manage their land. However many Aboriginal groups currently lack the resources, training and expertise to address new problems such as rising tourist numbers, introduced plant and animal species and climate change. Further, large areas of depopulated land have had consequent significant ecological changes such as the loss of fine scale habitat variability due to destruction of fire-sensitive species. There is little agreement among land managers and scientists concerning the primary objective of fire management or the ecological response of various habitats to different fire regimes. Scientists will continue to debate the role of fire in the landscape because of the great uncertainties that surround the subject: it is absolutely impractical to set up long-term controlled landscape-scale experiments to ‘solve’ these ecological problems. Furthermore it should be accepted that some land management decisions are value-judgements that are a product of changeable social and political factors. For instance there has been a recent shift in the thinking of some land managers from the primary importance of biodiversity to that of carbon storage.

We consider that collaborative ecological research on landscape burning between western scientists and traditional owners has an important part to play in future land management decisions for the following overlapping reasons.

Collaborative research

A collaborative research program provides a context where Aborigines can articulate their ideas about and aspirations for their land. For instance, the traditional owners of Ngauwudu have written a management plan for the area seeking joint management with the government and other agencies (Wunambal-Gaambera Aboriginal Corporation 2000). The traditional owners of Balanggarra and Wunambal-Gaambera lands in the North Kimberley recently carried out an ethno-biological research project to record traditional ecological knowledge and to identify land management issues such as landscape burning (Wunambal-Gaambera and Balanggarra traditional owners et al

2000). Culturally appropriate fire management may offer employment opportunities and the chance for Aborigines to get back onto their lands.

The process of Aborigines and scientists working together is important because of the two-way flow of knowledge. Improving the awareness of scientists can help educate decision-makers and the general public about Aboriginal landscape burning. It enables scientists and land-managers to communicate to Aborigines important information about predicted threats to landscape health associated with current global environment change. For example, the establishment of aggressive African weeds like Gamba grass can cause the savanna fires to become so intense that many trees will be killed. Collaborative research also provides the opportunity for Aborigines to understand how scientists go about their business of creating knowledge about landscape burning.

The documentation of both systems of knowledge will be a critical resource in understanding how landscapes respond to various forms of management. This is particularly important given the dramatic rate of cultural and ecological change that is presently occurring. Great advances have been made in how collaborative research projects can be equitable and respectful of culturally differences (Horstman and Wightman 2001; Smith 2000). We suggest that pursuing these approaches will maximise the collective knowledge, goodwill and resources of all stakeholders. Given the great challenge of maintaining landscape health at a time of dramatic global ecological change 'country' needs all the help it can get.

Acknowledgments

This paper was first published in *Ngoonjook: Batchelor journal of Aboriginal education. Journal of Australian indigenous issues* 20 (December 2001), Educational Media Unit, Batchelor College, Batchelor. The authors also wish to express their sincere gratitude to the Kalumburu community for their hospitality and involvement in this research, to Mr Mangolamarra for his contribution to this paper and to Mark Horstman for comments on the draft.

An oral version of this paper was presented to AIATSIS Conference2001 Symposium A 'Land Resources and Knowledge', Session 1 'Nature, landscape and human presences: Interdisciplines and interactions in cultural landscapes', convened by Lesley Head (University of Wollongong).

References

Andersen, A. 1999 Cross-cultural conflicts in fire management in northern Australia: not so black and white. *Conservation Ecology* 3:6.

Bowman, D.M.J.S. 1998 Tansley Review 101. The impact of Aboriginal landscape burning on the Australian biota. *New Phytologist* 140:385–410.

Crawford, I.M. 1969 Late Prehistoric Changes in Aboriginal Cultures in Kimberley, Western Australia. Doctoral thesis, London University.

Graetz, D., R. Fisher and M. Wilson 1992 *Looking Back: The changing face of the Australian continent, 1972–1992*. CSIRO Division of Wildlife and Ecology, Canberra.

Horstman, M. and G. Wightman 2001 Karparti ecology: recognition of Aboriginal ecological knowledge and its application to management in north-western Australia. *Ecological Management and Restoration* 2:99–109.

Mulvaney, J. and J. Kamminga 1999 *Prehistory of Australia*. Allen and Unwin, Sydney.

Smith, N. 2000 *Collaborative research possibilities in Cape York Peninsula*. Report prepared for CRC Tropical Savannas by Wik, Wik Way and Kugu Rangers, Balkanu Cape York Development Corporation, Key Centre for Tropical Wildlife Management, and the Centre for Indigenous Natural and Cultural Resource Management, Cairns

Vigilante, T. 2001 Analysis of explorers' records of Aboriginal landscape burning in the Kimberley region of Western Australia. *Australian Geographical Studies* 39:135–155.

Vigilante, T. 2004 The ethnoecology of landscape burning around Kalumburu Aboriginal Community, North Kimberley region, Western Australia: an examination of the ecological and cultural significance of Aboriginal landscape burning in the North Kimberley using experimental, ethnographic and historical approaches. Doctoral thesis, Charles Darwin University, Northern Territory.

White, M.E. 1997 *Listen ... Our Land is Crying*: *Australia's environmental problems and solutions*. Kangaroo Press, Sydney.

W-GAC 2000 *Land of Wandjina and Wunggurr-Ngauwudu (Mitchell Plateau) Management Plan*. Kimberley Land Council, Kandiwal and Broome. Available online at <savanna.ntu.edu.au/downloads/ngauwudu.pdf> (accessed 13 September 2002).

Wunambal-Gaambera and Balanggarra traditional owners, G. Wightman, S. Mangolamarra and D. Smith 2000 *North Kimberley Traditional Owners' Land and Sea Management Project–Final Report*. Kimberley Land Council and Tropical Savannas CRC, Broome.

Yibarbuk, D., P.J. Whitehead, J. Russell-Smith, D. Jackson, C. Godjuwa, A. Fisher, P. Cooke, D. Choquenot and D.M.J.S. Bowman 2001 Fire ecology and Aboriginal land management in central Arnhem Land, northern Australia: a tradition of ecosystem management. *Journal of Biogeography* 28:325–343.

David Bowman is the Director of the Australian Research Council Key Centre for Tropical Wildlife Management at Charles Darwin University. He has published extensively on the ecology of northern Australia.

Key Centre for Tropical Wildlife Management, Charles Darwin University, Darwin NT 0909 <david.bowman@cdu.edu.au>

Tom Vigilante is a natural resource manager with the Land and Sea Unit of the Kimberley Land Council. He has recently completed a doctoral thesis on the landscape ecology of Aboriginal fire use in the North Kimberley at Charles Darwin University. Previously he was awarded a BSc(Hons) degree in botany and zoology from the University of Western Australia.

Land and Sea Unit, Kimberley Land Council, Derby WA 6728 <tom.vigilante@klc.org.au>

Development of cultural indicators for the management of the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area

Dermot Smyth

James Cook University

Claude Beeron

Jumbun Community

Abstract: *The Wet Tropics Management Authority produces an annual report, State of the Wet Tropics, summarising the environmental well-being of the World Heritage Area in northern Queensland. To assist in this process, the Authority has developed a diverse set of 'natural indicators' that can be monitored annually to provide a guide to the state of the area's natural values. While the Authority is also obliged to protect and report on the area's cultural values, the only indicator of cultural values currently in use is the area of Aboriginal-owned land within the World Heritage Area.*

A review of Aboriginal involvement in the management of the Wet Tropics, released 1999, recommended the development of a comprehensive set of cultural indicators applicable to the management of the World Heritage Area. The Rainforest Co-operative Research Centre is undertaking research to develop these indicators, in collaboration with two Aboriginal communities in the Wet Tropics. The research builds on similar projects undertaken in forest environments elsewhere in the world and seeks to encompass a wide range of cultural criteria. These include recognition of Aboriginal rights and interests, participation in management, socio-economic benefits, status of language, protection of cultural sites, and transmission of knowledge and spiritual values. The research is focusing on both the development and application of cultural indicators, including how monitoring occurs and by whom, how information is documented and accessed, and how the information derived from cultural indicators can feed back into the management of the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area.

In Australia and elsewhere in the world there is increasing awareness of the need to monitor the effectiveness of protected area management, and the management of the environment generally. This has led to the development of a variety of indicators that can be used to measure the well-being of the values for which the environment is being managed. There is also a growing awareness that human, social and cultural values are important components of any environmental system, including protected areas, and hence there is a need to develop social and cultural indicators as part of any monitoring program.

For many years Aborigines of northern Queensland have said that their cultural values associated with their rainforest country should be respected and protected as part of the management of the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area. One of the issues that came out a review of Aboriginal involvement in the management of this World Heritage Area was the need to develop ways to find out if Aboriginal cultural values are being looked after in the overall management of the rainforests (Lawson et al 1988).

The Wet Tropics Management Authority (WTMA) has recently developed a set of indicators for use in monitoring the condition of the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area in northern Queensland. These indicators focus mainly on the condition of the 'natural' environmental values for which the area was listed as a World Heritage site, but also include one indicator for associated cultural values. This indicator, relating to the area of land under Aboriginal control, is regarded by WTMA and by Aboriginal peoples whose country lies within the World Heritage Area, as inadequate for monitoring the full range of cultural values associated with rainforest environments.

Research on the development of cultural indicators for the Wet Tropics is therefore being undertaken in response both to the identified needs of rainforest Aboriginal peoples and the management obligations of the WTMA. It is also anticipated that the methods and outcomes of this research can contribute to negotiations that have recently commenced to develop agreements on the resolution of Aboriginal interests in the management of the Wet Tropics.

What are environmental and cultural indicators?

Environmental indicators are tools to assist environmental managers, owners, interest groups and the general community to judge the condition of a protected area, or environmental region or a whole country. Indicators are used to measure particular aspects of the environment and to assess general environmental health. As described by Pearson (1998):

> Environmental indicators are physical, chemical, biological or socio-economic measures that best represent the key elements of a complex ecosystem or environmental issue. An indicator is embedded in a well-developed interpretive framework and has meaning beyond the measure it represents.

A common approach to designing environmental indicators, and the one adopted by the WTMA, is the 'Pressure-Condition-Response' model. This model recognises that some indicators reveal threats or pressures to the environment, that some give an indication of the condition or current state of the environment and that others reveal the level of response by management agencies to the prevailing pressures or conditions.

Cultural indicators are measurable attributes of a culture that provide information on its well-being or rate of change. As with environmental indicators, cultural indicators can be categorised as pressure, condition or response indicators.

While the focus of this study is the protection of Aboriginal cultural values through the development and monitoring of appropriate cultural indicators, it is important to acknowledge that many, if not all, of the so-called natural values of the Wet Tropics have associated cultural values. Animals and plants are important for hunting, gathering and other cultural practices, particular places are associated with cultural sites and indeed the entire region is imbued with cultural meaning and Aboriginal history, and can be properly described as an Aboriginal cultural landscape (Review Steering Committee 1998). Natural values, and the indicators that are developed to monitor those values, are therefore of significance to Aborigines.

Environmental indicators in the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area

The attributes of the Wet Tropics for which the region has been listed as a World Heritage Area relate only to its 'natural values'. The recently adopted environmental indicators, however, set out to monitor a spectrum of values, including cultural values, which extend beyond the requirements of monitoring the condition of World Heritage values.

The initial Wet Tropics indicators, identified as measuring pressure, condition and response, are set out in Table 1.

Pressure	**Condition**	**Response**
Clearing	Conservation status of species	Plan provisions
Structural modification	World Heritage value attributes	Repair activities
Fragmentation	Extent of Protected areas	Regulatory mechanisms
Changed drainage patterns	Associated cultural values	Policy implementation
Invasion by exotic animals		Legislative mechanisms
Invasions by weeds and diseases		Rehabilitation of degraded areas
Fire		Scenic management

Table 1. Summary of Pressure-Condition-Response indicators adopted by the Wet Tropics Management Authority

In the initial set of Wet Tropics indicators only one condition indicator relates explicitly to cultural values. None of the pressure indicators appear to be related to monitoring cultural values. The response indicators are more general and could incorporate responses to some threats to cultural values. However, as is acknowledged by the WTMA, this initial set of indicators does not address cultural values in any comprehensive way.

Section 2.4 of *State of the Wet Tropics Reporting* (WTMA 2000) presents the single indicator for 'associated cultural values' as 'the area of land (ha) formally under Indigenous management'. This indicator makes a direct connection between the protection of Aboriginal cultural values and the area of land being managed by Aborigines. This is clearly an important connection, but equally clearly this indicator cannot provide a gauge to the condition or well-being of the full spectrum of Aboriginal cultural values associated with the rainforest. Identifying what that spectrum is, and what are the best indicators to monitor it, are the challenges of this research.

An examination of cultural indicators used in environmental monitoring elsewhere in Australia and overseas provided a starting point from which to explore the development of cultural indicators for the Wet Tropics. A selection of these national and

international examples of cultural indicators is summarised below. Smyth (2000) has provided a comprehensive review of these national and international examples.

State of the environment reporting

The Commonwealth State of the Environment Reporting system supports the *National Strategy for Ecologically Sustainable Development* and helps Australia meet its international environmental obligations. Following the publication of Australia's first *State of the Environment Report* for Australia in 1996, Environment Australia commissioned a report on *Environmental Indicators for Natural and Cultural Heritage* (Pearson et al. 1998). The report acknowledges the interrelationship between natural and cultural heritage, but establishes six elements of heritage values, for ease of sourcing, interpreting and applying data. These elements are:

- Natural heritage places;
- Indigenous places that inform us about the past and the archaeological record;
- Indigenous places important to living cultures;
- Indigenous languages;
- Historic heritage places;
- Heritage objects—natural, Indigenous and historic.

This approach divides Indigenous cultural values into three main components:

1. Places, complexes of sites and cultural landscapes that inform us about the past (places primarily of archaeological significance).
2. Places and complexes of places or cultural landscapes that are part of continuing, living traditions or contemporary cultural practices of Indigenous communities, or which have special significance to them.
3. Indigenous languages as a critical factor in the maintenance of good health of heritage values of places, have to be recognised and monitored (Pearson et al.1998).

In addition there is recognition that specific objects, in museums and elsewhere, may have Indigenous cultural values. The report stresses, however, that the division of Indigenous cultural values into separate elements is a convenience for the development of indicators and it does not deny the many overlaps between these elements, and between Indigenous and non-Indigenous values.

Pearson (1998) points out that environmental cultural values have two distinct, yet related aspects. These are the condition of the physical (natural) environment of cultural significance, and the condition of the cultural significance that a cultural group attaches to that environment. The development of cultural indicators for the Wet Tropics seeks to capture both of these aspects of cultural values.

Australian application of the Montreal Process for sustainable forest management

The Montreal Process began when Canada convened an International Seminar of Experts on Sustainable Development of Boreal[1] and Temperate Forests, following the

[1] Refers to the coniferous forests extending from New England to Alaska in north America.

United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) in 1992. This led to the formation of an international Montreal Process Working Group (n.d.), and subsequently an Australian Montreal Process Implementation Group (MIG). MIG had the task of developing locally appropriate criteria and indicators for the management of Australia's forests.

In 1998 MIG produced a framework of regional (sub-national) level criteria and indicators of sustainable forest management in Australia (Commonwealth of Australia 1998). One of the seven criteria is 'maintenance and enhancement of long term multiple socio-economic benefits to meet the needs of societies', which includes several sub-criteria of particular relevance to Indigenous cultural values. These sub-criteria include:

1. Cultural, social and spiritual needs and values;
2. Employment and community needs; and
3. Indigenous participation in management.

The application of these criteria and indicators as a mechanism for the recognition of Indigenous peoples' rights and interests in Australian forest has been discussed further by Peeler (1998).

Centre for International Forestry Research

The Centre for International Forestry Research (CIFOR) was established in 1993 under the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR) system in response to global concerns about the social, environmental and economic consequences of forest loss and degradation.

One of CIFOR's projects has been to develop and test criteria and indicators for the sustainable use of forests. The results of this work have been published in a Phase 1 Final Report (Prabhu et al 1996) and a Criteria and Indicators Toolbox Series (Prabhu et al 1999). The CIFOR project is primarily concerned with developing criteria and indicators for forests used for commercial timber production and they are designed to apply at the forest management unit scale. In spite of the commercial focus of forest management, CIFOR's proposed indicators cover a wide spectrum of forest values from biodiversity conservation to economic returns and social and cultural values.

Forest Stewardship Council

The Forest Stewardship Council (FSC <www.fscus.org>) is an international, non-government organisation established to enable third party certification of forest products with respect to the sustainability of the forests from which they are extracted. The FSC provides accreditation to independent certification organisations, which then undertake an evaluation of a particular forestry operation; an equivalent Marine Stewardship Council has been established to certify the sustainability of particular commercial fisheries. The incentive of third party certification as a marketing tool is designed to encourage commercial users of natural resources to establish ecologically sustainable management of those resources.

The FSC has developed ten principles for sustainable forest management, with several criteria being attached to each principle. Two of these principles focus explicitly on the rights and interests of Indigenous peoples and local communities.

World Conservation Union (IUCN) Commission on Protected Areas

The IUCN Commission on Protected Areas has recently developed a framework for evaluating management effectiveness of protected areas (Hockings 2000). The primary focus of the framework is on monitoring the effectiveness of management of the 'natural' values for which the protected areas have been established. However, for one category of protected area (IUCN Category Five), specific recognition is given to the need to maintain the relationship between human cultures and the protected area.

A pilot project with Jumbun Community

Jumbun, also known as Murray Upper, is a community of about one hundred Girramay, Gulngay and Jirrbal persons located on Girramay country within the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area on the coastal plain between the Coral Sea and the Great Dividing Range, about 25 kilometres northeast of Cardwell. During 2001 we held a series of discussions at Jumbun to discuss the development of indicators to monitor the protection of their cultural values associated with the surrounding rainforest country.

The meetings involved elders and younger persons from the three language groups and were held on the riverbank near Jumbun. From these discussions we have developed cultural indicators for a selection of cultural categories and elements that Jumbun have identified as priorities. It has been recognised that there will be a need to consider additional cultural indicators in the future and to give more thought to how the identified indicators could be monitored. Table 2 summarises the priority cultural categories and elements, along with the potential indicators and suggested methods to collect the relevant information.

Discussion

Many of the potential indicators identified at Jumbun relate to the fundamental underpinnings of culture, such as land ownership, access to sites and support for language maintenance, rather than direct measures of specific elements of culture, such as culturally based knowledge, beliefs or practices. These priorities represent the current imperatives of Girramay, Jirrbal and Gulngay, and the degree to which their values, rights and interests are currently recognised in legislation and management arrangements. This underlines the need to review the appropriateness of cultural indicators over time, and the need to develop appropriate indicators with and for particular cultural groups at particular locations.

Jumbun have included the category of 'Understanding History' in recognition of the need to achieve broad community understanding of the impacts of local, colonial and postcolonial events, and to achieve adequate recognition of other Aboriginal cultural values. This inclusion of a shared understanding of history, between Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities, represents a new category of cultural values not included in any of the national or international suites of cultural indicators reviewed for this study.

Though the current research is a pilot process for the recognition of cultural values across the Wet Tropics, the indicators developed at Jumbun cannot be applied automatically to other cultural groups elsewhere in the region. It may be, however, that the methodology applied at Jumbun can be applied elsewhere, and other cultural groups may wish to consider the applicability of the pilot cultural indicators to their own needs.

Cultural Value	Indicator
A: Rights to country	
A1: Land ownership	A1.1 Area of Aboriginal-owned land as a percentage of traditional land of a particular group; A1.2 Rate of return or determination of land.
A2: Land access, hunting, fishing, gathering & camping	A2.1 Location of all public access roads identified and open; A2.2 Number of access roads opened or closed during one year; A2.3 Number of formalised agreements allowing access to traditional land on or through private land; A2.4 Acquiring land to allow access; A2.5 Legislation recognising right of access to traditional land; A2.6 Appeal mechanism when access is refused.
A3: Belonging, identity and freedom	A3.1 No permits required for exercising traditional rights; A3.2 Burials on private land recognised and registered; A3.3 Traditional owners acknowledged as traditional owners.
B: Looking after country	
B1: Managing the Wet Tropics WHA	B1.1 Jobs for Aboriginal people under Aboriginal control; B1.2 Aboriginal involvement in re-vegetation programs; B1.3 Awareness of local Aboriginal people about decisions and plans in the WHA; B1.4 Number, frequency and level of meetings between Jumbun community and Wet Tropics Management Authority and other agencies; B1.5 Number of permanent jobs for Traditional Owners with government agencies, e.g. as rangers.
B2: Benefiting from Country	B2.1 Number of jobs for Aboriginal people in Aboriginal-controlled tourism enterprises.
C: Language	C1.1 Number of language speakers; C1.2 Level of fluency within community and across generations and tracked over time (using historical, current and future data); C1.3 Number and scope of language programs in local schools and local community; C1.4 Incentives to learn language, e.g. in education and tourism; C1.5 Use of language names for places, rivers etc. on Wet Tropics maps; C1.6 Extent of recorded language—is it on tapes and/or written down for future transmission?
D: Understanding History	D1.1 Availability and use of information sources; D1.2 Memorials and memorial services for past events (e.g., massacres); D1.3 Community knowledge about local history; D1.4 Number of Aboriginal studies programs in schools.

Table 2. Cultural values and indicators developed by Jumbun Community.

The next stage of the project is to collect the necessary data for each indicator, negotiate agreement on access and storage of that data and begin the process of applying these indicators to the management of the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area. It is intended to establish mechanisms for ongoing data collection and application of indicators that prove to be useful in the protection of Aboriginal cultural values, and to allow for the further development of indicators as circumstances and aspirations change.

Acknowledgments

The research for this paper was initiated by Dermot Smyth as a Rainforest CRC project in which Claude Beeron, as a member of the Jumbun community, was a participant. Beeron was subsequently nominated by the community to co-present the paper at the AIATSIS Conference and hence became co-author of this paper. An updated version of this paper was subsequently given to the World Parks Congress in Durban, South Africa in September 2003.

An oral version of this paper was presented to AIATSIS Conference2001 Symposium A 'Land Resources and Knowledge', Session 2 'Nature, landscape and human presences: Reworking the culture/nature divide in environmental management: theory and practice', convened by Lesley Head (University of Wollongong).

References

Hockings, M. 2000 *Evaluating Effectiveness—A framework for assessing the management of protected areas* (Best Practice Protected Area Guidelines Series 6). World Conservation Union, Switzerland.

Lawson, B., V. Mundraby Jr, and R. Watkinson, 1988 *Indigenous Involvement in the Management of the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area*. RAPI [Royal Australian Planning Institute] Congress Papers, Northern Territory Department of Lands, Planning and Environment, Darwin.

Montreal Process Working Group n.d. <www.affa.gov.au/content/output.cfm?ObjectID=D2C48F86-BA1A-11A1-A2200060B0A03770>

Pearson, M., D. Johnston, J. Lennon, I. McBryde, D. Marshall, D. Nash and B. Wellington 1998 *Environmental Indicators for National State of the Environment Reporting: natural and cultural heritage*. Environment Australia, Canberra.

Peeler, L. 1998 Criteria and indicators for ecologically sustainable forest management—an Aboriginal Australia perspective. In *Proceedings of International Conference on Indicators for Sustainable Forest Management*. International Union of Forestry Research Organisations, in collaboration with Centre for International Forestry Research and Food and Agricultural Organisation. Natural Resources and Environment, Melbourne.

Prabhu, R., C.J.P. Colfer, P. Venkateswarlu, L. C. Tan, R. Soekmadi and E. Wollenberg 1996 *Testing Criteria and Indicators for the Sustainable Management of Forests: Phase 1 final report*. Centre for International Forestry Research Special Publication, Jakarta.

Prabhu, R., C.J.P. Colfer and R. Dudley 1999 *Criteria and Indicators Toolbox Series* (9 volumes). Centre for International Forestry Research, Jakarta.

Review Steering Committee 1998 Which Way Our Cultural Survival—The review of Aboriginal involvement in the management of the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area. Wet Tropics Management Authority. Cairns.

Smyth, D.M. 2000 *Monitoring Culture: Towards the development of cultural indicators for the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area*. Rainforest Co-operative Research Centre, James Cook University, Cairns (Discussion Paper).

WTMA 2000 *State of The Wet Tropics Reporting*. Wet Tropics Management Authority, Cairns <http://www.wettropics.gov.au>.

Dermot Smyth is a researcher and consultant on cultural ecology, based in Atherton, north Queensland; he is an Honorary Research Fellow in the School of Tropical Environment Studies and Geography, James Cook University, where he teaches an annual course on 'Caring For Country'. He has published widely on the recognition of the rights and interests of Indigenous peoples in environmental and resource management in Australia, particularly in the context of protected areas (national parks, marine parks and world heritage areas). He is a member of the World Commission on Protected Areas and the World Conservation Union's Theme on Indigenous People, Local Communities and Equity in Protected Areas (TILCEPA).

Rainforest Co-operative Research Centre, James Cook University, Townsville 4811
<dermot.smyth@bigpond.com>

Claude Beeron is a Girramay elder from the Jumbun Community in North Queensland. His traditional country includes land and rivers in several national parks that lie within the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area and as one of a few Girramay fluent in his own language he holds a great deal of traditional knowledge about the rainforest environments. He plays a leading role in his community, guiding community development projects and the protection of cultural knowledge. Claude is a Board member of the Girringun Elders Aboriginal Corporation that coordinates land claims and co-management negotiations in his region. He is also a member of the Community Consultative Committee that advises the Board of the Wet Tropics Management Authority on the management of the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area. He is actively involved in promoting Aboriginal involvement in rainforest research through his membership of the Aboriginal Research Program Support group of the Rainforest Co-operative Research Centre at James Cook University.

Jumbun Community, Kennedy 4816

Political theory between two traditions: ethical challenges and one possibility

Morgan Brigg

University of Queensland

Abstract: *Establishing an ethical political theory framework for researching intercultural issues in settler-colonial nation-states such as Australia is a challenging task given ongoing colonialism and the intimacy of race relations. This paper considers some of these issues and presents my intentions for developing a theoretical approach for researching intercultural conflict resolution between Australian Aboriginal and Settler-European peoples. The approach proposed is in part inspired by Levinasian notions about approaching and moving into proximity with the Other. One possible site for such an approach and dialogue in Australian politics may be opened by exploring and developing 'self-regulation' as a shared and important ethico-political practice. Such an exploration draws on both autonomy and self-regulation, noted by ethnographers and others as central to the political life of various Australian Aboriginal peoples, and the relatively recent Western recognition of the personal as political in the work of feminists, Michel Foucault, and governmentality scholars. Bringing these two knowledges into dialogue raises political questions and challenges for the Western academy around negotiating differing ontologies and epistemologies. However, it also promises an ethical framework for examining processes of intercultural conflict resolution as mechanisms in which people are acted on and act upon themselves to fashion subjectivities, and a way of exploring and promoting different worlds and ways of being within such processes.*

Establishing an ethical political theory framework for research in settler-colonial nation-states such as Australia requires facing problems resulting from the dispossession of Indigenous peoples. These problems cannot be seriously addressed without recognition of 'the intimate connection between the foundations of settler societies and the dispossession of prior occupants' (Thomas 1999:11). Within the settler-colonial academy this context has challenging ramifications for attempts to know, or conduct research involving, one's cultural others. As Patrick Wolfe points out, '[c]laims to authority over indigenous discourse made from within the settler-colonial academy necessarily participate in the continuing usurpation of indigenous space (invasion is a structure not an event)' (1999:3). This exposes the colonialist nature of much academic study of culture. Here the intentions of individual scholars are less important than mobilisation of the disciplines of the modern social sciences—'disciplines' in Foucault's dual-sense—in historical and contemporary attempts to govern Indigenous peoples by dealing with the 'native' or 'Aboriginal' problem (Attwood and Arnold, 1992; O'Malley, 1996; Wolfe, 1999). Although my specific interest is the research of intercultural conflict resolution, particularly mediation processes wherein a third party acceptable to disputants assists them toward a settlement of their conflict, these same broad considerations apply. In this situation, then, what might constitute an ethical theoretical framework?

A short answer could be provided by stating that we must overturn 'Aboriginalist' forms of representations of Indigenous peoples, and consciously articulate oppositional modes of knowledge against orthodox systems (Attwood 1992:xiv). This is the

Foucaultian legacy mediated by Edward Said's (1995 [1978]) *Orientalism*. While this has the ring of engaged scholarship, it also draws upon yet another Western framework. The emancipatory and ethical appeal of such an approach is immediately apparent, but less ethical dimensions, buried in the ontological and epistemological bases of this approach, might not be currently visible. Even without being fully aware of what such difficulties might be, a dubious slippage is sometimes evident in progressive scholarship that adopts this approach. For instance, Pat O'Malley (1996) convincingly argues that governmentality literature generally, and particularly the notion of 'mentalities of rule', is too restrictive because it does not provide adequate recognition of the constitutive role of resistance and Indigenous social practices in programs of governance. However, if we are to acknowledge Indigenous practices to avoid the problem of privileging the ruling group's point-of-view, then we surely need to question the privileging of the ruling group's theoretical framework? For these reasons, my effort is not overtly Foucaultian and attempts, instead, to grapple with the problem of the ethnocentrism of Western social and political theory.

To do so it is necessary to attempt to think beyond the confines of Western liberalism and its familiar ways of rendering the political relationship between Indigenous and newcomer peoples through representation, justice, democracy, rights, equity and so on. If we refuse this (colonial) frame of reference, then the relationship can be reconceptualised by recognising that Indigenous peoples are governed by imported political values, institutions, and programs. This does not deliver us from the problems of scholarship arising from our colonial heritage, but it does allow them to be addressed more directly. Of course, the political relationship between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australian values is also immeasurably complex because what was foreign and local at first encounter has become intertwined and complex through an intimate (yet antagonistic) history. This history does not support, for instance, the attribution of coherence, completeness, or premeditation to colonial forms of governance. As O'Malley (1996) points out, it is necessary to acknowledge the constitutive role of resistance and the precariousness of governance. At a more general level, the capacities of subjects to elide, subvert, and reappropriate the representations and formulations made of them needs to be acknowledged (de Certeau 1984; Scott 1985; 1990). While recognition of such complexities, as part of a more expansive tapestry of Indigenous-newcomer politics, forms the backdrop for this paper, my aims here are modest and circumscribed—I want to indicate one possible ethical political theory framework for examining intercultural conflict resolution.

The uncertainty of the human sciences: an ethical space?

Contested claims to knowledge in the human sciences are the counterparts of agonistic relations of power that play out in everyday political practice. In relation to settler-colonial anthropology in Australia, Gillian Cowlishaw argues that 'while the colonial state is commonly depicted as intent on compiling systematic knowledge of the colonised, ... governing practices depended upon a profound and determined refusal to know or engage with that otherness with which they were dealing' (1999:301). In place of an engagement, ethnocentric interpretations, stereotypes and generalisations abound. This reiterates the ethical complexities of knowing our cultural 'others' outlined in my introduction. However, the problem of the status of knowledge claims is broader than this and encompasses the whole of the human sciences in the consternation manifest most commonly as postmodernism. Sam D. Gill presents the basis of these problems in

a straightforward way by framing knowing as a process of cognition. He stated (1998:20–21):

> The problem of knowing is that cognition is a process in which the subject to be known is affected by the knower. The knower is an active agent whose concepts do not perfectly reflect some pre-existing structure in the mind-independent reality … Minimally, concepts give reality meaning. Though broadly accepted, this view of cognition struggles to supplant the still commonly held, more traditional view that meaning is a given residing within reality and awaiting discovery.

Gill points out that the extreme positions in this debate are between those that argue on the one hand that cognition fully creates reality and, on the other hand, that signs and language are conduits that directly carry meanings from reality into the mind (1998:21). The position I adopt in this paper is that even if we accept the minimal version mentioned above—that concepts give reality meaning—the process of knowing immediately becomes a complex and murky one that deeply implicates knowers. In noting the ramifications of this, Gill speaks of a gap between the reality of our world and our understanding of it, or the space of representation, as the space in which 'we academics realize our being' (1998:3).

This space can be approached in a variety of ways. It can be both ignored and embraced, and when the latter approach is chosen, despair, nihilism, play, celebration and shifting identity politics are all options. The approach taken here is that this space of representation can be both interesting and productive for politics. In particular, its fluidity might provide opportunity for different worlds to be imagined and emerge wherein people may be able to be different from who they currently are, and in which we may be able to establish different sorts of relations with one another. Within these overall possibilities, uncertainty about modernist and Western knowledge claims can make space for the recognition and valuation of other (for example, Indigenous) ontologies, knowledges and lifeways. In the Australian context Stephen Muecke (1992; 1997; 1999) and Cowlishaw (1999)—among others—have suggested we pursue such efforts. How then, can I use this space to develop an ethical theoretical approach for exploring intercultural conflict resolution?

I have mentioned the Foucaultian option in my introduction. A second option is the currently popular recognition and valuation of difference and diversity. Although valuable, this broad appeal is dangerous because it is compatible with what Cowlishaw (1999:296) terms the squeezing out of 'robust "racial" difference … while a malleable, tractable kind of "cultural" difference is encouraged'. Manifestations of this problem are most fully evident in culture tourism which frequently facilitate the assimilation of cultural difference with limited challenge to the dominant culture. This type of valuation of culture is sanctioned because it does not challenge the 'historical trajectory towards an imagined unified modernity' (1999:296). Thus, while recognition of difference is clearly an important initial step in the valuation of and engagement with cultural others, this often elides the politics of the process through which we 'both discover and create ourselves as we create and discover others' (Gill 1998:36). Considering this process in combination with valuation of cultural others suggests the possibility for an engagement with ourselves and embarking on an ontological experience which can only be hinted at through the recognition of difference. This venture might be described as a type of serious dialogue. Gill's (1998) term 'storytrack', modified from Arrernte knowledge, provides the sense I want to describe the meaning of this venture both within and across cultures. He wrote (Gill 1998:36):

> The places we find sufficiently important to cause us to pause are the intersections of our storytrack with the storytrack of others. At these crossing points we perform the academic rites of negotiating and manipulating the intersecting sets of values so that they might more fully and meaningfully interact with others … We travel not to get anywhere but because our identity, our being, is inseparable from the track along which we travel, and to journey along our track is how we enact who we are.

Engaging with the storytrack of our cultural others implicitly takes the form of an 'approach', a movement to come into proximity or closeness with someone or something other than one's self or one's own without claiming authority over it. The intention to find a way to be with someone or something without reducing them to the same or suppressing their alterity is at the core of Emmanuel Levinas' (1991a; 1991b) efforts to develop an ethics of alterity (Davis 1996:25). The key theme is that one cannot return unchanged from such encounters.

How, though, might one undertake this effort without running into the problem of operating through a Western (Levinasian) frame of reference and therefore not respecting Indigenous knowledges? One solution might be to attempt to develop symmetry by asking how would Aborigines come to know their cultural others? This seems a way out until it becomes compromised by the forms of knowledge that are traditionally used in the West for such efforts; most academically oriented writing about Aboriginal ontology, knowledge and politics is produced by non-Indigenous peoples. A solution to this second problem may be to accept a variety of forms of knowledge (literature, poetry, artwork, and mythology) traditionally not drawn upon by social and political science. However, if I were to interpret these material for the purposes of Western social and political science I would be led to make certain claims about Aboriginal social and political life thereby bringing me back to the earlier ethical problem I identified of non-Indigenous academics making claims about Indigenous life. In short, I cannot escape a treacherous political space; I potentially betray people with every move I make.

To attempt to deal with this quandary, I outline a possible zone of intersection, or of storytracks, between the political lifeways of Indigenous and non-Indigenous subjects in Australia. This will become a site for me to work through the above politics of knowledge as part of a larger doctoral research project examining the politics and ethics of intercultural conflict resolution. These efforts are necessarily incipient and tentative. They draw upon fairly traditional academic sources (I will turn to aesthetic and other forms of representation in later efforts) to explore a theme from Indigenous political life and put this in dialogue with some Western political conceptualisations. In doing so, I do not make claims to comprehensive knowledge of either tradition, but instead want to open a space for dialogue. Nor am I pursuing a 'dialectical approach' which would leave me with a comfortable synthesis. Fundamental to my approach is recognition of alterity and commitment to dialogue rather than a resolution which ends exchange and locks us into certain ways of being and interacting. In drawing out a theme of Indigenous political life my aim is not to valorise the 'traditional', construct or essentialise an Other, or elide the antagonistic intimacy of contemporary politics including the fact that Aborigines have mobilised Western concepts such as justice, democracy and rights to their own ends. Instead, I am aiming for insights which might not be possible unless I consider fundamental differences and put to one side debates about justice, rights and so on. In turn, these insights can hopefully be applied to more intertwined histories, identities, and contemporary politics.

Autonomy and self-regulation in two traditions

Within the literature on Australian Aboriginal political life, Fred Myers (1986:431) reports that while European interpretations previously characterised small-scale societies as 'group-oriented', recent researchers have been 'rather impressed with the value placed on autonomy'. This is reinforced in Myers' (1991) rendering of Pintupi social and political life in which he makes autonomy a central concept. Autonomy is not a simple matter because, for Pintupi, 'personal autonomy depends paradoxically [at least to Westerners] on sustaining relations' (1986:431). Deborah Bird Rose similarly highlights both the valorisation of autonomy for people at Yarralin (2000:167), and its complexity: 'one's identity as an autonomous person is always set in a context of group and country' (2000:168). The centrality of autonomy in Indigenous political life is readily evidenced in instances of persons attending meetings, discussing issues passionately (including agreeing and disagreeing on them), and then doing what they were planning to do prior to the meeting (Rose 2000:171–172). This should not, however, be generalised or decontextualised. Myers (1991:265) points out that people he was closely involved with would accept 'a Village Council's right to act as the representative of the settlement in relations with the government … [but] not authorize these assemblies to make policy and regulations binding on them'. Myers says that an indicative assertion of autonomy in this case was ''It's only their idea,' … 'They are just men, like me'' (1991:265).

Although autonomy is central, it is important not to assume that it is uncontested, or to lose sight of the fact that it is negotiated within a complex constellation of Law, Dreaming, country, and relatedness. Thus while I am suggesting commonality among Indigenous groups, different manifestations of these patterns mean that the political reality of Indigenous peoples in Australia cannot be generalised or essentialised.
The full range of nuances of the notion of autonomy is beyond the scope of this paper but one important theme can be captured in the term self-regulation. Although many Aborigines are born with options (Rose 2000:168) and the possibility of becoming autonomous (Myers 1991:248), this can only be realised through the course of one's life by 'learning to carry a heavier load with intelligence, [and] to manage the complexities of social relations' (1991:245). Mary Graham (1990) equates such self-regulation with autonomy as a central aspect of Murri political life. In other terms, each individual is their 'own law-bearer' (1990:2). Knowledge is crucial here too: 'a knowledgeable person is …one who has accepted the responsibility for regulating his or her own behaviour and who manifests this autonomy in everything he or she does' (1990:2). The linkage between knowledge and self-regulation, and the concomitant importance of developing the former autonomously, is borne out in the typical absence of moralising in Aboriginal mythology or knowledge (Berndt and Berndt 1989:3). This leaves people to make their own choices, which extend beyond particular moral issues: it is an 'individual's responsibility to formulate his own broader system of coherence' (Myers 1991:16).

There are perhaps several ways in which autonomy and self-regulation, in the Indigenous sense, can be placed in dialogue with Western political notions and conceptualisations. However, it is also important to note that in many respects these two political domains are largely incommensurable. Western conceptualisations of politics have traditionally taken a binary form with monarchs, sovereignty, governments, and institutions on one side, and a particularly peculiar notion (in the scheme of world cultures) of a skin-bound and autonomous Subject as the bearer of certain rights and

freedoms, on the other. In contrast, Indigenous Australians operate successfully without formal systems of government, very different forms of hierarchy, and a very different notion of the human person. In somewhat bald terms, for Aborigines, politics is an intensely personal process while for Westerners politics is located in a public realm. Of course, the latter view has been soundly challenged by, among others, feminists, Michel Foucault, and governmentality scholars. Barbara Cruikshank (1996:235), for example, suggests that we 'we have wildly underestimated the extent to which we are already self-governing. Democratic government, even self-government, depends upon the ability of citizens to act upon their own subjectivity, to be governors of their selves'.

Self-regulation is thus also central to the modes of governance of Western democracy. As Foucault (1991; 1997a; 1997b) has shown, a key achievement of Western liberalism, as both a political theory and rationality of government, is that while it is ostensibly concerned with a 'free' Subject, governing proceeds through individuals' pursuit of autonomy and freedom. Apparently apolitical technologies of governance such as education, social work, psychology, and therapy operating at arms length from official government provide both the mechanisms and boundaries through which people are acted on, and act upon themselves, to fashion an individual self with aims, desires and so on. The 'free subject' of liberalism is produced as s/he is acted upon and acts upon her- or himself without the need for the operation of power as imposition or interdiction. This type of control and governing of human subjects is consistent with the principle of liberal political rationality that '"One always governs too much"—or, at any rate, one always must suspect that one governs too much' (Foucault 1997b:74). Accepting this (second) paradoxical pairing of autonomy and self-regulation opens a way of 'approaching' Indigenous politics, and a possible space for dialogue and intersection of storytracks between the political lifeways of Indigenous and non-Indigenous subjects in Australia.

It is relatively easy to argue for the centrality of autonomy and self-regulation in both Indigenous and non-Indigenous traditions and lifeways. However, exploring the interactions of these storytracks is complicated by the politics of knowledge and the challenge to avoid reproducing European conceptual forms. Here it is necessary to recognise a variety of knowledge forms, and to draw upon aesthetic, literary, affective and personal sources that are not yet well accepted in political and social science. This is not simply an issue of diversity since Australian Aboriginal and Western traditions in many respects assert differing epistemological and ontological claims. Rather, the challenge is to find a means for holding a conversation between these traditions and for moving in new directions. Meeting this challenge, including engaging with different cosmologies, ontologies, and the practices that drive subjectivity formation in the two traditions, may be possible in the current climate generated by uncertainty of knowledge claims in the Western human sciences. If this effort can be pursued from within political and social science it promises an ethical basis for investigating intercultural mediation practices and possibilities such as those evidenced in Lin Onus's hybrid artwork (Neale 2000).

Such an approach is particularly appropriate and useful for considering intercultural mediation and related conflict resolution processes because of their centring of self-regulation. Mediation and affiliated practices such as facilitation emphasise voluntary participation and decision-making. At the same time, people are guided through processes which usually require significant changes in their behaviour, and/or a reworking of their subjectivity with regard to another person or persons, and a range of

implicit norms including community harmony, non-violence, peace, and so on (Pavlich 1996). Analysis of the politics of autonomy and self-regulation in mediation and related processes offers a way of considering how Indigenous and Settler-European traditions are at play and therefore a means of examining a subtle operation of power and governance in a settler-colonial democracy. Of particular importance is considering the cultural basis of the modes of acting upon people that are mobilised in intercultural mediation processes and the cosmologies and ontologies that these modes invoke. This will in turn allow evaluation of mediation and other processes in terms of the extent to which they give recognition and respect to the cultural traditions involved and to answer the question of whether, or to what extent, they are technologies of colonialism.

As I have indicated earlier, the ambiguous space of representation and the interaction of storytracks through the politics of autonomy and self-regulation can be exciting and productive. Examining the ways conflict resolution processes act on people through an intersection of political storytracks can thus also provide a basis for exploring and promoting different worlds, ways of being, ways of acting upon selves, and interacting. In part, such an effort may contribute to learning about different practices of the self, including their relationship to knowledge and governance in different traditions. In this sense, Western political theorists can perhaps learn much from the complex mix of self-regulation, autonomy, and relatedness that has likely been practiced by Indigenous Australians for thousands of years.

Although accessing the possibilities suggested by the intersection of Western and Aboriginal Australian storytracks in mediation and related processes can be thought of as a broadly theoretical effort concerned with the politics of colonialism, it does require caution with regard to popular postcolonial theoretical notions. Notions such as hybridity, for instance, have tended to emerge from areas that were part of the raft of post-World War Two decolonisations. One result is that they are often inappropriate for settler-colonial states such as Australia that often have not resolved key questions of colonial rule. The popularity of such notions, and an associated aesthetics which foregrounds hyphenated or shifting identities, are potentially problematic in the Australian context. Nicholas Thomas summarises the danger when he states, '[t]he fact that some people, some cultures, might not understand their identities in these terms at all, or might … imagine cyclones rather than cultures, is obscured. In all becoming nomads, we ironically dispossess the actual nomads and their descendants' (Thomas 1999:280).

Conclusion

Developing an ethical political theory framework in the settler-colonial context and the fluid space of representation of the contemporary human sciences is a complex and ethically fraught task. Here I have grappled with this problem in a circumscribed manner to present one way of developing a theoretical approach for researching mediation and associated conflict resolution processes between Australian Aboriginal and Settler-European peoples. To do so I have shown that self-regulation is a central storytrack in the political lifeways of Western and Indigenous subjects in Australia. Viewing mediation and related processes as sites where these storytracks intersect provides a way to respect both traditions and to evaluate the cultural politics of mediation processes. To achieve this will require attention to the ways people are fashioned or produced through mediation practices and to the role of different cosmologies, ontologies, objectives, and programs in these practices.

Acknowledgment

An oral version of this paper was presented to AIATSIS Conference2001 Symposium A 'Land Resources and Knowledge', Session 6 'Beyond Native Title: Self-government on Aboriginal lands; Economic independence and commercial development', convened by Larissa Behrendt (University of Technology, Sydney) and Lisa Strelein (AIATSIS)

References

Attwood, B. 1992 Introduction. In B.M. Attwood and J. Arnold (eds), *Power, Knowledge and Aborigines*. La Trobe University Press and National Centre for Australian Studies, Melbourne, pp.i–xvi.

Attwood, B.M. and J. Arnold (eds) 1992 *Power, Knowledge and Aborigines*. La Trobe University Press and National Centre for Australian Studies, Melbourne.

Berndt, R.M. and C.H. Berndt 1989 *The Speaking Land: Myth and story in Aboriginal Australia*. Penguin Books, Ringwood.

Cowlishaw, G. 1999 *Rednecks, Eggheads and Blackfellas: A study of racial power and intimacy in Australia*. Allen and Unwin, St Leonards.

Cruikshank, B. 1996 Revolutions Within: Self-government and self-esteem. In A. Barry, T. Osborne and N. Rose (eds), *Foucault and Political Reason: Liberalism, neo-liberalism and rationalities of government*. University of Chicago Press, pp.231–251.

Davis, C. 1996 *Levinas: An introduction*. Polity Press, Cambridge.

de Certeau, M. 1984 *The Practice of Everyday Life*. University of California Press, Berkeley.

Foucault, M. 1991 Governmentality. In G. Burchell, C. Gordon and P. Miller (eds), *The Foucault Effect: Studies in governmentality*. Harvester Wheatsheaf, London, pp.87–104.

——1997a Security, Territory, and Population. In P. Rabinow (ed.), *Michel Foucault: Ethics, the essential works* (vol.1). Penguin, London, pp.67–72.

——1997b The Birth of Biopolitics. In P. Rabinow (ed.), *Michel Foucault: Ethics, the essential works works* (vol.1). Penguin, London, pp.73–79.

Gill, S.D. 1998 *Storytracking: Texts, stories, and histories in Central Australia*. Oxford University Press, New York.

Graham, M. 1990 On Correct Behaviour. Unpublished paper, Brisbane.

Levinas, E. 1991a *Otherwise than Being or Beyond Essence*. Kluwer Academic, Dordrecht.

——1991b *Totality and Infinity*. Kluwer Academic, Dordrecht.

Muecke, S. 1992 *Textual Spaces: Aboriginality and cultural studies*. New South Wales University Press, Kensington, NSW.

——1997 *No Road (bitumen all the way)*. Fremantle Arts Centre Press, South Fremantle.

——1999 Travelling the subterranean river of blood: Philosophy and magic in cultural studies. *Cultural Studies* 13(1):1–17.

Myers, F.R. 1986 Reflections on a meeting: structure, language, and the polity in a small-scale society. *American Ethnologist* 13(3):430–447.

——1991 *Pintupi Country, Pintupi Self: Sentiment, place, and politics among Western Desert Aborigines*. University of California Press, Berkeley.

Neale, M. (ed.) 2000 *Urban Dingo: The art and life of Lin Onus 1948–1996*. Queensland Art Gallery, Brisbane.

O'Malley, P. 1996 Indigenous Governance. *Economy and Society* 25(3):310–326.

Pavlich, G.C. 1996 *Justice Fragmented: Mediating community disputes under postmodern conditions*. Routledge, London and New York.

Rose, D.B. 2000 *Dingo Makes Us Human: Life and land in an Aboriginal Australian culture*. Cambridge University Press.

Said, E. 1995 [1978] *Orientalism*. Penguin, London.

Scott, J.C. 1985 *Weapons of the Weak: Everyday forms of peasant resistance*. Yale University Press.

——1990 *Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden transcripts*. Yale University Press.

Thomas, N. 1999 *Possessions: Indigenous art/colonial culture*. Thames and Hudson, London.

Wolfe, P. 1999 *Settler Colonialism and the Transformation of Anthropology: The politics and poetics of an ethnographic event*. Cassell, London and New York.

Morgan Brigg is a doctoral candidate at the University of Queensland where he is examining the politics and ethics of conflict resolution between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians. He holds has an MA in sociology (development studies) and is an accredited mediator. His publications include Brigg, M. 2001 'Empowering NGOs: The Microcredit Movement Through Foucault's Notion of *Dispositif*', *Alternatives: Global, Local, Political 26*(3):233–258.

<m.brigg@uq.edu.au>

‘Do you want to delete this?’ Hidden histories and hidden landscapes in the Murchison and Davenport ranges, Northern Territory, Australia

Nicholas Gill

University of Wollongong

Alistair Paterson

University of Western Australia

M.J. Kennedy

Mungkarta Aboriginal Land Trust

Abstract: *Dominant non-Indigenous narratives in the Northern Territory describe a landscape of progress, industry development and the labour of settlers in pastoralism and mining. The messier ‘hidden histories’ of relationships between Aborigines and settlers, of Aboriginal lives and culture maintained under settler hegemony, and of Aboriginal labour are readily deleted from such stories. This absence is evident in public landscapes and histories, such as those presented in central Australia for tourism, and those circulating among Northern Territory political and landowning elites. In the Tennant Creek region, the labour and presence of Aborigines in mining and pastoralism is similarly obscured. This paper builds on Aboriginal biography and autobiography to record this presence and explore Aboriginal landscapes in the historic period. Through the life and labour of Warumungu man, MJK—documented through oral history, detailed site visits and archaeological surveys—a landscape-based picture of Aboriginal life amongst pastoralists and other settlers emerges. In the process, greater depth can be seen in the structure of the landscape and the networks of Aboriginal life and labour in settler society from the 1930s to 1970s. This is not a complexity MJK would delete. On the contrary, it is a source of identity and pride to him, and it contains stories, that for MJK reinforce the legitimacy of Aboriginal presence and interests in land.*

Hiding history in the Northern Territory

During Easter in 2000 we (Gill and Paterson) were in Central Australia during heavy rainfalls and flooding. Roads were cut and we were stuck in Tennant Creek. Rather than tour the Tennant Creek mine we decided to review some documents held by the local (National Trust) museum. This included the material used in the late 1970s to compile a history of Tennant Creek. The author had visited pastoral stations throughout the region, collecting oral histories and describing station histories. The final result was a general history of the region, *Tennant Creek: Yesterday and Today* (Tuxworth 1978). It remains the only such work of which we are aware and it is now out of print.

It was interesting to note that in one case—and we did not review the whole collection—the author had written to a pastoralist she had recently visited, and

included a section of her writing describing the contribution of Aborigines to the running of the station and where they camped. In brackets after this section the author asked the pastoralist: 'do you want to delete this?' The final published version indicates the pastoralist chose to exercise their power of veto, and no mention is made of Aborigines camping at the station in this instance.

In central Australia, there is a small and growing collection of such local histories. They are often celebratory of pioneer settlement and driven by a concern that the 'pioneer' past of the Northern Territory be documented before it is lost (Gill forthcoming). These local histories constitute a significant means by which the past and its attendant social and political arrangements and relations are revalidated. To a contemporary audience they reaffirm the actions and values of non-indigenous peoples in the Northern Territory's past. In so doing they 'transcend nostalgia' (Lowenthal 1985) and form a body of public history in which the values of the dominant 'Whitefella culture' are reaffirmed and made available as history. Through these public histories, local events and national narratives of history and identity intersect (Rose and Lewis 1992).

The mediated absence of Aborigines at the station described by Tuxworth is not unique in Northern Territory historiography. Indeed it has been suggested that social amnesia and the imagined absence of Aboriginal peoples is particularly evident and acute in the public history of the Northern Territory and in northern Australia (Riddett 1995; Rose 1991). In these practices, idealised distinctions between settler and Aboriginal lives, histories and realms are maintained both in the past and present as well as in visions of the future (Edmunds 1995 has provided a discussion of such issues at Tennant Creek).

Hidden histories/Hidden landscapes

There are geographies to these histories. The separateness of settler and Indigenous realms in settler history and culture is reflected in the landscapes that are created both materially and imaginatively. Upon the absences within these landscapes can be constructed the myth of the self-made pioneer in a new land, and the settler's ever variable opposite number: the wild, dangerous, acquiescent, childlike, or faithful Aborigine.

The geographies that are part of the dominant histories of the north have uniformity and well-defined boundaries (Howitt 2001). They are based upon the separation of indigenous and settler realms, as expressed in categories such as Aboriginal reserves and land, missions, pastoral leases, stock routes, and national parks (Howitt 2001; Nash 1984). In this process of spatial separation and delineation many of the specific details of the multiple ways in which a space or site was/is actually inhabited and used are lost. Where contrasting stories are to be told of the same landscape, a separation in time or a representation of Aborigines as acquiescent or complicit in settlement, is a strategy for avoiding reconsideration of the foundations of outback mythology. More complex stories of co-existence between settlers and Aboriginal persons, and of the landscapes and peoples who do not readily occupy predetermined niches remain largely absent from public history and from public geographies.

To overwrite uniformity in Northern Territory history, landscapes not founded on the geographies of uniformity and boundaries need to be considered (Howitt 2001). Such landscapes will include the diversity of ways in which land was inhabited and the points and places at which settler and Aboriginal lives intersected. These will be landscapes in which the uni-polar perspective of the settler self, will be replaced by a multicentred approach to landscape, one in which diversity, not uniformity will be a defining characteristic (Howitt 2001; Mitchell 2001).

How can we delineate alternative landscapes to create the historical and geographical frameworks that will form the basis for more inclusive stories of locality, region and nation? How can the contingency and diversity of Northern Territory landscapes be illustrated in such a way as to provide a foil to the homogenising and bounded landscapes that currently dominate? In relation to public history, Rose and Lewis (1992) suggest an approach built on specific sites, and the recovery of meaning and interaction at those sites. The specifics of settler/indigenous interaction can provide insights with which to insinuate cracks into histories and landscapes founded upon separation and spatial differentiation. To build on their argument, the presences at, and absences from, particular places contribute to the character of landscapes. Presenting different versions of presence and reinserting peoples and habitations made absent, in a manner grounded in places, offers a powerful antidote to colonising landscapes. Individuals, groups and nations find identity in landscape. Settlers in Australia have asserted this by projecting the certainty and the primacy of their landscapes onto their lives, onto Aboriginal peoples, into history, and onto the land. An aim of this study is to illustrate the fragile nature of such ‘certainty’ and to counterpose it to other subjectivities, shared spaces, lives and interactions.

The landscape of a life

This paper explores one largely hidden landscape in the Tennant Creek area (Figure 1), that of a Warumungu man, MJK. MJK was in his seventies at the time of the fieldwork on which this paper is based and is recently deceased. He spent his life working on stations and at mining settlements in this area. His experience includes the time of Aboriginal employment on stations, life at ration depots and Welfare Branch settlements, the arrival of land rights, the return of his traditional lands, and a period as a cattle station manager.

MJK’s life history and his recollections point not only to a multi-faceted Aboriginal landscape, but also to settler occupation and use of the land in ways that elude uniform compositions of landscape. For example, many of the sites we have visited are associated with settler pastoralists who align closely with Rowse’s (1998) description of ‘feral pastoralists’. Also featuring alongside such ‘ferals’ are their mixed descent Aboriginal employees and associates, their wives and children, and their tactics in avoiding the authorities in the rugged Murchison ranges (Figure 1). Such pastoralists do not fit neatly in the conventional tale of station establishment, families, and the growth of solid communities found in Northern Territory pastoral culture (Gill forthcoming; also Powell and McRae 1996).

We have approached the landscapes discussed in this study in several ways. With MJK we have visited places he remembers—including settlements, pastoral outstations, missionary camps—where Aborigines lived or briefly visited, and key sites related to the pastoral and mining industries. These site visits have acted as

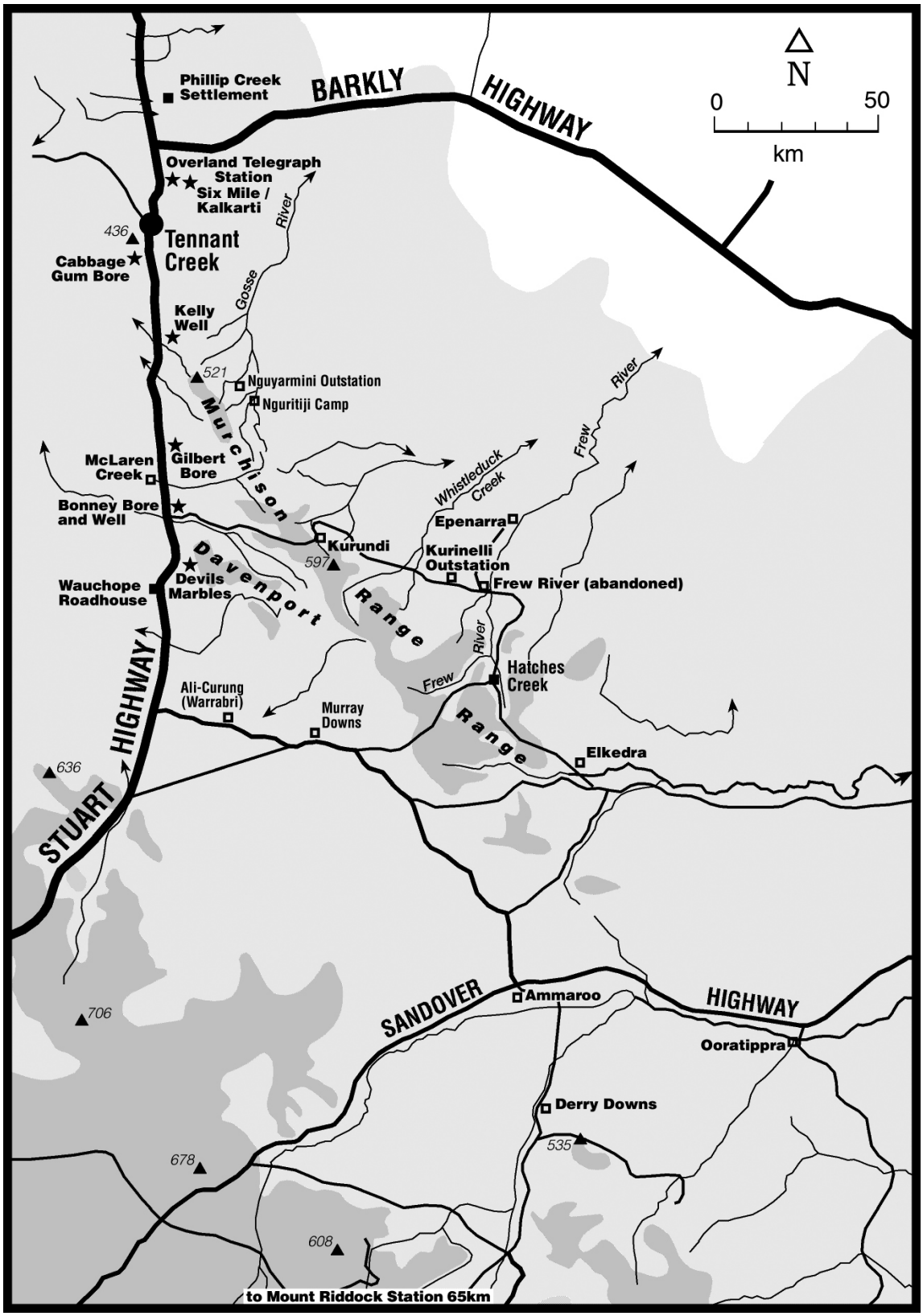

Figure 1. Tennant Creek and Murchison-Davenport Ranges area

mnemonic triggers, as MJK maintains a clear memory of how these places were occupied and used. Many of these visits were to places related to pastoralism, as MJK was aware of our interest in these places and his knowledge has been invaluable in interpreting how the pastoral system functioned. MJK's account also indicates how Aborigines and others negotiated the physical landscape. A map of MJK's life provides a structure which visually represents his memories of work, family, and aspects of his traditional obligations and knowledge (Figure 2). Most of the places in this map are settlements, each with a complement of ancillary work and social places. These are all in turn linked by pathways.

All of these places contain material culture: in campsites, holding yards, mission stations, government bores, and settlements. This is a type of material evidence which has rarely been used by archaeologists in historic contexts (Carment 1993) to address questions about the organisation of Aboriginal and settler society. As most of the material culture is on the surface and does not require sub-surface excavation, the recording of archaeological sites involved surveying the distribution of artefacts. These maps are linked to a database which records the characteristics of each artefact: what it is, when it was made, what its possible function was. This form of spatial analysis is well developed in archaeology, particularly in ethnoarchaeological studies in America (Kent 1984) and Australia (O'Connell 1987). There are scales of evidence in the archaeological record: from the smallest level of artefact/activity area, to site and regional analysis. This scalar approach provides a means to link individual sites to interpretations of landscapes, as detailed elsewhere in Australia (Birmingham 2000; Clarke 2000; Fullagar and Head 1999; Paterson 1999; Paterson 2000; Paterson et al. 2003).

In addition to the archaeological and oral evidence, documentary sources—including land-tenure records, biographies, mission records, and police records—have been studied. As field-recording is still underway, the analysis of this disparate evidence is not complete. However it is possible to indicate some preliminary results from this research, as illustrated by our work at Kelly Well.

Kelly Well

Kelly Well (Figure 1) is a site which has had multiple uses over time. It is the site of a soak used by Aborigines (*Balgalalgi*) which was reported by John McDouall Stuart (1865). A well was sunk there in 1875, and from the 1930s until the 1950s it was an important stage on the north-south droving route with extensive yards and a cattle dip (Pearce 1984). There are material remains of all of these activities in the forms of wells and yards. There are also the material remains of camps that appear to result from distinctive uses of the site. The most extensive remains originate from Aboriginal settlement in the forms of huts, fireplaces, tool making areas, and alcohol drinking sites (Figure 3). The settlement has a diverse range of cultural material, including ochre, grinding tools, stone and glass tools, and traded items such as decorated shell pendants from the Kimberley coast.

Other material remains relate to the use of a set of pig yards adjacent to the main cattle and sheep yards, and located close to the Aboriginal settlement. We are interested in past relationships between these two elements of Kelly Well. Land records indicate that Kelly Well was used from the 1930s onwards by Tennant Creek butchers as a means to access meat products from the pastoralists in the Murchison

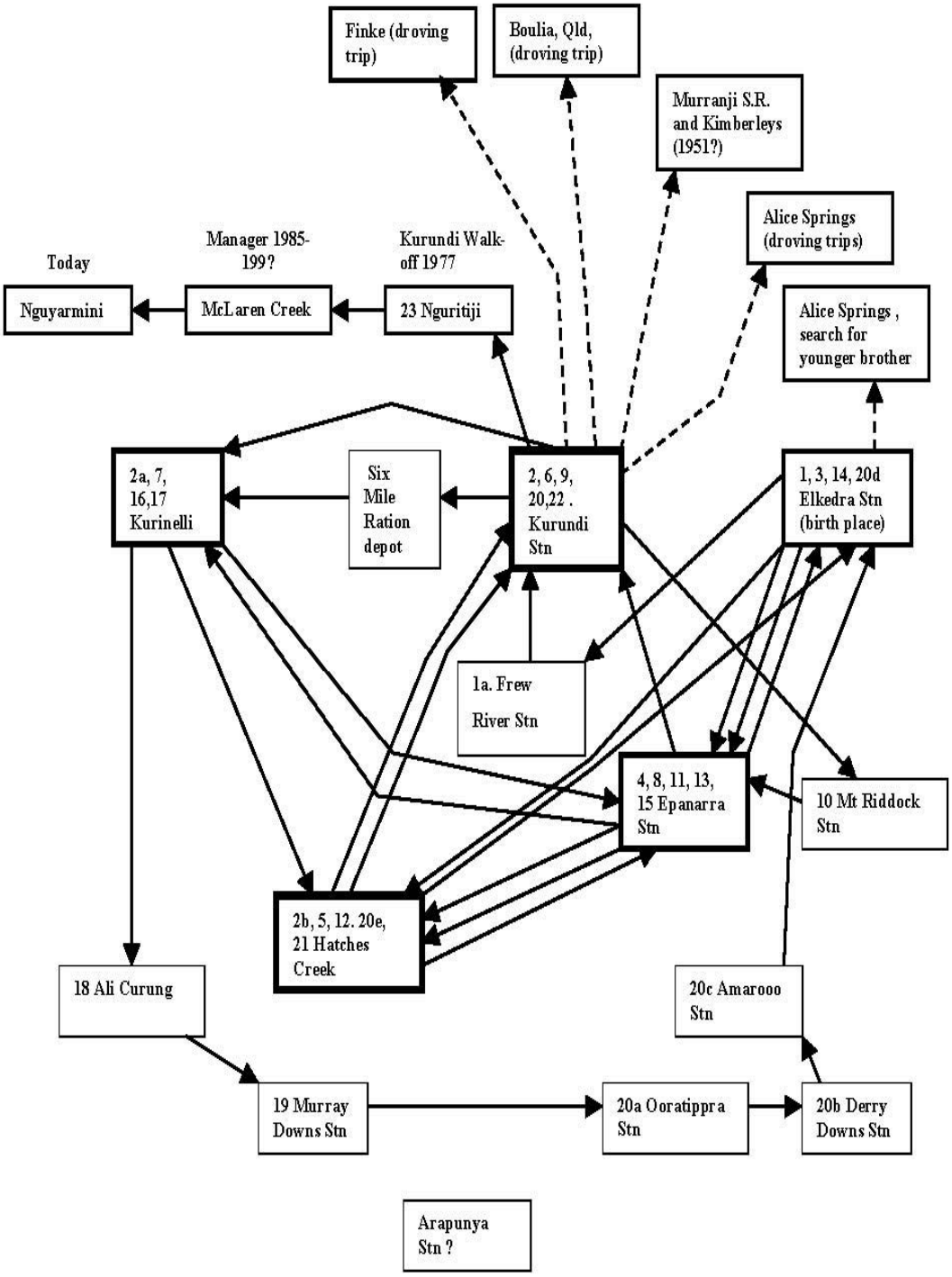

Figure 2. MJK's Map—Work History

Figure 3. Remains of Aboriginal huts at Kelly Well

Ranges. The butchers—Fazal Deen and Jimmy Traylen—are remembered by MJK, as he was involved in bringing cattle out to Kelly Well. At that time Aborigines were banned from Tennant Creek, but the butchers would bring alcohol, tobacco and food out to the Kelly Well camp and butcher the cattle on site. It appears that the pigs were sustained by the offal and other unwanted cattle parts. The remains of the camping episodes at the pig yards are well preserved, as discarded food scraps and rubbish were placed in the drums forming the yards, perhaps as a means to weigh them down (Figure 4). This archaeological material is being analysed for dietary, functional, and temporal information.

One interesting aspect of the information from Kelly Well is that it provides a complementary—yet different—account to MJK's recollections. MJK remembers how this site functioned as a nodal point linking a range of pastoral enterprises in the Murchison ranges with Tennant Creek, and as a site associated with longer droving routes in northern Australia. His account of social and economic relationships with butchers and drovers tells us much about how this place worked. However, MJK does not recall much about the Aboriginal settlement at Kelly Well reported here, which seems to be post-1950 in use, nor does he know much about the ways in which other travellers used this major watering place on the post 1860s north-south route. The archaeological remains of activities at Kelly Well provide different perspectives on social and economic processes which complement MJK's account.

Work as landscape

MJK's life can be mapped out to illustrate the points of convergence and divergence between the Aboriginal and settler realms. The process of mapping out his life also shows the complexity and diversity of meanings of various places. Figure 2 is one way

in which MJK's life can be mapped out according to the various places that feature in his recollections. The sequence of numbers (1–23) provides a rough chronology of events and places in MJK's life, but it should not be taken as a literal record of what he did and when. As most of our site visits with MJK are to sites on his own land, and much of the area covered in the map lies to the south, it includes places we have not yet visited. As MJK talked he would recall places and events left out in earlier conversations, and they would be duly inserted. No doubt gaps remain.

Figure 4. Quantification of food remains, ceramics and glass from the pig yards, Kelly Well.

Nonetheless, we begin our writing of this project with this map as it illustrates the nature and diverse character of the landscape of an Aboriginal man in the Murchison-Davenport Ranges area living in two realms, and occupying landscape created in terms of both. The map largely focuses on the time before land rights. It is a time when many Aboriginal persons were part of the pastoral economy, when stations depended on Aboriginal workers, when Aborigines resided in station camps, and were subject to the vagaries of the cycles of cattle work, the personalities of station managers and owners, and to the system of Aboriginal welfare.

MJK's work map shows how he moved around constantly from place to place and station to station. The same places crop up in this narrative over and over again, although at times for different reasons. MJK drops in and out of the pastoral economy, leaving when he has Aboriginal business to attend to. We will use some examples to illustrate the various meanings places have and how MJK lived in both the settler and Aboriginal realms.

MJK describes his work at Frew River, then Kurundi, as his first 'real' job. It was on these stations that he learnt the horse and cattle skills he would continue to employ

for decades to come. His station life was spatially concentrated around Kurundi, Elkedra and Epenarra stations (Figure 1). These are stations close to MJK's country, and they afforded access to both his own traditional lands and to older Aborigines from whom he could learn.

At Kurundi, MJK honed his skills as a stockman. These skills took him all around the country as stations needed workers with a range of skills such as riding bronco horses in yards, breaking in horses, building yards, sinking bores, putting up windmills, and working cattle (Figure 5). Work at Kurundi also took him all over land that he knows well today both in Aboriginal and pastoral terms. Many of MJK's more detailed site-based pastoral recollections on the north-east of the Murchison ranges, including the Kelly Well stories, date from his time at Kurundi working for George Birchmore.

Figure 5. Tjinjarra bronco yards which MJK helped to build in the 1930s-1950s

MJK's recollections are littered with places he worked. His memories of work include training racehorses at Elkedra, putting up a holding paddock at Epenarra, building yards at Hatches Creek and Rooney's yard, and having a row with the manager at Jim Lewis' yard on Kurundi. These places define a pastoral landscape, often using the names of those settlers credited with their construction, but clearly they are also are part of a landscape of Aboriginal movement in, around and out of the pastoral industry.

Like many Aborigines in this era, MJK was able to remain on or near his country through his station employment. At various times, this allowed him to leave the stations to pursue his own concerns. He describes one such period, the attractions of the stations, and the transition back to station work:

MJK: No, well, when, I bin went back with a big mob of people, you know, walking about round bush. So I bin join in with that really bush mob, bin walking around there, eating bush tucker, bush meat, then we went back to, we was looking for tobacco. So we had to, we went to Elkedra station, we seen old Jack Sprat, old half caste bloke.

NG: When you were walking around with that bush mob, where were you walking, which country?

MJK: Oh, Hatches Creek, between Hatches Creek, Elkedra, we bin walk back through there, I bin follow the mob, people walking round.

AP: That was after Kurundi?

MJK: After the Kurundi.

NG: You came looking for tobacco at Elkedra?

MJK: We went for, you know, we was going to get tobacco properly. Then we went to Elkedra. And this old Jack Sprat, he had horses, some racehorse, training, station horse. When old whathisname was there, old Johnny Driver.

NG: Was Jack Sprat working for Driver?

MJK: Yeah, working. He bin training whatshisname, racehorse, he bin training horses there. So when he see me, he said to me, "oh that's good, we looking for horseman", you know, you got that what I mean?

AP: Yeah yeah, you were good with horses.

NG : He knew you.

MJK: Yeah, he know me, old Jack Sprat, he's half caste bloke. He bin working for Kennedy and Bill Riley, Elkedra. But, Elkedra, what, Kennedy and whatshisname, Kennedy and whathisname, Bill Riley, went away.

Kurinelli, a small gold mining area plays a recurring role in MJK's stories. One of the miners was a Chinese man called Jimmy Campfoo, who, according to MJK, had an Aboriginal wife and numerous Aborigines working for him. MJK went there at least twice after arguments with station managers.

Kurinelli seems to have provided a place where Aborigines were able to gather and be relatively free from settler control, while retaining access to employment and goods such as tobacco and food from Campfoo. Kurinelli plays an important role in MJK's education as a Warumungu man. While still a young man, he left Epenarra station and went to Kurinelli to be educated, the results of which retain their relevance today:

MJK: No I didn't married yet. Had to come back and sit down with the old blackfellas, learn about Aboriginal way, you know ceremony way, with old Lame Tommy. At Kurinelli, I bin just sitting, I wasn't working, nothing.

AP: This was Kurinelli?

MJK: Yeah, Kurinelli mine there. I had to come back and sit down there. Oh long time. Kurinelli. I bin sit down there.

NG: With Lame Tommy?

MJK: With Lame Tommy, old people, just to learn about ceremony, ceremony about Warupunju people.

AP: [MJK], why then? Why did you go there then? Did someone say, "[MJK] you come back to Kurinelli and you learn about this business", or did you…?

MJK: Well, old fella, we bin really, want to, we was wondering that way. Young people. We was wondering, want to learn about the country.

AP: You wanted to?

MJK: Ya, so we got to come back to old people and, so we can show the ceremony. Country, you know. That ceremony, holding country. Just like the map you gottim. Just like a map. That's why people got to come back, well he knows the country, all over. You know, Warupunju, just like you say Queensland. Like Queensland. Warupunju, well that mean just like a Queensland. So we had to come back and sit down with old Lame Tommy. Lot of old people bin around there. Alyawarra people, Warumungu people, bin come together, and sit down. Do some ah, you know, do some Aboriginal way, doing some business and all that, bin doing it. So we bin learn him little bit about the country, you know, Aboriginal way. I bin there for long time, I never start work, I bin sitting down there a long time, with old blackfellas…Well you got to know the country, because a lot of people come and ask us questions.

AP: Now?

MJK: Now. Yeah. Come and you know.

AP: Its good that you learnt.

MJK: Yeah, well you learn, you know a bit about your country. Well you can talk about something. You know, whether lawyer, anthropologist, anthropologist, they ask you all sorts of questions, you know: "You know your country?" That's what they come and ask you. [22/6/00]

Kurinelli was a place that fulfilled a variety of roles for various groups. It was a mining area, and thus part of one story of the European occupation and development of the area. It was also a site that was occupied in a dual way. Aborigines and non-indigenous persons were both able to profitably use the resources available to further their economic and cultural interests. This was a place shared by at least two cultures, and there are points of connection as surely as there are separations.

The material considered in this paper demonstrates the different ways in which we are attempting to interpret landscapes—from the past to the present—in the Murchison Ranges. The different types of evidence relate to each other in different ways. MJK's recollections provide a deeply personal and powerful way of understanding a range of twentieth century activities in this region. The archaeology provides a different form of evidence, about the timing and nature of human activity and patterns of settlement, some of which are familiar to MJK, others less so. Documentary evidence also provides some important insights, particularly in relation to land tenure and use over time.

Following our introductory discussion of hidden landscapes and histories, this research appears to provide a different account of twentieth-century life in the Davenport-Murchison Ranges area, one which highlights people left out of, or generalised about in, previous historical narratives of the region. At a regional scale, MJK's work landscape illustrates a distinctively Aboriginal perspective on the period

of welfare and pastoral employment. His landscape is characterised by spaces shared by Aboriginal and non-indigenous peoples, as well as by the agency of Aborigines living under restrictive conditions. The archaeological, oral and archival evidence from sites such as Kelly Well and Kurinelli illustrates the value of a grounded and site-based approach to writing histories. Were we to rely on just one of the sources used, we would have a lesser understanding of the use and meanings of these places. In MJK's landscape, and in the case of Kurinelli and Kelly Well, we see a history of the region which encompasses 'separate domains', but these domains are 'nonetheless mutually embedded in each other so that to sever them is to perform an amputation' (Rose and Lewis 1992:36). The potential promise and reward of this research lie in bearing witness to MJK's multicentred landscape, and in working with the concept of landscape to complement and extend his personal stories into public histories of the region.

Acknowledgment

An oral version of this paper was presented to AIATSIS Conference2001 Symposium A 'Land Resources and Knowledge', Session 1 'Nature, landscape and human presences: Interdisciplines and interactions in cultural landscapes', convened by Lesley Head (University of Wollongong).

References

Birmingham, J. 2000 Resistance, creolization or optimal foraging at Killalpaninna Mission, South Australia. In R. Torrence and A. Clarke (eds), *The Archaeology of Difference: Negotiating cross-cultural engagements in Oceania*. Routledge, London, pp.360–405.

Carment, D. 1993 Archaeology and history in central Australia. *Australasian Historical Archaeology* 11:139–41.

Clarke, A. 2000 Time, Tradition and Transformation: the negotiation of cross-cultural engagements on Groote Eylandt, northern Australia, northern Australia. In R. Torrence and A. Clarke (eds), *The Archaeology of Difference: Negotiating cross-cultural engagements in Oceania*. Routledge, London, pp.142–81.

Edmunds, M. 1995 *Frontiers: Discourses of development in Tennant Creek*. Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies, Canberra.

Fullagar, R. and L. Head 1999 Exploring the prehistory of hunter-gatherer attachments to place: an example from the Keep River area, Northern Territory, Australia. In P.J. Ucko and R. Layton (eds), *The Archaeology and Anthropology of Landscape: Shaping your landscape*. Routledge, London, pp.322–35.

Gill, N. forthcoming Transcending nostalgia: pastoralist memory and staking a claim in the land. In R. Davis and D.B. Rose (eds), *Dislocating the Frontier*. Aboriginal Studies Press, Canberra.

Howitt, R. 2001 Frontiers, borders and edges: liminal challenges the hegemony of exclusion. *Australian Geographical Studies* 39:233–45.

Kent, S. 1984 *Analyzing Activity Areas: An Ethnoarchaeological Study of the Use of Space*. University of New Mexico Press, Albuquerque.

Lowenthal, D. 1985 *The Past is a Foreign Country*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.

Mitchell, D. 2001 The lure of the local: landscape studies at the end of a troubled century. *Progress in Human Geography* 25:269–81.

Nash, D. 1984 The Warumungu's reserves 1892-1962: a case study in dispossession. *Australian Aboriginal Studies* 1984/1:2–16.

O'Connell, J. 1987 Alyawara site structure and its archaeological implications. *American Antiquity* 52:74–108.

Paterson, A. 1999 Confronting the sources: The archaeology of culture-contact in the south-western Lake Eyre Basin, central Australia. Doctoral thesis, University of Sydney.

Paterson, A. 2000 Situating Belonging: The role of Historical Archaeology in locating cultural relationships using examples from Australian pastoral domains. *Balayi: Culture, Law and Colonialism* 1(2):109–31.

Paterson, A., N. Gill and M. Kennedy 2003 An archaeology of historical reality? A case study of the recent past. *Australian Archaeology* 57:82–89.

Pearce, H. 1984 *Tennant Creek Historical Sites Survey—Report to the National Trust of Australia (N.T.)*. National Trust of Australia (N.T.), Darwin.

Powell, P. and E. McRae 1996 *By Packhorse and Buggy*. Self-published, Alice Springs.

Riddett, L. 1995 Think again: communities which lose their memory: the construction of history in settler societies. *Journal of Australian Studies* 44:38–47.

Rose, D.B. 1991 *Hidden Histories: Black stories from Victoria River Downs, Humbert River and Wave Hill Stations*. Aboriginal Studies Press, Canberra.

Rose, D.B. and D. Lewis 1992 A bridge and a pinch. *Public History Review* 1:26–36.

Rowse, T. 1998 *White Flour, White Power: From Rations to citizenship in central Australia*. Cambridge University Press, Melbourne.

Stuart, J.M. 1865 *Explorations in Australia: The journals of John McDouall Stuart during the years 1858, 1859, 1860, 1861, and 1862, when he fixed the centre of the continent and successfully crossed it from sea to sea*. Saunders, Otley.

Tuxworth, H. 1978 *Tennant Creek: Yesterday and today*. J.R. Coleman, Darwin.

Nicholas Gill is a geographer at the University of Wollongong. He has conducted research on rural cultures and nature, outback mythology, Aboriginal land use and cultural history.

School of Earth and Environmental Science, University of Wollongong <ngill@uow.edu.au>.

Alistair Paterson is an historical archaeologist at the University of Western Australia. He has worked at the interface of history and archaeology in remote pastoral areas of Australia, particularly in the Lake Eyre Basin and more recently in the Pilbara.

Centre for Archaeology, University of Western Australia <paterson@cyllene.uwa.edu.au>.

M.J. Kennedy is now deceased. He was from the Warupunju country south-east of Tennant Creek. His name is used here in accordance with his family's wishes. His knowledge and desire to tell his story of Aborigines, Europeans and pastoralism in the ranges were central to the inception of the research and critical to many of its subsequent directions.

Returning Indigenous knowledge in central Australia: 'this CD-ROM brings everybody to the mind'

Barbara Glowczewski

Laboratoire d'Anthropologie Sociale, CNRS/EHESS/Collège de France
and James Cook University, Townsville

Abstract: *Many people in the modern world identify with a culture essentially transmitted through live or recorded images and sounds. Image and sound are at the core of the traditional transmission of knowledge for many Indigenous peoples. Today, multimedia technology and the internet offer a fantastic way to promote and transmit oral cultures both for the benefit of the Indigenous peoples concerned, as well as to demonstrate the importance of local knowledge in the global system. Though text is still present in the new technologies, audiovisual information allows more direct access to Indigenous languages and cultures. Debates about 'New Technology, Anthropology, Museology and Indigenous Knowledge' at the 2001 UNESCO symposium on 'Indigenous Identities' <http://www.unesco.org/culture/indigenous> have demonstrated the importance of making these new information technologies available to all Indigenous peoples. Such access will enable Indigenous peoples to control the data available on the Internet and to produce their own tools for education and communication. This will also help to commit researchers and museums to returning material, developing projects in partnership with Indigenous communities and respecting ethical protocols. Drawing on my personal experience of using multimedia technology to return material to the Warlpiri people of Lajamanu, with whom I have been working since 1979, I discuss a part of the Australian experience which has been groundbreaking in this domain.*

Indigenous peoples from different countries, especially Australia, have been saying for some time that the data collected over the decades by anthropologists and other specialists is very rarely returned to them. Access to recorded information, descriptions and analyses should be a right for the people concerned. This would allow them to control the representation of their culture and history and teach their children through the education system. People also need to know about the existing data and studies referring to them, so that they can deal more effectively with governments which, when considering land claims and compensation, may ask them for written evidence of their ethno-cultural ancestry. Finally, when people have control of such data, it is possible for them to debate and criticise the existing scientific interpretations.

For all Indigenous societies based on an oral tradition with no writing system, anthropological and other records have become an important part of their own history. But such records cannot be taken as automatically reliable, especially when the government is using experts who refer to old archives or studies to challenge the current oral testimonies of Indigenous persons.[1] This conflict over authenticity is one of the reasons why Indigenous persons claim the right to re-appropriate, and take control of, the ways in which their culture, society, beliefs and knowledge have been represented

[1] Sutton (1995, 1998) has written on the current critical movement in relation to anthropological classics in Australia.

during decades of Western academic dominance. Part of this movement of resistance involves the repatriation of material culture, especially religious objects and human remains that are spread all over the world. It also involves the repatriation of immaterial culture, intangible heritage or intellectual property; that is, stories, songs, language and other knowledge recorded in the past and in the present. Guidelines 28 and 29 of the United Nations' draft principles and guidelines for the protection of the heritage of Indigenous peoples state that:

> All researchers and scholarly institutions within their competences should take steps to provide Indigenous peoples and communities with comprehensive inventories of the cultural property, and documentation of indigenous peoples' heritage, which they may have in their custody … Researchers and scholarly institutions should return all elements of Indigenous peoples' heritage to the traditional owners upon demand, or obtain formal agreements with the traditional owners for the shared custody, use and interpretation of their heritage. [United Nations 2000]

These two guidelines cast a new light on the current development of new information technologies. This paper analyses the example of a CD-ROM that I produced to return and restore information gathered through my work to the Warlpiri people from central Australia (Glowczewski 2000/01).

Re-appropriation of culture

As a French anthropologist, I started to work with Warlpiri from Lajamanu in 1979. Today, Warlpiri are one of the main desert groups, neighbours to the Kukatja and Pintupi persons of the Western Desert. Like most other Australian groups, the Warlpiri experienced violent contact with Europeans, epidemics, massacres, forced sedentarisation on reserves, unpaid labour, and different government apartheid-type policies; but, in contrast with groups which were exterminated or dismantled through the separation of children from their families, they were able to stay together and maintain part of their culture. Their language is still spoken, unlike many of the 200 languages present in Australia before European colonisation began. After a successful land claim in 1976, the old reserve of Lajamanu established in the 1950s became an Aboriginal managed community.

In this context, I became committed to the repatriation of data collected from the elders in a form that would be useful for the younger generation. Many hours of recordings, on audio tape and on film, formed the core for a multimedia program linking images, sounds and texts for the Lajamanu. The aim was not just to make a database juxtaposing different media, but to structure the information so that it could be used by local school students as part of their bilingual Warlpiri/English program. My hypothesis was that if I could transpose the cognitive map of this society (that is, the way that people organise their relation to space and knowledge), then it would be also easier for non-Aborigines to understand the cultural and spiritual richness of this Indigenous knowledge and the complexity of Warlpiri society.

In 1995, Lajamanu school already had some Macintosh computers, and with the quick development of new technologies in the Australian school system, it was probable that sooner or later this remote community[2] would also have CD-ROM facilities.

---

[2] The nearest settlements are Wawe Hill, 100 km to the north, and Yuendumu, 300 km to the south.

Cover of Dream trackers. Yapa art and knowledge of the Australian desert (Pistes de Rêve—Art et savoir des Yapa du désert australien). *CD-ROM, UNESCO Publishing, Paris, Geneva and New York*

To produce an interactive multimedia program, the data had to be organised differently from a book or a film. The writing of the script had to be non-linear; that is, it had to have autonomous modules of text, sound and image that could be connected with each other. I wanted these hyperlinks to follow rules and to have meanings that respected the connections that the Warlpiri themselves establish according to their own cognitive logic.

Many months were spent arranging the data, according to the Dreaming affiliations of the different local groups. Traditionally these groups used to live around waterholes, hunting and gathering as they travelled between places that were in their spiritual custody. Today, Warlpiri still identify with those places of origin, and they celebrate them in rituals during which they dance, sing and paint their bodies and sacred objects. In the mid-1980s, they also started to paint traditional designs—which always refer to places and their connected totems—on canvas for sale. I chose a sample of such paintings, classified according to the totems they represent and their respective countries, as the organising structure for all the data.

I then worked then with a fantastic Warlpiri lady, Barbara Gibson Nakamarra, custodian of the Yawakiyi Plum Dreaming, daughter of deceased ritual leader and herself very knowledgeable, having lived a traditional hunting and gathering life until the 1950s. She helped me with the translations of the many songs and stories I had collected from some fifty Warlpiri and checked the general structure of the information and the way things were connected. All the selected material was classified into fourteen local groups, each identified by the totemic names of the ancestral heroes, animals and plants who travelled and left their imprint in special places. The project was then presented to the community with a press-book and an audio tape.

Back in Paris, with the assistance of a computer laboratory (LIA, IRD), I produced a digital pilot with the whole structure and some of the data. I then showed it to the community on my laptop in July 1997. Three months later, after having integrated more data, I organised with Qantm Indigenet, an Australian organisation promoting Aboriginal access to internet and multimedia, a one week workshop in the Lajamanu School which had just received ten new Macintosh computers with CD-ROMs. The workshop was very exciting as the children could show their family how to navigate on the screen to check this ‘Yapa’ (‘Aboriginal people’ in the Warlpiri language) program written in HyperText Markup Language (HTML). Both young and old were very enthusiastic about seeing and hearing their own people in a way that respected their traditional classifications. Elders were especially happy about the ease with which the information could be accessed directly by children or adults who cannot read and write, and the fact that there were three hours of Warlpiri speech or songs by over fifty representatives of the community. It was agreed that I should continue to develop this restitution program for use in the school.

Cultural constraints

The workshop also aimed to make the community conscious of the risks involved with new technologies, such as the possible transfer of HTML through the internet to anybody in the world and issues of cultural copyright over collective traditional material, such as songs, designs and other knowledge. I was ready to recognise the Warlpiri intellectual property over the content of the CD-ROM, their right to control the access to it, and also their right to a royalty if it was distributed outside the community.

At this stage, some members of the community were worried about the internet, so I decided to stop using HTML and JavaScript (languages of the internet) and to shift to Lingo Macromedia Director software which does not allow direct display on the internet. This made the project more expensive because it now required a professional to reprogram everything, but I was committed to continue and personally funded this technical change.

In the making of this CD-ROM, several cultural constraints had to be taken into account. Despite my first language being French, I had to produce it first in Warlpiri and then in English so that all persons involved could check the content themselves. It included not only the 51 artists whose acrylic paintings on canvas were presented in the CD-ROM, but also other elders who had cultural and religious rights to the totems and places referred to in these paintings, and in the songs, stories and dances related to the designs. The second constraint was to select only data that could be made public, according to the secret/public definition of the Warlpiri; all the content had to be checked by the appropriate custodians of the different ritual sections. I also had to be very careful not to use a language that could refer to secret aspects. For instance, initiation includes circumcision, among many other rituals, but as this word should not be pronounced publicly, it is replaced in the CD-ROM by expressions used by the Aborigines of the desert (e.g., ceremony, business, man-making, going through the Law that transforms boys into men) and no other details are given.

Another aspect of the secret knowledge is that many elements connected to men's Law and knowledge are secret and cannot be presented publicly. Part of women's Law is also secret and cannot be shown, but many women's rituals—*yawulyu*—can be shown, including body-paintings and ritual objects. Gender complementarity is a very important feature of Aboriginal desert culture. As one film in the CD-ROM explains, 'Men Law and women Law go level, both are custodians of the country'. Being a woman, I chose from the beginning to work mostly with women, and was able to demonstrate that their public rituals are strong and fundamental to the society as they look after the land and its eternal spirits. Once the men saw the pilot version of the CD-ROM, and the scope of women's and men's public painting on canvas, some decided to record a public version of their songs to add to the program. The whole data was checked again, with the invaluable help of a Warlpiri language teacher, Elisabeth Ross Nungarrayi, who also contributed a new song for her country and Dreaming inherited from her father. Unlike the editing of a film, multimedia programming allows such additions and modifications which can be shown back during the long process of consultation with the community.

An additional but essential constraint was to respect the taboo relating to the dead. For most Aboriginal traditions, the name of the dead person cannot be spoken—nor anything homophonically relating to this name—until the end of the mourning period which can last from two years to a generation. This custom also applies to other representations of the dead person, such as verses of songs or places connected with his or her totemic spirit that have to be avoided, and has been extended to photos and films. The Lajamanu community would only use the CD-ROM in school if the images of the dead could be hidden when required. So we had to develop a tool that allows photos of persons who have passed away to be hidden. The users now have the option of hiding photos (replacing them with an icon: the Aboriginal flag) or disclosing them if they wish. The hide photo option can be modified at any time from the screen and stays in place on the hard disk when the computer is switched off and back on.

A network of stories

The CD-ROM opens with a schematic map representing a selection of forty-seven Warlpiri sites connected by a network of lines and the following oral explanation:

> The Central Australian desert is criss-crossed by hundreds of trails connecting springs or rocks. Each trail has stories about the making of the landscape by animal, plant, fire or rain Ancestral Beings. Aboriginal people, Yapa people, call them Jukurrpa, Dreaming Ancestors, the trails of their spiritual Law and Culture. Choose a trail to discover these stories and their rituals.

The word *Jukurrpa* [3] is written in red on the top of the screen as it is a hyperlink. When a mouse is dragged over it, a red card appears with the following text:

> *Dream* and *Dreaming* in Warlpiri language. Also used in other Desert languages (Pitjantjatjara, Pintupi, etc.) to designate the Ancestral Beings, their totemic names, the trails of their travels, the stories about their adventures, and the space-time in which these events are registered for ever and in which they travel in their dreams. Jukurrpa is also the spiritual component that every man and woman shares with a totem (animal, plant or other) one embodies. It designates some of the women's or men's sacred objects which are imbued with the Dreaming life-force, *Kuruwarri*, or spirit-children, *Kurruwalpa*.

The words Dreaming, Kuruwarri and Kurruwalpa are also hyperlinks with red cards showing their definitions. This tool, which directly connects with a Warlpiri language glossary, applies to all Warlpiri words and concepts mentioned in the CD-ROM.

When the mouse is dragged over any part of the map, an icon appears on the right-hand side representing the connected totem with its Warlpiri and English name. The fourteen main totemic names of the Lajamanu groups are listed and when the mouse is dragged over one of them, the corresponding lines on the map are highlighted in red to show which places are linked by a trail with this totemic name. The main totemic names refer to Ancestral Beings who are conceptualised as part-animal or plant, or as elements such as fire or wind, or as persons named by cultural objects such as digging sticks or poles. Everything that is named in nature and culture has its Jukurrpa or Dreaming. This principle is eternally present in the Jukurrpa space-time, the virtual memory of the cosmos and the people; all such principles are inscribed on the land as sites created or shaped through imprints left by the eternal Beings.

The Warlpiri have thousands of toponyms naming waterholes, hills, rocks, trees and creeks over a desert territory extending 600 kilometres north/south and 300 kilometres east/west. I only selected about one hundred places as examples of the intertwining structure of the perception of desert Aboriginal mythical and geographical space. The map is only a graph, a topological map, which shows points in relation to each others, as deduced from the stories included on the CD-ROM. People say: we needed two camps (*ngurra*) during the wet season to go from place A to B to the north, we would always stop in C on the way, to the west we could see the Dreaming trail of the Yam and to the east the trail of the Possum, and when we (or the ancestors) looked back south at midday we could still see the rock of D. There might be contradictions in cross-checking all the mythical stories and life-stories, not only because memory

[3] Jukurrpa in Warlpiri is Tjukurrpa in Kukatja and Pintupi.

changes but also because geographical elements can shift: sand dunes travel with the wind, creeks can change their flow during floods, water which comes up when digging underground can disappear when soaks are dry. We tend to think that the physical order is permanent, but my understanding of the Warlpiri perception of desert space is that it is always moving, breathing they would say, even though the principles (the Dreaming as virtual life force) remain permanent.

The number of trails between two places is infinite; there are as many itineraries as there are ways to travel, track game or collect food. Metric distance is not necessarily meaningful in the desert; people measure space in time rather than kilometres. If travelling from one point to another at a given time, the time required might change according to the season, the size of the group, the age of the children, or the availability of resources. During the hottest season, people would sleep in the day. Sometimes they would dig themselves in the ground, heads covered with a shield or a dish so as not to be burnt, and they would rush through the night to cover as much distance as possible, especially if they knew that there were no water sources on the way. The perception of the desert expands and contracts accordingly—even today when travelling is done by four-wheel drive or by plane. In this sense, the Desert Dreaming web is an Indigenous mental representation of the '*espace itinérant*' (itinerant space) of hunter-gatherers as opposed to the '*espace rayonnant*' (radiating space) of sedentary cultures as represented in Genesis. But, contrary to Leroi-Gourhan's (1964) idea of 'espace *itinérant*', repetition of travelling is not equivalent to a static perception of time and action. In the cognitive world of the Aboriginal hunter-gatherer the need for adaptation is also conceptualised.

Cognitive mapping and land rights

The graph of sites and trails in the CD-ROM does not pretend to be a real map with real distances, nor are the red lines of the trails real itineraries, because most Aborigines do not want to make public the location of many of their sacred places. To help protect these places, I have respected this concern.

The Warlpiri number around 4000 today, some living in Lajamanu, others in other communities, including Balgo in Western Australia. Traditionally they occupied this giant territory by travelling according to seasonal and climate changes. They were divided into groups of fluctuating size which were formed through descent, alliances and specific ritual and spiritual connections. Each man and woman shared with others the ritual custody of segments of trails (including some land, but not specifically tracts of land) around the sites which the trails connected. Men and women had to marry not just outside of their local (totemic) group but also with somebody who was a custodian of a Dreaming trail positioned as in a 'spouse' relationship with their own Dreaming trail. Family groups would often travel hundreds of kilometres in a year, but only some of the country and places that they crossed and used, water sources or other sites—hills, caves, rocks, ochre or quartz deposits—were considered to be their property and their ritual responsibility; for instance, significant places where rituals had to be performed to allow the maintenance of the connected totemic species, or phenomena, to make rain, to assure the growth of yams at each season or the reproduction of goannas. No ritual could take place with only the custodians (*kirda*) of the place and Dreaming, some of their allies, nephews and brothers-in-law had to be present in the ritual role of manager (*kurdungurlu*, policeman, lawyer or worker as the central Australian Aborigines say today).

The CD-ROM interactive map is an attempt to illustrate as simply as possible the complex web of the cognitive mapping of the land in the desert and especially the fact that, when actualised together, all the itineraries seem to criss-cross. But the trails are not just inter-twined over a flat space—that is, the surface of the land—some go underground (those of small marsupials, reptiles or roots), others travel in the sky (like birds and rain). In this three-dimensional web there are lot of common places which have two or more trails—to two or more totemic species and their custodians. Not all places crossed by the trails are necessarily owned by the holders of the respective trails; often the rights are shared between two or more groups. This causes a headache for land claimants from the Australian desert groups who all share such a vision of space and land. How can the right owner be identified according to the Western legal process? Aborigines know, when they travel, that from the point-of-view of the Kangaroo ancestral Being, it is the group of the Kangaroo custodians—his spiritual descendants—who are the owners of the place connected with the Kangaroo Dreaming (because of some ancestral action that was preformed in that place). But a few metres from this site, one can find prints left by the Yam ancestors and a soak that is owned by the Yam custodians whose other main sites go in another direction. The visual transposition of this Aboriginal cognitive mapping into an interactive map gives the user an immediate experience of this inter-connectivity which proceeds from the same logic as the web. Multimedia is an ideal tool for rendering this Indigenous mapping.

As anthropologists, we are expected to write books with an introduction, a conclusion and a linear development to present different aspects of the society in question. But to present an Indigenous society and its knowledge from the inside, talking about the Kangaroo group before the Rain group, may create false impressions of hierarchy or causality between the elements presented. It has to be said that the Warlpiri totemic groups do not organise themselves in a hierarchical way. People do not say that the Rainmakers as a group have more political or religious power then the custodians of the Kangaroo Dreaming, because both water and kangaroos were necessary for the traditional survival of the society. This ontological interdependence does not prevent conflicts between individuals and groups, and power relations expressed by word, strategic action, violent physical confrontation or sorcery. But such socio-political dynamics will not be justified in the name of precedence or set hierarchy between the totemic ancestors. Dreaming stories describe many conflicts and battles between ancestors of the same or different totem, very often as motivated by the desire and hunt for a prey which can be consumed. Opposed to this conflict of desire is the autonomy of each species, including gender: female or male heroes often live in pairs or in a group of one gender only. This tension between autonomy and interdependence is relayed in the social order by different rules: one should marry outside of his or her own totemic group; custody of land and totemic transmission tend to be restricted to the patrilineal group which shares the same totemic name; but some places are shared by different groups. If the Rain Dreaming is the responsibility of one group, rainmaking benefits everybody. Similarly, the rituals for the Kangaroo Dreaming benefit everybody, not only as a main source of meat, but also because this marsupial Ancestor is connected with an initiation that applies to all Warlpiri men (and many other tribes too). Each totemic group in the society—like men and women as opposite genders—has a complementary role to play which is constantly renegotiated in relation to land.

A dynamic tradition: the language of prints

> Warlpiri people and their neighbors in the desert say that painting is feeding the body and the mind, each painting has a Dreaming name, Jukurrpa, the trail of an animal, a

> plant or another Ancestor like fire or rain. The totemic signs which are ritually drawn on the body, the sacred objects or the ground, are also painted on canvas for sale in galleries all around the world.

This oral commentary in English (or French)—the only one after the introduction of the CD-ROM—accompanies an interactive contents page presenting a mosaic of 32 paintings with their totemic names and a column of fifteen signs. When the mouse is dragged over any of these paintings—produced on canvases, bodies or ritual objects—some of the signs listed on the right of the screen turn from white to yellow: these are the signs used in the selected painting. When the mouse is dragged over one of the fifteen signs, some of the paintings' titles turn from white to yellow, indicating the paintings that contain those signs. This interactive presentation allows the same signs to be used in paintings connected to different Dreamings. In other words, Warlpiri signs, like other desert signs, are polysemic, and cannot be read as conventional icons or hieroglyphs to decipher.

After clicking on the painting vignette, the viewer accesses a page showing other paintings of the same totem. The viewer can then click again to see the painting in full screen with related explanations or call for the artist's file (with links to the artist's other contributions in the CD-ROM). The paintings and their specific signs all have meanings, but these are contextualised according to a minimal iconic rule: the signs reflect the position in space of the objects or concepts to which they refer. A circle can be a place or any object that leaves a circular imprint on the land, a line is a sleeping person or a link between two places, a meander line also expresses a link between two places, but when the totem follows a meander road, such as a creek, it expresses yam roots or fire. Half circles (U shapes) are persons (or other beings) sitting on the ground. A male will be identified when the tools placed next to him are a spear or a woomera (a line and an oval with a little tail for the spear thrower), a female will be identified by a shorter stick and an oval representing her coolamon dish. An arrow can refer to any bird—including the non-flying emu—and an E shape to a possum, because these are the tracks these animals leave on the ground. Some signs are combined into a recognised totemic design, but other combinations of signs are common to several totems (for instance, two or three circles connected by two or three straight or meander lines).

Beyond this minimal coding of the print system, no further deciphering of the paintings can be done unless the artist provides the meaning of the signs, the story and the connected songs associated to the painting.[4] Warlpiri call their paintings *kuruwarri*, a word which is also a synonym of Jukurrpa, Dreaming and story; signs are called *yirdi*, print, word or song verse.

The CD-ROM presents 100 canvas paintings with commentaries. For each Dreaming there are many photos and films of ritual painting and dancing, oral recordings of one or several story-tellers in Warlpiri with written translations of his or her version of the myth. Each story is also presented through a selection of songs by women and some men, the verses of which are transcribed and translated. Such song-lines are cryptic and condensed versions of the stories. Some verses sound like a long

[4] It is the same with the Warlpiri hand-sign language in which signs are distinguished not just by their shape but also by their movement. Over 4,000 signs have been recorded in this language so far. Some examples (of totems and kinship terms) are shown in the CD-ROM.

word, which is often the Dreaming name of a live or dead person. Warlpiri, and some of their neighbours, consider that each person embodies the spirit of such a song verse: it is the verse that gives the baby the power to 'articulate' both speech and motion.

There are many ways to tell stories, to develop different angles, interpretations, and connections, according to one's own style and experience. Even new episodes can be added: Warlpiri say they can communicate with the eternal ancestors who sleep in the sacred sites when their spirit travels in their own dreams—especially when they sleep in these sites. All the sleepers of one camp are often asked to share their dreams as their collective experience is considered to be 'the same dream'. When it is recognised, through the interpretation of a dream, that the dreamers travelled in the space-time of a given Dreaming, the dreamers' vision can be materialised through a new song, a painted design or a dance. Such dream creativity is seen as information given by the Dreaming virtual memory, even though it may be an adaptation of a recent event that affected the living. From the Dreaming point of view it is 'actualised' by Jukurrpa, the virtual matrix and its ancestral inhabitants. The Dreaming is not a golden age or an eternal repetition of something without past or history. Just like the evaluation of space in the desert is relative to the speed at which you can travel, the perception of time is relative to the way you treat an event: sometimes it is to be forgotten or temporarily avoided because of a death or a conflict, at other times it is to be remembered and transformed to be projected in the future and set as an example.

People's actions can be used to confront new problems. Traditionally such problems might have included a drought, a cyclone, a demographic fluctuation, the need to change seasonal routes because of the unavailability of resources, when people were too numerous in one place or when a drought lasted several years. All this change had to be managed in a way that could be authenticated by the ancestors, that is explained in the spiritual Law system which allocates places to people but also legitimates their sharing of common rights in some places. It is this ancestral logic that allowed the temporary gathering of several hundred individuals in the same place, while most of the time they travelled in very small family groups.

The fact that this flexibility was recognised as part of the dynamic structure of the Dreaming trails is extremely important today when land claims are subject to royalty payments. Shortly after the Warlpiri won a land claim over part of their traditional territory in 1978, mining companies were attracted to look for gold (an activity which had ceased after the gold rush at the end of the nineteenth century). Today over twelve international trusts have exploration licences, but every time a new tract of land is to be opened to exploration, they have to negotiate with the Lajamanu owners and Aborigines from other communities, such as Balgo. This process involves establishing lists of the traditional stakeholders who are entitled to royalties. Before Europeans arrived and began mining in the region, this part of the Tanami Desert was an important traditional gathering site for different ceremonies, but not all Warlpiri groups had a relation of spiritual custody to the place. The drought of the 1920s attracted many Warlpiri to the gold rush camps where many of the current elders' generation were born. Requests by their descendants for a share in the royalties have to be negotiated with the original custodians who claim to be the only beneficiaries. Nevertheless, sharing tends to be recognised by the majority who do not agree that just a few should become 'millionaires' when traditionally all sites were supposed to be complementary within a

land system that maintained a balance between all the groups. One current solution to try to prevent inequalities involves paying some of the royalties into a collective fund which benefits the whole community.[5]

The power of connections

Many Dreaming itineraries do not stop at the site a group identifies as the boundary of its segment in a given direction. Custodians often say that their Dreaming segment is continued by another group, which may or may not be of the same language group. Some of these trails, like Emu or the Two-Men/wind/lizard, are passed from group to group along thousands of kilometres; these groups did not all meet traditionally, but their ritual objects (or other artefacts) could travel across the whole continent, through exchange partners (set through namesakes in the northwest of Australia), by the transmission of rituals and along mythical lines. The result is that the same Dreaming heroes continue their travels from one group to another: similar events can happen to them in different places but most of the time the story unfolds like a serialised story. For instance, two men are said to have given shamanistic practices and kinship rules to the groups they encounter, but in different language groups they give different systems (eight sections, four sections, exogamous or generational moieties). The important thing is that, even if Dreaming heroes are said to stay forever in the places they visited, created or 'imprinted', they come from elsewhere and go elsewhere. This limitlessness is a virtual principle for establishing new connections; it enables the Dreaming language to be reformulated and new bonds to be passed on to people today.

With age and experience, men and women acquire information about how to connect knowledge between the different Dreaming heroes both inside and beyond the tribal territory.[6] It is the extension of alliances and experiences that gives a wider understanding of this web of connections; knowledge at this level is more then just content, it has the capacity to link together the right elements. This cognitive process is not necessarily directly taught, it may be acquired through participation in many rituals and travels. As an anthropologist, it sometimes took me several years to deduce meaningful connections which I did not see when recording the data. Had I only recorded stories, I would have missed many of the connections which appeared when relating them to other data collected during the performance of rituals, dancing, painting and singing. The CD-ROM was not only an ideal medium to restore Warlpiri connections, it also helped me to synthesise the whole network as a virtual means of exploration through pre-programmed hyperlinks interconnecting texts, images and sounds. For instance, every time a story-teller mentions the name of a Dreaming trail which is crossed while narrating another Dreaming trail, or a place name which is

---

[5] On the subject of land negotiations in relation to mining, see the thesis by Derek Elias (2001).

[6] The use of the word tribe has been banned from Aboriginal studies for legitimate reasons relating to its perjorative usage among administrators, politicians, some journalists and their audience. It has also been criticised in anthropoligical debates. But the Warlpiri people and many other Aboriginal groups still refer to their specific language group as a tribe as opposed to other Aboriginal language groups. In the current French understanding 'tribe' does not sound perjorative, but it can be when used in a colonial or postcolonial context. I believe that this word should be re-evaluated because it is valued by people who find in it a way to express the solidarity of their extended family ties and a specific social organisation related to the environment.

connected to another Dreaming, these names are highlighted in red and allow a link to the screen displaying the story of this other trail.

This invitation to wander in the territory of the Dreaming story-telling, painting, singing and dancing made the old persons extremely happy when they saw tangible proof of their teaching about the inter-relatedness of the Dreaming. The elders and all the women I worked with were excited by the new medium because it did not threaten their encyclopaedic knowledge or their power in the society. On the contrary, their legitimacy was affirmed by the fact that they are recognised by name as story-tellers and painters. They could see that only the public side and a small part of their knowledge was used to demonstrate that relations connect persons to elements of their environment and to a spiritual realm. The CD-ROM was going to confront the problem of children not learning enough of the traditional knowledge—survival skills, geography, medicinal plants, dancing and singing—because they spend most of their time at school; and the elders and the women recognised this. They were also proud to be able to present their culture to persons outside of their community using this medium.

Some of the middle-aged men had different reactions, however. They were of my generation (I was 23 years old when I started in 1979). They wanted to know why strangers should be able to easily access the connections between things, to become familiar with information that takes a lifetime to understand in just a few hours. The 'understanding' they talk about is different from the immediacy (snapshot effect) of digital information. Their knowledge is imprinted in their bodies and mind through physical and metaphysical—abstract and esoteric—experiences which require collective performances, feeling of country and spiritual sharing. But these men, who have been involved in complex negotiations with developers and government officials for many years and who have endured the struggle for self-determination, no longer have as much time to spend with their elders to learn traditional knowledge. A similar resistance occurred in the early 1980s when Warlpiri and Pintupi from another community, Papunya, who had transposed their totemic designs on canvas, started to exhibit and sell the paintings all around the world. Some Lajamanu men were very worried about what they saw as a decimation of the traditional designs they share with this community because of common Dreaming trails. Nevertheless, they themselves started to paint on canvas in 1986, after meetings with the Papunya elders and some other communities where they decided what content could be shown and how it had to be visually presented. Lajamanu is located on the traditional land of the Kurintji language group, but the majority of who live there now are Warlpiri deported from lands further to the south.

After I installed the CD-ROM at Lajamanu school in August 1998, a controversial community meeting led the Council to decide that the program was very good for the school but should not be commercialised outside the community: culture was too precious to become a commodity. A year later, another big meeting was organised in my presence with the Council which decided this time to release the CD-ROM for display, but only in museums and research libraries, like universities. The idea was to attract persons willing to learn and with an earnest approach to research. The confidence in institutions which aim at educating large audiences is based on the hope of creating new conditions for cultural sharing. It is in this spirit of exchange that twelve Lajamanu men accepted an invitation to visit Paris in 1983 and to dance and make a gigantic

ground sand painting,[7] and that artists continue to travel to different cities to dance and paint for the launch of their canvas paintings in galleries and museums.

The challenge with the CD-ROM was to find a solution for the distribution that would respect the wishes of the community and the cultural property rights of the artists. In 2000, UNESCO Publishing signed a contract with the Lajamanu Art Centre, Warnayaka, to co-publish the CD-ROM and to share the copyright and the benefits through licences granted to institutions and individual orders addressed directly to UNESCO. The new version which came out in French and English under the title *Dream trackers: Yapa art and knowledge of the Australian desert (Pistes de Rêves)* was presented by Jimmy Robertson Jampijinpa, a Warlpiri artist, then manager of the Lajamanu art centre, during an international conference.[8] In an interview with the UNESCO journal (*Source* June 2001), he noted that 'This CD-ROM brings everybody to the mind'.

Access to technology

A question for the future is: what means do Indigenous communities have to control the chain involved in the transmission of knowledge? Multimedia technology can only be advertised so long as it does not threaten to become a mode of fixing a culture which is a dynamic process, evolving through social transformations, individual and collective experiences, community art and personal styles. The Warlpiri have shown that they master this dynamic aspect of their culture even when traditional transmission is not restricted to the old ways. Writing about oral cultures has already questioned the vitality of orality, but it has not stopped people from continuing to invent stories or reinterpret the old ones. Books on anthropology and oral history are not bibles because the written text does not serve as the core of the cultural and spiritual beliefs; it is still the ritual action and the exchanges between people which lead the control of knowledge in, and between, Aboriginal communities. In this sense the power of the elders cannot be threatened when initiations continue to be performed and children learn from the land. The power of interpretation lies with the whole system of belief which is in the hand of those who practice this culture.

When the elders' experience cannot be physically shared, the question of cultural reproduction becomes an issue. We know, however, that data recorded in books or other mediums always remains open to future reinterpretation and criticism. Historians and specialists on literature and art have demonstrated this many times. It is time to also recognise this in anthropology: anthropological books all carry some useful information about the given society, either the one observed or its relationship with the society of the observer. It is also important to recognise that different interpretations can co-exist. With multimedia, the advantage is that you can hear the songs and stories and see through films and photos the visual elements that persons connect with the oral

---

[7] Théâtre des Bouffes du Nord by Peter Brook, the ARC and the Musée d'Art Moderne. Part of the exhibition 'D'un autre continent—l'Australie, le rêve et le réel', organised by the Festival d'Automne 1983.

[8] 2001 UNESCO Symposium, 'Indigenous Identities: oral, written and new technologies', co-organised by the author at UNESCO in Paris <http://www.unesco.org/culture/indigenous>. The multimedia version of the 2001 symposium promoting the 2003 Charter for Cultural Diversity has since become available as: L. Pourchez et al (eds) 2004 *Cultural Diversity and Indigenous Peoples: Oral, written expressions and new technologies*, CD-ROM, Unesco Publishing, Paris.

elements. But another story-teller could tell the same story in a different way. I did not include in this CD-ROM anthropological interpretations published elsewhere (Glowczewski 1991, 1996). There are only a few texts contextualising some key domains (art, artefacts, church, fieldwork, hand-signs, healing, history, hunting, kinship, land-rights, law, rituals, taboos). The data presented is only a sample collected at a given time (between 1979 and 1998) of the huge cultural heritage of the Warlpiri, but it is structured as an open network according to the Warlpiri mode of mapping knowledge.

I was often asked 'why should the recording stop there?' My answer is that if Warlpiri wish to continue the project they should be assisted.[9] Multimedia technology requires money and technical expertise, but just as Aborigines in Australia adopted video recording in the 1980s and teleconferencing in the 1990s, they are now starting to use new technologies, including the internet precisely to record their culture.[10] The Maningrida community in Arnhem Land had a website for several years: it showed examples of songs, didgeridoo players, paintings for sale and the community telephone. This site was so popular that the community was inundated with orders for art works as well as questions from users wanting to know more about the culture or to come and visit them. The site was closed because of this popularity: the community could not keep up with the demand. It has since been redesigned to respect their privacy.

The focus now is on using new technologies as tools for recording and connecting. While many museums have put their collections on the internet, Aborigines say information relating to their objects should be controlled: they want to decide what can be made public or not. They would like that all information related to their specific groups to be made available through the internet—but only to the community concerned. In other words, if there are Warlpiri objects in certain museums, a process should allow the Warlpiri, but the Warlpiri only, to access the inventory of these objects as compiled by each of the museums through the internet. This idea led to the concept of an Aboriginal Gateway, which is being developed by the AICN (Australian Indigenous Cultural Network) at the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Straight Islander Studies in Canberra, with the pilot project of the Pitjantjatjara Council (Gulash & Arley 2001). Australian museums—like Canadian ones—have agreed to work within new protocols which require respect for cultural constraints. This may involve producing databases which function with passwords to allow the right group to access information through the internet. This process, which associates the recording of heritage with the repatriation of knowledge, should be encouraged so that cultural objects spread all over the world can be reunited through the establishment of virtual museums.

---

[9] The project of a Warlpiri linguistic encyclopaedia was undertaken in the 1970s with the participation of several linguists and Warlpiri specialists (Laughren ed.). A temporary CD-ROM, 'Kirrkirr', a graphical electronic interface to the Warlpiri Dictionary, was developed at the University of Sydney by Kevin Jansz, Christopher Manning, and Nitin Indurkhya. Information about the development of the project is available on the site of the linguist David Nash at <http://www.anu.edu.au/linguistics/nash/>.

[10] Melinda Hinkson (1999) has recently analysed the use of different audio-visual technologies by the Warlpiri people of Yuendumu. Hinkson has also produced the CD-ROM, 'Yardiliny', with this community and the South Australian Museum.

Acknowledgments

An oral version of this paper was presented to AIATSIS Conference2001 Symposium C 'The resonance of tradition', Session 7 'The Production and Reception of Contemporary Media Technology, convened by Helena Gulash (AIATSIS).

References

Elias, D.J. 2001 Golden dreams: people, place and mining in the Tanami Desert. doctoral thesis, Australian National University, Canberra.

Glowczewski, B. 1991 Du Rêve à la Loi chez les Aborigènes—Mythes rites et organisation en Australie. PUF, Paris.

——1996 [1989] Les Rêveurs du désert—Warlpiri d'Australie. Actes Sud/Babel, Arles.

——1999a Pistes de Rêve aborigènes. *Xoana* 6:13–25.

——1999b Négociations pour la fabrication et la distribution d'un cédérom: 'Yapa - Art rituel du désert central australien'. *Journal des Anthropologues* 79:81–98.

——2000/01 Dream trackers. Yapa art and knowledge of the Australian desert (Pistes de Rêve—Art et savoir des Yapa du désert australien). CD-ROM, UNESCO Publishing, Paris, Geneva and New York. <http://portal.unesco.org/sc_nat/ev.php?URL_ID=3540&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201&reload=1084895885>

[Photographs: <http://portal.unesco.org/sc_nat/file_download.php/yapa_photos.html?URL_ID=3475&filename=10821174015yapa_photos.html&filetype=text%2Fhtml&filesize=1680&name=yapa_photos.html&location=user-S/>]

——2002 Culture cult. The ritual circulation of inalienable objects and appropriation of cultural knowledge (North-West Australia). In M. Jeudy Ballini and B. Juillerat (eds), *People and things—Social Mediation in Oceania*. Carolina Academic Press, Durham.

Gulash, H. and B. Arley, 2001 Indigenous Australian peoples utilising new technologies to reclaim cultural materials and knowledge. In *Indigenous Identities: oral and written expressions and new technologies*, International conference. UNESCO Paris, 14–17 May.

Hinkson, M. 1999 Warlpiri connections: new technology, new enterprise and emergent social forms at Yuendumu. Doctoral thesis, La Trobe University, Melbourne.

Kendon, A., 1988 Sign Languages of Aboriginal Australia: Cultural, semiotic and communicative perspectives. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.

Laughren, M. (ed.) 1983/1994 Warlpiri dictionary project—Warlpiri dictionary entries, Fauna domain, Flora domain, Body Parts, Verbs. Mimeo and disks, Yuendumu.

Leroi-Gourhan, A. 1964 Le geste et la parole II La mémoire et les rythmes. Albin Michel, Paris.

Sutton, P. 1995 Country: Aboriginal Boundaries and Land Ownership in Australia. Aboriginal History Inc., Canberra.

——1998 *Native Title and the Descent of Rights*. National Native Title Tribunal, Perth.

United Nations, 2000 Draft principles and guidelines for the protection of the heritage of Indigenous peoples—revised version. Appendix to the Seminar organised by the Commission on Human Rights, United Nations, Geneva, 28 February–1 March 2000, Special rapporteur Erica-Irene Daes.

Barbara Glowczewski is a Director of Research at the Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique in Paris and a Member of the Laboratoire d'Anthropologie sociale <http://www.ehess.fr/centres/las/index.html>. She coordinates a postgraduate research seminar on the 'Anthropology of networks' at the Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales, Paris. Dr Glowczewski has been working in Australia since 1979, first with Warlpiri, then with different groups in the northwestern Kimberley, especially in Broome, home of her husband, Jowandi Wayne Barker, Aboriginal film maker and composer. At the invitation of James Cook University, as an adjunct Professor, she has designed an international program on 'Indigenous strategies of communication: cultural festivals and new technologies' with Rosita Henry (James Cook University) and Professor Marcia Langton (University of Melbourne). Author of several books and many publications in scientific collective books, journals and multimedia productions, Dr Glowczewski also has contributed to exhibitions, radio and television shows, and films. Her last book is titled *Rêves en colère. Alliances aborigènes dans le nord-ouest australien* (Plon Terre Humaine, Paris, 2004).

Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique, Laboratoire d'Anthropologie Sociale, Collège de France, 52, rue du Cardinal Lemoine, 75005 Paris <b.glowczewski@college-de-france.fr> *and* School of Anthropology Archaeology & Sociology, James Cook University, Townsville