USE OF THESES

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Cautionary Note

This thesis contains names of actual people who may have subsequently died. Care must be taken not to mention these names to Marrangu people because this would cause distress. Similar care must be taken with photographs of people. Details of Marrangu ceremonies contained in this thesis could cause concern to Marrangu people if revealed in public contexts.
'MEWAL IS MERRI'S NAME'

FORM AND AMBIGUITY IN MARRANGU COSMOLOGY, NORTH CENTRAL ARNHEM LAND.

Craig Elliott

All work presented in this thesis derives from my own research unless otherwise credited in the text.

C. N. Elliott

Craig Elliott
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Mewal 'im do bad, but 'im not all bad

- Dick Miwiri
CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

This thesis examines two spirit concepts, Merri and Mewal, in a north-central Arnhem Land cosmology. My broad objective is to write on the content and organisation of Aboriginal cosmology and the relationship of spirit concepts to the sensible world. The research is based on six months fieldwork in 1989-90 at two outstations, Galawdjapin and Gattji (see Map 1.1). My aim prior to fieldwork was to record and analyse a genre of song belonging to the Marrangu people. I wanted to see how the songs relate to mortuary beliefs and customs. This aim (of recording and translating the entire song cycle) proved too ambitious for the short time I was at Galawdjapin and Gattji, though many recordings were made and a start made on the translations. Analysis of the songs remains an important aspect of the research, as both Merri and Mewal are named song subjects\(^1\) in the Marrangu manikay cycle (see Chapter 4).

Hamilton, working among the Anbarra people of north-central Arnhem Land, has observed that "research is often like this - the questions you set out to ask are supplanted by questions which the data themselves generate" (1981:16). In my case the data generates first ambiguity, then questions. The ambiguity is this: people at Galawdjapin and Gattji say that the Spirit Beings Merri and Mewal are two different entities but that they are also the 'same'. They regularly use their names interchangeably. For example, they say Merri and Mewal are the "same song"

\(^1\)I use the term 'song subject' in the same sense meant by Wild to denote, "textual material associated with a single spirit being (wangarr) or several closely linked spirit beings" (1982:2).
MAP 1.1: GATTJII AND GALAWOJAPIN IN RELATION TO ARNHEM LAND
(literally) but there are songs for each in the Marrangu manikay cycle. What's more, I was told that 'Merri' is Mewal's name but that Mewal is different to Merri.

These statements seemed inconsistent with my received knowledge. Borsboom (1978b:52) claims that, "Mere [=Merri] like spiritual beings... are known among Djinang-speaking people and their neighbours" and 'Mewal' is the Marrangu name for this Spirit type. I found 'Mokuy' not 'Merri' was the general name for this Spirit type and that Marrangu people saw their 'Mewal' and 'Merri' as distinctive, local types.

I was told that 'Mewal' is the Marrangu name for Merri, but that Wulaki-speakers also have Mewal-like Beings. I saw places that on one occasion were described as Mewal sites and on another were Merri sites (depending on who I was with). Mewal and Merri are both spirits of the dead, I was told, but only Merri is found near a corpse. The question I pursued in the field was: how is the ambiguity surrounding Merri and Mewal to be accounted for and how do people make sense of cosmology that includes both Merri and Mewal?

With this background my research topic took shape. I soon realised Merri and Mewal are actors in the lives of people at Galawdjapin and Gattji: physical ailments and certain behaviors, for instance, are put down to the hidden intervention of Merri; children are told not to wander or else Merri will grab and eat them. Both Merri and Mewal are dreadful to humans, masterminding any illusion resulting in injury, insanity or death. Disturbing dreams are reported as Merri 'coming to get me'. Stretches of thick bush in

---

2 Keen (pers comm) informs me that the Liyagalawumirr clan also has a Spirit Being named 'Mewal'. Both Liyagalawumirr and Marrangu are of the Dhuwungi (=Dua) moiety, while Wulaki is Yirritjing (=Yirritja) moiety. It would seem unlikely that the same name would apply to entities of both moieties. Most probably the Wulaki beliefs were being spoken of using Dhuwungi moiety names.
Marrangu country are not entered alone or at night because Merri and Mewal live there and it angers them to hear human voices. Merri and Mewal have daily, experiential relevance.

Merri and Mewal are, in addition, entities present in numerous cosmological contexts. They are complicit in the original creative acts in Marrangu territory, in the Djarware or Honey Dreaming (see Chapter 3). In this context both, but especially Mewal, are identified with Marrangu clan (or mala) origins and uniqueness -- certainly not grounds to view Merri and Mewal as malignant in any way at all. In origin of death and eschatological beliefs Merri and to a lesser extent Mewal are thought to be intentionally antagonistic to human communities. This anxiety is borne out in the conduct of funerary rites (see Chapter 5). Merri and Mewal also have the ability, in varying cosmological contexts, to go about together or separately as a single Being, as companions, as a single spirit for all dead humans and as a vast group of individual dead humans' spirits. Merri and Mewal are also thought able to occupy the bodies of living human beings and thereby move around undetected.

This work, then, is an investigation of the complexity (perhaps more than ambiguity) of the Marrangu people's spirit entities Merri and Mewal. The ethnographic questions I ask and seek to answer are these. What are the characteristics of Merri and Mewal and which of their many aspects is significant in what context? How does the cosmology of Merri and Mewal relate to sites in Marrangu territory and to the daily experiences and expectations of people? What is important in the attitudes people have towards the overlapping features of Merri and Mewal? Are neighbouring peoples' spirit beliefs analogous to Merri and Mewal and if so what is the nature of the similarity? What have Mewal and Merri to do with notions of group identity, individual spirituality and mortality and the makeup of the body?
These questions were not pursued from day one of my fieldwork. They arise from circumstances of confusion; from not knowing whether I simply misunderstood what had been said to me, or whether I was hearing real differences in people’s views. Certainly other factors also were involved: my personality and those of my teachers; the accessibility of knowledge in Aboriginal communities; and my expectations and material resources. The answers I offer to the above questions arise from the challenge I found in pursuing them.

While many ethnographic works on Arnhem Land have discussed cosmological concepts, few take as their focus, as I do, local cosmological categories as distinct from representational systems (music, painting, dance, ground design, etc.), ceremonies or mythology. For example, Warner (1937/58) was concerned primarily with the Wawilak, "Djunkgao" (=Djung’kawu) and Gunapipi myth and ritual configuration in his examination of ‘Murngin Totemism’. R.M.Berndt (1951;1952) searched for a fundamental thesis in the Kunapipi rite and "Djanggawul" myth respectively, via an investigation of ritual acts and songs. Thomson (1949), who spent several months at Gattji in 1936-37, looked at the importance of ceremonies in the exchange cycles of north-east Arnhem Land people. Berndt (1970) again, this time in the case of Arnhem Land "Gunwinggu" (=Kunwinjku) sought to articulate the local relationship to land via the contingencies outlined in myth. Taylor (1987) more recently has investigated Kunwinjku art as did Morphy (1977) for the Yolngu earlier. Keen (1978) examined Yolngu belief systems and especially ceremonies to show the relationship between clans, clan countries and the ‘Wangarr’ (=Dreaming). An emphasis on the spirirtual significance of land also informs Williams's (1986) treatment of Yolngu beliefs. The interrelationship between performance elements -- song, dance and "text" -- is at the heart of work by Clunies Ross and Wild (1982;1984) on the Burarra manikay cycle,
Djambidj. Borsboom (1978a and b) worked at length with the Djinang speaking people in documenting their Maradjiri ceremony.

Most accounts of cosmology in the region are based on research carried to the east among Yolngu people, or further west with Burarra and Kunwinjku peoples and concern the representation of religious belief rather than the formulation of religious concepts. One point of contrast with the published sources I pay close attention to is that between the Marrangu 'Merri' spirit and the 'Mokuy' spirit or 'soul' found among the Yolngu. Some Yolngu peoples also use the term 'Merri' and sometimes Marrangu people use the word 'Mokuy'. Warner translates •mokol• (=mokuy) as "trickster soul" because it steals people's bodies and eats them (1937/58:567). Warner says all people have two souls, mokuy and birrimbirr (or warraw). He describes birrimbirr as the "true totemic soul of man" (ibid). While others question Warner's description of mokuy as a "soul" (for example see Morphy, 1984:40) they agree mokuy and birrimbirr are the twin components of individual spirituality. Taylor (1987:80) found among the Kunwinjku that the spirits kunwaral (or wayarra) and kunmalng were a similar partnership.

Marrangu people use the terms merri and wuguli to denote this dual human spirit composition. They know the term 'birrimbirr' and sometimes use it interchangeably with wuguli (see Borsboom, 1978b:52). The word wuguli refers to a 'life force' that upon death returns to a person's clan country to reunite with ancestral energy. In contrast, the merri spirit must be flushed from the corpse before joining others of its kind, often in thick monsoonal jungles. As with most accounts from elsewhere in Arnhem Land, only the wuguli spirit (or birrimbirr or kunmalng) is ancestrally regenerative, whereas the merri spirit has many facets (both malign and benign) and is not a 'trickster' or 'bad soul' in a unitary sense.
In Chapter 6 I analyse the merri/wuguli partnership in Marrangu thought and show it is not a straight forward division. Other concepts such as individual power, ganydjarr, and 'shadow', mali, are thought to be part of an individual's incorporeal being. But before that, in Chapter 3, I show that one aspect of the merri spirit (like the wuguli spirit) is thought ancestrally powerful in the sense of having given the first clan members sacred knowledge in the form of songs and dances. The Marrangu understanding of Merri is not limited to a malevolent aspect of individual spirituality.

Another point of contrast (between north-central and north-east Arnhem Land) is the Dhuwungi moiety Honey Dreaming. Held jointly by Dhuwungi moiety groups throughout much of Arnhem Land, this Dreaming has local, distinct characteristics. In Chapter 3 I examine these. The character of the 'Wudhal' Dreaming figure is reviewed in the light of Marrangu beliefs.

There is another point that distinguishes Marrangu people from their eastern Yolngu neighbours. A Yolngu word, 'wangarr', which translates as 'Dreamtime' or 'Dreaming' (to denote the epoch of primordial and mythological beginning and the essence of things now), is not used by Marrangu people. Nor do Marrangu people use the Djinang word for "the dream time" -- bulkinyirbi (Waters,1983:14). When Marrangu people mean to denote 'the dream time' they say "Dreaming" and claim this has always been their word.3

I follow the usage I recorded and employ the word 'Dreaming' to refer to the following. The period before human habitation when the earth was inhabited by Spirit Beings who, by creative exploits, gave the world the physical characteristics that people now know; the time when these Beings frequently interacted with and instructed the first human

3 Marrangu people infrequently use the term 'totem'; their usage of 'Dreaming' encompasses symbols of group and individual identity, i.e., totems (see also Williams,1986:27).
beings in Dreaming 'Law'; the quality of power (called 'marr' by Thomson, 1975) that derives from the Dreaming and can be tapped in ceremonies, by individuals, expressed in song, paintings, etc., or found at certain places; the enduring essence of all things; and, the realm of existence to which a person's wuguli spirit returns after death and from which the power to conceive emanates (though wuguli and conception spirits are not coterminous).

An important adjunct to the Dreaming is the notion of 'strong' or 'straight law' or 'sacredness', called madayin (=maRAIIn). Madayin is the quality of sacredness that certain sites, objects, songs, paintings, dances, ceremonies and 'Dreamings' (stories of journeys and events that happened in the Dreaming) possess by virtue of being transformations of the Dreaming. Manikay song words, for example, are madayin because they are held to be the words spoken by Spirit Beings (or sometimes spirits of the first human dead) in the Dreaming (Clunies Ross, 1978:134). Certain names are madayin because they are labels first bestowed in the Dreaming. Similarly, certain sites are madayin because Dreaming Beings are believed to have created them and deposited their Dreaming essence there. Munn, working from published sources, states that "maraiin" means "powerful, taboo, pertaining to the totemic species and ancestors... [with] connotations of 'insideness'" (1969:180). 'Madayin' also implies the restriction of some very 'strong' or 'sacred' knowledge into the hands of senior people, especially men, or confines its display to 'inside' contexts, such as certain ceremonies.

The notions of the Dreaming and madayin are important in Marrangu philosophy. The Dreaming is the source of all enduring creation, everything so created is madayin. Many features in the landscape are regarded as transformations of original Dreaming creations. On one occasion a Marrangu man pointed to some rocks and said, "they're not rocks, that's Honey", meaning that a Dreaming Being placed honey in the form of rocks at
that site (or the honey subsequently changed into rocks). These rocks are now madayin because they are a manifestation of the Dreaming Honey Being. The statement is also significant in that it reveals the Dreaming as a system of symbolization as well as ontology. This aspect is a central revelation of the Dreaming: the meaningful appearance of the phenomenal world is an efficacious sign of the creative wonder of the Dreaming.

Thus the Dreaming is thought strongly existent in the observable world, if not directly analogous with it (the rocks are honey, not rocks). So while one aspect of the Dreaming concept refers to the distant past, the evidences of this creative epoch are manifest in the existent, sensible world. This, as Stanner has observed, is how a "totemic system" should be understood, "as a link between cosmogony, cosmology and ontology" (1962/65:237).

The Djinang speaking region of north-central Arnhem Land is usually included in the Yolngu (north east Arnhem Land) social bloc. Warner (1937/58:36) includes both "Yandjinung" and "Burera" speakers among his Murngin "tribes", but says they are "border line" cases. On their map Berndt, Berndt and Stanton (1982:134) include areas east from Cape Stewart in the "north east bloc". Morphy (1987:151), Merlan (1986:480) and Thomson (1975:3) number Djinang speakers among Yolngu peoples for their shared mythology and ceremonial customs. Linguists (for example F. Morphy, 1983) number Djinang with the Yolngu group of languages but note that Yolngu speakers at Yirrkala regard Djinang as "a foreign language" (ibid:3).

In regional terms, Djinang lies between the Yolngu linguistic area, characterised by suffixing languages, and the Burarra languages to the west which are marked by prefixing structures (see Clunies Ross, 1983:11). Waters (1983:vii) places Djinang among the Nhangu group of Yolngu languages. Djinang dialects are predominantly suffixing: for example, 'gurrbi-li' means, literally, 'home to'; 'marnay-nirri' = 'creek
from'; and 'djammad-jigi' = 'work I do'. But Djinang also has prefixed clauses (e.g.,
'arrai-gurri', meaning 'I go') a feature associated with the Burarra language type.
Another convention Djinang shares with Yolngu dialects is the naming of the language
after the word for 'this' (compared with the western Arnhem Land practice of using the
word for 'nothing'; see Taylor,1987:71).

Djinang people regard themselves as distinctive in certain respects. They say they are
not Yolngu but "Yul", the Djinang word for 'human person'. They refer to their language
and 'Law' by the term yan and not by the Yolngu word matha or mada. Djinang-speakers
are more likely to identity themselves by their clan name (as "Marrangu"); mostly it
is Dhuwal and Dhuwala speakers to the east who describe Djinang-speakers as
"Djinang". Moreover, Djinang people regard their marriage arrangements as being less
polygamous than their eastern neighbours, though Djinang men do sometimes have two
wives (but rarely more). At Galawdjapin one woman told me, "those Yolngu men have
five or six wives. That's not right. They're getting too greedy." Others acknowledged
there were degrees of difference.

Marrangu people also mark themselves off from their Burarra neighbours to the west.
The Burarra, they say, are 'salt water' people who speak 'backwards', meaning they have
a prefixing language rather than (as Djinang) a predominantly suffixing one. It is also
claimed the Burarra people, like the Gunavidji people further west, have lost touch with
their land after having spent too much time at the township of Maningrida (see Map
1.1). The Burarra, they say, are also excessively polygamous.

Despite these perceived differences I develop my account of Marrangu society and
cosmology with the help of relevant observations gleaned from Yolngu, Burarra and
Kunwinjku ethnographies. I signal this step with phrases such as 'in Yolngu thought' or
'according to Hamilton's Anbarra informants', so that the reader knows the information presented is not specific to Marrangu people but nonetheless of regional relevance. Use of ethnographic sources in this way is both desirable and necessary as only Borsboom (1978a, 1978b) has in recent times studied Djinang people in detail.

Borsboom in Maradjiri (1978b) presents an analysis of the songs, dances and myths that form part of this elaborate, public ceremony. He suggests the main theme of Marrangu Maradjiri, which is performed for another clan over several weeks, is "the indissoluble unity between a group of people, natural species and a certain locality" (ibid:15). Borsboom argues Maradjiri was once a mortuary rite (ibid:176) involving the hair or bone remains of the deceased person. The maradjiri pole, a key object in the ceremony, was once called a "bone pole". Borsboom asserts that due to European contact and settlement since the 1950's and the subsequent prohibitions on secondary mortuary practices, the mortuary aspect of Maradjiri has been replaced with themes to do with birth and inter-group solidarity (ibid:xiv). For example, the maradjiri pole is now called a "birth pole". But, Borsboom insists, the cosmological symbolisms and performance structure remains "so that it looks as if no change has occurred" (ibid:182-3). He concludes that the continuance of Maradjiri with conscious innovations reveals a local ethos that the Dreaming is both eternal and immutable, and dynamic and contemporizing.

Borsboom is the only other writer to look specifically at the Marrangu spirit concepts Merri and Mewal. He claims they are, "the most complex spiritual concept of Djinang philosophy" (ibid:47). A major preoccupation of this thesis is to critique Borsboom's representation of Merri and Mewal. Borsboom's classifications differ from those I recorded in certain respects, especially in the relationship between Merri and the Djareware Honey Being and the connection of Mewal with 'dead body' spirits (ibid:53).
The significance in Marrangu cosmology of these and other divergences between my information and Borsboom’s account is examined in Chapter 3.

The issues addressed in each chapter of this thesis are as follows. In Chapter 2 I briefly describe local geography and settlement history and then examine the diversity of relationships the Marrangu clan (mala) has with other groups. These relationships are in part structured by intra-clan ‘company’ filiation and include links through marriage, territory, language, kinship and Dreaming (baparru) property.

In Chapter 3 I begin analysis of Marrangu cosmology, looking first at the Djareware or Honey Dreaming. This is the main mythic scenario possessed by the Marrangu people, the name ‘Marrangu’ itself means ‘Honey’. My purpose here is to analyse the place and significance of the Spirit Beings Merri and Mewal in the Djareware Dreaming in the light of what was told to me and Borsboom’s findings. I argue Mewal is more closely interactive with the Djareware Being than Merri and, therefore, more strongly evocative of the themes of clan beginnings and its source, the Dreaming. I critique Borsboom’s presentation of Merri and Mewal in Maradjiri. Chapter 3 also investigates Marrangu eschatological speculations and in particular the Luma Luma Dreaming. I examine this eschatological scenario in the light of links with the Madayin (Ngarra) ceremony and the beliefs of the neighbouring Burarra people.

In Chapter 4 I analyse the texts of the Mewal and Merri songs that form part of the Marrangu manikay cycle. The placement of the Merri and Mewal songs in the cycle reveal important cosmological associations, especially with the Djareware cluster in the case of Mewal and in the case of Merri, other ‘jungle’ Dreamings. I criticize Borsboom’s ‘sub-cluster’ divisions of the Marrangu manikay cycle in terms of topography. I argue
Marrangu manikay most clearly represents cosmological groupings, not a land and water based division.

The Marrangu mortuary sequence is described in Chapter 5, with extensive observations of Marrangu funerals witnessed in 1989 and 1990. The prolonged and elaborate mortuary rites are saturated with allusions to Mewal and Merri. My aim here is to show the significance of Merri in the mortuary context. Significations are noted which stand in contradiction to the associations Merri and Mewal convey in the Djaraware Dreaming. The outcomes this contradiction generates are examined in the light of Marrangu concepts of the soul, human origins, the regeneration of life and dynamic nature of the Dreaming. I give a brief outline and assessment of the theories of death proposed by Bachofen, Frazer, Hertz, van Gennep, and Bloch and Parry in the light of Marrangu obsequies.

In Chapter 6 the significance of the Merri figure in Marrangu perceptions of bodily development, composition and affliction is analysed. I ask: what causes conception? What is the relationship between Merri and conception? What is an individual's spiritual and physical being? How are these two aspects of being linked and what importance has Merri in the linking process? What are the Marrangu models of affliction and healing? How does Merri influence the physical and psychological wellbeing of a person? In addition, I offer a short critique of writings on Aboriginal conception.

In the concluding Chapter I state what I regard as the position of Merri and Mewal in Marrangu belief; in cosmology, song, ceremony, eschatology and in ideas of physical and spiritual being. I point out the ambiguities that exist in the local understandings of Merri and Mewal and place these in historical, geographic, linguistic and cosmological
context. Finally, I return to an analysis of the ontological design of Aboriginal thought, contrasting Marrangu speculations with Plato's Doctrine of Forms.
CHAPTER 2

MARRANGU LAND AND SOCIALITY

North-central Arnhem Land is predominantly characterised by dry eucalyptus forest dominated by the Darwin stringybark, Eucalyptus tetradonta, known locally as balatj or bemborlai.1 Plates 2.1 and 2.2 illustrate the local vegetation, Plate 2.3 shows honey being gathered in the same area. The eucalyptus forest of Marrangu territory is drained by two creeks, Djimbi and Gattji (the latter called 'Galawdjapin Creek' in Marrangu territory). See Map 2.1 and Plates 2.4 to 2.7. North of the eucalyptus forest are seasonally flooding and semi-tidal lowlands (for example, Mungirdi plain in Plate 2.5). Here Gattji and Djimbi Creeks peter out, the former into a series of swamps (shown in Plates 2.9 and 2.10); the latter into a jungle waterhole (see Plate 2.11). Plates 2.12 to 2.14 show some of the foods procured at such places. The environment of swamp surrounded by paperbark (as shown in Plates 2.9 and 2.10) is very distinctive in appearance and cuts across the land roughly east to west. The northern part of Marrangu country is characterised by this environment (see Map 2.1 and 2.2). The people at Galawdjapin and Gattji also exploit food resources in the mangrove lined salt water estuary systems and tidal mud flats north of the tidal plains (see Plate 2.15).

The siting of Galawdjapin and Gattji outstations close to Gattji Creek is certainly tied to the permanence of this waterway. Gattji (see Plate 2.16) is a traditional place of residence and is a 'big name' place. Missionaries from Milingimbi Mission visited

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1 A third alternative name for stringybark tree found in Djinang Marrangu (in fact the most common) is not used here through deference to a recently deceased individual.
Plate 2.1: Stringybark (Eucalyptus tetradonta) forest, near Galawdjapin. This semi-open and flat woodland is typical of much of Marrangu country.
Plate 2.2:- Grass burning in the late dry season, October 1999, near Bumbaldjarri, Marrangu country.
Plate 2.3: Honey gathering near Djarwumarrpa, September 1989. Bees, a small stingless variety, are observed entering the hive. The tree is then cut adjacent to this entrance. The entire contents of the hive is eaten using but but grass to soak up the honey or, as here, fingers.
Plate 2.5: Galawdjapin (Gattji) Creek, near Galawdjapin. A popular spot for fishing and swimming.
Plate 2.6:- Children at play Gattji Lagoon, near Barrmendelnorray, September 1989.
Plate 2.7: Barramundi, djanambal, caught in Gattji Creek, 1990. Jimmy Burinyila is holding the fish.
Plate 2.8: Mungirdi Plain, Yalungirri country, looking south-east, August 1989. This semi-tidal and seasonally flooding plain marks the northern boundary of Marrangu country. The smoke on the right hand horizon is from a grass fire.
Plate 2.9:- Djarrapuldjirri fresh water swamp, Wulaki country, November 1989. Gattji Creek ends in a series of swamps like this. Paperbark trees (melaleuca leucadendra) proliferate in the waterlogged ground.
Plate 2.10: Gorbrambi fresh water swamp, Wulaki country, September 1989. One of the swamps Gatiji Creek drains into. Note reflection of paperbarks in the water.
Plate 2.11: Djimbi Creek at Djambi jungle, Marrangu country, August 1989. This area is important in Marrangu clan cosmology.
Plate 2.12: Extracting edible core of cabbage palm, golwire, August 1989. The white core is eaten raw or cooked and tastes like a cross between carrot and coconut.
Plate 2.13: Ragi (Edible Corm or Spike Thrush; Eleocharis dulcis) growing in swampy water north of Garnadjari, Balmerbe country, October 1989. The green shoots, visible above the water, are attached to the edible part, a black corm the size of a Macadamia nut, or smaller. Ragi is a staple for magpie geese who are often hunted at swamps like this.
Plate 2.14: Procuring long-neck turtles, barnda, at Djarrapuldjirri swamp, Wulaki country, November 1989. The turtles are found in patches of cloudy, muddy water which is poked at with a stick (hence the holes in the mud). A woody sound is made when the stick contacts the turtle’s back. The turtle is then dragged from the mud.
Plate 2.15: Salt water cockles, nungi, at Goonabari, Wagu country. The cockles are collected in the tidal mangrove mud flats nearby and roasted on hot coals. They are also broken open and eaten raw.
Plate 2.17: The Djinang Marranggu owned outstation Galawdjapin, 1989. Note the stringybark forest surrounding the camp. The road in the top right goes to Ramingining. The shot is taken from atop the water tank (see Plate 2.18).
MAP 2.1- VEGETATION AND DRAINAGE IN MARRANGU TERRITORY AND SURROUNDS.
MAP 3.3: CLAN TERRITORIES AROUND MARRANGU COUNTRY, NORTH CENTRAL AUSTRALIA.
MAP 3.4: NONGERE AND GURAKNERE MARRANGU COUNTRY
MAP 25: MARRANGU BAPARRU CLAN COUNTRIES ON HONEY DREAMING TRACK
Gattji prior to World War two to exchange goods such as tea, sugar, flour, jam, cloth and tobacco for sacred objects. Mission staff also established a garden at Gattji for a time. Galawdjapin (see Plates 2.17 and 2.18) by contrast, is not a traditional settlement site but was established in 1974. At that time several Marrangu, Mildjingi and Ganalbingu clanspeople left Maningrida, where most had been resident since the early 1960's, and moved back onto their own lands. At the time of my fieldwork two other Marrangu Djinang outstations, Mulgorrum and Gulidi (see Map 2.2) were unoccupied. Mulgorrum, like Galawdjapin, is a recently established outstation, while 'Gillere' (=Gulidi) is mentioned by Thomson (Peterson, 1976:104) as a Djinang place which he visited in 1936-37.

CLAN, TERRITORY AND COMPANY

Most Djinang Marrangu clan members live at Galawdjapin, Gattji, Ramingining and the 'Tank' (see Map 2.2). The 1987 Ramingining (township and outstation) census lists 57 Djinang Marrangu people, of which three are now deceased. There are others this list has not included, as well as births that have occurred since 1987. In 1989-90 I recorded 39 'bottom' and 24 'top' Djinang Marrangu people. Most individuals of the 'top' grouping reside at the 'Tank' and in Ramingining, while most of the 'bottom' Marrangu live at Galawdjapin and Gattji.

Affinal relations of 'bottom' Marrangu people, especially Wulaki, Burarra and Mildjingi individuals also live at Gattji and Galawdjapin (Gattji is Wulaki owned). Tables 2.1 and 2.2 show the number, age, sex and clan or language group affiliations of the populations at Gattji and Galawdjapin in the period August 1989 to February 1990. In each case the land owning clan heads the column.
### Table 2.1: Galawdjapin Population Profile

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Clan</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Sex</th>
<th>Age (in Years)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>M</td>
<td>F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marrangu</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mildjingi</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Burarra</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gupapuyngu</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manharrngu</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gunavidji</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>29</strong></td>
<td><strong>15</strong></td>
<td><strong>14</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

All 25 Marrangu individuals resident at Galawdjapin and Gattji, except one, belong to the 'bottom' Marrangu clan. But, as seen from Table 2.1, Marrangu individuals at Galawdjapin are not in the numerical majority. This is more starkly the case for Wulaki individuals at Gattji who are outnumbered 7:1 (see Table 2.2.). The populations of Galawdjapin and Gattji are a composition of peoples comprising the land owners, their affines and individuals of other clans whose land is adjacent or who may normally marry with the land owning group.

Column 3 of Table 2.3 shows the clans whose country either 'borders' Marrangu land, have reciprocal food gathering rights with Marrangu people and/or whose country Marrangu people "look after". Clans whose countries are related in this way to both 'bottom' and 'top' Marrangu are listed. Same moiety clans stand in the relationship 'mother's mother' also have reciprocal rights and responsibilities (see...
discussion of 'medje' relationships below). Map 2.3 shows the location of lands for most of the clans mentioned in Table 2.3.

### TABLE 2.2: GATTJI POPULATION PROFILE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CLAN</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
<th>SEX</th>
<th>AGE (IN YEARS)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>M</td>
<td>F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wulaki</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marrangu</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Burarra</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gupapuyngu</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Murrungun</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gunavidii</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manharrngu</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Groups whose country 'borders' Marrangu lands are Wulaki, Yalungirri, Djadiwitjibi, Murrungun (Yirritjing), Rembarrnga, Ganalbingu and Balmbi. Marrangu people have 'guardianship' rights (in the sense meant by Morphy, 1984:28-29) over the territory one of these groups, Rembarrnga, because the Rembarrnga speaking clan that truly owns the land is extinct. Both Wulaki and Ganalbingu clans are 'mother' clans to Marrangu people, who are said to 'look after' their mother country. This means they have rights to paint their 'mother' clan's

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2 This is a Wulaki-speaking Murrungun clan, not to be confused with the Dhuwungi moiety Murrungun (Morning Star) clan.
Dreamings and are obliged to perform certain ceremonial duties for their 'mother' clan. Other clan countries Marrangu people "look after", that is call 'mother', are Djadiwitjibi, Mildjingi and Murrungun (Yirritjing).

Most Marrangu people living at Gattji recognise two Wulaki women as their 'mother' (B.2 and B.8 in Fig 2.1); one of whom, B.8, is the acknowledged owner of Gattji. One senior Marrangu man (B.5 in Fig 2.1) has lived at Gattji most of his 71 years. When Galawdjapin was established in 1974 he decided to remain at Gattji and "look after" the country and raise his children there. His brother (B.13) set up Galawdjapin, the outstation on Marrangu land. B.5's decision to stay at Gattji is consistent with local practices allowing either uxorilocal or virilocal residence. I never heard anything to suggest it was unusual to have Marrangu people outnumber Wulaki people 7:1 on Wulaki country. It seems that by living at Gattji Marrangu people were simply regarded as "looking after" Wulaki country. Time will tell what becomes of Gattji and the rest of Wulaki country, but in the past the Marrangu clan has incorporated other clans into its own ranks. For example, Borsboom (1978:22) reports that the three member Gorbmorbmal clan is, "now [1975] considered as 'one' with Wurgigandjar [= 'bottom' Marrangu] and its country as part of Wurgigandjar territory."

The Djinang Marrangu at Galawdjapin and Gattji call themselves simply 'Marrangu', which is the baparru name they share with other clans (mala) of the Honey (=Sugar Bag, Djarware, Yarrpany) Dreaming. Several other names are regarded as synonyms for the Djinang speaking Marrangu clan including Warnambi, Wurrgiganydjarr, Mewal and Mungurrpi.

Warnambi and Wurrgiganydjarr both relate to the Stringybark tree; Warnambi to the tree itself while Wurrgiganydjarr denotes "stringybark flower" (Borsboom,

The Stringybark Tree Dreaming, like that of the Djareware (Sugar Bag) Dreaming, is held in common by all Marrangu clans (and many other Dhuwungi moiety clans besides). In fact, the name 'Wurrgiganydjarr' was given to the Djinang Marrangu people by another clan, the Djambarrpuyngu speaking Marrangu clan (Borsboom, ibid). Such exchanges highlight the closely related spiritual endowment of clans of the same baparru (discussed below under 'Marrangu Baparru').

Mewal, as already introduced, is a Spirit Being companion of the Dreaming Honey, Djareware. By virtue of this association Mewal sometimes serves as an alternate name for Marrangu and, as I was told on one occasion, Marrangu clanspeople are addressed as 'Mewal' by certain others in Ramingining.

The fourth Marrangu synonym, Mungurrpi, in my experience was only ever used in conjunction with 'Marrangu' (as "Mungurrpi Marrangu") to refer specifically to the Marrangu people at Galawdjapin. It's 'meaning', if one exists, is unknown to me though its usage suggests a similarity with the term "bottom" in the division of Djinang Marrangu into "bottom" and "top" segments. In my time at Galawdjapin and Gattji 'Marrangu' was the most frequently used clan name, Mewal and Warnambi occasionally and Wurgiganydjarr and Mungurrpi very rarely.

The Marrangu clan is divided between "bottom" and "top" parts, known as Nongere (or Mongon or Mongonirri) and Guraknere respectively. This division is said to stem from a Dreaming act when Djareware (Honey Being) used a stone axe to cut
Marrangu country into two parts, thus forming Nongere and Guraknere (Borsboom, 1978b:72). Nongere and Guraknere are described in English as "companies", each with specific responsibilities according, primarily, to their geographic position. However, both contain sites connected with the journey of Djareware, the Marrangu Sugar Bag Being.

Taylor's Kunwinjku informants translated the word 'company', in the context of intra-clan division as "follow each other", "mix together", "we share" and "all one family" (1987:86-87). I received virtually identical glosses though, significantly, Kunwinjku organisation is different to the Marrangu case in that group belonging is expressed more in terms of language groups than clans (ibid:101,140). I did not record any statement that 'company' denoted "indeterminate tracts" of land, in the sense meant by Stanner (1965:12). In contrast to Keen's (1978:214) finding at Milingimbi that the term 'company' is rarely used, I found the term frequently employed and the groupings it denotes an important facet of social organisation.

The word 'company' is used by Marrangu people (in addition to intra-clan divisions) to describe the relation between intermarrying clans, that is, between clans in a "mother" or djungkai relationship (djungkai relations are discussed below). There is some cross-over in these two senses of 'company' because the intra-clan company subgroups structure marriage arrangements with djungkai clans.

An example will help demonstrate the division of rights and responsibilities between Nongere and Guraknere. Nongere (bottom) Marrangu country is located adjacent to Wulaki country, whereas Guraknere (top) country, lying to the south-east, adjoins Ganalbingu lands. Map 2.4 shows this. Only Nongere Marrangu (of the Marrangu companies) marries with the Wulaki speaking clan called Djelaworwor and "look
after* or are djungkai for Wulaki country. Similarly, Guraknere Marrangu individuals alone (among Marrangu people) marry with the neighbouring Ganalbingu speaking clan and have djungkai responsibilities towards Ganalbingu territory.

Hence (and in this sense the two meanings of 'company' overlap) Nongere Marrangu are djungkai for Wulaki and Guraknere Marrangu are djungkai for Ganalbingu. However, these differing ties towards neighbouring 'mother' countries and clans do not extend to graded ownership rights in Marrangu lands. Both Nongere and Guraknere are considered equal owners all of Marrangu land. A further point of cross-over is that the most senior man from either company is regarded as the leader of the clan as a whole.

Nongere and Guraknere are today firmly viewed as "one Marrangu family", as one man told me, and are regarded as jointly possessing the "one Dream" and madayin associated with it. The interrelation is further imaged in that 'Guraknere' means the neck or apex of the spine (hence 'top') while 'Nongere' denotes the 'bottom' of the spine. This symbolism is significant as bone is a substance associated with clan origins and ancestry (see Chapters 5 and 6).

In terms of genealogy, Nongere and Guraknere Marrangu do not constitute 'one family'. Fig 2.1 and 2.2 chart the genealogies of Marrangu Nongere and Marrangu Guraknere respectively. Most Nongere individuals are descendents of three brothers (B.1, B.5, and B.13) while most Guraknere individuals descend from two brothers of a different lineage (X.2 and X.4). These two lineages do not overlap genealogically, even when one goes back to the eldest male in each chart (A.2 in Fig 2.1 and W.2 in Fig 2.2). The clans that Nongere and Guraknere Marrangu marry into are different: most Nongere individuals have Wulaki mothers; while most Guraknere individuals
have Ganalbingu mothers. No Nongere individuals marry with Ganalbingu people and no Guraknere individuals take Wulaki spouses. But, both Nongere and Guraknere call either Wulaki or Ganalbingu 'mother' clan. The difference lies in that closer geographic proximity makes Guraknere the more important djungkai group for Ganalbingu people while Nongere is djungkai for their immediate neighbours, the Wulaki Djelaworwor clan.

Nongere and Guraknere companies are identified with distinct but contiguous tracts of Marrangu country and this is reflected in residence patterns (see Map 2.2 and 2.4). Even though Guraknere Marrangu do not live on Guraknere country at present (Mulgorrum outstation being abandoned) they live closer to Guraknere country than do Nongere Marrangu that is, at the 'Tank' and Ramingining. However, companies are regarded as joint owners of all sites throughout the breadth of Marrangu country. Therefore the Marrangu clan and all Marrangu individuals own the land, not the Nongere and Guraknere companies that compose the Marrangu clan.

The land-owning unit in the Marrangu case is composed of two patrilineal groups and not a single patrilineal descent group. Hiatt (1962:279-80) has found that Gidjingali (Burarra) land ownership structures are often of more than one patrilineal group. The Marrangu clan is not a single lineage, patri-descent group. It is a land-owning group owning the spiritual knowledge associated with that land and composed of two 'companies', Nongere and Guraknere. Non-Marrangu people resident at Marrangu outstations do not share in such ties of ownership and no especial unity is attached to the residential "community" on the basis of shared residence (see Hiatt, 1965:24-27).
As Morphy (1990:316) notes, a critical feature of the clan in Arnhem Land, despite having sovereignty over its own land, is its position of connectedness with many other clans. The links the Marrangu clan has with other clans in terms of shared Dreamings and madayin (baparru); shared language (yan); territorial proximity; marriage ties (djungkai); and reciprocal ceremonial (medje) responsibilities are shown in Table 2.3.

I have discussed territorial relationships (column 3) in the above section. In each of the following paragraphs I outline relationships the Marrangu Djinang clan has in terms of shared language (column 2), marriage/djungkai ties (column 4) and ceremonial ‘medje’ ties (column 5). A fuller discussion of baparru relations (column 1) then follows.

Five clans besides Marrangu speak dialects of the Djinang language: two are of the Dhuwungi moiety, Manharrngu and Murrungun; and three are of the Yirritjing moiety, Mildjingi, Balmbi and Djadiwitjibi. There is conflicting evidence whether Wulaki, Wagu and Yalungirri are Djinang dialects. I take up the question ‘is Wulaki Djinang?’ in Appendix 1. On the basis of shared language, larger groupings of clans are formed, though these are not socially important groups. Fig 2.3 shows the coverage of Djinang yan in relation to baparru, mala and company affiliations.

Yirritjing clans that marry with Marrangu Djinang clan are listed in column 4 of Table 2.3. Some of these clans including Ganalbingu, Dabi, Wulaki, Mildjingi and Djadiwitjibi have a longstanding intermarrying relationship with the Marrangu clan and are called djungkai. All other clans listed have members who have married Marrangu individuals in ‘one off’ arrangements. ‘Djungkai’ means mother’s clan and country and entails several
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1. <strong>BAPARRU</strong></th>
<th>2. <strong>LANGUAGE</strong></th>
<th>3. <strong>TERRITORIAL</strong></th>
<th>4. <strong>MARRIAGE</strong></th>
<th>5. <strong>CEREMONIAL</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sugar Bag Dreaming (all Dhuwungl)</td>
<td>Djinang Yan (D=Dhuwungl; Y=Yirritjing)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ritharngu- Lake Evala</td>
<td>Manharrngu (D)</td>
<td>Wulaki; 2, 3, 4 (Y)</td>
<td>Wulaki</td>
<td>Murrungun</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Djambarrpuynngu- Elcho Island</td>
<td>Murrungun (D)</td>
<td>Yalungirri; 2, 3 (D)</td>
<td>Mildjingi</td>
<td>Liyagalawumirr</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wagilak Roper River</td>
<td>Balmbi (Y)</td>
<td>Djadiwitjibi; 2, 4 (Y)</td>
<td>Gupapuyngu</td>
<td>Mandjalpingu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Burarra</td>
<td>Djadiwitjibi (Y)</td>
<td>Rembarrnga; 2 (D)</td>
<td>Gunadba</td>
<td>?Yalungirri</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>?Gyde River</td>
<td>Mildjingi (Y)</td>
<td>Mildjingi; 2, 3, 4 (Y)</td>
<td>Gunavidji</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>?Marakulu</td>
<td>?Wulaki (Y)</td>
<td>Ganalbingu; 2, 3, 4 (Y)</td>
<td>Djadiwitjibi</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>?Kulumula</td>
<td>?Yalungirri (D)</td>
<td>?Walu (Y)</td>
<td>Murrungun; 2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. Language affiliation of clan shown only. Places listed denote (approx) where this group owns country.
2. Denotes clans whose territories border Marrangu country.
3. Denotes clans whose country is often visited on hunting and fishing trips by Marrangu people.
4. Denotes clans whose country is "looked after" by Marrangu clan.
5. First 7 clans/language groups listed marry Nongere Marrangu; the bottom 3 marry with Guraknere.
6. A Yirritjing moiety Murrungun clan speaking a dialect of the Wulaki language.
roles and responsibilities. Djungkai "look after" the madayin paintings, songs, objects and sites of their mother clan. For instance, djungkai are said to be 'policemen' or 'manager' in ceremonial activities. Everyone in each clan standing in a relationship of 'mother' to another clan are recognised as djungkai. The djungkai/mother clan concept expresses the interrelationship between the moieties. As one man told me, "Dhuwungi [=moiety] is mother to Yirritjing [=moiety] and Yirritjing is mother to Dhuwungi".

Same moiety clans in the relationship 'mother's mother' to each other call each other medje or 'granny'. Clans that Marrangu people call medje and vice versa are shown in column 5 of Table 2.3. All these clans fulfil supervisory roles as "guardians" to each other's madayin, to use Morphy's term (1984:28). Whereas djungkai clans "look after" each other's madayin, medje clan's might be said to 'look out for' each other's interests. The actual medje or 'granny' relationship between individuals is characterised, ideally, by joking and friendly indulgence and good humoured banter. Medje clans also handle bestowal arrangements. Wife bestowal is made by the male recipient's gorrung (FFZDH or FZDS) from one of the medje clans.

MARRANGU BAPARRU

The term 'baparru' (=babaru, bapurru) in the sense Marrangu Djinang people use it refers to the aggregate of same moiety clans (mala) that share a central Dreaming story (or some form of madayin property) and whose countries contain sites named in that story. This kind of configuration has been called 'phratry' by Warner (1937/58:33) and 'totemic unions' by Shapiro (1981:23). At Galawdjapin and Gattji the word 'baparru-a' is also used to denote the gathering of kin at a burial and
its associated ceremonies (see Chapter 5). Some people I spoke to insisted baparru has a different meaning from mala (patrilineal land-owning clan) though in fact I sometimes heard the terms used interchangeably. According to usage at Galawdjapin and Gattji 'baparru' adheres only loosely to the concept mala; its foremost sense is the collection of clans who have joint ownership of one Dreaming and its associated madayin. It is in this sense that I use the term baparru. Other workers (for example R.M. Berndt, 1955:96; Thomson, 1975:6; and Hiatt, 1965:20) have noted interchangeable usages elsewhere in Arnhem Land and suggest that 'baparru' can mean both the Dreaming based affiliations noted above and the patrilineal land-owning descent group, mala or clan.

The groups with whom the Djinang Marrangu people have baparru affiliation are shown in Table 2.3 (column 1) together with approximate locations of land owned by these groups. The language grouping (which does not necessarily co-incide with the clan name) is given. According to Marrangu people at Galawdjapin and Gattji, all these clans may be identified as 'Marrangu'. I confirmed this directly in the case of the Ritharngu speaking Marrangu, the original owners of the Honey Dreaming.

I am uncertain of who the 'Marakula' and 'Kulumula' groups are (see Table 2.3) and do not know where their country lies1. I include them here because they were mentioned to me by a senior Marrangu man. Possibly he was referring to now extinct clans who nonetheless are recognised as members of this baparru. The clans that form the Marrangu baparru are widespread geographically. Map 2.5 shows this. However, they are said to be joined in that the Dreaming Honey Being, Djareware, journeyed westward through each of these territories (see Map 2.5). On this basis

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1 Keen (pers comm) suggests the 'Kulumula' people own land in the Wessel Islands.
all Marrangu mala are said to share the "one track" and, despite different languages, the "one song." Chapter 3 looks more closely at the Djareware Dreaming, sites associated with it, the place of the Spirit Beings Mewal and Merri in it and how this Dreaming forms the basis of baparru membership.

At a day to day level baparru affiliations are not very significant, as members of Marrangu clans are geographically dispersed. As seen, the populations of Galawdjapin and Gattji are composed of peoples from many clan backgrounds, none of whom reside on the basis of being the same baparru as Djinang Marrangu. But, I would argue in terms of clan esteem, identity and ceremonial organisation, baparru relations are critical.

All Marrangu clans exchange spiritual property, such as sand sculpture designs, between each other and direct ceremonies such as mortuary rites on each other's behalf. Such collaborations indicate a common spiritual origin and are concrete expression of both clan autonomy and interconnectedness. The great value placed upon knowledge and ownership of properties such as designs, ceremonies and songs, not to mention the Dreaming significance of certain sites, makes these interactions all the more important. Taylor (1987:381) has observed that baparru is a highly abstract concept with little relation to on-the-ground groupings, but that baparru relations highlight the notion that spiritual unity transcends geographic, political and linguistic differences.

Clans within the same baparru do not share in toto the same Dreaming property as any one other member clan. Each clan along the Dreaming track will highlight a different aspect of the story relevant to themselves and their country. For example, Djinang Marrangu emphasize that part of the Dreaming journey of the Djareware
Honey Being that occurs in their country, namely, along the course of Djimbi Creek. In a like way, both Dj ambarrpuyn gu and Djinang Marrangu sing Stringybark tree manikay but place the emphasis differently. This feature is often described with the phrase “same but different” and perhaps more than any other feature is axiomatic of baparru relations. I discuss this aspect of baparru relations further in Chapters 3 and 4.

SUMMARY

This chapter has outlined the main features of the natural and social world of which the Marrangu people are part. Marrangu own territory dominated by open stringybark forest about 20 kilometres south of the north-central Arnhem Land coast. Most Nongere Marrangu people live at Galawdjapin and the neighbouring Wulaki outstation called Gattji and regularly visit other clan territories in the salt-water country to the north on food gathering expeditions. This area is characterised by mangrove lined estuaries and vast tidal floodplains. The intermediate area between Marrangu fresh-water country and this salt water environment features large seasonal swamps circled by paperbark forest. The swampy paperbark country forms a striking natural division between the two. Dense monsoonal jungles also dot this region. The paperbark swamps form the northern perimeter of Marrangu territory.

The social environment is distinguished by a blend of autonomous and interlinked groupings, chiefly among them the clan or mala. The mala is structured on patrilineal descent and designates social belonging and otherness. Land tenure and cosmological character of sites is also named as specific to individual clans.
The clan is the principal unit generating a sense of belonging, but several other cross-cutting dimensions of sociality are present. Hence a shared Dreaming track (baparru), shared language (yan), shared residence, 'company' (Nongere and Guraknere), mother (djungkal) and granny (medje) clan ties all structure social relations.

Tables 2.1 and 2.2 showed at least eight clans are represented in the populations of Galawdjapin and Gattji, numbering fifty-six persons in total. Less than half of these were Marrangu individuals. Most other Marrangu individuals, chiefly of the Guraknere 'top' Marrangu company, live in Ramingining or at the Tank. Clan filiation is not the exclusive determinant of residence patterns. What people do, with whom and when on a daily basis is more a matter of individual choice than a result of clan membership. Hence boys of similar ages congregate together, as do girls. Hunting and fishing trips are organised according to who's got the bullets and line, not via principles of group solidarity. Social interactions are highly flexible and this is very pronounced in small, reasonably remote communities such as Galawdjapin and Gattji, where close knit interdependence is an essential and unavoidable feature.

As the analysis following looks specifically at Marrangu concepts and cosmology, this aspect of local society (namely, the fluid interconnectedness of individual relationships) will tend to be obscured. This should not detract, however, from the real significance of certain formal ties, which both bind together and differentiate individuals and groups. In terms of cosmology, baparru relations are highly significant as they draw together people from widely different locations on the basis of shared Dreamings and Dreaming sites.
In Chapter 3 I analyse the Djareware Dreaming shared by all Marrangu clans, looking at its geographic significance for each of the Marrangu clans but especially as it bears upon the Djinang Marrangu people. Also in Chapter 3 I begin analysis of the Spirit Beings Mewal and Merri in the Djareware Dreaming and demonstrate the ambiguity surrounding these two figures. The composition of Marrangu eschatological beliefs, which focus around Merri, is also revealed through an examination of the Luma Luma Dreaming. Subsequent chapters deal with various aspects of these spirit concepts; as found in song, mortuary ritual and perceptions of the body.
CHAPTER 3

MEWAL, MERRI, DJAREWARE DREAMING AND LUMA LUMA DREAMING

MEWAL AND DJAREWARE STORY¹

Djareware [Honey Being] emerged from Raymangirr, a hot freshwater spring in the coastal foreshore between Buckingham and Arnhem Bays. There Djareware chopped down a stringybark tree to look for honey. As the tree fell it changed into rock and all things involved in this encounter became madayin: stringybark tree, its flowers, gecko lizard, tree goanna, friarbird and bees, pollen, eggs and honey.

Djareware was now joined by Mewal and travelled north west, looking for honey at various places in Djambarpyngu Marrangu country on Galiwin’ku (Elcho Island) including Wurriyu, Lugubaia and at Matunba Island.

From Galiwin’ku, Djareware and Mewal travelled south west, crossing back onto the mainland at Barabum’wala, in Djambarpyngu Marrangu country and then south to Wagilak Marrangu territory. From here they again travelled north west, entering Djinang Marrangu country at a place called Djapididjapin.

At Djapididjapin a female Mewal Being dropped a hollow log and this created a waterhole and Djimbi Creek. A boulder near Djapididjapin is a Dreaming site for the female Mewal.

Continuing on through Djinang Marrangu country, Mewal ate honey at a place called Wulkirbimirri, leaving some of it behind on two exposed rocks. These rocks are now also a Mewal Dreaming.

From here Mewal and Djareware travelled down Djimbi Creek. On the way Mewal searched for honey, knowing there was plenty about because the stringybark tree flowers, wurrki, were in bloom. Mewal saw many goannas, girmili or minarr, looking for honey also.

Mewal looked for large bees, nom nom, and small bees, nakarri, entering and leaving stringybark trees. Mewal then cut the trees with an axe, ngapamada. A male Mewal Being dipped in but but grass and scooped out the honey and collected a type of yam called wirrpa. A female Mewal Being collected more honey in a dilly bag.

Djareware and Mewal then came to Rrorritjdarri (also known as Djambi #1) where Mewal put Djareware into the deep red rocks of the creekbed. This place is now a Djareware Dreaming.

¹This account of the ‘Mewal and Djareware Story’ combines five accounts from different individuals collected at Galawdjapin and Gattji in 1989. Two senior Marrangu men also discussed with me a bark painting that depicts this story. I am further indebted to Djon Scott Mundine who supplied the information in the opening paragraph.
Further along Djimbi Creek Mewal and Djareware created a jungle called Djambi (#2). At Djambi they met Merri. Mewal and Merri sang and danced together, Merri teaching Mewal the songs and dances (sometimes Mewal is given as the teacher).

Mewal placed the water goanna, djarrka, at Djambi but djarrka later moved. Djarrka’s head is now in a billabong at a place nearby called Malidjul. Djarrka’s tail is in Galawdjapin Creek at a site called Boyndjarrkaoridjijn.

Near Djambi Merri and Mewal collected water lily roots, ragi, which they threw to an island to the north west called Gorriba. They sang and danced again.

Mewal placed some bees in rocks at Djambi while other bees continued westward, leaving the mainland at a clearing in mangroves at the mouth of Bundadjarrri Creek, just south of Darbada Island.

Back at Djambi, Mewal and Merri decided to move on also. They travelled to Bumbaldjarri, a jungle close by. Here they met spirits of deceased humans, also called Merri, as well the first living people to inhabit the area. Mewal and Merri held a song and dance, bunggul, with them. Bumbaldjarri is now a Mewal and Merri Dreaming place.

After that Mewal returned to Djambi and stayed there. Djambi is now a Mewal and Djareware Dreaming place.

Merri continued north to the swampy country at the end of Djimbi Creek. Here, at a swamp called Garnadjarri, Merri once again collected ragi, washed it and threw it to Gorriba.

DJAREWARE, MEWAL AND MERRI

The Marrangu people living at Gattji and Galawdjapin say the Djareware (or ‘Honey’, ‘Yarrpany’ or ‘Sugar Bag’) Dreaming1 is ‘Our Dream’ and occasionally refer to themselves as ‘Honey People’. ‘Djareware’ is not to be understood as simply the substance honey but also, according to Borsboom, as:

The spiritual essence of the Dreamtime Honey, the Bees producing the honey, the ‘Nose’ of the Bees2 ... the humming noise made by Honey Bees, the Sugar Bag sand drawing and [paintings upon] the Maradjiri [ceremonial] pole (1978b:43).

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1 By ‘Djareware Dreaming’ I mean the ‘Mewal and Djareware Story’. I will also use the phrases ‘Honey Dreaming’ and ‘Marrangu Dreaming’ interchangeably in this sense.

2 In addition to the ‘nose’ of the bees, I was told the hooked protusions at the entrance to the hive were the ‘nose’ of Sugar Bag. Plate 3.2 shows the projecting part on one hive.
Djareware includes all the parts of the honey -- eggs, pollen, food -- and the hive. In the Dreaming story quoted above Djareware is to be understood in all these aspects. Just which aspect is present, if not all, must be gleaned from the context in the story.

Mewal and to a lesser extent Merri participate in this Dreaming and have extensive if not altogether clear ties with the Djareware Being. There are several aspects to the Mewal figure in the Djareware Dreaming. First, Mewal is a singular Being that travels with Djareware from Raymangirr to Djinang Marrangu country. Upon entry into Djinang Marrangu clan country, Mewal is transformed into a female and male pair that continue to accompany Djareware down Djimbi Creek, collecting Honey on the way. Both these aspects of Mewal are close adjuncts to the Djareware complex, especially to the Bees.

Is this inseparability borne out in paintings of these Spirit entities? Bark paintings, rarrk, depicting the Djareware story show Mewal anthropomorphically (as in Plate 3.1) while Djareware/Bees are represented as two concentric circles or dots and the hive as an enclosed pole or cone shape (see also the Djinang Marrangu Djareware ground sculpture; Fig 5.2). However, for Marrangu people, certain cosmological entities diverse in character, name and habitat are regarded as the 'same' if they occur in the same story. I heard all the figures in the Djareware story referred to simply as 'Djareware'.

At Djambi, the jungle Djareware and Mewal co-create in the Story, Mewal meets Merri and is transformed again, this time into a Jungle Spirit of direct similarity with Merri. A large number of these Spirits inhabit the jungles of Djambi and Bumbaldjarri and are known collectively as Mewal. In this aspect, as a body of Jungle Spirits, Mewal is coterminous with Merri and closely interactive with the spirits of the human dead (which I call 'dead body' spirits), also called Merri. The Mewal Being has all these aspects in the Djareware Dreaming.
The Merri figure in the Djareware Dreaming is more straightforward. Merri is the name of a single Spirit Being that inhabits the jungles of Djambi and Bumbaldjarri. The same name also applies to a large number of like Spirits that live in these jungles. The title ‘Mewal’ or ‘Merri’ applies equally to this group, hence it is said in the story that Mewal and Merri sing and dance (bunggul) together. This activity marks them as Beings with closely shared properties and as having ties with the spiritual property of the living community. As Morphy (1990:317) notes, bunggul episodes in Dreaming stories symbolise the transference of madayin property to human groups because it is through bunggul in ceremony that people today re-enact the Dreaming Law.

Spirits of the human dead are also believed to congregate in jungle places and they too are called merri (to distinguish them from the Jungle Spirit Merri I use the term without a capital). Merri and Mewal (in the Jungle Spirit sense) dance and sing with these ‘dead body’ merri. Merri Jungle Spirit(s) also interact with the first living humans, teaching them the Marrangu manikay songs. In this sense, Merri is more oriented to the human community than Mewal. At the conclusion of the story (and earlier with Mewal) Merri Jungle Spirits throw raji, lily root, to Gorriba where another Merri figure called Luma Luma lives (discussed later this chapter).

In the cosmologies of other Marrangu clans Merri is a more generalised concept than the Djinang Marrangu type. In these cosmologies, for example in that of the Djambarrpuynu Marrangu, Merri is akin to ‘Mokuy’, a malign Spirit Being but with Creator Being aspects; connotations more appropriate to the Mewal figure in Marrangu cosmology. In the Djinang Marrangu version of the Djareware Dreaming, the Merri Spirit is a more confined figure with a strong jungle presence but limited elsewhere. Limited, but not non-existent: for example, the Merri Dreaming track begins south-east of the Arafura Swamp at a site called Mungirwir, and continues throughout ‘top’ and ‘bottom’ country. The point to remember is that this track is different to the one owned by Mewal and Djareware. Fig 3.1 shows the different tracks.
Fig 3.1: Djareware, Mewal, and Merri Dreaming Tracks
In addition, the ‘dead body’ merri evokes the transient, non-regenerative aspect of human death, especially recent death. The Mewal Jungle Spirit, in contrast, is distinct from the merri ‘dead body’ spirit, despite singing and dancing with spirits of the dead in the jungle. A corpse, for example, is not referred as ‘Mewal’ but as ‘merri’.

In sum, Mewal and Merri are related spiritual entities but have different centres of meaning. The strongest aspect of Mewal appears as Djareware’s companion. In contrast, Merri’s focus is as the unseen and unpredictable Spirit presence in the jungle. A second aspect of Mewal is identical to Merri in this regard. A further aspect of merri is the ‘dead body’ spirit figure, which stands removed from Merri’s other sense and still further removed from Mewal’s ‘honey’ aspect. A feature of these differences between Mewal and Merri is that in certain contexts they appear as proper names and other situations as common nouns, highlighting the various forms and the generic and yet clan specific nature of these Beings. A summary of Mewal and Merri’s associations, in order of strongest signification, is shown in Table 3.1.

There is a strong resemblance between the Marrangu Djareware Dreaming and other Dhuwungi moiety Honey Dreamings found elsewhere in Arnhem Land. Groger Wurm (1973:51-57) and C.H.Berndt (1970:1322) describe myths involving the Spirit figure ‘Woijal’ or ‘Wudal’ (=Wudhal or Wurray). ‘Wudhal’ is “the Wild Honey Ancestral Being” (Groger Wurm,ibid:51) that originated in Ngalakan country in south central Arnhem Land and travelled north. On the journey, Wudhal carries in long baskets honey collected from stringybark trees that have been cut with an axe. Wudhal also establishes many madayin sites for various Dhuwungi moiety clans (ibid). Wudhal and Djareware are alike in these respects.

According to Groger Wurm, Wudhal has several alternative names including “Warala warala” (=Warrala-warrala) (ibid). At Gattji I was told ‘Warralawarrala’ is the name of Wulaki (Yirritjing moiety) Mewal-like Being, though this seems unlikely.
Keen found Warrala warrala to be a Liyagalawumirr (Dhuwungi moiety) mala "stick insect" manikay subject (in fieldnotes). In any event, a Mewal-like Being is strongly involved in the various Honey Dreamings of both moieties. Significantly, the Yirritjing moiety Honey Dreamings are commonly recognised to involve a different species of Bee, called niwuda (see Rudder, 1977:2:4.2.2).

**TABLE 3.1: MEWAL AND MERRI IN MARRANGU COSMOLOGY**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MEWAL</th>
<th>MERRI</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Honey Dreaming figure: companion of Djareware</td>
<td>1. 'Dead body' Spirits</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Group of Jungle Spirit Beings (interchangeable with Merri)</td>
<td>4. Honey Dreaming figure: travels independent of Mewal and Djareware</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Groger Wurm (ibid) also states "Ure" is an alternate name for Wurray or Wudhal. Elsewhere (see Warner, 1937/58:554-559) 'Ure' is construed as a "trickster" Mokuy (=Merri) Being, suggesting a further Honey-related aspect to the Merri figure (see also Layton, 1970:490-1). The possibility that the Marrangu Mewal Being is an elaboration of the Mokuy (=Merri) figure, found elsewhere in Arnhem Land, is strongly suggested by the dual 'trickster' and Honey identity of the Ure Being.

The interaction between Djareware, Mewal and Merri is an aspect of the Djareware Dreaming emphasized strongly by Djinang Marrangu people. Mewal has a close association with Djareware (though, as I discuss below, Borsboom found Merri to be a closer companion of Djareware). Marrangu people are addressed as "Mewal", because this is "all the same as Marrangu", the Dhuwungi moiety Honey. Further, a Wulaki Being called Ganingalkngalk, now regarded as closely analogous to Mewal, is translated in Waters' Djinang Dictionary as, "totemic Bee" (1983:40).
In the 'Mewal and Djareware Story', Mewal travels with the Honey Bees westward from Raymangirr, near Buckingham Bay, where Djareware first emerged. Mewal searches for Honey enroute, finding it in abundance in the interior of Stringybark trees, where Mewal also notices Goanna and Friar Bird (Geganggie). Marrangu country is largely dominated by stringybark forest and the creatures Mewal encounters are known and common to this landscape. Dreaming relationships and events, therefore, accurately blend with the character of the landscape but, in addition, are thought to help establish it. Land transforming events in the Djareware Dreaming not only create the physical landscape but give a cosmological character to the land. Hence the ambivalence felt over jungle places stems from Dreaming events, in that Mewal and Merri (as Jungle Spirits) liaise there with spirits of the human dead (merri). All of these Spirits are thought to attack living individuals.

I was told the Jungle Spirits Mewal and Merri behave in a devious way. They call out to people, especially when alone, making them lose their way and forget the task at hand (these actions are represented in the Mewal bunggul; see Chapter 4). Mewal and Merri also exercise a mystical control over the land, having the ability to twist it round or make other modifications resulting in a lose of direction. When fishing, Mewal or Merri unhook the catch especially if it is a catfish, bullia or djikada, a Marrangu conception Dreaming. Injury or accident is often attributed to the influence of Mewal or Merri (as is often the case noted for ‘Mokuy’ spirits). In these ways and many others, Merri and Mewal are unseen agents interrupting the normal flow of life, cloaking every act with vulnerability. The merri ‘dead body’ spirits are also viewed as malevolent, but in a more localised sense. They attack the bodily well being of the living, rather than creating a generalised state of disorder as do the Merri and Mewal Jungle Spirits.

Borsboom also documents the Marrangu Djinang Djareware Dreaming (that's not to say the same version). Borsboom found Merri to be in closer relation to Djareware than
Mewal. As this characterisation is a significant variation from my information, I analyse the differences in the following section.

MERRI AND MEWAL IN BORSBOOM'S MARADJIRI

Borsboom's summary of the Merri and Mewal concepts is shown in Table 3.2 (compare with Table 3.1). In Maradjiri, Borsboom states "Mere" (=Merri) is "the First Sugar Bag (=Djareware) Man" of Marrangu cosmology and is "identical or interchangeable with Sugar Bag" (1978b:48). Both Djareware and Merri, he says, travelled through Marrangu territory in the Dreaming performing similar acts, visiting places and jointly naming them (ibid). Where they first met is unclear but Merri, Borsboom says, set out from Murrunga Island, "a mythological place...where the sun rises" (ibid).

TABLE 3.2: BORSBOOM'S SUMMARY OF MERRI AND MEWAL IN MARADJIRI (1978b)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>GENERAL CONCEPT:</th>
<th>MERE (=MERRI)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Wurigigandjar</td>
<td>singular Cult Hero (First Sugar Bag Man, identical with Sugar Bag)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(=Djinang Marrangu)</td>
<td>dual B-Z pair, (also spoken of as Mewal pair)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>specification:</td>
<td>plural 1. Mewal (species of spirit tricksters, Devil-Devils) 2. Spirits of the dead (dangerous part)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Borsboom found 'Mere' (=Merri) to be a mythological 'old man' who collected honey throughout Marrangu country with an axe, spoonstick and dilly bag (ibid). People today, he suggests, collect honey in the manner of this Merri Being. In this old man form, writes Borsboom, Merri cooked honey on some hot stones at Wulkirbimirri and
gave it to some young men and women which revealed to them the secret of how to procreate (ibid:49).

Borsboom further discusses Merri as a Brother and Sister pair who incestuously produced the first people and installed the kinship system and social relations between the sexes (ibid:49-51). According to Borsboom, "when Djinang speak of this [brother and sister] pair the names Mere and Mewal are used interchangeably" (ibid:52).

Borsboom finally distinguishes "a class of spiritual beings" called Mewal. They inhabit jungles, "may be male or female [and] belong exclusively to the Wurgigandjar [=Djinang Marrangu] people" (ibid:51). These Beings are regarded as mischievous and potentially dangerous. Borsboom specifies these Beings as Mewal but also refers to them as Merri (ibid). Worth noting here also is that Dhuwal and Dhuwala speakers call these spirits "Mokuy" (Morphy,1984:40) a word, says Borsboom, "the Djinang know and compare with Mere" (ibid).

Djareware is described by Borsboom as having travelled through Djambarrpuynugu Marrangu territory (no mention is made of Wagilak country on this Dreaming track) before entering Djinang Marrangu territory (ibid:43). Borsboom suggests Bees and the concept Djareware are, "intrinsically connected" (ibid:45) but sometimes appear independently (ibid:43). When this happens, Borsboom writes, Djareware travels underground while the Bees fly through the air. Borsboom's comments regarding the cluster of features (cited earlier) that together make up 'Djareware' correspond closely with my information. His information regarding Merri and Mewal is significantly different to what I received, however.

In particular, I was told the Merri Being that originated at Murrunga Island was called Luma Luma and is involved in a different Dreaming scenario from the Djareware Dreaming. Hence Borsboom's claim that the Murrunga Island Merri, Luma Luma, is
the 'First Sugar Bag Man' of the Djareware Dreaming suggests either: (a) the existence of a third Dreaming scenario, involving both Luma Luma and Djareware, of which I am unaware; or (b) that Borsboom has not distinguished between the Luma Luma and Djareware (Honey) Dreaming scenarios. This conclusion does not deny the existence of a tangential link between the Luma Luma and Djareware Dreamings (see below).

Further, the 'First Sugar Bag Man' Merri, to whom Borsboom's informants ascribe the creative events of the Dreaming (along with Djareware) was, according to my respondents, not Merri but Mewal -- the Mewal Being that accompanies Djareware from Raymangirr. The 'First Sugar Bag Man', they said, is not called "Mere", but Mewal. Accordingly, I was told the Jungle Spirit Merri that figures in the Djareware Dreaming did not come from Murrunga Island (as is Borsboom's information), but from Mungirwir, a site near the Arafura Swamp (see Fig 3.1). In point of fact, Murrunga Island does not lie, "probably far to the east" (ibid:48) but is located to the north of Marrangu territory in the Crocodile Islands group.

On the basis of differing responses from different sets of Marrangu informants, Borsboom and I have identified divergent classifications in Marrangu cosmology. Borsboom found the male and female Beings that accompany Djareware down Djambi Creek are "Mere" but that they are "also spoken of as Mewal pair" (see Table 3.2). This pair, Borsboom found, were active in establishing Marrangu sociality and the division of knowledge in rituals (possessed by men) and reproductivity (by women) (ibid:49-50). I found these Beings were only spoken of as a Mewal pair and that in the Djareware Dreaming Mewal is most closely associated with Honey, not Merri.

Waters must have received concurrent information (that Mewal and not Merri is the closer adjunct to the Marrangu Honey Being) because he defines "Miwal" as "totemic Bee" or "Bee species" (1983:77) but classes "Mirri" as "devil" or "spirit of dead
person" (ibid:76). Mountford (1956:387) recorded a Marrangu story which also associates Mewal with Honey. The story involves two sisters, "Miwal" and "Wanuwanu", who live in a bark hut at "Djimba", presumably Djimbi Creek. The hut is propped up by a central pole and "within this pole there is a hive of wild Bees...and the honeycomb"(ibid). Plate 3.1 shows the painting from which these details derive (see also Clunies Ross,1978:130-1,154).

I was told the Being that spills Honey on the rocks at Wulkirbimirri in the Djareware story is Mewal and not an old man Merri, as was Borsboom's information (ibid:48-49). These rocks, adjacent to the present day Ramingining airstrip are, I was told, a Mewal Dreaming site. The rocks are visible from the road linking Galawdjapin and the airstrip. They are about 30cms high and have a light green colouration on top which, reportedly, is the stain left by the Honey. But rather than mentioning Merri, my hosts said Mewal ate and spilt the Honey on these rocks, a point repeated almost every time we passed the spot.

In the versions of the Djareware story told to me, Mewal is depicted much as the Merri old man mentioned by Borsboom; that is, searching for honey and consuming some at Wulkirbimirri. But there is some suggestion in the accounts I received that this aspect of Mewal is female, despite the similarities with Borsboom's old man Merri. The differing views and knowledge of informants as well as confusions over related cosmological scenarios probably, to some extent, explains the divergence.

The two final aspects of Merri recorded by Borsboom (that of a class of jungle dwelling Spirit Beings and 'dead body' spirits) correspond with information I received, with
Plate 3.1: Bark painting showing the two women, 'Miwal' (=Mewal) and 'Wanu-wanu', collected at Millingimbi in 1948 (in Mountford, 1955:390). The long panel in the middle is the central pole supporting the bark hut the two women have built. The hut is located at "Djimba" (probably Djimbi Creek). Inside the pole is a hive of bees, the dots being the bees and honeycomb. 'Miwal' and 'Wanu-wanu' are at the top of the painting.
Plate 3.2: The 'nose' of Djareware. The point protruding from the tree is the 'nose'. The bees, called nakarri in Djinang Marrangu, can be seen gathering above it to enter the hive.
the former group being spoken of as 'Merri' or 'Mewal' interchangeably. The Mewal Being that is Djareware's companion is transformed into a Jungle Spirit, in both a singular and group sense, upon entering Djambi jungle and meeting Merri there. While the name remains the same, the associations are very different. The Jungle Spirit Mewal consorts with 'dead body' spirits and is generally antagonistic to living people. In contrast, the Mewal Being that is Djareware's companion helps create Marrangu clan country and bestows the madayin. The Mewal Being that is Djareware's accomplice is, therefore, regarded as an important creator of the social and natural environments of the Marrangu people. In this key respect Mewal is inseparable from Djareware.

ANALYSIS OF THE 'MEWAL AND DJAREWARE STORY'

The Djareware Dreaming describes the encounters and events of the journey. The story is also an account of cosmogony with Djareware conceived as one of the original creator Beings. Where events take place commemorative traces are left in 'natural' features. Flora and fauna encountered are made madayin including Stringybark Tree, Water Goanna and Friarbird. In addition, Djareware establishes relations of kin and moiety and bestows a clan identity on the first humans by giving them the Marrangu manikay to sing. Djareware's Dreaming journey is the source of Marrangu clan identity and is the charter by which relations to land, not just tenure, are structured.

The Djareware journey links the territories of several Marrangu clans. As seen in Chapter 2, each Marrangu clan (mala) owns widely dispersed country but with sites associated with the Djareware story located within it. Each of these sites relate to episodes in the Djareware Dreaming and are one grounds upon which all Marrangu clans (forming Marrangu baparru) assert their possession of "One Dream" or "One Song". The journey's starting place, Raymangirr, lies in the territory of the Ritharngu
Marrangu people. They are regarded as the original owners of the Djareware Dreaming. They gave it to the Djinang Marrangu people a long time ago. On the way to Djinang Marrangu territory Djareware passes through Djambarrpuyngu Marrangu country at Galiwin'ku and Djinba speaking Wagilak Marrangu lands also. After leaving Djinang Marrangu territory, Djareware enters country belonging to clans of the Burarra language group near Cape Stewart.

This Dreaming track intersects at various points with other Dhuwungi moiety Honey Dreaming journeys. For example, there are various sites along the southern coast of Galiwin'ku associated with the Honey Dreaming for the Gamalangga and Murrungun clans (see map in R.M. Berndt, 1976:149-50). The clans co-owning this Dreaming track, however, which include Manharrngu, Manhdhalpuy and Liyagalawumirr as well as Gamalangga and Murrungun clans, constitute a different baparru from the Marrangu baparru despite the similarity of Dreaming entities (see diagram in Keen, 1977:175). The Murrungun clan, for example, is usually identified with the Morning Star baparru which includes, among other clans, the Rembarrnga-speaking Murlarra people. The Marrangu clans, in addition, have crossovers with other clans on the basis of the shared Dreamings of Sun and Water Goanna (Keen, 1978:246).

To return to the story analysis, it is noticeable that Mewal is a dedicated Honey gatherer. Mewal carries sticks called djibbadai and bongbirri to aid the search, an axe, but but grass to dip in the honey and a dilly bag for its collection. Mewal ate Honey several times on the journey and in the process became “the boss of Sugar Bag”, as one man put it.

What does ‘boss of Sugar Bag’ mean? It means Mewal has an intimate knowledge of Djareware rather than a dominating position. Mewal knows where to find Djareware, how to find Djareware and how to collect and eat Djareware. Mewal also knows Djareware can effect conception, link living individuals with the ancestors (enacted
ceremonially with the Djareware string, malka) and guide to the appropriate afterlife place the wuguli (ancestral spirit) of a deceased person. 'Boss' indicates the creative cosmological relationship of Djareware and Mewal.

I was told that Mewal brought Djareware to Marrangu country in the Dreaming in a dilly bag. This relationship facilitated the entry of Djareware into features of the landscape at Wulkirbimbiri, Rrorritjdarri and Djambi, places named in the story, either as Honey or Bees. When shown these places I was told, "that's not rock, 'im Dream" or, "that's not creek, 'im Dream". Mewal is credited as the power making this transformation, with an aspect of Djareware as the outcome.

At other times in the story Djareware works more or less independently of Mewal. Such is the case during the initial search for Honey at Raymangirr and when Djareware leaves Djinang Marrangu country which, in the versions I collected, Djareware does alone. It is probably equally understood that Mewal followed the Bees all the way from Raymangirr and that Djareware brought Mewal in the process.

Stringybark trees are a recognised location for bee hives and the focus of honey gathering activity. Marrangu people have a Dreaming attachment with stringybark trees and especially the flower produced by them. One name for the Marrangu clan, Wurrgiganydjarr, was given to them by the Djambarrpuyngu Marrangu clan. The blossoming of the stringybark tree flower, wurgi, is a recognised sign for the renewed seasonal availability of honey (Rudder, 1977:2.4.1).

In the Dreaming story the Bees collect pollen from this flower and Mewal cuts the tree to get at the Honey. People today use the same types of implements as used by Mewal, namely sticks and but but grass, to find and dip into hollow logs filled with honey. In this sense the story is a clear charter for present activity.
Clawing their way up and down the tree trunks are goannas, one of the most consistently encountered creatures in Dhuwungi moiety Honey stories throughout Arnhem Land (see, for example, Groger-Wurm, 1973:54-55; Warner, 1937/58:556-557; Mountford, 1956:289-292; and Berndt and Berndt, 1989:40-41). In all these accounts, a "lizard man" sees 'Wudhal' (=Mewal) collecting Honey and demands some for himself, gulping it down quickly. A stick catches in the throat of lizard man as he swallows. The lizard man starts to cough and choke, but the stick changes into a tongue and the lizard man is transformed into a frilled neck lizard. This scenario is also associated with the Djungguwan ceremony (Keen, pers comm). In the versions I received Mewal sees minarr, land goanna, also collecting Honey, but the events leading to the transformation are not mentioned.

Of the other creatures mentioned in the story, the Friarbird Geganggie (or Gulauwun) is a common adjunct to stringybark trees. These small, black and white birds build their nests high in the branches or trunks of stringybark and other eucalyptus trees. On the one occasion I saw this bird in the wild it was, in fact, in a stringybark tree. Geganggie is said to be 'boss' for the bud of the stringybark tree flower, matai (Borsboom, ibid:60) as Geganggie feeds on the nectar of this flower.

In the Marrangu manikay song for Geganggie, the rapid movements made by this bird as it jumps from branch to branch are described in detail. The Geganggie manikay is usually sung in succession with the Djareware and Stringybark manikay, conveying a closely integrated cosmological clustering. Borsboom's informants said Geganggie and another bird, Crow, flew along with Djareware on part of the Dreaming journey (ibid:46).

According to Marrangu people, a significant event in the story is the placement of Djarrka, water goanna, at the jungle of Djambi by Mewal and Djareware. At Djambi a tree called minitgí, which translates as "jungle tree", is associated with this episode of
the story. Borsboom (ibid) asserts Djareware travels with Djarrka to the waterhole near Malidjul, which is now Djarrka's home. The accounts I recorded differs in that Djarrka travelled alone and underground (although in one case Merri is said to travel with Djarrka). Some people at Galawdjapin say that most of Djarrka's body is still underground, with the tail of the Water Goanna at Boyndjarrkaoridjin (in Galawdjapin Creek) and the head at Malidjul. Others suggest Djarrka's tail is no longer at Boyndjarrkaoridjin but moved first to places in Yalungirri Bopenni (mosquito) country, to the north, and then westward to a site in Burarra country. In all probability there are several Dreaming scenarios involving Djarrka, based on different journeys, because Djarrka is an important Dreaming entity shared by many Dhuwungi moiety clans.

Like Djareware and Mewal, Djarrka is of major significance in Marrangu cosmology and Dhuwungi moiety ritual. I was told Djarrka and Djareware were given to the Marrangu people by Djang'kawu, a brother and sister pair who are the archetypal creators in the Dreaming, precedent to Mewal and Djareware and credited with establishing the ritual and moral order. Mewal and Djareware followed and established the identity of the Marrangu clan and its territory. Subsequently, Merri taught the first people their songs. Djarrka is viewed as part of these processes of social and spiritual bestowal.

Djarrka also figures in the Wawilak story that informs the secret Dhuwungi moiety Gunapipi ceremony. Several places throughout Marrangu country are madayin by virtue of this involvement. Malidjul, for instance, the billabong containing this Being's head, is close to a Gunapipi ritual ground. In addition, the Cabbage Palm Golwire, a Marrangu manikay subject related to the Gunapipi is also madayin.

Curiously, Djarrka has what seems a fleeting role in the Djareware story given involvement in these other mythic and ritual contexts. What's more, there is no
Marrangu manikay for Djarrka, suggesting that the Marrangu manikay cycle is a rather selective presentation of Marrangu cosmology (the reasons for this will be revealed in the next chapter). But, notably, Djarrka is part of the process of human conception in Marrangu thought (see Chapter 6).

The Djarrka Being is, however, linked to the female Mewal who created Djimbi Creek because the hollow log, dropped by Mewal, is one transformation of Djarrka. Djarrka is sometimes imaged as a dupun hollow log and, moreover, Borsboom found Djarrka to be "symbolically represented by a large didjeridoo" (ibid:46). Mewal and Merri are also closely identified with hollow log coffins because other Jungle Spirits, as well as the merri 'dead body' spirits make their home inside hollow logs.

But the hollow log/Djarrka motif is not solely evocative of death, as the hollow log also has a regenerative aspect. The hollow log dropped by the female Mewal contains Honey which, being composed of eggs and made by a process of fertilization, is regarded in Marrangu thought as analogous to conception and the power to create. As Hamilton (1970, cited by Keen, 1978:305) found among the Anbarra, “Honey contains eggs and therefore spirit children”.

In the Djareware Dreaming, this link with regenerative themes is suggested by the confluence of the hollow log (Djarrka), the seeping Honey that creates Djimbi Creek, together with the female Mewal and her dilly bag. Warner, in fact, glosses 'Djimbi' as "vagina" (1937/58:51) and the dilly bag used to collect Honey is identical to a type known as djirrk or bardji which, I was told, further connotes "womb", "home" or "baby net". The location of Honey inside the hollow log carries a connotation of the joining of male and female qualities. The progeny, in this case, is Djimbi Creek and the profusion of Djareware sites along it. Probably related is one use I was told for the Dreaming djibbadai stick: the male Mewal uses this stick to prod hollow logs while searching for Honey.
Mewal travels along Djimbi Creek to the jungle of Djambi and here the fertilizing themes are radically transformed. The jungles of Djambi and Bumbaldjarri are the homes of Merri and Mewal Jungle Spirits and the merri 'dead body' spirits of more recently deceased Marrangu individuals. The Mewal and Merri Jungle Spirits perform many joint acts, including collecting ragi (Edible Corm) singing and dancing. The Jungle Spirits Mewal and Merri are coterminous by virtue of these shared deeds.

Jungles, called minimbirri generically, are (in Marrangu territory at least) small, dark, humid and lush places, abounding in banyan trees, cabbage palms, sugar gliders and mosquitoes. They are recognised as homes of Mewal and Merri and avoided. They are cosmological and experiential as well as naturally occurring environments. If entered, disorientation or disappearance is thought likely. For example, on one occasion at Galawdjapin I announced I was going for a walk to Bumbaldjarri to collect some cabbage palm. I was sat down and told, "You can't go there, too many merri there". And Mewal?- I asked. Too many of them too, was the reply. I said I'd stay on the outside of the jungle, but it didn't matter -- there'd be Merri and Mewal scouting there as well.

How do Merri and Mewal in the 'Mewal and Djareware Story' help generate these attitudes? In the story that appeared at the beginning of this chapter, the Mewal and Merri Jungle Spirits are confined to areas within or near these jungle places. However, there is a generally held belief that they also roam far beyond the jungle, throughout Marrangu territory in fact, looking for people to deceive or injure. They also look for wandering merri 'dead body' spirits which they then escort back to the jungle. The Mewal and Merri Jungle Spirits, therefore, are thought to be interested in the human community, but only from a disposition of malignancy.

The same qualities apply to the merri 'dead body' spirits, except that they are encountered especially at night in a more personal way, in dreams of death or in physical maladies, for example. Close relatives of a deceased person may be targeted by
a merri 'dead body' spirit for special hostility. 'Dead body' spirits are found, in addition to jungles, near the former homes of the deceased person or near the grave site. They move about using human pathways but without leaving tracks. The generalised attributes of merri 'dead body' spirits and the Mewal and Merri Jungle Spirits alike are nocturnality, misanthropy and roguery.

The qualities of the Mewal and Merri Jungle Spirits are countered to some extent by the properties of Djareware. Djareware is a generative and benevolent entity in Marrangu philosophy. Djareware exists as a creator of landmarks, people and spiritual identity. Of course, so is Mewal, but the Jungle Spirit aspect of this figure makes impossible a unitary association with creative themes (see Table 3.1). The Honey Being, in contrast, is always associated with the enduring side of cosmological events and with processes of spiritual renewal, with the fulfillment of journeys and harmonious outcomes. The life-creative significations of Djareware are thrown into sharper focus when contrasted with the malevolent and death attributes of the Mewal and Merri Jungle Spirits and the merri 'dead body' spirits. Qualities of life, it seems, are always affirmed in the face of death.

This is also demonstrated in terms of individual spirituality, where Djareware is identified with a person's ancestral spirit, called wuguli (or birrimbirr). This spirit, or its spiritual source, is believed to exist in Marrangu clan country. The wuguli spirit returns as an undifferentiated clan spirit to such a place following death, where it becomes fully integrated with the spiritual ancestry of the Marrangu clan. This transition is marked in the mortuary cycle by the Wandjar ceremony (see Chapter 5). Wandjar involves washing in a Djareware ground sculpture, an act that affirms that the wuguli spirit of the deceased has reunited with the clan's ancestors. In contrast, the merri 'dead body' spirit is feared and attempts are made to rid the corpse of this association.
While the Djareware Dreaming is the main expression of Marrangu clan cosmology, there are several other contexts in which Beings from this story are found. One such scenario is the Luma Luma (or Gomirringgu) Dreaming, because this is the story that concerns the Merri Spirit at Gorriba Island (mentioned in the 'Mewal and Djareware Story'). I now turn to an examination of the Luma Luma Dreaming and show how it relates to the Djareware Story and Marrangu notions of eschatology.

**LUMA LUMA DREAMING AND MARRANGu ESCHATOLOGY**

Luma Luma is a Merri Being in charge of a community of Merri Beings resident at Gorriba Island. The Luma Luma Dreaming (see story below) is the heart of Marrangu eschatology. The Luma Luma and Djareware Dreamings are linked in that Merri and Mewal Jungle Spirits and merri 'dead body' spirits in Djambi and Bumbaldjarri may move onto Gurriba (or Murrunga) and join the spirit communities there. This connection was marked with the throwing of water lily pods, ragi, from Bumbaldjarri and Garnadjarri to Gurriba. Ragi embodies the link between the recent and long term dead, who are reckoned to occupy different stages in the ancestral spiritual cycle.

I was told all the spirits at Djambi and Bumbaldjarri were able to communicate with Merri at Gurriba and Murrunga. For Djinang Marrangu people, these features establish firm grounds for shared Dreaming identity with other Marrangu clans who have a vast array of Dreamings for the offshore islands. In former times the performance of the Madayin ceremony would have allowed these groups, along with others from western Arnhem Land, to come together and express these ties ceremonially. Thus the figure of Luma Luma allows the realities of geography, mortality, sociality and spiritual continuity to be expressed as a single conception.
Marrangu people postulate several homes of the dead. Some Merri go to the jungles of Djambi and Bumbaldjarri; some go on from there to island homes of the dead several kilometres off the coast to the north and north-west; some go straight to these islands without ever going near a jungle; other Merri remain near the grave site of the deceased, never really leaving the ground formerly trodden by that person. There is no single home for the merri spirit of a deceased person. The dispersed and large number of possible homes for merri contrasts with the situation for the wuguli (or birrimbrr) spirit. The wuguli spirit, soon after death, returns to a range of sites within the deceased's clan country. The options are confined to that clan's land, though not only, as Warner insists, to waterholes within this territory (1937:16).

Marrangu eschatology, then, is predominantly given to the afterlife behavior and journeying of the merri to a conceivably large number of destinations.

Indeed, the perceived behaviour of merri 'dead body' spirits is a tangible presence in the lives of Marrangu people. For instance, I was told that shortly after the death of an old Wulaki woman many years ago, no one could catch the species of bonefish which was her Dreaming. This was explained in that her merri had "gathered 'im up", so that survivors could not catch and eat them. People also say 'dead body' spirits are treacherous and to be avoided, especially at night.

The same antagonistic attitude is attributed to Merri and Mewal Jungle Spirits (who in this context can be thought of as spirits of the longer term dead). For this reason, the jungles of Bumbaldjarri and Djambi are seldom entered alone and kerosene lanterns or torches are carried when walking through the bush at night to, "tell that Merri and Mewal to go away". The spirits of the dead that reside at geographically distant offshore islands are less integrated with daily experience. They are not evoked to account for disruptions of any kind, but spoken of only in stories in which they figure, and these are not told regularly.
The principle islands of the dead known by Marrangu people are called Gurriba and Murrunga, located in the Crocodile Islands about 45 kilometres north-northwest of Galawdjapin. Murrunga Island is owned by Yanyango speaking Murrungun and Malarra clans. Warner (1937/58:47) and Thomson (1975:6) report there are a number of Dreaming sites located there, including those for Bara (north-west monsoon) and paperbark tree. In Thomson's photograph collection (held at the Museum of Victoria) are several images of ceremonies held on Murrunga Island (see photos #191-#219).

Dreamings celebrated in these rites include green turtle, "rakai" (=ragi, water lily pods) and "Kor'mirringo" (=Gomirringgu), a synonym for the Luma Luma Merri. All these Dreamings figure in the Luma Luma Dreaming examined below (see also Thomson's Fieldwork File #10, lodged at the Museum of Victoria). Thomson (1975) further notes a "prayer-like" (ibid) attitude held by those approaching the island because the mali, shade, of Dreaming Beings live in the rockshore. The other island, named Gurriba, is said to be the home of a huge number of spirits, personified in stories as one giant old man Luma Luma.

Some merri 'dead body' spirits of deceased Marrangu people are believed to join Luma Luma and the collection of Merri at Gurriba. I was told that either the corpse (i.e., merri 'dead body' spirits) go to the island itself or other merri from Gurriba come to the place of death "looking for that body". In another sense there is a Merri resident at Gurriba for every 'dead body' merri and as the corpse decays, the Merri at Gurriba beckons to its counterpart to come and join it. In this sense one old man said to me "our merri there now", that is, at Gurriba. There is no clear reason why some merri go to Gurriba and others to Djambi and Bumbaldjarri, but it was said that some Merri continued onto Gurriba after staying briefly at Djambi and Bumbaldjarri.

Luma Luma was described to me as an "old man Merri" with many wives and children, who loves eating turtle and people, and is renowned for his flatulence which possesses
spiritual power, marr. Other accounts have Luma Luma as a whale (Berndt and Berndt, 1964:275) or a figure similar to the Kunwinjku Rainbow Serpent (Taylor, 1987:319). Luma Luma also has some connection with Mewal through his association with the Honey Dreaming being ‘Ure’ (=Wurray). Stories involving Ure collected elsewhere in Arnhem Land bear a striking similarity with the Luma Luma story I collected at Galawdjapin (compare Warner 1937/58:557; and Groger Wurm, 1973:55).

However, to everyone I spoke to, Luma Luma was Merri, not Mewal. Some said Luma Luma’s name was more correctly Gomirringgu (Thomson’s ‘Kor’mirringo’) because the word Luma Luma also referred to an Emu Dreaming. What’s more, mirring, the word for the green sea turtle that is eaten by Luma Luma, is the root to the name Gomirringgu. In the recordings I made of this story the name used is Luma Luma and this was said to be appropriate because a rocky outcrop on Gurriba Island, where Luma Luma lives, also had this name. In the end it was agreed that Luma Luma or Gomirringgu were both appropriate names for the Merri dwelling at Gurriba.

In the Luma Luma story, the merri of dead people have the physical appearance of living human beings. Luma Luma himself is the only exception to this; he is a giant of human form with an enormous appetite and power to control the ocean winds. He also wears on his head a large white conch shell, yurrigunningi (similar in appearance to a London ‘bobby’s’ hat) which he blows on like a trumpet. Another version has fire issuing from between his lips as he speaks (Holmes, 1972:62). Thomson’s description of ‘Kor’mirringo’ (=Luma Luma) varies from these. He found, “nothing to denote or suggest either sex or human form” (in Thomson’s Fieldnotes, File #10,p.7) and settles on calling Kor’mirringo a “morkoi [=Merri] wangarr” that “eats the spirit” of dead people (ibid).

The Luma Luma Dreaming is jointly owned by a number of mala. The Burarra Marrangu clan owns the island of Burdja off the coast of Cape Stewart. Djinang
Marrangu are also said to be 'bosses' for the Dreaming, and various Kunwinjku clans and Manharrngu (a Djinang mala) have rights to paint the Luma Luma Dreaming. Other groups also have versions of this Dreaming, including Djinba and Djapu speaking clans (Berndt and Berndt, 1970:122) and the Groote Eylandt Durilji clan (Groger-Wurm, 1973:55; Warner, 1937/58:557-9). Most probably many other groups have interests in this Dreaming because it is prominent in the mythology associated with the Madayin ceremony.

Luma Luma - Gomirringgu Story

Two men from Galiwin’ku went hunting for salt water green turtle (mirring, gudewagi, or warrguluma) in a canoe. The canoe followed the north-east wind (djimuru) to Gurriba [which Munyal also names Luma Luma] where they speared a green turtle. They decided to cook the turtle on the beach of Gurriba, an island in the Crocodile Islands group.

A north-west wind (Bara) now blew and the two men knew Luma Luma was near. Luma Luma smelled the turtle the men were cooking and came forward for a closer look. The two men gave the stomach, liver, hip, leg and arm bones and cooking juices to Luma Luma. Luma Luma swallowed the lot, down it went.

Luma Luma then told the two men to come with him as he had two daughters which they were welcome to sleep with. The daughters were collecting long yams, barrdji (a Dhuwungi Murrungun Dreaming) so Luma Luma called to them by blowing on his large white conch shell (yurrigunningi) that he wore on his balding head. The daughters returned and Luma Luma instructed them to lie down with the two men for the night.

Luma Luma's wife did not want her daughters to sleep with the two men and saw that they kept well apart throughout the night. Whenever the two men tried to sneak closer to the daughters, she would push them apart. Luma Luma slept through until daybreak.

At daybreak the two men went and speared more turtle, cooked and ate it. The daughters went to get water but secretly tried to join the two men. Luma Luma and his wife saw them and made sure the daughters and the two men remained separated throughout the day.

The following night, while Luma Luma and his wife slept, the two men stole away with the daughters in their canoe. They were already out of sight when Luma Luma discovered them missing. Luma Luma went down to the beach where the canoe had been launched and thrust his bum high in the air, towards the ocean. A magnetic force went out from his bum.

The canoe containing Luma Luma's daughters and the two men suddenly changed direction, moving back to the beach where Luma Luma stood. "Where do you think

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1 This version of the story was told to me by Ray Munyal at Galawdjapin in Dec 1989.
you're going?" Luma Luma asked the two men. "We'll all go to sleep now", Luma Luma said.

Luma Luma wanted his daughters back, so, as the two men slept, He struck both of them over the nose with a large tapstick called bilma, given to him by the moon. The two men died. Luma Luma then ate the two men, swallowing them down. Down they went.

A group of relatives, of both Yirritjing and Dhuwungi moiety now came in canoes, searching for the two missing men. They searched many places but found nothing. Then they smelt an odourous wind blowing from the north-west and knew it was from Luma Luma at Gurriba. They knew Luma Luma had eaten their countrymen because the wind smelt like rotting bodies. [Munyal described it as "wuguli bu", literally "spirit (or shadow) shit"].

They now made preparations to attack Luma Luma. They made bush torches [of stringybark bound with bush string], hooked and mangrove spears and many canoes. People from Galiwinku to Cape Stewart joined the attack. There were hundreds of canoes.

Some canoes arrived at the beach at Gurriba. Others circled to the left and right, surrounding the island. The grass on the island was set alight and soon a large fire was ablaze.

Luma Luma and his family, who were sleeping, awoke to find themselves on fire. Luma Luma stood up and tried to smother the fire and attack the raiders, but spears rained down on him. Luma Luma's wives and daughters were captured. Luma Luma was speared in the side of the ribs and back and staggered away. He walked to Bordja, an island near Cape Stewart, where he died and turned to stone.

A semi submerged rock just off Bordja Island is the spirit or shadow (wuguli) of Luma Luma. This is where Luma Luma now stands.

Various images in the story suggest the afterlife journey of spirits of the dead. First of all, the two turtle hunters arrive at Gurriba by canoe. The canoe, or sometimes a paperbark raft, is a common motif linking the worlds of the living and the dead. Kunwinjku (Berndt and Berndt, 1951:108) and Goulburn Island (Berndt and Berndt, 1964:482) stories tell of the island of the dead being reached by canoe while, in a Yolngu myth, the spirit leaves the bones of the deceased and boards a canoe paddled by the Mokoi (=Merri) of "the first man who died" (Mountford, 1956:325).

At Gurriba, the hunters cook and eat the green sea turtle, mirring, that they have caught. This is an analogue for the part of the life cycle where spirits of the dead become the potentiality for conception. Turtles are likened to both the corpse and conception spirits. At an exhumation ceremony Mountford witnessed a spear was thrust into the corpse and this was said to mean a turtle had been speared (1956:312).
Mountford was told another turtle spearing rite was carried out at Burelko (Burraiku), "the final resting place of the dua [moiety] dead" (ibid). The green sea turtle is prevalent in the waters near Gurriba, and especially at Bordja Island, where Luma Luma finally died and turned to stone. Meehan (1982) writes that the Burarra Gidjingali from the mainland adjacent to Bordja Island, raise the island in conversation by virtue of the large numbers of green turtles to be caught there. This area is also close to a green turtle Dreaming site off the coast of Djunawunya, some 20 kilometres to the south-west. This Dreaming images the turtle:

as an extremely old woman who lives in an underwater home beneath the surface of the ocean. . . In the same region lives Angadajjia, a giant Fish Trap, on whose back the dead of Djunawunya are said to ride (Clunes-Ross and Wild, 1982:20).

The sea turtle motif is, therefore, an adjunct to the corpse and spirits of the dead. In consuming the green turtle meat the hunters take on the Dreaming qualities of this species and are thus linked to death and the spirits of the dead. In the story this transformation is emphasized in that Luma Luma learns of the hunters' presence by smelling the cooking meat. The hunters are like the turtle because they eat it and this invites the interest of Luma Luma, the leader of all the merri spirits at Gurriba.

But the turtle evokes conception also. Rain falling on the sea enters various fish and turtle species, thereby creating a spirit child (Mountford, 1956:309). Rudder (1980:42) and Warner (1937/58:22) accord the turtle motif a similar relationship with conception, while in coastal West Arnhem Land a hunter diving for turtle will be led instead to "a child. . . calling him father" (Berndt and Berndt, 1964/88:152-3). Thus, as an important food source the green turtle is an apt motif for the nourishment and sustenance of life, afforded by concep tive processes. But, in addition, the green turtle is the consumption of life - bodily decay - and the stench of decomposition. The creature's ability to survive on land and at sea also makes it an appropriate 'both ways' motif.
A more obvious link with eschatological reality are the locational elements of the story. Gurriba lies to the nor-north-west of Marrangu country, the same direction as the source of the monsoonal winds, named Bara, that prevail from December to March-April. Bara is regarded as an important cosmological indicator of death. When the Bara winds blow, people say that Luma Luma must have eaten another human being. It is inferred from this that someone has died or, in a related way, that it is time to hold one of the extended mortuary rites. In the story Bara is replaced as Luma Luma's prodigious flatulence, so odourous that a comparison with the stench of a rotting corpse is drawn by the kinspeople of the two missing hunters.

The act of eating the bodies of humans is a further metaphor for the process of bodily decay. Luma Luma, in this sense is the physical corruption that follows death, and the seasonal onset of Bara reminds people of this process. The sound produced by Luma Luma when blowing on the large conch shell, yurrigunningi, is an extension of this. Bara and the smell of decomposing flesh is the breath of Luma Luma. Apparently related is the information I received that a person's voice survives death, as breath is one aspect of the wuguli spirit (see also Warner,1937/58:197).

A further reason why the story is linked to eschatology is the use of fire against Luma Luma by the warrior kinsmen of the two deceased men. Fire is conceptually opposed to merri spirits in Marrangu thought (see also discussion of Dada ceremony, Chapter 5). Merri shy away from the heat and light generated by fire, and smoke is thought to carry away the merri 'dead body' spirits. The belief that fire destroys 'dead body' spirits (and Merri and Mewal Jungle Spirits) is well understood. So it is in the Luma Luma story that this giant Merri and his family meet their end by burning and choking on smoke (and by multiple spear wounds). Luma Luma's destruction by fire may represent the human attempt to escape, or at least control death.
But Luma Luma’s destruction is not total. Gurriba remains the home of the spirits of the dead and Luma Luma continues to manipulate the ocean winds, as known by the seasonal return of Bara. Even Luma Luma himself lives on in a physically transformed aspect: as a large black rock offshore from Bordja Island. Thus the Luma Luma Dreaming places human death in a similar light to that of the cycle of seasons, of decay and renewal.

The Luma Luma Dreaming is linked to the Madayin (=Ngarra) ceremony. The charter for this link is evinced in a version of the Luma Luma Dreaming recorded by Holmes (1972), wherein Luma Luma instructs the attackers in “new law”, the Madayin ceremony (ibid:66). The Madayin (or Ngarra) ceremony was in former times prevalent throughout western and central Arnhem Land (Taylor, 1989:388) and is still performed in north-east Arnhem Land by Liyagalawumirr and Gupapuyngu peoples. The sacred objects used in the ceremony are identified with the different mala taking part, while simultaneously being understood to have derived from the one single body. Thus Luma Luma’s bones and organs are the madayin objects and paintings, the sacred objects owned by each clan, the different clan groups and their present day ancestors. In this way, writes Taylor, the image of Luma Luma’s divided body “is a symbol of the overall unity of these groups despite their totemic and political differences at a local level” (1987:319).

Luma Luma is also credited with having introduced the mortuary rite called Bardurru (=Larrgan) and is said to be ‘boss’ for this ceremony. In Bardurru the bones of a dead person are crushed and placed in a hollow log ossuary, called dupun, which is then abandoned or sometimes buried in the stomach of a Luma Luma sand sculpture (for example, see Clunies Ross and Hiatt,1977).

Kunwinjku, Burarra and Djinang Marrangu eschatology assert Gurriba to be Luma Luma’s home, where large numbers of merri reside. This belief is reflected in the trepidation held towards this place. Gurriba is reckoned to be treacherous and
dangerous to visit because of difficult ocean currents and unpredictable winds in the area. Luma Luma's final resting place in the story, the large, semi-submerged rock near Bordja Island is held in a like attitude. Rocky reefs surround both Bordja island and this rock, called Ngarapia (=Luma Luma). Bordja island can only be visited "during rare combinations of suitable wind, tide and weather" (Meehan, 1982:80). I was told that if I went too close to Ngarapia -- Luma Luma's body -- or tried to take a photo of it, I would be struck by a bolt of lightning sent forth by Luma Luma. But trips are made to Bordja Island to collect rock oysters and green turtle eggs. While there, however, behaviour is modified; shell gathering "is very low-keyed; people talk always in soft voices and make few gestures ... our companions are obviously in some awe of him [Ngarapia or Luma Luma] and the islet" (Meehan, 1982:102).

Ngarapia rock off Bordja Island is said to be the body of Luma Luma and is, by all accounts, an awe-inspiring site. Resembling the upper body of a human figure, the rock has indentations in the sides (the 'ribs'). These depressions are said to be where Luma Luma was wounded by numerous spear blows. One of these depressions forms a narrow hole that goes right through the rock and under the right conditions, water spurts violently through this fissure. When this happens the spurting water is said to be the blood gushing from Luma Luma's wound. Thus Ngarapia rock is actively evocative of the cosmological events leading to Luma Luma's death.

Bordja is recognised as part of the estate of Inanganduwa and this place and the adjacent foreshore and waters are, according to Burarra thought, Luma Luma's original home (Clunies Ross and Hiatt, 1977:136,143). In addition, the Fish Trap Being Angadjatjia and a group of Spirit Beings called Marawal (not to be confused with Merri or Mewal, though there are similarities) are connected with this area because they helped create this as a home for the spirits of the dead. Indeed, Marawal in one of its senses, is synonymous with Ngarapia, i.e., Luma Luma (Clunies Ross and Wild, 1982:24).
Marrangu eschatology, therefore, is characterised by Merri of different forms, character, companions and locations and with differing attitudes and relationships to the human community. The significance of sites ‘belonging’ to Luma Luma as with the symbolism of Luma Luma’s divided body in the Madayin ceremony, is that it condenses the separation between place, people and spirit. In cosmology, Luma Luma personifies the process of decomposition and one group of merri spirits of the dead. This itself condenses the existence of ‘surviving’ spirits with the fact of human mortality. Because Gurriba Island is physically present, as is Luma Luma’s transformed body near Bordja Island, these spirits are also understood to have a presence, and live in communities similar to human groups. Indeed, as seen in the Luma Luma story, they interact with living humans. Luma Luma’s Gurriba Merri community are not separated from the other centres of M/merri spirits, including those in jungles back on the mainland.

CONCLUSIONS

In Marrangu cosmology, Mewal and Merri evoke both distinct and interpenetrating contextual features of it. Cosmological context is all important in grasping which aspect(s) of these Beings is present, especially as the names sometimes do, sometimes do not, vary. Borsboom, too, makes this point when he observes, "Aborigines make no explicit verbal distinctions. What they mean by Mere [=Merri], Mewal and Sugar Bag has to be judged from context" (ibid:53).

Djareware connotes Marrangu clan origins and character by virtue of the acts performed on the Dreaming journey through Marrangu clan territory. Mewal too signifies Marrangu identity and the creation of the land, but also the spirits that are hostile to the living community and who have mystical control over the land. Merri is composite with Mewal in this malevolent aspect, but has an additional identification
with the immediate afterlife existence of the body and the processes of decay. The overlaying significations of Djareware, Mewal and Merri suggest an indistinct but unbroken thread from the time of the land's creation to the attitudes people now hold regarding the character of the land and lived mortality.

Both Mewal and Merri are highly complex entities, shifting in cosmological aspects as the Djareware Dreaming shifts location. As the shifts occur -- for instance, when Mewal moves from Djareware's companion to Merri's companion, or when the merri 'dead body' spirits interact with the Merri Jungle Spirits -- some overlay of meaning and ambiguity results. This is an inevitable consequence and probably desirable outcome of conceptual dynamism. In order to consolidate extended conceptual meanings and make economies, some ambiguity is critical. The analysis of Mewal and Merri in the 'Mewal and Djareware Story' presented here certainly suggests this. Chapter 7 reviews these and other reasons for such ambiguity. As this chapter has shown, the Djareware Dreaming includes entities that have interrelated clusters of signification and meaning. Precision amidst this complexity is often not to be found.

In the Luma Luma Dreaming Merri is more clearly associated with death, decomposition and homes of the dead. But this Dreaming also highlights several aspects of the Merri figure in Marrangu cosmology. The Luma Luma, Jungle Spirit and 'dead body' senses of M/merri are interrelated but with slightly differing significations in terms of geography, ceremony, behaviour and links with the living community.

Djareware, however, as the central element in Marrangu cosmology does stand in sharp contrast to some of the significations of Mewal and Merri but is highly correlative with Mewal in its 'Bee' aspect. This correlation is also found in the Marrangu manikay song cycle where Mewal and Djareware prefigure in one Dreaming scenario within the cycle, the other scenario being Wungguru J Gapi (floodwater) and its related themes. Jungle related song subjects, however, highlight themes only
marginally related to the Mewal and Gapi clusterings, integrating (and partitioning) to some extent the cycle as a whole. The next chapter looks further at the cosmological and land based associations of Mewal and Merri as revealed in the Marrangu manikay song cycle.
CHAPTER 4

MEWAL, MERRI AND MANIKAY

This chapter focuses on Marrangu manikay, songs the Merri Jungle Being is believed to have authored. The manikay song cycle owned by Djinang Marrangu people includes songs for both Mewal and Merri. Songs have a characteristic placement in the cycle which shows their interrelatedness in terms of cosmology. Hence I investigate not only the Mewal and Merri song texts but the organisation of the song cycle as a whole and interrelationships with other Marrangu song cycles. I then critique the manner in which Borsboom (1978) and other ethnographers dissect manikay into ‘land’ and ‘sea’ divisions, arguing against viewing manikay cycle composition primarily in topographical terms.

Each manikay song focuses on a particular named Being and names several of its attributes. The songs are in descriptive mode and often ponder in microscopic detail various aspects of the subject. Entities sung about are not necessarily, as Hiatt and Rhys Jones (1988:17) have observed, of economic or gastronomic importance. More often they are primarily of cosmological importance and commemorated ‘for their own sakes’ as, “objects of contemplation” (ibid). But as Marrangu people make no distinction between cosmological ‘reality’ and sensible ‘reality’, many relations extant in cosmology are also found in the physical world. The organisation of the manikay cycle demonstrates this. The groupings of songs within the cycle pointed out to me followed cosmological scenarios, into ‘Mewal songs’ and ‘Floodwater (Wunggutj Gapi) songs’ (see Table 4.4). These groupings also accurately follow geographic and climatic realities. But not all songs in the cycle are so designated and ‘undesignated songs’ integrate the ‘Mewal’ and ‘Water’ songs. They also afford considerable flexibility in performance order.
THE MANIKAY GENRE AND 'SAME SONG' MANIKAY

Manikay are defined by Clunies Ross as, "clan songs which allude to the actions of ancestral beings (Wangarr)" (1978:129). Marrangu people do not use the word 'Wangarr', but their notion of 'Dreaming' parallels Wangarr. Essentially, the 'allusions' are in the form of names associated with the Dreaming Being that is the named subject of the song. A number of songs, anything from ten to forty or more make up a manikay cycle. In the Djinang Marrangu case its thirteen songs. Each song consists of a body of phrazes consistent with Lord's original definition of 'formulae', that is, "a group of words which are regularly employed under the same [or similar] metrical conditions" (1960:4). These 'groups of words' are often not found in spoken discourse, a characteristic not only of Arnhem Land song (see Hiatt and Hiatt, 1966:2) but of sung traditions around the world (see Merriam, 1964:189).

Most essentially, these words are names of the Spirit Being (or sometimes words spoken by that Spirit Being) and other entities the Spirit Being interacted with in the Dreaming. Manikay evoke these semantically rich names as a way of enlivening that aspect of the Being. Manikay words are usually not connected to each other by linguistic or affective markers, as is the case with spoken narrative. Clunies Ross, in fact, distinguishes manikay language for its failure to, "use linguistic resources to denote relationships between objects that are contextually present" (1983:19).

Manikay are experienced not as text but formulaic recitations of names of highly evocative cosmological entities. Oral recitation allows a fluidity of order and utterance, a point often overshadowed by the 'authority' of translated texts (and worth bearing in mind when the texts are discussed later).

Manikay instrumentation includes tapsticks and wuyimbal (didjeridu). Performers may additionally either clap their hands together or against their thigh. A manikay performance is sometimes termed bunggul, in a sense similar to 'party' or 'get together', but usually this word denotes song with danced accompaniment.
Where song with dance occurs, the bunggul can be of two types, called by Borsboom "simple" and "elaborate" (1978b:120); or "formal" and "elaborate" by Clunies Ross and Wild (1984:213). A 'simple' bunggul lasts about a minute and corresponds exactly to the length of a single song verse. The dance itself consists of a small number of repeated movements identified with the song subject. An 'elaborate' bunggul may last for ten minutes or more, accompanied by continuous manikay verses. It depicts in highly narrative fashion specific Dreaming events. Elaborate bunggul is more likely (than at other times) to occur in ceremonial contexts. Both women and men participate in elaborate bunggul.

Table 4.1 shows the relationship between voice and instruments in a typical Marrangu manikay song verse. The 'women's dance' column refers to the short, women's only dance sequences. Women dance a few metres from the seated men's singing group. These women's only dances are of shorter duration than each song verse and closely integrated with the song's tempo and subject, though with embellishments.

Not all Marrangu manikay conform with the features outlined in Table 4.1 (for example Mewal manikay) and of those that do, not all will have danced accompaniment. The duration of each verse and number of verses sung is also variable. Clunies Ross and Wild (1984) provide the most thorough analysis to date of the relation between singing, instrumentation and dancing in manikay performance (R.M. Moyle,1979; and von Sturmer,1987 have looked at performance interrelationships elsewhere in Aboriginal Australia).

The thirteen song manikay cycle owned by Marrangu people shares some but not all thirteen song subjects with other Marrangu mala. Table 4.2 shows the Djinang, Djambarrpuyngu and Burarra Marrangu manikay cycles. These clans are said to possess the 'same song' but in fact they only share about half of their songs with each other. Of the songs they do share emphasis is placed differently. Thus the expression
'same song' is not to be taken literally but refers to the shared ownership by these
groups of the Honey (Djareware) Dreaming. All Marrangu manikay cycles include
songs to do with Beings, journeys, relationships and events in the Djareware
Dreaming.

TABLE 4.1:- PROFILE OF TYPICAL MARRANGU MANIKAY VERSE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TIME (SECONDS)</th>
<th>VOICE</th>
<th>TAPSTICKS</th>
<th>DIDGERIDU</th>
<th>WOMEN'S DANCE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(i) 0-4</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>4-5 beats</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(ii) 5-26</td>
<td>continuous singing; breath every 6-8 secs; low pitch and soft</td>
<td>35-40 beats</td>
<td>fast, continuous drone</td>
<td>dancers stand and commence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(iii) 27-33</td>
<td>near wailing burst; higher pitch and louder</td>
<td>6-7 beats</td>
<td>lengthened intervals between 4-5 outbreaths</td>
<td>movement, especially arms, slows</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(iv) 34-42</td>
<td>same as (ii), except slightly louder</td>
<td>12-16 beats, with 3 final beats gradually slower</td>
<td>same as (ii)</td>
<td>same as (ii), but gradually slowing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(v) 43-58</td>
<td>same as (iii), but sustained and louder; ends with sudden lowering of pitch</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For instance, the Burarra, Djambarrpuyngu, Wagilak and Djinang Marrangu all possess Stringybark and Djareware manikay, but emphasis is placed differently. The Burarra Djareware manikay stresses this Being's relation with a hollow log coffin, dupun, while the Djinang Marrangu version focuses on the Bees' collection of honey. Similarly, Djambarrpuyngu Marrangu have Stringybark and Stringybark Flower manikay, while the Djinang Marrangu have just one Stringybark manikay and it highlights the effect on these trees of the approaching north-west monsoon, Bara.
### TABLE 4.2: DJINANG, DJAMBARRPUYNGU AND BURARRA MARRANGU MANIKAY CYCLES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DJINANG</th>
<th>DJAMBARRPUYNGU</th>
<th>BURARRA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Stringybark tree</td>
<td>Stringybark tree and flower</td>
<td>Ngalilag (White Cockatoo)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Djaraware</em> (Sugar Bag)</td>
<td>Sugar bag; Stable fly; Caterpillar</td>
<td>Wama-Dubun (Sugar bag, Hollow log)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Geganggie</em> (Friar Bird)</td>
<td>Birds wuruidj (Green parrot) and wiwijag</td>
<td>Gulauwun (Silver-crowned Friar Bird)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Wak Wak</em> (Crow)</td>
<td>Wak (Crow)</td>
<td>Maralgarra (Crow)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Madjialanggo</em> (Spearstick)</td>
<td>Djangul (Spear)</td>
<td>King Brown Snake</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Merri, Mewal</em></td>
<td>Wurray (Devil-Devil)</td>
<td>Marrawal (Spirit Man)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Djudo-Djudo</em> (Tawny Fromouth)</td>
<td><em>Batji</em> (Dilly Bag)</td>
<td>Djurd-Djurd (small bird); Baildja/Wodbarridja (small tuber)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Narge Narge</em> (possum or Native Cat)</td>
<td>Mayawa (Blanket Lizard)</td>
<td>Djodja (Red-cheeked Marsupial Mouse)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Golwire</em> (Cabbage Palm)</td>
<td>Dharradha (Jungle Fowl)</td>
<td>Wang-gurra (Brindled Bandicoot)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mud Cod; Bream Fish</td>
<td>Rainbow Snake</td>
<td>Lauwlowa (small fish); Dalwura (Black Bittern)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Bara</em> (north-west Monsoon)</td>
<td>Wulma (south-east clouds and rain)</td>
<td><em>Bara</em> (north-west Monsoon)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Wunggutj Gapi</em> (Floodwater)</td>
<td>Gapi (water and rain); Bulanybirr (Porpoise); Maawu (Garfish); Wuduku (Drift wood)</td>
<td>Wurragulama/Marban (Green Turtle); Marnba (Porpoise); Yarrabi (Shark); Djurrei (Reef and Moray Eel)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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1 This table is adapted from Borsboom (1978a:117; 1978b:83). Same row correlations are suggestive only; I do not, for example, mean to say that the Djinang Stringybark manikay is equivalent to the Burarra White Cockatoo manikay. Some Burarra manikay listed by Borsboom have been altered after consultation with Clunies Ross and Wild (1982).

2 'Spearstick' appears in Borsboom's listing. I did not record, or hear mention of, a Djinang Marrangu manikay for this subject.

3 I was told 'barrtji' was a long yam and a Murrungun (Dhuwungi moiety) manikay.
Further, Wagilak Marrangu own one song that describes the same bird as the Djinang Marrangu Djudo-Djudo (Tawny Frogmouth) manikay, but in the Wagilak case the bird goes by a different name and a different habitat is emphasized.

Many other manikay are specific to each Marrangu mala: sea birds in the Burarra case, insects for the Djambarrpuyngu and fresh water fish and forest dwelling birds, primarily, for the Djinang Marrangu. The blend of shared and separate Dreamings among mala sharing the same Dreaming track (in this case, Honey) is characteristic of baparru organisation. People sum it up by saying, "same song right along, but little bit different". In this way Marrangu mala emphasize their autonomy and interdependence with others simultaneously.

Various other Dhuwungi moiety clans, which are not regarded as members of the 'same song' Marrangu baparru, also possess some of the same songs as those held by Marrangu clans. Such clans are considered to possess songs for a different Dreaming track. Hence, the Goyulan (Morning Star) and Djambidj manikay cycles are co-owned by at least six clans and two of them, Djambarrpuyngu and Gidjingali, are also co-owners of the Marrangu cycle. Indeed, Djinang Marrangu people regard Djambidj as the Burarra Gidjingali version of Marrangu manikay. The other Goyulan and Djambidj owning clans, Gamalangga, Liyagalawumirr, Malarra and various other Burarra clans, possess a number of songs in common with Marrangu manikay clans; namely, Stringybark tree, Merri-like 'ghosts', Honey or Bees, and various bird and fish species (Keen, 1978:215). The Goyulan, Djambidj and Marrangu cycles are clearly closely related, notwithstanding the fact that they cover different Dreaming tracks.

SONG ORDER AND COSMOLOGY

The thirteen songs of the Djinang Marrangu manikay cycle are performed in a fairly consistent though rarely identical order and the number of verses sung varies between
performances depending on enthusiasm, time and circumstance. Occasionally half of the cycle will be sung one evening and be completed the following evening, particularly in informal performance contexts. The manikay order I recorded on 4 occasions at Galawdjapin and Gattji in 1989 is shown in Table 4.3. A further sequence was told me by the Wulaki Djelaworwor wife of a Marrangu man and is shown in 4.3.5.

**TABLE 4.3:** DJINANG MARRANGU MANIKAY ORDER

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>4.3.1: performed 2.9.89.</th>
<th>4.3.2: performed 9.10.89.</th>
<th>4.3.3: performed 7.11.89.</th>
<th>4.3.4: performed 2.12.89.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(1) Bara - north-west monsoon Bara Bara Bara</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(2) Stringybark Tree Stringybark Tree Stringybark Tree</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(3) Djareware - Sugar Bag Geganggie Geganggie Djareware</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(4) Mewal - Spirit Being Djudo-Djudo Djareware Mewal</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(5) Geganggie - Friar Bird Wak Wak Wak Wak Geganggie</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(6) Wak Wak - Crow Mewal Mewal Wak Wak</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(7) Djudo-Djudo - Tawny Frogmouth Djareware - Narge Narge</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(8) (Merri - Spirit Being)¹ (Merri) - Golwire</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(9) (Narge Narge - possum species or Native Cat) (Narge Narge) - (Merri)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(10) (Golwire - Cabbage Palm) (Golwire) - (Diudo-Djudo)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(11) (Morgal - Mud Cod) (Wurdibal) - (Morgal)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(12) (Wurdibal - fresh water Bream) (Morgal) - (Wurdibal)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(13) (Wunggutj Gapi - Floodwater) (Wunggutj Gapi) - (Wunggutj Gapi)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

¹ Brackets denote reported song order (i.e., not tape recorded).
Several features stand out from Table 4.3 and 4.3.5. Firstly, a generally consistent order can be discerned. Bara, north-west monsoon, always opens the cycle, followed by Stringybark (except in 4.3.5). Borsboom (1978b:78) in contrast found Bara usually occurred at the conclusion of the sequence, with the opening song being Stringybark. However, Borsboom notes “several times” hearing Bara sung first (ibid). Wunggutj Gapi, floodwater, always closes the cycle, except in 4.3.5 where it is Golwire, cabbage palm. The order of 4.3.5 is exceptional also for the inclusion of an extra song subject Bullia, salt-water catfish.

I was told that, besides Bara, Stringybark or Wunggutj Gapi may open the cycle and the Spirit Beings Mewal or Merri, in addition to Wunggutj Gapi, maybe sung last. Notable also is that with one exception (4.3.3) Mewal and Djareware are sung consecutively, generally in the first half of the cycle. Songs Djudo-Djudo (Tawny Frogmouth), Merri, Narge Narge (?possum or native cat) and Golwire usually fall in the mid section of the cycle while Wurdibal (fresh-water bream), Morgul (fresh-water mud cod) and Wunggutj Gapi conclude the sequence (4.3.5 excepted).

---

1 Bullia (or Djikada) is a Marrangu Dreaming but I never heard it sung as manikay. Bullia is closely associated with Wurdibal, Morgal and Wunggutj Gapi in cosmology. My informant probably included it here for that reason. Interestingly, Hiatt and Hiatt (1968:8-9) document a Yirritjing song about a small fresh water fish called “Badeidjarg”. Included in Hiatt and Hiatt’s translation of this song is a reference to “Catfish and Herring”, species that eat Badeidjarg and whose ‘home’ is “near Gadjji [=Gattji] south of Milingimbi”. As my informant for Table 4.3.5 was a Wulaki woman resident at Gattji it is possible she confused Bullia with the fresh water Catfish (a different species) that appears in the Badeidjarg manikay text.

2 When Golwire was given as the final song in the sequence I queried if this were correct and was told, "im right there".
Why are the songs sung in a relatively consistent sequence? In discussing this question with Marrangu people a distinction was repeatedly made between 'Mewal songs' and 'Gapi songs'. These groupings were defined with reference to two Dreaming stories, both owned by the Djinang Marrangu. The first story was the 'Mewal and Djareware Story' (discussed in Chapter 3), focusing on Djareware, Mewal, Geganggie (Friar Bird), Stringybark Tree and Merri. The second was called the 'Bullia and Gapi Story' and included reference to Wunggutj Gapi, Wurdibal, Morgul and Bara and a number of other Dreamings without manikay titles including Bullia, Dupun/Bardurru (Hollow Log), Bordjirrai (forked stick), Mullitdji (fish trap), Warbalulu or Murla (Pelican) and several Cloud Dreamings.

In addition, four manikay were not included in either grouping -- Wak Wak, Djudo-Djudo, Narge Narge and Golwire. These designations are shown in Table 4.4, with only the manikay named Dreamings mentioned. Borsboom's "sub-clusters" are shown in Table 4.5.

The groupings in Table 4.4 relate to cosmological categories but also to geographic zones within Marrangu territory. Geographic zones alone organise the groupings shown in Table 4.5. The 'Mewal songs' (Table 4.4) include those Spirit Beings associated with the most inland, elevated and dry areas of Marrangu country, dominated by medium density Stringybark forest (with Merri least representative in this sense). The 'Gapi songs' cover Beings associated with floodwater, the creeks of the low lying wetlands of the northern coastal belt and with rain.

The 'undesignated' songs (Table 4.4) include Beings evocative of dense, monsoonal jungle thickets that proliferate (though not exclusively) in the middle band of Marrangu territory. In these places, fresh water creeks meet the swampy, seasonally flooding lowlands, such as at Garnadjjarri, Djambi and Bumbaldjarri.
### TABLE 4.4: DJINANG MARRANGU MANIKAY GROUPINGS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MEWAL SONGS</th>
<th>GAPI SONGS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mewal</td>
<td>Wunggutj Gapi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Djareware</td>
<td>Wurdibal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stringybark</td>
<td>Morgal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Geganggie</td>
<td>Bara</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Merri</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**UNDESIGNATED**

Wak Wak, Djudo-Djudo, Narge Narge, Golwire

### TABLE 4.5: BORSBOOM'S MARRANGU MANIKAY 'SUB-CLUSTERS'

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>GRAVEL SUB-CLUSTER</th>
<th>JUNGLE SUB-CLUSTER</th>
<th>WATER SUB-CLUSTER</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Stringybark</td>
<td>Mewal</td>
<td>Golwire</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Djareware</td>
<td>Merri</td>
<td>Morgal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Geganggie</td>
<td>Djudo-Djudo</td>
<td>Wurdibal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crow</td>
<td>Narge Narge</td>
<td>Wunggutj Gapi</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Source: Borsboom, 1978a:114; 1978b:71)
Djinang Marrangu people say that the manikay cycle follows the features of their country from "top to bottom", from forest subjects to jungle subjects and finally to water subjects. They also say the manikay cycle references the two stories Mewal-Djareware and Bullia-Gapi. If, for example, I lapsed and mistakenly placed one manikay, say Geganggie, with the 'Gapi songs', I would be corrected with, "im [Geganggie] not Gapi, 'im belong that Mewal", or words to that effect. Conversants were adamant that the four 'undesignated' manikay were just that -- it was definitely not appropriate to include them with either of the other groupings or to treat them as a grouping in themselves. They retained a position in the song cycle between the 'Mewal songs' and 'Gapi songs', and this position was not structured by any single characteristic. At the same time my hosts emphasized the unity of the cycle, saying that all manikay are "Our Dream" and that internal linkages bind the cycle together compositely.

Before examining these internal linkages I will first look more closely at the Marrangu manikay "sub-clusters" Borsboom identifies (shown in Table 4.5) as these differ from the typology I recorded.

Borsboom (1978a:114; and 1978b:71-74), following Warner (1937:421-427), C.H.Berndt (1970:1321) and preempting Clunies Ross (1983:6-7) characterises manikay subjects in terms of their relation to geography and climate, especially land and water, coastal and inland. Clunies Ross, for example, divides the Djambidj manikay cycle into "landways" and "seaways" (ibid). As shown in Table 4.5, Borsboom identifies three "sub-clusters" in the Djinang Marrangu manikay cycle: the "dry gravel country sub cluster", the "jungle sub cluster" and the "water sub cluster" (1978b:71). Borsboom argues the order is, "inherent in the natural structure of the Wurgigandjar [=Djinang Marrangu] clan estate, the habitats of which are symbolically represented by the various dreamings of this cluster" (ibid).
Borsboom further suggests seasonal progression from dry to wet (ibid) and the cycle of night and day (ibid:88) give structure to the cycle. Secondarily, Borsboom designates some manikay as "death dreamings" (including Crow, Mewal, Merri, Narge Narge and Wunggutj Gapi) and others as "life symbolic" (Djarareware, Stringybark, Geganggie, Golwire, Wurdibal, Morgul and again, Crow) (ibid:69-70). These 'death' and 'life' designations are based on observations of ceremonies and the integration of particular manikay with various ceremonial sequences.

I question Borsboom's three sub-cluster divisions on a number of grounds. Firstly, no Marrangu person I spoke to made a threefold division of the manikay cycle based solely on ecological complexes. All asserted the manikay cycle was "right" in terms of cosmology and ecology. Manikay subjects I was told are cosmological Beings and 'naturally' occurring species and conditions. In this sense, then, Dreaming Beings both transcend and are immanent in the visible instances of themselves.

Secondly, though the gravel, jungle and water sub-clusters to some extent reflect the reality of Marrangu clan country, they are not important in structuring the Marrangu manikay cycle. 'Gravel country' was a common description for the elevated southern forest region of Marrangu territory, an area dominated by stands of stringybarks, but this area is not without its jungle and water features. In fact, the most frequent reason for going to this region, in my time at Galawdjapin, was to fish in Galawdjapin Creek near the fringe of a jungle thicket, at a place called Djoppibirmiri. No one I spoke to identified Crow exclusively with gravel country and in my experience they are just as frequently seen near jungles or waterways, and most frequently, near sites of human habitation.

Thirdly, small jungle thickets do occur between the elevated 'dry country' and semi-tidal, flooding lowlands of Marrangu territory as Borsboom suggests (ibid:73), but they are not the dominant feature of this region. Rather a more open, scrubbier acacia and marblewood forest with high grasses and some pandanus and cycad palms,
characterises this area. Plate 2.2 (in Chapter 2) shows this environment. Jungles form small but distinctive microclimates throughout this belt, but are not confined to this area (see Plate 4.1).

The significance of jungle environments in Marrangu cosmology certainly overstates the incidence of these environments in the local landscape. Jungle areas are also found in the elevated gravel country and in the semi-tidal lowlands on the northern margin of Djinang Marrangu territory and further north, near mangrove lined estuaries, at Miriki in Yalungirri country for example.

Jungles abound with mosquitoes, bats, pigeons, banyan trees and cabbage palms (Golwire), which is not included by Borsboom in his jungle sub cluster. Borsboom does include Djudo-Djudo in the jungle grouping, an owl-like bird that is rarely seen and most typically associated with night (as this is the only time you hear it). Djudo-Djudo's habitat includes both jungle and drier stringybark forest. Narge Narge, Mewal and Merri are indeed highly representative of jungle places, but, as the last chapter noted, Mewal and Merri are believed to have journeyed extensively throughout Marrangu territory in the Dreaming. Mewal, in one sense, is closely analogous to Djareware and sometimes virtually synonymous. It is surprising therefore that Borsboom separates Djareware and Mewal, placing Djareware in the 'gravel sub-cluster'. The close affinity of Mewal and Djareware in the manikay cycle is demonstrated in the frequency of consecutive song ordering for these two Beings (see Table 4.3).

Fourthly, Borsboom's "water sub-cluster" denotes the swampy, paperbark (Melaleuca Leucadendra) seasonally flooding and semi-tidal wetlands typical of the northern areas of Marrangu territory. It also images the rising floodwaters brought on by the wet season monsoons and the resulting proliferation of fish species Djimbi and Gattji creeks. Borsboom includes Golwire here because, like Morgal, it lives on "the margin of land and water" (ibid:71). However, Borsboom's
Plate 4.1: Bumbaldjarri jungle, Marrangu country.
information suggests Morgal is a salt water species (ibid). This makes it a long way removed from ‘land’, for Marrangu people conceptualize tidal creeks and the ground surrounding them as ‘sea’, wulan, not land. I found that Golwire is no more evocative of water than Merri, Mewal, Narge Narge and Djudo-Djudo, Borsboom’s jungle Dreamings.

Bara is included by Borsboom in the water sub-cluster. Bara is known as north-west wind and rain but as Table 4.3 showed, Bara consistently occurred at the beginning of all the manikay performances I witnessed. Thus, while the Marrangu manikay cycle clearly does ‘make sense’ in terms of physical features, Marrangu people conceptualize it in terms of the believed relations between physical features and cosmological realities. Manikay subjects ‘represent’ both ecology and cosmology. That the cycle can be observed to follow empirical reality demonstrates how closely cosmological and empirical reality is integrated in Marrangu experience and thought.

Among coastal peoples it may be highly appropriate to divide the manikay cycle into "landways" and "seaways" songs as, for example, Clunies Ross does in the Burarra Djambilj case. But for Marrangu people such a division is unwarranted because their territory is wholly bounded by land and all their manikay subjects embody this (including fresh water fish but excluding Bara). In any case, the Marrangu manikay cycle integrates distinct cosmological scenarios in a way that represents but does not exhaust Marrangu cosmology as a whole. This does not imply neat and precise designations, however, but sets various manikay in the most cosmologically appropriate relation to each other. Thus I return to the theme of internal linkages within the Djinang Marrangu manikay cycle.

Table 4.3 showed the order of manikay performance on four occasions. Performances always commenced with Bara (north-west monsoon) and moved next to Stringybark. Bara is summoned by the call of thunder from Wulma (pre-wet wind and rain from the south-east) regarded as ‘father’ to Bara, whose cosmological home, Mungirwir, is to
the south-east of Djinang Marrangu territory near Arafura Swamp. Located there also is a Merri Dreaming site, Merri being regarded as the original composer of Marrangu manikay.

Bara responds to Wulma's call and big winds blow in from the north-west, also the direction of a Merri Dreaming at Gurriba. The big winds and rain blacken the trunks of Stringybark trees with rivulets of water and make the branches sway from side to side, some of which break off and fall to the ground, slowly rotting to become hollow logs.

Djareware or Geganggie (Friar Bird) manikay are sung interchangeably after Stringybark. Deposits of Djareware are found in Stringybark trees either living or dead, and bees gather pollen from Stringybark tree flowers, wurrgi. The bird Geganggie builds its nest in the top branches of Stringybark trees and searches for Djareware there. All these relations (with Bara excepted) are familiar from the 'Mewal and Djareware Story'. It is no surprise therefore that Mewal is sung next after Djareware. Mewal searches for Djareware throughout Marrangu territory and while doing so encounters Geganggie who becomes Mewal's messenger, the two later conducting a bunggul, song and dance, together. There is, therefore, a narrative logic in the order the songs are sung.

As Mewal travels down Djimbil Creek to the jungles of Djambi and Bumbaldjarri, Djareware is placed in various 'natural' features, rocks at Rrorritjdarri for example. Also on the way Mewal has a bunggul with Geganggie, Wak Wak (Crow) and Djudo-Djudo (Tawny Frogmouth). Geganggie and Wak Wak argue over possession of a hollow log, with Geganggie getting the Maradjiri (‘birth pole’) hollow log and Wak Wak the dupun (‘bone pole’, ossuary) hollow log. Note that the cycle has now moved from the 'Mewal songs' to those that were left undesignated. These 'undesignated' songs convey themes and relations contingent with both the 'Mewal' and 'Gapi' group of songs. I now show how this is the case.
At the jungles of Djambi and Bumbaldjarri Mewal meets Merri and, together with Geganggie, Wak Wak and Djudo-Djudo holds a bunggul there, Merri performing the Geganggie bunggul for the first time. Merri is identified with hollow log coffins as are the three birds, who all build nests in the hollows of trees. Merri, Wak Wak and Geganggie are further linked because they all 'eat' rotted human flesh. Djudo-Djudo calls out in the darkness of night, like Merri, when roaming about looking for prey, leading to the view that Djudo-Djudo is Merri's messenger (Borsboom, 1978b:112).

Merri shares the jungle cosmological environment with Narge Narge (a spotted possum or native cat) and Golwire (Cabbage Palm) both 'undesignated' manikay, along with Wak Wak and Djudo-Djudo. Narge Narge eats the fruit of Golwire and sleeps in hollow logs. Narge Narge is considered the "owner" of the dupun hollow log coffin, but gave it away to Wak Wak. Golwire assists Merri (or sometimes Mewal) in entrapping people in jungle places in the following way; "sometimes Merri or Mewal make you go into that jungle. Golwire closes in around you. Golwire stops you escaping. You stay there now".

After Djudo-Djudo, Merri, Narge Narge and Golwire comes three of the 'Gapi Songs', the other, Bara, having commenced the sequence. The linkage between the 'Gapi Songs' and the proceeding ones must be inferred from the 'Bullia and Gapi story'. This story covers the cosmology of the final phase of the mortuary cycle, when the crushed bones are placed in a hollow log coffin, a ceremonial sequence known as Bardurru (or Dupun or Larrgan). The story tells of Wunggutj Gapi (floodwaters) inundating and covering the land and filling up the freshwater creeks at the behest of various fish species, including Wurdibal (Bream) and Morgal (Mud cod). These fish, which symbolise wuguli (=birrimbirr) spirits, are subsequently caught in the mullitdji (fish trap) often imaged as a pelican's (warbululu) gullet. Mullitdji and Warbalulu are associated with the north-west horizon, the direction of Bara rains and with one of the spiritual homes for deceased Marrangu individuals. Throughout the flood time there is a
cosmological link between fish in streams and stars in the milky way but
unfortunately I have no other details about this (see, however, Kupka, 1962/65:126-7; and Morphy, 1977:206).

It appears the final 'Gapi songs' of the Marrangu manikay cycle are linked to the preceding songs by the hollow log motif and the power of jungle places to evoke water imagery, through the combination of darkness, coolness and dampness. In this respect Golwire bears some resemblance with several other palm species that luxuriate along creek sides. The hollow log is shared by the jungle dwellers Narge Narge, Djudo Djudo and Merri (who use it as their home) and is the focus of the mortuary ceremony that accompanies the 'Bullia and Gapi' story. Another interlinking feature is the ragi (lily root) which Merri and Mewal gather near the jungles in the 'Mewal and Djareware Story' and throw to Gurriba, the home of the Luma Luma Merri. This island is the same direction (north-west) from where the monsoonal rains that produce the flooding waters come.

It is apparent, then, that the Marrangu manikay cycle comprises no hotch potch selection of songs. The cosmological and empirical relations between songs give the cycle a logical structure in every way consistent with the Mewal, Gapi and unclassified designations. The cycle incorporates two quite distinct Dreaming scenarios, but not without some incongruity. The manikay cycle abides to what are, to use Borsboom's phrase, the "most typical" associations, with less typical linkages being "intermediates" (1978b:74).

In the discussion of the Mewal and Merri song texts that follow I spell out both the 'most typical' and 'intermediate' associations these songs have with other manikay in
the context of Marrangu cosmology. First I examine the Mewal song text as translated by Borsboom (1978:198-199)\(^1\).

### MEWAL MANIKAY

**Mewal Manikay Song Text**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A.1. mewal'moro</th>
<th>ngapinda:'lia</th>
<th>djalgimoro</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mewal</td>
<td>leaving Djinang countries and looking back over his shoulder</td>
<td>walking</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A.2. 'nadibo 'nadibo</th>
<th>galnge 'bala'lan</th>
<th>galnge 'ra':man</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>dance act of Mewal</td>
<td>Mewal</td>
<td>white skin (covered with down)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A.3. bogo 'bara 'ringo</th>
<th>mewal 'moro</th>
<th>galamar 'galamar</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>?</td>
<td>Mewal</td>
<td>?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A.4. 'nabido 'nabido</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>dance act of Mewal</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>B.5. bogo 'marapala</th>
<th>raigo 'raigo</th>
<th>'nabido 'nabido</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>?</td>
<td>certain dance act of Mewal</td>
<td>dance act of Mewal</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>B.6. mewal 'moro</th>
<th>galnge 'ra':man</th>
<th>nja:nga</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mewal</td>
<td>white skin (covered with down)</td>
<td>look</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>B.7. 'bogo 'baraja</th>
<th>'bogo 'bara 'ringo</th>
<th>'nadobo 'nadibo</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>?</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>dance act of Mewal</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>C.8. galnge 'warbilbil</th>
<th>'bogobara 'ringo</th>
<th>mewal 'moro</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>certain description of Mewal</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>Mewal</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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\(^1\) The Mewal and Merri song translations are included here with the author's permission. Readers are referred to *Maradjiri* (p.185-186) for an explanation of how the translations came about and the problems that arose in the process.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>C.9. gaînge 'reridje</th>
<th>gaînge 'djebabar</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>gravelplace everywhere</td>
<td>name of a stick</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>C.10. 'bogobara 'ringo</th>
<th>'bogobara 'ringo</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>?</td>
<td>?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>C.11. gaînge 'ra:man</th>
<th>nja:nge</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>white skin (covered with look down)</td>
<td>'bogobara 'ringo</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

C.12. mewal 'moro
    Mewal


The musical qualities of the Mewal manikay bear comment as they are unusual. The Mewal manikay is marked by an extremely slow (2-3 second) tapstick interval and a disjoint, almost halting vocal line. This contrasts with the most common manikay form, outlined in Table 4.1 especially in period (ii), where the voiced continuity commonly encountered here is replaced by delays between utterances of several seconds. I suggest the unusual musical structure of the Mewal manikay is to facilitate integration with the Mewal dance sequences. In the Mewal dance, two men sway slowly to and fro from waist up, turning their heads slowly to either side as they go. The Mewal positions are shown in Figure 4.1.

The duration of each turn of the Mewal dancers is about 2-3 seconds, equivalent to the interval between tapstick beats in the Mewal manikay. Each change in direction corresponds with a tapstick beat. The vocal component of Mewal manikay is also affected by the dance sequence, because each time the dancers sway forward they emit the sound "yu...yu" (or "he...he" according to Borsboom [1978b:200]) and a rapid "keekeekee" sound as they sway back. The brevity of the Mewal manikay vocal line allows these utterances to be heard in the intervals between tapstick beats.
The Mewal song text makes repeated reference to this dance sequence and Borsboom notes that the phrase 'raigo raigo' (line B.5) means, "Mewal turns his head and shoulder looking intensely to the left and to the right (ibid). Clearly there is a close interdependency between the song and dance components of Mewal bunggul. In a note to his translation of 'bogo marapala' (line B.5) Borsboom states, "meaning unknown. Informant's explanation ... 'Mewal is getting hot, his forehead is getting hot" (ibid). Mewal's hot forehead probably relates to the presence of fire in the Mewal bunggul during the Bogabod ceremony (see Chapter 5). In this context, fire marks the end of the corpse's association with the deceased's 'dead body' spirit (having joined the Mewal and Merri Jungle Spirits) and the concomitant 'freeing' of the living from 'its' malignant influence.

The text also refers to the white exterior of Mewal (line A.2., etc.) which Borsboom's informant suggested constituted a featherdown "skin" (ibid). This is the characteristic appearance of the Marrangu female Mewal Being. The featherdown covering marks Mewal as madayin, a transformation of the Dreaming. In addition, the down covering is sometimes construed as the appearance of a skeleton. The colour is also significant in that people at Galawdjapin and Gattji reported 'seeing' Mewal only at night, such as in the glare of car headlights, at which time Mewal appears white in colour and small, like a child.

Mewal is thought to be highly mobile at night, journeying the length of Djimbi Creek from the headwaters near Wulkirbimirri to where it peters out in the north. A typical destination is the jungles of Djambi and Bumbaldjarri where Mewal holds a bunggul with Merri. Along the way Mewal meets Geganggie and Wak Wak and gathers Djareware from Stringybark trees. These events are familiar from the 'Mewal and Djareware Story', but the Mewal manikay further images Mewal looking for humans, evoked by the word "nja:nga" (line B.6.) translated by Borsboom as "look".
Mewal searches especially for solitary humans to confuse into wandering blindly by calling and then running away, or by changing the position of footprints or turning the victim's tongue thereby making him/her unable to speak coherently. The characteristic Mewal sound ("yu...yu, keekeekee") is the call used by Mewal in this luring process. When people lose their way they claim to have been deceived by the call of Mewal. The situation is understood in the sense of a 'brush with death'. One man said to me that to go close to the source of a Mewal call was a "bad, wrong story". Further, Borsboom suggests that:

By making this strange sound Mewal catches the attention of a lagging member of a group. When that person walks in his direction Mewal would run away a little and then make the same sound again. In this way the person is lured further (ibid:200).

An analogue with death, wherein the spirit separates from the body and moves to another realm out of sight of the living group, seems particularly apposite. According to Marrangu projections, jungles hold the potential for disorientation and this gives the behaviour of Mewal a tangible efficacy.

As seen in Chapter 3, the image of Mewal is not unambiguously malign. In the song text Mewal is not exclusively identified with Jungle Spirits or skeletons. The word "ngapirda: 'lia" (line A.1.) sees Mewal looking around at Djambi and Bumbaldjarri (ibid:199). But the text also refers to Mewal's presence at the "gravelplace" (line C.9.) which Borsboom's informants said "belonged to Mewal" (ibid:201). In the gravel country, or southern part of Nongere Marrangu country, Mewal performs a number of creative acts with Djareware before meeting Merri (and the 'dead body' spirits) at Djambi. Thus Mewal evokes, in the movement from 'gravel' country to jungle, the Dreaming creation of the land through to malignant, misanthropic properties focused around death progressively. Mewal, therefore, is situated in contexts which for Marrangu people appear truly appropriate for this Being's diverse attributes. As one man said to me, "Mewal 'im do bad, but 'im not all bad". 
The breadth of Mewal's significations helps explain Marrangu manikay song order. Table 4.3 showed, with one exception, Mewal and Djareware are sung consecutively in the first half of the cycle, usually with Geganggie, Wak Wak or Stringybark adjacent. These Beings are Mewal's cohorts throughout the 'top', gravelly (laterite) portion of Marrangu territory, being encountered while Mewal gathers Djareware along the way. Following the Mewal song in most cases are manikay subjects left ungrouped. They occupy the jungle habitat, visited next by Mewal in the Djareware Dreaming, and include Djudo-Djudo, Narge Narge and Golwire. Merri is also encountered at this time, but is included in the Mewal group of songs, possibly because Merri too travelled through the gravel country before reaching the jungle. The 'Gapi songs' follow, involving a different cosmological scenario. Thus the different aspects of Mewal, from Djareware's creative collaborator to malign Jungle Spirit, is encapsulated in Mewal's manikay companions. I now turn to the Merri song text.

MERRI MANIKAY

Merri Manikay Song Text

A.1. nga: 'djine walgogo 'djine genere
Merri is crying worrying cry
A.2. rolpo rolpo nja:nge nja:nge ngan 'didjarpenene
? look he smells a decaying body
A.3. gurime 'ringo nga: djine raiwartwart
from a long way he came crying bald (Merri has no hair on his scalp)
A.4. murungga nga: 'djine gurime 'ringo
name of the island where Merri started his travels Merri is crying from a long way he came
A.5. raiwartwart  nga: 'djine  ngan 'didjarpenele
bald (Merri has no hair on his scalp) Merri is crying he smell a decaying body

B.6. murungga  nga: 'djine  raiwartwart
name of the island where Merri started his travels Merri is crying bald (Merri has no hair on his scalp)

B.7. gurime 'ringo  nga: 'djine  ngan 'didjarpenele
from a long way he came Merri is crying he smells a decaying body

B.8. nga:mantangtang 'djile  bambildjarri
breasts (of the female Merri) going up and down part of the Wurigandjar Nongere country
(when she is dancing)

B.9. raiwartwart  'bemere  nga: 'djine
bald (Merri has no hair on scalp) salt water place Merri is crying

B.10. ngan 'didjarpenele  nga:man 'tangtang 'djile
he smells a decaying body breasts (of the female Merri) going up and down part of the Wurigandjar Nongere country
(when she is dancing)

C.11. nga: 'djine  nja: nge  gurime 'ringo
Merri is crying look from a long way he came

C.12. gunerine  nga: 'djine  marawurpa
name of a place in Burarra country Merri is crying name of a place in Burarra country

C.13. raiwartwart  nga: 'djine  balpenara
bald (Merri has no hair on his scalp) Merri is crying name of an area in Nakara country

C.14. bindjiwa  nga: 'djine  marala 'gala
name of a certain area Merri is crying name of a certain area

C.15. djugar 'bularbular  wagai 'ngole  nga: nga
the route Merri followed (from east to west) name of a certain area look

Source: Borsboom, Maradjiri, 1978:201-203.
The Merri manikay is not accompanied by elaborate dance sequences and therefore conforms with the typical manikay structure profiled in Table 4.1. There is, however, a Merri bunggul as the textual references to the movement of the dancers' breasts (line B.8) makes clear. The Merri dancers can be men or women, but unfortunately I have no other details about the dance.

The Merri body design is shown in Figure 4.2. The two parallel lines and spiral motifs are of white clay and the protrusions from the painted upper arm spirals are leaves or twigs. I was told this body design was the same as a Kunwinjku (west Arnhem Land) design for a Mimi Spirit Being. Another design often associated with Merri is the predominantly white cross hatched design called gumununggu.
Plate 4.2: Two merri carvings produced at Galawdjapin in 1989, in this case a mother and daughter pair. The predominantly white cross hatching, called gumununggu, is the Marrangu design for Merri. The 'mother' carving is about 1.5 metres high, the 'daughter' 0.9 metres. The sculptor, George Putti, is in the background.
Plate 4.3: Merri ‘dead body’ spirit carving, made at Galawdjapin in 1989. This merri carving, with gumununggu on the stomach, is almost 2 metres high. Note the ‘ribs’ on the chest. All merri carvings have a base colour of black. The artist is Andrew Maragululu.
Several anthropomorphic sculptures of Merri made at Galawdjapin in 1989 had gumununggu painted on the stomach region, as plates 4.2 and 4.3 display. I was told this design was formerly painted on the bodies of deceased Marrangu clanspeople, particularly the skull, but that this no longer happens (on painted skulls see Hoff [1977:159]; Mountford [1956:316-7]; and Thomson [Peterson, 1976:107]). In present times this design (and others) are painted on the dupun hollow log.

The Merri song text makes reference to several aspects of Merri, especially journeyings and abode. To begin with, the island of "murungga" (line A.4) is named. As familiar from last chapter, this place is located to the north of Marrangu country in the Crocodile Island group. Murrunga Island is in the vicinity of Gurriba, the island home of the Luma Luma Merri and to which Merri and Mewal throw ragi in the 'Mewal and Djarware Story'.

Borsboom translates "gurime'ringo" (line A.3) as "from a long way he came", so it is not clear whether 'gurime'ringo' is a place, journey or Being. I was told 'Gomirringgu' is an alternate name for Luma Luma. Keen (pers comm) says Gomirringgu is a female Being owned by the Yanyhango speaking Malarra clan. Borsboom's 'gurime'ringo' is probably this Being.

Places mentioned in the text refer to different journeys of different aspects of the Merri Being. The 'saltwater place' "Bemere" (line B.9) for instance, was visited by the Merri Being that appears in the 'Mewal and Djarware story'. This place is in Marrangu territory, opposite Darbada Island to the north-west of Galawdjapin and Gattji and is 3kms east of the Murrungun Warrda Warrda outstation of Gumugeda. The reference to Bumbaldjarri (line B.8) images both Jungle and 'dead body' aspects of Merri and malignancies they are thought to control. The other places mentioned (in

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1 My information is inconclusive as to whether this place is in the territory of Djinang or Burarra Marrangu.
Merri's journey originates at Mungirwir from where Merri is believed to send forth Wulma, the pre-wet wind, thunder and lightning that comes from the south-east. The thunder of Wulma "calls out" to Bara, the monsoonal wind and rain from the north-west, the next phase of the wet season. Recall from Table 4.3 that Bara commences the manikay cycle, hence Merri is regarded as initiating manikay, because Merri sends Wulma to fetch Bara, the first song sung. Relations between climatic events, cosmology and manikay accurately blend with the presence and actions of Merri at Mungirwir. It's probable also that the progress of the wet season, with the floodwaters cascading down Djimbi creek, image Merri's journey. In this intricate way climate and cosmology embody Merri's journey into Marrangu country from Mungirwir.

There are numerous textual references to Merri "crying" or "worrying" (line A.1, etc.). Here Merri is closely linked with the sentiments of bereavement. Aboriginal English usage of "crying" and "worrying" denote general states of distress caused by separation, uncertainty or disappointment. People attending a funeral say they've come to "cry for that body" and may mean literally shedding tears or ceremonially expressing condolence by way of singing. People remain "worried" until the ceremonies are complete, at which time they say, "we not worry anymore". Of course the song is not sung in Aboriginal English but the translated terms I think accurately convey the intended significance.

The Merri carving in Plate 4.3 shows the body outlined in white, certainly direct depictions of a human skeleton. I was told Merri has the ability to get through peoples' skin and "see" their bones. The song word "ngan 'didjarpenele" (line A.2) images the process of bodily decay, a process with which Merri is strongly identified. The "smelling" of flesh by Merri evokes its disappearance during decomposition, culminating in bare bone without skin or flesh, probably referenced by the word
"raiwartwart" (line A.3, etc.). As shown in Chapter 3, there is a cosmological link between the odour of a rotting corpse and the prodigious flatulence of Luma Luma. People seeing Merri in a dream reported how ugly Merri appeared and this was explicitly linked to the appearance of a corpse because, I was told, "when 'im die that Merri come tell us [during sleep]". This episode from my fieldnotes illustrates the point:

28.11.89: [Person's name] told me about a dream he had recently where an ugly thing he called Merri came into his room through the window and tried to drive a stick through his stomach. He resisted the attack and it went away. [Person's name] interpreted this dream as meaning a person had just died and their Merri was roaming about 'informing' people about the death.

In summary, the Merri manikay text refers to the various Dreaming journeys and habitats of Merri and how this relates to individual mortality. The jungle environments are where the 'Jungle' and 'dead body' aspects of Merri overlap: the Dreaming journey of Merri leads to these places and the 'dead body' merri are 'called' into these places.

In Table 4.4 Merri is grouped with the 'Mewal songs' because, like Stringybark and Geganggie, Merri figures in the Mewal and Djareware cosmological scenario. But I would argue Merri is not as central to this group as the other songs. To use Lakoff's term (following Rosch) Merri is "peripheral" whereas Mewal is "prototypical" (1987:8-11) of this group. Merri shares a hollow log home with Wak Wak, Djudo-Djudo and Narge Narge, as well as Geganggie. Furthermore, this hollow log home is in the jungle, which Merri shares with Djudo-Djudo, Narge Narge and Golwire, all excluded from the 'Mewal songs' grouping. Add to this Merri's association with 'dead body' spirits and decomposition and a link with the 'Gapi songs' is revealed, as these songs form the cosmology of final burial. On these grounds difficulties arise in grouping Merri with any of the clusters of songs.
CONCLUSIONS

The elaborate cosmology informing the manikay cycle, centred around the Djareware and Gapi scenarios, is a structured though not entirely neat mass. Not all contextually present relations are mapped out. Rather, the Marrangu manikay cycle exhibits both continuities and inconsistencies, with Dreaming entities simultaneously displaying intermeshing and unaffiliated themes. But the cycle is no model of disorder either. The internal rationale informing the 'Mewal' and 'Gapi' groupings nominated to me is clearly discernable. A substantial degree of performative dynamism is made possible by the coverage of themes evoked in the songs. This also means that not all the songs in the cycle need to be sung on any one occasion to achieve this coverage.

The physical environment and cosmology are not mutually exclusive in Marrangu thought; the contrasts drawn between the Mewal and Gapi groupings I recorded and Borsboom's manikay subclusters (as I represent them) highlight the way Dreaming scenarios relate to the sensible world. But the Dreaming is not merely a 'reflection' of the sensible world. Adhering to its own structure, the Dreaming sometimes corresponds with phenomenal reality, sometimes not. This is the nature of cosmology: if it were transitory and wholly apprehendable like the physical world, then it could not convey general, enduring themes which are its stock in trade. To depict the Dreaming as if it were the same as visible reality, as I suggest Borsboom and others do, denies to the Dreaming one of its most essential elements, namely, a reality that transcends the sensible universe.

Analysis of the Mewal and Merri song texts demonstrates how numerous characteristics of each Being are related to each other and with other songs in the cycle. There are no textual markers delineating one set of characteristics from another. The songs 'make sense' on several levels of knowledge of cosmology and interpretation. Mewal and Merri manikay highlight the complexity of these spirit
concepts and how the divergent aspects relate to different scenarios within local cosmology and to different features within the physical world.

The next chapter looks at the Merri and Mewal spirit concepts in relation to the Marrangu mortuary cycle, which is one of the main contexts for the singing of Marrangu manikay. The Mewal and Merri Beings are entities present at various ceremonies throughout the mortuary sequence, especially those focusing on the physical remains. An elucidation of these correlations forms the backbone of my analysis. I also relate the cosmology of Merri and Mewal to Marrangu ideas on spiritual and ancestral renewal, a theme already touched on in discussion of the Luma Luma Dreaming.
CHAPTER 5

MARRANGU DEATH AND MOURNING:

"CRY 'IM, DANCE 'IM, PUT 'IM IN DUPUN"

INTRODUCTION

This chapter is concerned with how the mortuary ceremonial cycle is elaborated in the light of the perceived fate of the deceased's spiritual components, the ritual acts that occur throughout, the treatment of and attitude to the corpse, the division of ceremonial labour, and the songs that are sung and when. I show how the believed afterlife of the wuguli spirit, merri 'dead body' spirit and Merri and Mewal Jungle Spirits are correlated, and how they are associated with and separated from the physical remains. An examination of the theories of death proposed by Bachofen, Frazer, Hertz, van Gennep and Bloch and Parry is an important sub-theme of this chapter.

The Marrangu way of death is a lengthy affair - from the time of death till the performance of the final rites several years elapse. Soon after death -- at initial burial -- the wuguli (or birrimbirr) spirit of the deceased joins the clan ancestors somewhere in the deceased's mala country. The wuguli spirit separates from the body and sheds identification with the deceased individual in the process. The wuguli spirit of a person is distinguished from the other aspects of individual spirit composition, namely one's merri, chiefly by virtue of association with bone, clan country and ancestral continuity.
The merri 'dead body' spirit, in contrast, is regarded as malign and unpredictable and strongly identified with the corpse and smell of decomposing flesh. The merri spirit is thought to remain near the corpse until, following exhumation, joining Merri Jungle Spirits of the more distant dead in monsoonal forests or at an offshore island home usually much later. There is, however, considerable interpenetration between 'dead body' spirits and Jungle Spirits. Their behaviour in many respects is identical. A number of the conflicting statements I recorded about Merri and Mewal can probably be accounted for by the condensing (or confusing) of Jungle Spirits and those of the newly dead and with similar beliefs of neighbouring clans.

This chapter, by focusing on the mortuary cycle, continues the investigation of the various contexts in which Merri and Mewal are found. Merri (as corpse and spirit) is a key element in Marrangu death practices, but Mewal much less so. The merri 'dead body' spirit is thought to be actively present throughout the entire mortuary sequence, especially immediately following death.

Mewal is thought little implicated by death and mortuary disposal, but this does not hold equally true for all stages of the mortuary cycle. Mewal is especially evoked in the Bogabod (exhumation) ceremony, which usually occurs several months or even years after death. In Bogabod the bones are recovered, cleaned and prepared for final burial. Mewal is closely identified with the treatment of the bones. As the most durable remains of a corpse, Marrangu thinking views bone as synonymous with the continuing existence of the clan ancestors. It is with this theme of spiritual and social continuity that Mewal (as represented in Bogabod) is concerned. Importantly, the merri 'dead body' spirit is, at this time, in a state of transition: from identification with the corpse to integration with the collectivity of Jungle Spirits.

Throughout the sequence of mortuary rites Merri and Mewal shift in cosmological significance. Mewal, completely unimplicated by the image of the corpse and event of
death, is strongly associated with the bones after exhumation and with the concomitant acknowledgement of the unity of the deceased, the bereaved and the ancestors. In contrast, merri is identified with and as the corpse, attracting sentiments of vengeance and hostility. Later (as the corpse decomposes) merri is associated with the diffuse jungle presence of the longer term dead and thereby, more closely with the Merri (and Mewal) Jungle Spirits. In this latter aspect Merri too is closely identified with the bones (see discussion of 'Bardurru' ceremony). In these ways the figures of M/merri and Mewal integrate the experience of grief and lose with cosmological and eschatological beliefs.

The relative and shifting significances of Mewal and Merri in Marrangu cosmology make this integrative process possible: Mewal is identified most with mala origins and continuity, while Merri has strongest links with human mortality and eschatology. A further aspect of this is that Merri (as Luma Luma) is associated with the Moon Man Dreaming. The 'Moon Man' gives Luma Luma (an 'old man Merri') the power to control human death through the gift of madayin tapsticks called bilma or bilmal. The Moon Man, or in Djinang 'Runge Yul', was responsible for installing the character of human death which contrasts in its finality with the renewal of each lunar cycle. The following 'Rungo Yul Story' gives account of this, in effect an origin of death myth.

Rungo Yul Story

The moon man had two sons and two wives. One day he sent his two sons to hunt ducks because he was hungry. He sent his wives to collect yams at the jungle. The two sons caught many ducks but saved none for their father, eating them all themselves. When their father found they had eaten all the ducks he became angry and put his two sons in a fishtrap he had made. The moon man told his sons, "you two can be like fish now", and he tied the fishtrap tight around them. He then dragged the fishtrap through the water a long way, drowning his sons. The moon man then returned to his camp to build his house, a circular structure covered with paperbark [thought to be the 'same' as the ring that appears around the moon].

When his wives returned they asked, "where's our sons?" The moon man replied, "I dont know." His wives then went and called out to the boys but there was no reply. They suspected their husband of killing the two boys, so they decided not to give him any of

1 This version of the story was told to me by Ray Munyal at Galawdjapin in Jan, 1990.
the yams they had collected. Later that night, when the moon man was sleeping inside his house, his two wives got up and silently left the house. They got dry twigs and placed them around the outside of the house, closing the door. The moon man continued to sleep inside. His wives said, "we'll let him burn now", and they set fire to the house. When it was well alight the moon man awoke and tried to escape. He was very angry. His wives ran away.

Finally the moon man managed to get out and wandered until he found a large white gum tree [near Gattji Creek). He climbed this tree all the way back into the sky, where he is once again be to seen. The moon man told all the people, "you see, when I die I come back to life, but when you die, its forever".

This story, which also relates to cloud, bream fish and water in Marrangu cosmology (for example see Groger-Wurm,1973:50,118-9) is thought to have a straightforward meaning. Namely, the moon may wax and wane but with each new moon comes 'into body' or 'back to life'. In contrast, when people die they may undergo a change of status but they never come back.

MARRANGU MORTUARY SEQUENCE

The sequence and approximate duration of Marrangu obsequies is shown in Table 5.1. The period immediately following death, Wirgugu (Wake) is a time spent waiting for relatives to arrive for the burial and involves the most sustained period of singing and crying and spontaneous displays of grief. During the Wake preparations are made for the burial. Today, a wooden coffin is placed inside a grave when all those wishing to attend have arrived. In former times, instead of grave burial, the corpse was exposed in a tree platform called birraga, until the flesh had decomposed (Warner,1937/58:433; Thomson [Peterson]1976:100). This allows the non-permanent parts of the corpse to perish, a necessary step before the bone could be disposed of.
Dada follows immediately after burial (but may occur in the period leading up to it also). Dada involves the brushing of mourners and the large and expensive possessions of the deceased (e.g., car, house, video) with singed and smoking green branches. In Wandjar all mourners are 'washed', yigiligi, by having water poured over them. Following this a red ochre called mekki is smeared all over the body. This act closes the initial funerary phase.

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**TABLE 5.1: MARRANGU MORTUARY SEQUENCE**

- **DYING AND DEATH**
  - WIRGUGU (WAKE)  
  - BURIAL, DADA, WANDJAR
  - BOGABOD (EXHUMATION)
  - BARDURRU (HOLLOW LOG)

A few months later, the corpse is retrieved and the bones cleaned and retained for a considerable period, usually by matrilateral relatives of the deceased. This is Bogabod (or Bukubut). After 1-2 years the bones are prepared for Bardurru (or Larrgan). In
Bardurru the bones are crushed and placed in a hollow log ossuary and abandoned. Bardurru is the final mortuary ceremony involving the physical remains of the deceased at the present time. In former times, however, Bardurru was followed by two further ceremonies, Maradjiri and Madayin (=Maraiin).

Maradjiri (the word refers to the string and pole used in the ceremony) was initiated when a bone of a deceased person was given to the Maradjiri owning mala by members of the deceased's own mala. This gift, called madjaballa, is received and held by the Maradjiri owning mala until the ceremony proper takes place some years later. At that time the bone, together with a long pole and other objects is ceremonially returned to those who requested the Maradjiri. This ceremony was formerly known as the 'bone pole' ceremony and regarded as the, "last series of personalised funerary observations" (La Mont West, 1962; cited by Borsboom, 1978). The madjaballa gift (on occasions a piece of decorated string) could also be distributed earlier in the mortuary cycle, "to muster people for exhumation ceremonies" (Thomson [Peterson] 1976:104).

Maradjiri is still often performed but its funerary significance has waned. This historical and thematic change is, in fact, the central thesis of Borsboom's work Maradjiri (1978b). The bone of a deceased person is no longer used as the madjaballa, being replaced by the hair or navelcord of a new born. People now speak of Maradjiri as a 'birth pole' rite and say they perform it "to make friends" (Borsboom, 1978b:xiv) and "[to] stress the indissoluble unity between a group of people, natural species and a certain locality" (ibid:15). Furthermore, the Maradjiri pole is no longer referred to as the 'bone pole' but is said to represent the Djareware (Sugar Bag) Dreaming and thereby accorded what Borsboom calls "life symbolic" themes (ibid:178).

The Madayin ceremony, in which Luma Luma is a central figure, was also part of the extended mortuary sequence. Though little performed today in central and western
Arnhem Land (Taylor, 1987:148) this ceremony integrates the themes of individual mortality with notions of seasonal fertility, land ownership and human regeneration (ibid:147-8). Borsboom (1978:172) notes similar themes. Taylor further suggests Madayin was held, "to ensure the transmission of the sacred objects owned by important deceased men to other senior men of the clan" (ibid:147). The reason for the decline in performance of the Madayin ceremony is unclear, though Taylor speculates that since 1950 in west Arnhem Land it has been replaced in favour of other ceremonies, particularly the Gunabibi (ibid:148; see also Hiatt, 1965:63).

THEORIES OF DEATH AND MOURNING

The pattern of mortuary rites as extended affairs, including double burial, is very common cross-culturally. Least common, Rosenblatt, Walsh and Jackson (1976) argue, is the contemporary Western practice of disposing of the dead within a few days of death. Rosenblatt et al argue that secondary burial and final mortuary rites impose definite limits on the period of mourning and publicise the reintegration of the mourners after the rites of separation previously (1976:90-92).

The most often cited theoretical framework for interpreting extended funerary practices is also one of the oldest. Hertz, the French sociologist, proposed in 1907 (1960) the tripartite view of death and funerals. Hertz saw in death a similarity with other forms of ritual, such as initiation, which involve the rite of separation (survivors become mourners; deceased person becomes a corpse); the rite de marge, a transitional, liminal period where normal roles are suspended, restrictions imposed and the corpse decays; concluding with the rite of aggregation, which marks the full transition of the corpse into a soul reunited with the ancestors and the reentry of

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1 However, Keen (personal comm) states Liyagalawumirr and Gupapuyngu people still perform this ceremony regularly.
mourners into full social life. This model, elaborated by Van Gennep (1909/60) emphasized the paralellism between the state of the corpse, the passage of the soul after death and the conduct of the mourners (1907/60:45).

Regarding the corpse and the soul, Hertz argued that "as the visible object vanishes it is reconstructed in the beyond" (ibid:46). Hertz applied his model to secondary burial customs in Borneo where the final rite is "the great feast", held to celebrate the soul's arrival in the ancestral realm and dissolve all mourning prohibitions on the survivors.

Though Hertz had a wider, Durkheimian agenda (seeing in each individual death a sacrilege upon society which must be defeated [1907/60:77-78]) it is the correlation he observed between the decay of the corpse and the formation of the soul which is of greatest interest here. In this important respect, Marrangu obsequies and eschatology defy the Hertzian model. This is because the 'soul', the wuguli of the deceased, is believed to rejoin the ancestors before the first burial, not following secondary burial as Hertz's model asserts¹. The difference is significant enough because one of the key attributes of Hertz's rite de marge phase, that of the temporarily homeless and wandering soul, is not present in the Marrangu case. The wuguli spirit is already united with the ancestors by this time.

The merri of the deceased, as I will show, is more in accordance with Hertz's notion of a wandering 'soul', except that Marrangu people do not regard the merri 'dead body' spirit as a soul in the sense of being ancestrally eternal. Because, in Marrangu reckoning, the wugulli of the deceased joins the ancestral home before first burial, exhumation and secondary burial must take on a different significance than (to follow Hertz) marking the completion of the soul's journey to the ancestral home. I suggest

¹ Compare this finding with those in the film Waiting for Harry (1980), where it is stated the birrimbirr (=wuguli) spirit goes to an ancestral home when a ceremonial pole is erected during the Bardurru (=Larrgan) rites.
that in the Marrangu case secondary burial marks the transformation of the wuguli, stripped of all recognition with a previously deceased individual, into the ancestral-spiritual potency active in 'spirit-child' impregnation.

So while there are important correlations between the corpse, 'soul' and mourners, I argue they are not all of the kind proposed by Hertz. What's more, his typology rests on an explicit separation between the corpse, ancestors and the passage of mortuary rites (see Morris, 1987:30-31). I argue this view does not apply here as Marrangu people consider ancestors as much a part of their mala as living members, claiming to be able to communicate with ancestral spirits and deriving social identity and political status from them. In general terms, however, the experience of bereavement, where survivors undergo a social and emotional transformation, is inseparable from the spiritual transformation of the deceased.

Even before Hertz, Frazer (1890) and Bachofen (1859) examined funerary practices. Working independently, they drew attention to the prevalence of sexual and birth symbolism in these practices. Less concerned with the question of how society overcomes the death of its members, Bachofen and Frazer looked at how funerary symbolism united the social and natural orders within a single system of beliefs.

Bloch and Parry (1982) have recently taken up this interest in sexual and fertility symbolism. They argue that society recreates itself through the genderised symbolism of sexuality (female) and fertility (male) at the time of each death (1982:27). Bloch and Parry claim many societies construe death in two antithetical but interdependent aspects, which they label 'good' and 'bad' death. The 'good' death is the victory of masculine order over the arbitrary and disruptive fact of biological death. In this victory, they argue, death is constructed as renewing the fertility of the source of all human life on the principle that, "every death makes available a new potentiality for life [and] that the regeneration of life is a cause of death" (ibid:8). The corollary is
the ‘bad’ death, the non life-giving death, where the feminine disorder and corruption of death is viewed as openly defiant and threatening to society. ‘Bad’ death represents the corruption of legitimate (male) fertility by uncontrolled (female) sexuality. Such death can not be harnessed to the cycle of regeneration, marking instead discontinuity in the life cycle and unfulfillment of social duties. Suicide, infant death, death by disappearance or death in the unsocialized wild are examples of Bloch and Parry’s ‘bad’ death (ibid:15-18). “Victory over death”, write Bloch and Parry, “[and] its conversion into rebirth, is symbolically achieved by a victory over female sexuality and the world of women” (ibid:22). Bloch and Parry apply this genderised view of ‘good’ and ‘bad’ death to ideologies governing the recreation of social systems of exchange, affinity and authority for no society, they point out, has yet eliminated biological processes.

There is a ‘common sense’ reason why fertility themes should dominate funerary symbolism: people are remembered, in part, by the offspring they produce. As Levine notes of Gusii funerals, “there is unmistakable pride in fertility expressed at the funerals of elderly persons who are the ancestors of many living people” (1982:48).

But Bloch and Parry’s ideas find echoes in Marrangu obsequies only when stripped of the gender-based associations. Birth and fertility themes are important to the mortuary sequence, but it is women who, like men, are identified with these themes. There is no evidence to suggest Marrangu people believe women (symbolically) give birth to the corpse, as Bloch and Parry’s model supposes (1982:27). Nor are women identified with the processes of putrification and decay (ibid) although Munn (1969:186) claims to find precisely this symbolism in the Wawilak myth. A notion that a fulfilled death has an incremental effect on the reproduction of new life is integral to the rites. A sex based division, however, is not to be found.
Without the genderised associations, then, one may indeed accept the centrality placed upon regenerative themes in funerary rites, as identified by Bachofen and Frazer last century. This assertion is borne out in the analysis of Marrangu obsequies that follows, though it is incorrect to suppose sexuality and fertility are radically divided in Aboriginal thought, a point made by Tonkinson (1978:85; see also Merlan, 1986).

My analysis of Marrangu obsequies is presented in the same order as outlined in Table 5.1. Details referring to the Wake and Burial I witnessed in 1989 are denoted by the term ‘Tank Funeral’, since the events took place at a settlement near Ramingining known as ‘the Tank’. Additional details from another funeral I witnessed in 1990 at the same place are referenced by the term ‘Tank Funeral #2’. During the first Tank Funeral the corpse was housed in a dwelling owned by a Ganalbingu speaking man who is the senior djungkai to the Djinang Marrangu mala, his mother clan.

DYING AND DEATH

When a person is sick and/or feel they are near death, close relatives are requested to come and see that individual before death occurs. The ailing individual’s own mala manikay cycle maybe sung at this time to, it is said, instruct the dying person or, ideally, aid recovery. Instructions are necessary because the wuguli spirit needs to be guided back to the mala country of the deceased.

Besides direct knowledge, people learn that an individual has died through song, dream or auspicious events. The news that a death has occurred is delivered through song before those listening are told the identity of the deceased. All deaths are announced initially in this way. The following instance illustrates how the singing of manikay informs of death:
15.11.89:- on arrival back at Galawdjapin this afternoon Andrew Margululu sat down quietly with tapsticks and began to sing a single verse of the Merri manikay. All others in camp knew this was a sign that someone of the Dhuwungi moiety had passed away (because the Larrgan manikay is sung for a Yirritjing death). As Margululu continued to sing people gathered near where he sat to hear of the news. Margululu finished singing and put down the tapsticks. Those gathered waited, some enquiring as to where the death had occurred. Others asked whether the deceased was a man or woman, girl or boy. Then Margululu volunteered the news that a small girl at Milingimbi had died. Her identity was clarified with reference to several mutual relations, but without mention of her name. As the deceased was not a close relation there was no crying or further singing and discussion quickly turned to consideration of whether or not to attend the funeral. The following day six people, men and boys, left to attend the funeral.

Sometimes the merri of a recently deceased person is encountered in dreams. On such occasions the merri may appear in close bodily resemblance to the deceased, speaking and behaving as the person formerly did. Alternately, the merri appears as a deformed and/or ugly image of the deceased, or in non human form, a cat for example. Dreams of merri visitation are said to have special power because they disclose information not consciously or widely known, namely, that the dreamt of person has passed away.

Where it was possible to confirm, the five or six dreams of this kind reported to me were in fact followed by the public news of a death. In one intriguing instance the dream, I was told, was shared by myself:

13.9.89:- Andrew Margululu [with whom I shared a room at the time] told me this morning that last night while asleep I shouted 'get away from me, get away from me, don't hurt me.' He heard what I said and was unable to sleep. He made some damper and tea and sat up throughout the night. While awake he heard a rap on the door and a knocking sound on the window. He said these sounds were produced by a roaming merri come to harm us. He also said that my dreaming outburst was a response to the merri presence.

14.9.89:- News arrived today of a death of a Burarra man in Darwin. Tonight Margululu insisted that the kerosine lanteen, which normally burns on a low flame in the corner of the room, should be set on a higher flame and placed near the door so that ghost knows not to come in.*

Death by sorcery can also be revealed through dream:

16.9.89:- Today Margululu told me that he had another dream where a man he knows to the south of here was killed by being sung into, that is, by being forced to hear a 'mixed up' (yurra) song, one that he didn't know. The words poisoned his whole body, eventually killing him.

People also learn of a recent death by accounting for common events by reference to the agency of the newly deceased person's roaming merri. Disturbances in the normal
pattern of expectations of one's experiences, such as in food procurement, are often interpreted in this way:

16.9.89: Margululu: "sometimes when you go hunting and you don't feel happy you will not catch anything, it will all get away from you. This means that someone is about to die or soon will. You will return to camp empty handed and hear the news the next day."

16.9.89:- Walked to Gattji this evening with Margululu and Freddie Yuwalarra. On the way we heard a 'grrr grrr' sound in the bush a short distance from the road. Margululu and Yuwalarra said it was a buffalo, though you couldn't see it in the dark. At Gattji we told another man what we had heard. He said that it was a merri and that probably someone had just died or was about to die. He predicted that in the next few days we would get word of a death. [Note: buffalo, especially heard or seen at night, are regarded as roaming merri].

These instances illustrate how everyday events are interpreted in accordance with the believed consequences of death. Exactly when death occurs is not considered important, though a person is assumed dead when they enter a coma (Warner, 1937:58:414), even if the heart continues to beat (ibid:25). As soon as this occurs relatives are summoned for the Wake and preparations begun for the burial.

WIRGUGU - WAKE

The period immediately following death up until burial is called Wirgugu. A strong sense of bereavement is present at this time and is expressed through singing, crying and dancing. At this time also the coffin and (in the Tank Funeral) hollow log ossuary are obtained and properly adorned. Throughout this 1-2 week period mourners continue to arrive at the funerary site, to sing and 'cry' for the deceased. By crying (meaning either shedding tears or thinking remorsefully of the deceased) and singing survivors 'say goodbye' to the dead person.

Those expected to attend but who do not are not condemned, but their actions are interpreted in one of two antithetical ways: either they are too distressed to attend (and this is thought an appropriate motivation); or they are thought responsible for the
death in some way (the decision to stay away, in this case, viewed as tantamount to an admission of guilt). This can lead to accusations of sorcery and the execution of retributive sorcery.

Those that attend the funeral or approach the corpse are smeared all over with a white monochrome paint called gamununggu. The reason for this, I was told, is to publicly articulate one’s respect for the deceased and the bereaved family and to ward away the deceased’s merri spirit.

White body paint dominates the physical appearance of mourners in this stage of obsequies, especially those in close contact or relation with the deceased. According to Taylor, “the paint is said to cleanse the living ... from the ‘sweat’ of the deceased [as] it is this ‘sweat’ of the deceased that attracts the dead person’s ghost [merri]” (1987:154-5).

Three groups of people are the main participants in Marrangu obsequies, at this time and throughout (compare Clunies Ross and Hiatt, 1977:133). The first group comprise members of the deceased’s own clan. The men of this group gather to sing their clan manikay cycle, the deceased’s own clan songs. Men of this group may dance but do not paint the corpse or hollow log ossuary (dupun), though their advise is sought and valued by those doing this work. Clanswomen of the deceased do not handle the corpse, but sing and dance in small groups near where the corpse lies.

It is notable that all women, whether consanguineal or affinal relatives of the deceased, grieve as a group largely separate from the men, though this pattern is breached at certain distinct times in the rites (as will be seen in the account of Dada). An

1 This is not to say, of course, that each individual does not have a unique set of experiences of the occasion.
observable feature of women's grieving is close and prolonged physical contact with each other.

The second group are those whose mothers belong to the deceased's clan and who are, therefore, called djungkai. These people are the keepers of the body and do not sing. They have responsibility for painting the dupun hollow log, digging the grave, constructing shades and the dangerous task of moving the corpse. These tasks are shared by men and women. The senior man of this group is the "number one" djungkai and is responsible for the correct execution of the rites. Senior women of this group brew tea and bake damper for anyone in the entire gathering.

The third group comprises individuals whose mother's mother belongs to the deceased's clan, that is, those in a medje (granny) clan relationship. Senior men of this group have a supervisory role, checking on the performance of ceremonial duties by others. However, they also sing their own manikay cycle in solidarity with members of the deceased's clan. Younger men of this group assist in painting the dupun and constructing the shades and sing their own manikay. Women of this group dance to both their own clan's manikay and that of the deceased's clan.

The other people present participate by singing Marrangu manikay, for they are of the same baparru as the deceased. Men and boys of these groups attend by virtue of sharing the Dhuwungi moiety Honey Dreaming, the main Marrangu Dreaming. In addition to singing, they execute dances and build ground sculptures derived from this Dreaming. Women of the other Marrangu clans sing and dance and interact closely with kinswomen from the deceased's own clan. Some of these roles and events are illustrated in the following details of a Wake I attended for a Marrangu man in December, 1989.

TANK FUNERAL: WIRGUGU (WAKE)
D, a middle aged man of the 'top' Djinang Marrangu mala, passed away after a long illness. His wife's kin, Ganalbingu speakers resident near
Ramingining, became the djungkai for the body. From this time the deceased's name became yagirridjumirri, 'passed away name', and was not allowed to be spoken. Soon after death the corpse was moved from D's house in a car driven by one of the widow's brothers, a junior or 'worker' djungkai. The body was taken to another house and D's house was abandoned for an indefinite period. At the new house clansmen of the deceased sat on the verandah singing Marrangu manikay. Some wept as they sang. A short distance away, D's clanswomen performed a Marrangu dance and wailed plaintively, occasionally throwing themselves to the ground in bodily grief. Beside the corpse female affines consoled D's widow with loud, hysterical wails.

The senior Ganalbingu djungkai then decided to move the body to his own house just out of town, D's mother country. D's belongings were placed in the car. Then the corpse itself was brought out, in the glare of spotlights and shouts of "way way". The singing of Marrangu manikay was continuous and particularly vigorous as the corpse was being moved. The deceased's clansmen assisted the djungkai workers in moving the corpse whilst many others, men and women, gathered closely around.

At the new house the body was removed from the car, again with accented singing and placed in the living room. Those who had handled the corpse smeared themselves with white clay, gamununggu, and the car's interior and exterior were brushed by leafy branches that had been singed in a fire, a Dada ceremony.

The mourners now took up residence in the houses and grounds surrounding the dwelling housing the corpse. Male mourners continued to sing through the night and into the next day. Marrangu manikay was being sung by all groups, though one group comprised Djambarrpuyngu speakers, another Ritharrngu speakers and the third Djinang speakers.

Groups of women and men sat on the verandah of the house, crying. Some got to their feet and danced, collapsing after a minute or so into the arms of others. The following day work commenced on two 'shades': one open walled and for use by singing groups during the heat of the day; the other wholly enclosed, for concealment of the coffin and dupun hollow log ossuary and for a madayin (secret) ceremony called Our, held just before burial.

Map.5.1 gives a plan of the scene.

These activities, singing by men, the (less frequent) dancing by women and the construction of the shades dominated the week and a half leading up to the burial. Throughout this time mourners from distant communities continued to arrive: Murrungun clan members from Gamidi outstation; Murrungun and Wulaki clan members from Wurdega outstation; clansmen of the deceased from Gumugeda outstation, Maningrida and Milingimbi; and Burarra speaking Marrangu from Cape Stewart.

As each new party arrives they cover themselves with white clay and attempt to approach the corpse. Men (either of the deceased's clan or those calling the deceased's clan M or MM) halt the approach, holding spears and spear throwers aloft in a threatening way. The new arrivals return the

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1 Morphy (1984:62) states that the mokuy or merri spirit is thought especially dangerous when the body is being moved, but does not suggest why. The vigor of the singing at the Tank Funeral whenever the corpse was moved must have been a response to a notion merri presence at this time; perhaps the movement disturbs merri's location within the corpse?
MAP 5.1: PLAN OF 'TANK' FUNERAL, DEC. 1989.

(Approx scale) 0 metres 6
threat, confidently breaking through towards the corpse, bursting into
wails when they get near.

A worker djungkai told me new arrivals must 'force' their way to the
corpse so as to demonstrate their goodwill, i.e., that they are not afraid to
go near the corpse because they are in no way responsible for the death. On
the other hand, the keepers of the body do not know who to trust and
therefore confront them.

After each group has 'forced' their way in, viewed the corpse and cried,
they present a bunggul (song with dance) for the deceased. The Ritharrngu
Marrangu from Lake Evalla, for example, performed a Djareware bunggul.
This involved stretching a long strip of bandage, the Djareware string or
malka, from the enclosed shade to the door of the house where the corpse
lay. Ritharrngu and Djinang Marrangu men and women then held the string
above their heads and shuffled forward into the room where the corpse lay,
singing Djareware manikay as they went. The string was then wound around
the corpse and the bunggul concluded. After that the singing groups of men
and boys reassembled in the shades near the house.

At the Tank Funeral #2 (held for a Marrangu woman) the Djareware
bunggul was also performed and included the events outlined above. Hence,
not only Marrangu people but also Mildjingi, Wulaki, Murrungun,
Liyanagalawumirr and Ganalbingu people (i.e., people of both moieties)
participated in this Marrangu rite (Plate 5.1 shows part of the scene).

Throughout the Wake (at the Tank Funeral #1) the enclosed shade is used
for ritual preparations by senior men (of the deceased's clan and those
calling this clan M or MM). When the coffin and dupun are procured they
are placed in this shade accompanied by a madayin (secret) episode where
all women, girls and boys must remove themselves some distance away.

On the day following the arrival of the coffin (3 days since the death) the
corpse is moved into the concealed shade and once again women and children
retreat to a distance. The dupun and coffin are prepared for burial whilst in
the shade.

During the wake the corpse is referred to as "merri" or "that dead body".
Less frequently the corpse is spoken of in a personal way as, for example,
"my countryman lying there". Mostly the inert form of the corpse is
"merri".

This merri also has the ability to leave the corpse and roam and create
sickness, especially at night. One of its deeds is to place foreign objects in
the bodies of mourners, particularly in the side of the ribs or chest.
Several cases of this kind of affliction were reported, particularly by
individuals belonging to the deceased's own clan.

The cure consisted of the 'lump' (often one or more small pebbles) being
removed by a man with recognised healing abilities, called marrngitj. The
merri can also cause more severe disorders, such as violent outbursts and
madness, but neither Tank Funeral I witnessed saw cases of this kind.

After the 10th day of mourning, the djungkai are informed by members of
the deceased's clan that they had cried, sung and "thought about that body"
for long enough. The sequence of events leading up to the burial commenced
the following day. In the Christian influenced local English vernacular, this
Plate 5.1:- Djareware bunggul at Tank Funeral #2, 1990. The line of Djareware dancers including Marrangu, Wulaki, Liyagalawumirr, Gunalbingu, Mildjingi and Murrungun individuals (the line continues out of shot) move towards the house containing the corpse. Marrangu individuals are singing Djareware manikay (see right). Dancers carry the orange and white Djareware string, malka, and hold leafy branches representing Stringybark. They shake the branches as they move forward because “that is what merri does”.
day and the next are considered when 'the funeral' takes place. Distant kin, and less involved individuals may attend just for this time.

The Wake is a time when people who knew the dead person come together to pay their respects and support each other in grief. In Morphy's (1984:63-4) account of a Madarrpa clan Wake, people said many groups participated because it was important to, "come together for that body," because unity gives "power to that body." A sense of 'family' solidarity is frequently spoken of, even though many are distressed and angry at the death and many members of distant, not strongly related clans are present.

Anger during bereavement, however, is usually expressed by men. Outsiders judged to be complicit in the death, for reasons that they behaved badly towards or showed dislike of the deceased, are the objects of this anger. The communal acts of singing, crying, dancing and touching articulate sentiments of closeness in the face of perceived ill will by outsiders.

The many days spent singing and dancing are less spectacular than the relatively brief rites of burial (upon which most ethnographic accounts concentrate; compare Thomson [Peterson]1976; Morphy,1984). But it is during the Wake that the strongest expression and sharing of grief takes place. I would argue it is also the period when interclan friendship is most forcefully reaffirmed. Moreover, the songs sung are considered vitally important to the fate of the deceased's wuguli. The songs are a kind of eschatological compass which aids the wuguli in finding the ancestors, in some tract of land or water in the deceased's country. The designs painted on the coffin lid (Morphy,1977:8) also aid in this way.
BURIAL

People are buried a short distance from the main areas of settlement - where the Wake has taken place. Children are an exception to this. They are buried in the camp area close to where the parents sleep (Thomson [Peterson] 1976:99). Mountford (1956:311) and Thomson (ibid) report that the corpse is painted with red ochre shortly before burial so, it is said, the ancestral spirits can identify the corpse.

There are (or were) two types of burial commonly practiced in north-central Arnhem Land: grave burial, called djaldjimirri; and exposure in a tree platform, called birraga (the word refers to the timber and bush rope used to tie the platform together). A third kind, that of the communal burial ground, is now increasingly common but formerly was found only in south-eastern Arnhem Land, near Blue Mud Bay (see Thomson [Peterson], ibid).

In tree platform disposal the corpse was left exposed, either face up or face down on a platform about 1.5 metres off the ground. The tree platform was more common in former times when the bones were always used in the post burial ceremonies. However, during the period of closest missionary contact -- the 1920's through to the 50's -- exhumation and secondary burial occurred less often, and ground burial (in cemeteries) was promoted (see Morphy, 1984:43-45).

More recently, over the past 10-15 years, exhumation and secondary burial have once again been conducted in full, that is, involving the physical remains of the dead person. There is no doubt that increased numbers of people living in small outstations on or near their own land has contributed to this resurgence, as it has allowed greater control in making decisions that retain indigenous customs. Northern Territory Department of Health personnel may visit an outstation if they know a body is being
held and recommend its disposal, but are less likely (than in the larger centres) to confiscate it.

The practice of coffin burial (the coffin was introduced in the war years) has been retained despite the decentralisation of population. Before this the corpse was wrapped in paperbark, rungun, and placed in the grave, the soil being shovelled in by stones called djuldji. Plywood coffins are now ordered and flown out from Darwin. They maybe painted or draped with special material. Before the advent of coffins, grave burial was preferred to the tree platform when the deceased was very young or old, or where the death was perceived to have not been inflicted by sorcery (see Thomson [Peterson] ibid:100).

Burial is marked by a flurry of ceremony. At the Tank Funeral in the 24 hours leading up to the burial, manikay were sung continously with an explicit aim of communicating with the deceased's departing wuguli. Through singing the wuguli is asked to come back so the survivors can 'see' the spirit one last time. With burial, the reunion of the wuguli with the ancestors is thought to be successfully completed. The manikay sung leading up to burial connect the 'line' between the ancestral home and the corpse, so that the wuguli 'knows' for certain the path to choose and the mourners are reassured of the presence of the ancestors through the newly departing wuguli. Burial is regarded as an appropriate time to affirm that death is not the end of 'life'. The following details from the Tank Funeral illustrate these themes and the ceremonial rites of burial.

**TANK FUNERAL: BURIAL**

On the 10th day after death, when the mourners smeared red ochre instead of white clay over their bodies, clansmen of the deceased announced their wish to bury the corpse the following day. The senior djungkai agreed to this and the final preparations were made.

That night (coincidentally the 25th of December) the singing groups moved from their usual positions (see Map 5.1) to the grave, now almost fully dug. Singing continued here all night, with no women or children present. The stated purpose of the grave side manikay singing was to 'bring up' the wuguli of the deceased for one last farewell. A worker djungkai told
me the singing makes "the dead body [he meant wuguli] active again". He went on: "we sing all night and yell out to that spirit and ask 'come back and let me know you are the same spirit', and that spirit comes back into action [as] when the dead body was alive. That spirit crashes into people".

The following day I was told the wuguli of the deceased had 'appeared' late that night, standing beside one of the singers. The individual I spoke to, a close clansman of the deceased, was pleased to have witnessed this visitation as it showed the deceased was "right." He said if the wuguli had not appeared it would have been a sign they had "sung too much." But now everyone knew the wuguli spirit had joined the ancestors at a site called Boyndjarrkoirdjin, a deep pool in Galawdjapin Creek in Marrangu clan country.

Once the wuguli had appeared and been dispatched to its ancestral home, its individuated existence is thought to cease. The same worker djungkai told me, "Its finished, its never coming back. Thats the end of you." The following day the coffin was buried. Singing continued on as the previous day and there was more activity than before in the shade containing the corpse, coffin and dupun.

At about 4pm women and children were instructed to remove themselves to a distance as before, as a madyain (and secret) ceremony was about to occur. About half an hour later they returned. The concealed shade was now wide open and the coffin, draped in a blanket and colourful sheet, was in full view. The dupun hollow log had been moved to the grave during the restricted section.

Several women now approached the coffin, including the widow and other affinal kin. They held knives and tomahawks in their hands and struck their scalps as they approached. Some, not all, drew blood. I was told this meant the women were saying goodbye to the deceased and "we give you blood now".

After striking themselves several times men clumsily disarmed them, usually with a short struggle. The women now started throwing themselves repeatedly to the ground. As they did this they cried and wailed, but not haphazardly; it was strikingly tuneful, sounding like a melancholy version of men's manikay. Most of the women finished up prostrate on the coffin, which became smeared with blood.

While the women mutilate themselves men sing the Djareware manikay. Boys belonging to Marrangu clans wear Djareware armlets and necklaces made of white feathers (from any white feathered Dhuwungi moiety bird) and orange breast feathers from the orange breasted parrot.

As the women are picked up, the coffin bearers (both clansmen of the deceased and djungkai) move in. A car is used to carry the coffin the 40 or 50 metres to the grave. Before the car starts to move off, three men (clansmen of the deceased) and painted with red ochre, surround the grave site. Then three djungkai carrying spears run towards them. The three protecting the grave become agitated and return threats to the newcomers, jumping about wildly. The three wielding the spears continue to advance and gradually join those near the grave site who accept their presence warily. This was the bream, Wurdibal, bunggul.

The car carrying the coffin then starts to move off, to the accompaniment of the Stringybark manikay. (The Stringybark song was sung on all occasions
the corpse or coffin was moved. At the Tank Funeral #2, Merri as well as Stringybark manikay was sung at these times).

The car moved slowly. A long string festooned with orange and white feathers, the Djareware string or malka, stretched across the top of the car from front to back. It was held at both ends by Marrangu clansmen who walked in motion with the car.

The three djungkai who earlier participated in the Wurdibal bunggul, ran back and forwards between the car and grave site, shouting, with spears held high. The entourage of mourners followed the car, some sang, some cried, others walked in silence.

The car parked alongside the grave, which already contained the covered dupun. The grave ran north-south. Many men, clansmen, djungkai and others now lifted the coffin from the car and lowered it into the grave. Stringybark manikay was again sung as the coffin was moved into the grave. Men now moved in close around the grave, women gathered in groups of four or five further back. There was silence now and little movement. One man pierced his scalp with his spear thrower and allowed the blood to trickle into the grave.

A Uniting Church minister from Maningrida, a nephew of the deceased, now spoke. He read from the Bible, asking mourners to bow their heads in prayer. Not everyone followed his instructions and quite a few began to fidget, especially during the English delivery. He then threw a handful of dirt into the pit and the service was over.

Several djungkai immediately began to shovel dirt into the grave, while most other mourners wandered in twos and threes back to the house and shades. Later the grave was covered with corrugated iron and blue tarpaulin.

Once the corpse is buried the physical aspect of the deceased’s presence diminishes, though the merri is still thought to be present. This contrasts with the wuguli spirit which by this time is thought to have returned to its ancestral clan country. This finding varies from Morphy’s claim that “the journey is not thought literally to occur during the course of a single ceremony” (1984:61). In the case of the Marrangu wuguli spirit I suggest it does.

After burial the merri ‘dead body’ spirit of the deceased continues to be explained as a malign though diffuse presence. The merri causes quarrels, a variety of ailments and accidents long after the corpse goes into the grave. The fleshy part of existence may have been disposed of, but the influence of merri remains. The identity of the deceased continues to be suppressed after burial, the ‘person’ being referred to as “that new merri.” What’s more, the merri continues to inhabit the places the deceased formerly
occupied, so these places (especially dwellings) remain abandoned for several weeks "to give that merri time to leave."

DADA

In order to further break the association with the corpse, a Dada ceremony is held soon after burial (though, as seen, Dada is held not only at this stage). Dada involves the brushing of mourners, possessions of the deceased, dwellings and objects used in the rites with singed and smoking branches. Dada releases those who have handled the corpse from restrictions imposed on them while they were in close contact with the corpse (Morphy, 1984:42). The release is effected largely because smoke is believed to have cleansing properties. Warner (1937/58:419) also suggests rites of 'purification' are intended "to send the [wuguli] soul away from the group and into the totemic well and to force the [merri] trickster spirit out into the jungle." My information supports Warner's second aim, but not his first.

There is a general antithesis in Marrangu thought between the merri spirit and fire/smoke. People who set fire to grass to "clean the bush" also say they do this to remove the cover for a merri to hide in. I was told smoke as used in Dada, "throws that merri out of camp and out of [our] bodies, so that merri wont come after us." This suggests a further association of fire, namely, that of closure and finality. As one of Morphy's informants stated, "fire covers up the funeral" (1984:102). Warner reported that the stench of the corpse, which is a metonym for merri, is "consumed by the smoke," (1937/58:435). Fire and even more generally, light, discourages merri from coming close to a camp at night. Further, merri is thought to wander mostly at night and therefore be especially averse to firelight and its adjunct, smoke. One man told me daylight and firelight make the merri spirit "friendly." There is no such opposition (to fire/smoke) in the case of the wuguli spirit.
The atmosphere of the Dada ceremony is very different to that which prevails during the burial. Dada is performed in a lighthearted and carousing mood; chatter is animated and bright, occasional raucous laughter accents the gathering and women and men are less segregated than at any other time since death. Singing continues with a less structured delivery, as several djungkai move among the mourners with smoking branches.

TANK FUNERAL: DADA

Once mourners had regathered under the shades and on the verandah of the house, the mood changed appreciably. The gathering seemed happier, perhaps it was relief that the body was now buried. The scenes of self mutilation and solemnity (in this case, just half an hour earlier) were replaced with laughter and flirtation. There was not a sullen face to be seen.

The djungkai workers continued with their tasks. A circular depression about one metre in diameter was fashioned in the sand adjacent to the now semi-dismantled men's shade. This formation was called mantjarr.

A fire was lit within the sand sculpture and green branches were singed therein. These were used by the djungkai to brush over the bodies of all the mourners. The car used to carry the coffin was also brushed with these branches, as well as the room where the corpse had laid.

Crow, Wak Wak, was the single manikay accompaniment to these events. (At the Tank Funeral #2 a Dhuwungi Murrungun Dreaming, Barjdji or long yam, accompanied Dada). At this funeral, two Burarra Marrangu men sang continual verses of this song. When each individual was brushed, everyone chorused "wak...wak...wak...", in imitation of the bird's call. Singing went on, with bursts of laughter and flippancy comment, until all present had been brushed. As the branches were from green trees smoke, not fire, was the most conspicuous element throughout this ceremony.

With all mourners so cleansed, the perimeter of the sand depression was gradually pushed in, smothering the fire. As this was done, anyone who was dissatisfied with the execution of the rites was asked to speak. No one complained, though some clansmen of the deceased took the opportunity to pledge that the death would be avenged. Another thanked the 'family' for attending and suggested it was time for a celebration.

The sand depression was now completely flattened, thereby closing the opportunity to air grievances and the ceremony itself. Friendly socialising and animated banter ensued throughout the rest of the day and evening.

The Crow manikay sung during Dada is thought to closely parallel the ritual presence of fire/smoke (I am unfamiliar with the connotations of the Barjdji manikay sung to accompany Dada at the Tank Funeral #2). The Burarra Crow manikay (as sung at the
Tank Funeral) includes the phrase "gulba birrirra" which translates as "[Crow] cackles as He rubs his firesticks together" (Clunies Ross and Wild, 1982:52). Crows are often seen feeding on the flesh remains of carcasses and the Crow manikay sung during Dada almost certainly images the process of decomposition and the appropriateness of this in terms of the circularity of life and death. Further, there is a Marrangu Dreaming scenario (see Borsboom, 1978b:57-8) tracing the events leading to Crow becoming "boss to that dead body."

**WANDJAR**

Wandjar is the last phase in primary funerary rites. In this ceremony mourners are 'washed', yigiligi, by having water poured over them. The water is said to "make free" the mourners from their period of mourning, as soon after Wandjar the funeral party disperses to return to interrupted activities. The washing usually takes place within a ground sculpture belonging to one of the Marrangu clans and is followed by the smearing of all present with red ochre, mekki, which is said to free recipients from mourning restrictions.

According to Taylor, Kunwinjku Wandjar ceremonies aim, "to cleanse [the living] from the pollution of the deceased" (1987:147). The perceived source of contamination is, as in Dada, the merri spirit of the deceased. However, rather than there being a clear polarity between water and merri (as with fire/smoke and merri in Dada) Wandjar emphasizes the resumption of the everyday life by the bereaved and the continuity of existence despite the absence of the dead person. However, water certainly has connotations with life as discussion following the details of the Tank Funeral Wandjar will illustrate.
Wandjar also highlights the themes of clan solidarity and unity of ancestors and living people. This is evidenced when the mourners stand inside the ground sculpture and are washed. The sculpture is a Dreaming design, such as Djareware, shared with several other clans and as such expresses the Dreaming ties that exist between these clans and between the deceased individual and his/her clan. The fact that all mourners stand inside the sculpture when washed, regardless of which clan owns the design, is also a strong demonstration of solidarity. By washing in Wandjar mourners express unity with the dead person, his/her clan, that clan’s Dreamings, clans sharing those Dreamings and with other mourners.

Clunies Ross and Hiatt found ground sculptures made during a Gidjingali (Burarra) Larrgan ceremony also represented particular Spirit Beings, their homes and places within the deceased’s clan country (1977:132). They found the ground sculpture is, above all, associated with the ancestral origins of the deceased’s clan. They argue, as does Keen (1978:202) that there is no “simple equation” (ibid) between a sculptured ‘hole’ and the clan ‘totemic well’, as Warner (1937/58:426) and Thomson (Peterson, 1976:107) contend. Morphy too suggests Warner and Thomson have “oversimplified the Yolngu concept [of ancestral renewal] by stressing the return of the spirit to the deceased’s clan well” (1984:151). Ground sculpture motifs evoke several models of ancestral renewal and clan continuity and not a unitary association with a ‘sacred waterhole’ or ‘well’.

As the water is poured manikay belonging to the deceased clan are sung. These focus on the spiritual identity of the deceased because they are songs from the deceased’s Dreaming. The act of washing, therefore, in addition to ‘making free’ mourning restrictions evokes the spiritual heritage of the deceased, as if such a remembrance itself has cleansing qualities. Interestingly, those washed first are persons who have dreamt about the deceased’s merri (see Warner’s account, 1937/58:420).
TANK FUNERAL: WANDJAR

Wandjar took place in the morning of the day following Dada. Overnight a ground sculpture had been made on the same area where the circular depression had been the previous day.

Fig 5.1 shows the formation.

The sculpture ran north-south, same as the grave. It was the Djareware, Sugar Bag, design and had been constructed by two Burarra Marrangu men. The design was given to the Burarra Marrangu people by the Djinang Marrangu clan a long time ago and was, thereby, evidence of the cosmology shared by these two clans. The Djareware ground sculpture owned by the Djinang Marrangu (given to them by the Ritharrngu Marrangu people) was not executed at this funeral. It is shown in Fig 5.2.

The good humoured atmosphere during Dada the day before continued to be present. Several men, including the Burarra men who had built the sculpture, sat in the dismantled men's shade singing manikay. Others joined the group from time to time. On the verandah of the house a few women sat nursing children, playing cards or kneading dough for damper. Some, including the widow of the deceased, sat still and silent.

All took care to avoid stepping on the sculpture and dogs that did disturb it were immediately shooed away and the damage repaired.

Several djungkai fetched water in drums and buckets and all present now gathered around the sculpture. The singing group fell silent and a senior clansman of the deceased took up the singing alone. The song was Stringybark, the deceased's Dreaming. In preparation for the dousing, watches and other personal items were removed.

The first group to be washed stood in the section marked 'A' (see Fig 5.1). Djungkai poured water over them and as it fell it was rubbed into the skin. Several drenchings were required as all parts of the body had to be washed.

To the rear of the group two men, standing back to back, joined hands and swayed from side to side. This represented the stringybark trees blown by the monsoonal wind and rains, Bara.

Next another group of men were washed in the same section. Following them two groups of women, some nursing babies, were washed in section 'B', the Stringybark manikay again accompanying. Finally, in section 'C', a further two groups of men and boys were washed, including all the djungkai. After this everyone painted themselves with red ochre to make them "like tree" and the rites of burial were considered 'closed up'.

The final act of Wandjar was to fully erase the ground sculpture (although it had been considerably trampled during the washing). First, breaches were made at 'X', 'Y' and 'Z' (see Fig 5.1) and the collected water allowed to escape. Then groups of women, affinally related to the men of all the Marrangu clans, danced over the sculptured area, gradually demolishing the sculpture. The manikay sung during the dance was Mamba, Porpoise, from the Burarra Marrangu manikay cycle.

With the sculpture now fully trampled the gathering dispersed. The shades that had been used were not fully disassembled until several days after.
FIG 5.1: BURARRA MARRANGU
DISTREWARE GROUND
SCULPTURE, AS CONSTRUCTED
FIG 5.2: DJINANG MARRANGU

DJAREWARE GROUND

SCULPTURE.

mounded sand
Those returning to distant communities made travel arrangements. The only mourners not to return home were those who had shared the deceased's dwelling. They remained at the funeral site for several weeks before returning home.

During the Wandjar ceremony the unifying themes are clan continuity and solidarity between Marrangu clans. The connection between the spiritual heritage of the living community (in songs and designs for example) and the regeneration of clan Dreamings is strongly reaffirmed. The progression from a state of mourning is also marked.

The execution of clan designs is visible proof of the interconnectedness of cosmological property between same baparru clans. This property is sometimes exchanged between Marrangu clans on the basis that the Dreaming Beings' journey passed through the donor and recipient clan's territory. The Djareware Dreaming, which has resulted in the transference of designs from the Ritharrngu Marrangu to the Djinang Marrangu and subsequently to the Burarra Marrangu has been exchanged on this basis, underlying the spiritual homogeneity of these clans despite their geographic and linguistic separation.

In death, a Marrangu individual is believed to achieve unity with the Dreaming because the wuguli spirit rejoins his/her ancestors in Marrangu clan country. In Wandjar Djareware is proclaimed anew as the source of clan identity. The death is the catalyst for this proclamation of spiritual and social continuity.

The presence of water in Wandjar reinforces this assertion. Water makes all present 'strong' because it helps remove the merri of the deceased. Water is symbolic of life, for example, in the way that the monsoonal rains each wet season result in new growth. The Stringybark manikay images this association, by referring to the effects of the monsoonal wind and rains. Bodies of water are reported as sources of new life, as

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1 The seasonal conditions of the oncoming wet season also have a cosmological association with the process of bodily decay, as analysis of the Luma Luma Dreaming demonstrated.
conception spirits are often 'found' in certain species of fish. In the final mortuary rite, Bardurru, this relation is made explicit. Water signals the spiritual transformation of the deceased's wuguli as it is reincorporated with ancestral energy, perceived as a contributory source of new life. Moreover, water thrown over the mourners during Wandjar connotes their re-emergence following the period of mourning.

**BOGABOD**

The ceremony accompanying the exhumation of the bones, Bogabod (or Bukubut) follows two to six months after burial. The exhumation itself may not be carried out by the same people who performed the burial, though members of the deceased's clan and the djungkai clan will always be present. No women are present when the bones are exhumed because the ceremonial structure of Bogabod involves the passage of the bones to female custodians. When the grave is unearthed all present eat a kind of damper made from the nuts (milgali) of the cycad palm, minitji-dambung (see Plates 5.2 and 5.3).

Merri is the manikay sung at this time because cycad palm damper, I was told, is the 'food' for "that dead body." The damper is eaten from a paperbark 'plate' (the nuts having been roasted in a fire wrapped in paperbark). A 'party' atmosphere is current at this time because everyone is "happy for that bone." The bones are cleaned in water, painted with red ochre (or this may occur later in preparation for the Bardurru ceremony) and placed in a paperbark carrier called djarra. Any remaining flesh is kept in a separate paperbark receptacle.
Plate 5.2:- The cycad palm nuts, milgali, are wrapped and tied in paperbark ready for roasting. They have already been soaked in water for a week to remove toxins. After roasting they are made into a kind of damper. This food, among other times, is eaten during the Bogabod ceremony.
Plate 5.3: Roasting cycad palm nuts. Wrapped in paperbark the nuts are covered with hot coals.
Thomson has observed the exhumation of a Djinang man's body he witnessed in 1937 at "Gillere" in Marrangu territory (now the site of an abandoned outstation). He writes:

Two men were involved in handling the bones. The man who removed the bones was the adopted father of the deceased [and] from the same country, named Balambarri[?] He was assisted by ... a Mildjingi man, a sister's son of the deceased, who was married to two of his daughters.... The adopted father removed the bones, starting from the feet and working upwards. [Name] poured water over the bones as the first man washed them, thus reducing the period he would be wukundi (tabu). The head was picked up last and washed by pouring water in through the foramen magnum. Each bone as it was picked up was placed on a sheet of bark beside the grave. When they had all been removed the grave was filled again. The two men washed and smeared themselves with white paint from head to foot; 'everybody no more want to smell'(Thomson [Peterson]:104).

Warner notes a heavily smoking fire is lit as the exhumation is carried out which, "prevents the stench from being too heavy" (Warner, 1937/58:435). The flesh and bones, both wrapped in paperbark, are then brought back to the camp and the Bogabod ceremony commences. This involves, initially, a Wandjar washing ceremony for those who had performed the exhumation and all other close relatives, after which red ochre is smeared over everyone. The washing takes place, as described previously, in a ground sculpture that is a Marrangu design.

The Mewal bunggul follows. During this rite two or more men carry the paperbark containing the bones. The paperbark is bound in the shape of a flexed arm (as shown in Fig 5.3).

This shape is said to be "like Mewal" and the dancers sway to and fro holding the paperbark bundle with their own arms in a similar flexed position (see Fig 4.1. last chapter). As they sway they make a slow "yu yu" sound, followed by a rapid "kee,kee,kee." This is the sound of the jungle dwelling Mewal. Mewal is the only manikay sung at this time.
Female relatives of the deceased then approach the dancers holding the bones. They try to snatch the bones away but can not, so they cry out and cut their heads with a stick called djibbadai (or barniki or garnai) which has "got 'im Mewal inside" (recall that the Mewal Being that accompanied Djareware in the 'Mewal and Djareware Story' also carried a djibbadai stick). After this the bones are presented for safe keeping to any of the following relatives: M,MM,MB,MBS,FF,FZ,EZ or adult D. After presentation the female custodians cry and cut themselves again. The bones are then kept in the paperbark djarra and suspended from a forked stick, bordjirray, until preparations are made for the Bardurru (=Larrgan) ceremony, some months or years later.

The significance of a Mewal-like Being in a Wulaki Bogabod ceremony has been described by Thomson (Peterson, 1976) and is worth noting here due to the present day proximity of Wulaki and Marrangu people and their respective beliefs. This 'Mewal', in the name of Ganingalkngalk, is described by Thomson as a "marrajdjirri
Meri" (Peterson:103) suggesting a further cross-over with the Merri Jungle Being. Ganingalkngalk is the principle bunggul for the Wulaki ceremony involving the flesh remains, called Larrgun Djammurmur ('djammurmur' is the name of the home of the Wulaki Black Diver Duck Dreaming in Gattji Creek).

Thomson witnessed a Larrgan djammurmur ceremony in 1936. He observed the flesh being placed in a painted hollow log, replete with carved 'teeth' at one end (the characteristic Djelaworwor Wulaki hollow log) which was afterwards placed upright on a ceremonial ground. He says at this time an effigy of the "Kanangalkngalk meri" is also made and presented to the same individuals who receive the bones, but the string affixed to the effigy is later returned to the makers (Thomson [Peterson]: ibid).

Thomson claims that prior to the flesh being placed inside the hollow log it maybe cooked and eaten or hung around the neck to, supposedly, "increase hunting effectiveness" (ibid). Wulaki and Marrangu people I spoke to readily acknowledged the similarities between Ganingalkngalk and Mewal. At Gattji some young Marrangu men (in their late teens and early twenties) spoke of Ganingalkngalk as 'Mewal' and seemed unaware that there was any distinction at all.

Thomson's account also makes reference to the water and fish based cosmology connected with the hollow log used in this ceremony by Wulaki and Marrangu peoples (among others). As will be seen in the section on Marrangu Bardurru, when the bones are deposited in a hollow log called dupun, marine based motifs are most prominent.

Bogabod, then, is concerned with the retrieval of the corpse, the disposal of the flesh and the presentation of the bones to individuals who will keep them until the Bardurru ceremony is held. In both Warner (1937/58:439) and Thomson (Peterson:106) it is stated that female relatives are usually the custodians of the bones, with male patrikin of the deceased deciding when the bones should be relinquished and made available for
the Bardurru ceremony. Though I recorded no exegesis suggesting reproductive themes associated with the women keeping the bones, this meaning is strongly implied.

Take in evidence the character of the bones while in female possession. They are covered in red ochre (or are thought to be preparing for this appearance). They are wrapped in paperbark, the traditional material for babies' cradles and beds. In this state the bones are considered madayin, of strong, 'straight' essence, and embody the ancestral destiny of the deceased. Furthermore, the paperbark carrier, djarra, suggests water as paperbark trees are usually found near water places, such as swamps. Water deposits are considered a source of life in Marranggu thinking because conception spirits in the form of fish reside there. The combination of bones that are madayin together with paperbark and its evocation of water, strongly suggest that the central ritual role of women is linked to the idea of parturition.

Correlating with this theme is the ritual absence of the deceased's personalised merri because, if present, this spirit would call up sentiments of the death as disruption, discontinuity and lose. Merri figures little in the Bogabod rites, except when the corpse is first unearthed. In contrast, Mewal is the main Spirit Being represented in song and dance, thereby evoking the collectivity of Jungle Spirits as well as the Dreaming Being that is Djareware's companion.

A spiritual transformation takes place in that the merri of the newly deceased has joined this collectivity and is no longer attached to any particular individual's death. Hence, the merri 'dead body' spirit moves closer to the general presence of Jungle Spirits, but not to the point of being thought ancestrally regenerative (as is the case with the wuguli spirit). The actuality of this transformation is confirmed in the Bardurru ceremony that follows. The visible counterpart is that as the physical remains of the corpse break down, the individuality of the deceased's merri is destroyed. The merri is thought to take up a new home in the jungle and thereby
become synonymous with the Merri Jungle Spirits. The thematic focus in Bogabod, then, is not only the removal of the deceased's merri but, in contrast to the earlier rites, the redefining of the merri presence: from individual counterpart to uniformity with Jungle Spirits.

The fate of the deceased's wuguli is supposed to be secure, having been dispatched to its ancestral home before the coffin was placed in the grave months earlier. The treatment of the bones during Bogabod and later during Bardurru directly affirms this supposition, as the permanence of the bones are an analogue for the enduring wuguli spirit and, by extension, the circularity of the life cycle. In separating the bone from the flesh, its more durable (and putatively immortal) spiritual side is isolated and emphasized. To the 'immortal' remains (bones) is attributed the potential for further mortal existence through spiritual regeneration. The consumption during Bogabod of cycad palm damper, which like the bones is white and carried in paperbark, maybe a sacramental rite designed to impart some of this 'immortality' to the living or, alternately, offer the spiritual process some 'mortal' nourishment.

BARDURRU

Bardurru (or Larrgan) is at present the final stage in the mortuary sequence, and usually occurs 1-2 years after Bogabod. In it the bones of the deceased are placed in a hollow log ossuary called dupun (or Bardurru) which is then left to perish, somewhere in the deceased's own country. There was a brief time, following the establishment of town-like settlements (such as Maningrida in 1958) when Bardurru ceased to be performed. Then, instead of placing the bones in the hollow log, they were kept in a suitcase for an indefinite period. The establishment of 'outstations' has facilitated the revival of a good deal of ceremonial life, Bardurru included. For a case in point, see Hamilton (1981:8,18).
The word 'bardurru' is most often used by Djinang Marrangu people to describe the full ceremonial sequence at this time. However, Thomson claims this is a Liyagalawumirr word, the correct Marrangu word being kallangurr (Peterson:107), though I never heard this word used. Bardurru also refers to a type of ossuary most commonly cut from a stringybark tree and is also a synonym for Merri (in its Jungle Spirit aspect) because the Merri Jungle Spirit makes its home inside hollow logs in the jungle. Clunies Ross and Hiatt's Anbarra informants said the Bardurru ossuary has a ground sculpture counterpart recognised as a, "man-like totemic being" (1977:142). Throughout the region the most common alternate name for this ceremony is Larrgan, and I often heard it referred to as such by Marrangu people themselves.

The principle groups of people represented at Bardurru are the same as those present for the initial burial rites: members of the deceased's clan; those calling this clan M or MM; and members of other Marrangu clans beside Djinang Marrangu.

Bardurru is regarded as the most powerful and dangerous (in a madayin sense) of all the mortuary rites. In Bardurru the most generally applicable themes of life and death, natural and social regeneration and inter clan unity, expressed through the exchange clan designs, are expressed. Rather than obliterating the remembrance of the deceased individual a general statement of wellbeing is constructed on the basis of the death.

Bardurru is initiated when male patrikin of the deceased ask the custodians of the bones (usually matrilateral kin) if they are ready to cut the dupun (Thomson [Peterson]:106). (Recall, however, that in the Tank Funeral the dupun was cut and painted soon after death and buried along with the coffin). A tree, usually an ironbark (though occasionally a stringybark is used) is found and cut to a length of about two metres. The log chosen must be hollow or easily made so by controlled fire. The Crow
manikay, Wak Wak, is sung when the hollow log is straightened with fire. A ridge (called barbar by Gidjingali people) is carved around the circumference of the hollow log one-fifth of the way from the top. Two small holes, "eyes", are carved above this and these, according to Thomson, "commemorate the fact that the coffins were originally made by each clan spirit ancestors and in some way personify them" (Peterson:107). Clan designs (with red, white and ochre colouring) cover the exterior of the dupun. The painting is carried out in a ceremonial shade similar to that erected during the Wake, or indeed this maybe done during the Wake.

The bones are taken from their paperbark chamber, red ochred if not already, and crushed. A stone called rirrkindji was the traditional implement for this task. All sections are crushed including the long bones and skull. Merri is the manikay accompaniment for bone crushing because Merri (Jungle Spirit) is thought to call from the jungle "guy ya, gu-li gu-li... guy ya, gu-li gu-li" as the bones splinter. All present cover themselves with red ochre when the bones are pulverised, both events taking place inside a ground sculpture (Thomson [Peterson]:107; Warner,1937/58: 442).

The next ritual sequence brings the bones and dupun together. First, the dupun is leant against a forked stick called bordjirrai (the word means 'ear'). See Fig 5.4. Then, as the Merri manikay is sung, many individuals grab handfuls of bone fragments and throw them into the dupun, which is blocked with paperbark at the other end. Once again Merri's call is said to be heard. A stick, djibbadal (as used by Mewal to find Honey and by women during the Bogabod ceremony) is used to push the bones down into the dupun. Once all the bones are in, the end is sealed off with more paperbark to keep the contents dry. Following this, cycad palm damper is eaten in small groups near the dupun.
FIG 5.4: BARDURAU CEREMONY, DUPUN AND BORDJIRAII.
FIG 5.5: MULLITDOI FISH TRAP,
GAPI (WATER) BUNGUL,
BARDURRU CEREMONY.

string, catfish
bullia and djikada

rudjambungi
(bush string)

rope netting

bamboo
The final phase of Bardurru, the Water (Gapi) bunggul (which is only performed as part of Bardurru) begins as soon as a Dreaming fish trap pole called mullitdji is constructed. This requires the procuring of two bamboo lengths (or similarly flexible material) about four-five metres long. Bush string, nudjambungi, is wound around these poles, lashing them together at one end and leaving a gap of half a metre at the other. Loosely hanging pieces of string drape from both poles. These are the catfish, bullia and djikada, which are caught in the fish trap. The whole construction is placed near the dupun. Fig 5.5 shows the finished mullitdji.

Participants now dance Wunggutj-Gapi (floodwater) to the sung accompaniment of Bara (north west monsoon) and Wunggutj-Gapi. These songs tell of the pre-wet season thunder, lightning and rain (Wulma) gradually building into the torrentual monsoonal rain (Bara) filling and flooding of creeks throughout Marrangu lands that results. Some dancers imitate the catfish, prolific during floodtime, being caught in the fish trap. Others representing the pelican (murla or warbalulu) endeavour to catch the ones that escape. The Wunggutj-Gapi manikay refers to pelican as the Being who brought the first non-rain making clouds, called boruru and melwatdjidji, which nonetheless foretold of rain and by implication the first floods and profusion of catfish. The first rain clouds, named mullitdji, were also brought by pelican in its considerable gullet.

The Gapi bunggul goes throughout the night, the dancing and singing taking place adjacent to the dupun and mullitdji. No one is allowed to sleep. At daybreak (the start of a new day in Marrangu thought) the Wunggutj-Gapi manikay is sung for the final time and makes reference to catfish, bullia and djikada, being caught in the fish trap. After this the mullitdji pole is broken to pieces. The dupun is then placed erect in the ground, near where it had stood or elsewhere in the deceased's clan country, where it will later be washed away by the wet season floodwaters, Wunggutj. Warner describes this final passage of events in the following way:
The leader... calls out the power name of the water then the sacred names of the totem well. The sacred name of the hollow log is cried out and the log planted in the ground in an upright position. All the women cry and wait for the dead man. Food [cycad palm damper in the Marrangu case] is given by the women to the leader. It is placed near the hollow log coffin. The leader says, 'this food is for the old old ancestors' (1937/58:442).

A further offering of cycad palm damper (or today white flour damper) is made by women of the deceased's clan to everyone with different clan affiliations. A ritual meal ensues before the participants disperse.

In terms of eschatology, the dupun hollow log evokes the Merri and Mewal Jungle Spirits as they live in hollow logs in the jungle. One woman summed up the significance of Merri in the Bardurru ceremony by saying, "[we] cry 'im, dance 'im, put 'im in dupun".

Merri is credited with having first sung about the use of hollow logs to contain bones. Merri shares the hollow log habitat with other Spirit Beings (sung about in the manikay cycle) including Narge Narge and Djudo Djudo. Another Spirit Being Wak Wak is considered the "boss" of the dupun hollow log because it perches on the top to eat the rotting flesh of corpses.

Merri is also believed to have first sung the Wunggutj Gapi manikay and to have initiated the ritual sequence centering on the Gapi Dreaming. The mullitdji fish trap pole is considered the joint 'boss' (with Merri) of the Gapi bunggul. The water and fish motifs focused upon in the Gapi bunggul link these final mortuary rites to ideas of conception, because catfish spirits (along with Djareware and the water goanna, djarrka) are thought to mystically enter a woman's uterus at the time of foetal quickening. The profusion of catfish in flooded creeks, an image evoked during the Gapi bunggul, strongly links the potentiality of conception, the regeneration of human life, with the natural order of wet and dry seasons. The mullitdji fish trap netting vast numbers of catfish is an analogue for conception of life within the womb. One translation of the Djinang Marrangu word for womb, djirrk, is in fact "baby net"
which, I was told, is "like that fish trap". There is also a cosmological link between the image of catfish in creeks and the multitude of stars in the milky way, but I do not know the story behind this (but see Morphy, 1984:41; and R.M.Berndt,1976:150, site #79 on map).

That the dupun hollow log, containing the most permanent remains of the deceased, is cosmologically tied to the creation of human life seems clearly and strongly correlative. The permanency of the bones and the seasonal proliferation of catfish (conception spirits) are aptly analogous to the idea of life regenerated; the death having fulfilled the potential for life.

Notably, for purposes of showing the overlay of neighbouring clans' beliefs, Wulaki people of Gattji have a cosmological scenario in that it links the creation of waterways throughout this area with the subterranean and fish-like movement of the dupun hollow log (see Thomson,[Peterson,103]). Thus the Marrangu cosmological cluster of fish trap, hollow log, catfish, water, clouds and stars is closely paralleled by the Wulaki complex of hollow log, fish and water. That some younger individuals may from time to time collapse the two scenarios into one is not surprising.

MARRANGU DEATH IN THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE

The overall composition and character of Marrangu mortuary rites has now been sketched. The rites are elaborate and at times spectacular, with an accent on expressing grief appropriately rather than immemorializing remembrance in permanent structures. Like death anywhere, however, contradictory emotions surface. On one hand, death allows the individual to attain the peak of spirituality, fully one with the ancestors. On the other hand, death means trouble, accusations and counter accusations of sorcery, social disruption and increased probability of sickness and
illfortune. These problems are most accentuated in the period immediately following death. The rites at this time endeavour to draw the malign influence of the merri 'dead body' spirit away from the corpse and mourning community. An inquest maybe held to define the cause of death and ascertain the identity of those responsible; Dada and Wandjar celebrate the process of return to the clan country of the wuguli spirit and aim to cleanse the mourners of contamination from the corpse and thereby make them less attractive to merri affliction. The later ceremonies of Bogabod and Bardurru are informed by the belief that the deceased is fully reunited with ancestral potency, of which the regeneration of life is just one manifestation. There is a transition throughout Marrangu mortuary rites from the sense of lose and disruption to the certainty that a new, everpresent existence has been attained.

As outlined earlier, Hertz (1907) has proposed a three phase model to account for such a transition. Hertz recognised the correspondence between the decay of the corpse and fate of the soul and mourners, seeing in rotting a metaphor for social and spiritual transformation. In Marrangu death rituals a resemblance certainly exists between corpse, 'soul' and mourners, though the relation is not of the kind Hertz's model suggests. This chapter makes clear that the wuguli spirit leaves the corpse and rejoins the ancestors at the time of first burial. This defies the Hertzian model because his liminal, transitional phase is characterised by the wanderings of the homeless 'soul' not yet reunited with the ancestors. The merri of the deceased is indeed a wandering spirit, but the merri spirit is thought by Marrangu people to 'wander' indefinitely, not just throughout the period of mourning or until the corpse is reburied. The merri spirit is not thought to join the clan's ancestors. In any case, it would be inaccurate to describe merri as a 'soul'. Marrangu themselves describe the merri 'dead body' spirit as a "ghost", and wuguli as "true spirit".

With the secondary rites, the Bogabod and Bardurru ceremonies, the merri is recaste as a less personal spirit, part of a jungle dwelling collective of spirits. But as a
collectivized Jungle Spirit Merri are apt to wander and cause sickness and misadventure to befall the living, though former acquaintances of the deceased are not targeted for special hostility. This continues to be so even after the wugull spirit is thought to have rejoined the ancestors. Therefore, Hertz's notion of the transitional phase of mourning as a period when the corpse decays and is later reconstructed as a purified soul, thereby ending the 'soul's' wanderings, is not supported by the evidence of Marrangu obsequies and concepts of individual spirituality.

Marrangu people have no unitary notion of a soul, as Hertz's reckoning assumes. The deceased individual has a dual spiritual identity: the merri, is regarded as malign and indefinitely misdirected, growing progressively less attached with the specific identity of the deceased; and the wuguli spirit, the permanently existent entity that joins the ancestral spirits of the deceased's own country at the time of burial. There is, furthermore, no straightforward parallelism between the ancestrally reunited wuguli and the putrifying corpse. The corpse is still rotting away after the wuguli spirit's journey is thought completed.

The 'great feast' of Borneo death rites, which Hertz saw as celebration for the successful return of the soul to the ancestral realm, has its likeness in Marrangu rites in the celebratory mood of Dada and Wandjar straight after burial. But at this time in Marrangu rites the corpse is still intact if not visible, suggesting that the transition of the wuguli spirit in the afterlife is more closely corroborated by the appropriate fulfillment of burial rites rather than the physical disintegration of the body.

The implication of this, I think, is that the extended rites of Bogabod and Bardurru assume a different significance to that assigned them by the Hertzian model. Rather than marking the conclusion of the 'soul's' spiritual journey and the concomitant dropping of mourning restrictions, Bogabod marks the conclusion of the transformation of the merri 'dead body' spirit into the Merri Jungle Spirit. Bogabod
involves the processing of the bones away from association with the corpse. Mewal is the main ceremonial accompaniment for these activities. Rather than evoking the corpse, the image of Mewal evokes the Spirit communities in the thickly forested areas of Marrangu country.

The association appears to be that the dead person’s merri has now been incorporated with the totality of these Jungle Spirits. Such a transition is certainly suggested by the fact that the corpse, about which the merri had previously loitered, has now been reconstructed as it’s most durable aspect, bone. Hencewith, the merri can no longer find an attachment with the deceased in the form of a corpse and therefore removes ‘itself’ to the company of other Merri and Mewal in the jungle. The transition suggests a connection between bone, Marrangu madayin country and the clan’s Creator Beings, especially Djarareware and Mewal. The Mewal bunggul at the time of Bogabod images this process. It is a process that is quite distinct from the ancestral journey of the wuguli spirit. It is one of reconstruction of the ‘ghost’ element of the dead and the incorporation of bone and Mewal and Merri Jungle Spirits within the spiritual significance of Marrangu clan country and clan origins.

The final rite, Bardurru, in which the bones are deposited in a hollow log ossuary, draws together the theme of human regeneration with the natural order of cyclical renewal. The death, now with crushed bones as its only physical referent, embodies the potentiality of conception because the water and fish motifs of the Gapi bunggul combine the image and reality of natural abundance with the idea of continuing creation of human life. Fish are caught in the mullidji fish trap evoking the way a foetus matures inside a woman’s uterus, a ‘baby net’. The singing of the Merri manikay accompanies the placement of the crushed bones in the dupun hollow log. This is ceremonially appropriate because Merri, among other forms, are said to resemble a skeleton. Even after the bones are in the hollow log they are associated with Merri. However, the designs on the surface of the hollow log and the themes of conceptive
fertility evoked by the Gapi bunggul at the time of its disposal clearly mark the bones as primarily analogous to enduring spirituality.

The final rite of Marrangu obsequies recognises, therefore, not only that the wuguli spirit has refound the ancestral corpus but, moreover, that this facilitates the regeneration of human life. The potentiality of this is evoked in the Gapi bunggul. Clearly, Marrangu obsequies do involve related transitions of corpse, 'soul' and mourners. But, as this analysis demonstrates, the transitions are different and perhaps more elaborate than the structure proposed by Hertz and van Gennep.

Bloch and Parry (1982) in their analysis of death rituals have suggested the transformation of death into fertility is a symbolic (Bachofen, Frazer) and sociological (Hertz, van Gennep) process. Death, they argue, is the process of disintegration in physical and social senses, with spiritual and social regeneration the result. Symbolically, death is the separation of flesh from bone. Death culminating in disintegration alone is, according to Bloch and Parry, the 'bad' death (to which they ascribe a sexual-feminine valency) while death realised as regenerative fertility (masculine) is the 'good' death. Bloch and Parry extend the notion of 'good' and 'bad' death to relations between consanguineal and affinal kin respectively, the virtues and dangers of exchange, and the collective upholding of authority against the voluntary circumventing of it (ibid:27-41). They suggest the construction of order out of death reveals the limits of masculine ideology in the face of yet to be eliminated feminine biological processes (ibid:39). Is Bloch and Parry's association of death with feminine and fertility with masculine borne out in the symbolism and organisation of Marrangu obsequies?

For Marrangu people, both men and women must mourn the death of a kinsperson. Men expressing grief, characteristically, by displaying aggression and anger, voicing accusations and threats and singing; women express grief by crying, self mutilation,
dancing and close physical contact with one another. These demonstrations of grief are culturally recognised as appropriate. Neither men or women per se are more identified with the corpse: the deceased's patrikin, both male and female, are thought most threatened by the corpse because of the close kin connection. For this reason, those calling the dead person's clan 'mother' are required to do most of the handling of the corpse. But both men and women of this djungkai clan are required to handle the corpse, with perhaps men more involved in this regard. If masculine 'qualities' were antithetical to the corpse, one would expect men to be less involved than this. All others are required to mourn as appropriate.

Women, on the whole, are not the more conspicuous mourners though, notably, men are not compelled to mutilate themselves (however, they may; see description of 'Tank Funeral: Burial', earlier). There is a sense in which the perishable substances of the body (flesh, fat, blood etc.) are identified with relations traced through women and the more durable component (bone) with patrilineal relations (Keen, 1978:298). However, all body substances have a common, Dreaming genesis and in any case, matrilateral relations are just as crucial to clan survival as patrilineal ones, a belief stressed in the Madayin/Ngarra and Morning Star ceremonies.

Everyone suffers at death. It is not the case that women must endure more due to, say, their more "anomalous" or "natural" constitution (Rosaldo, 1974:33). Both men and women can be afflicted by the deceased's merri spirit. Both widow and widower must abandon the residence they formerly shared with their deceased spouse. Both men and women are subject to mourning restrictions. Both men and women are liable to be blamed for the death. It is in everyone's interest the mortuary rites are carried through to completion. I would argue that in the Marrangu context there is no sense in which women embody "the unpredictable nature of biological death" (Bloch and Parry, 1982:15) and men "the real font of human and natural creativity" (ibid:18).
Analysis of the Bogabod ceremony showed how birth themes are suggested by the possession of the bones by women. An analogue exists between the exhumed bones wrapped in paperbark and the traditional method of carrying a baby, also in paperbark. In Marrangu thought, women are the “makers” of babies. Men contribute to conception, but women bring the foetus to life with their own blood (see next Chapter). The power to reproduce is theirs alone. If it is granted that bones are associated with patrilineal kin and ancestors, then, the possession of them by matrilineal kin (usually) evokes the marriage union between men and women of these groups, and the offspring that usually result. There are good grounds, therefore, for linking feminine involvement and symbolism in the mortuary rites with themes of reproduction, birth and fertility. I consequently reject the gender aspect of Bloch and Parry’s model.

Men and women do specialise in ceremonial activities other than the Bogabod ceremony. Manikay singing on all occasions, not only during mourning, is an exclusively male activity, though women do have their own clan songs. Women and men perform separately the dances that accompany the singing. However, mens’ singing is not exclusively evocative of death’s regeneration and womens’ dancing of its discontinuity, as Bloch and Parry’s model posits. ‘Good’ and ‘bad’ death, the parallelism between the ideas of death renewing fertility and curtailing life, are more focused in the dual spiritual components of the deceased individual, wuguli and merri, than in male and female respectively.

CONCLUSIONS

Marrangu obsequies are part of the transformation process of the deceased’s spiritual identity. The wuguli spirit is the enduring link with his or her own Dreamings: with each death the journey of the first ancestors is retraced by the wuguli spirit. Each individual and their Dreamings are associated with sites in their own clan country. At
death (or, as seen, at burial) the wuguli returns permanently to one or more of these sites and is reincorporated with the clan’s ancestral spirits. It is at sites like this that agents of conception are caught or dreamt about by Marrangu men or women, or their spouses. If this occurs and pregnancy results, it will be said that the baby was conceived at this site, meaning a clan ancestral agent entered the woman’s uterus there. When the baby is born, he or she will acquire a Dreaming identity linked to the place of conception and his or her wuguli will also be said to come from this place. The wuguli spirit is therefore integral to the life cycle as Marrangu people see it.

Clan continuity is predicated upon the successful reunion of the deceased’s wuguli spirit with other ancestral spirits, given that the presence of such spirits is an important indicator of land ownership. The subsequent emergence of clan ancestral spirits as animate conceptive agents completes the triangle of clan, land and life. The transformations of death, ancestral renewal and conception interlink the ‘points’ of this triangle. The wuguli spirit mediates between the continuity of individual life, past and new. The transmission of the bones of a dead person back to their clan country in the course of mortuary ritual is tangible, tactile recogition of the cycle of regeneration. In Bogabod Mewal is contingent with this transmission.

In contrast, the merri ‘dead body’ spirit does not possess the quality of renewing permanence as the wuguli spirit. The merri is the corpse, the recent dead and regarded as actively malevolent soon after death. But with the body inert the merri vacates its ‘home’ and wanders around, not really knowing where to go, finally being content to stay close to the corpse and visit strife upon those gathering to mourn the death. When the corpse is disposed of, the merri spirit remains at places once inhabited by the dead person, but over time (i.e., some months) becomes less noticeably influential, until finally joining a collective Merri presence somewhere in a local jungle. By this time survivors are unlikely to encounter the merri ‘dead body’ spirit but more likely to fall foul of the Merri Jungle Spirit.
The merri spirit, then, when hovering near the corpse or at night is a mobile and usually malign entity. In marked contrast to the wuguli spirit, the merri spirit is never really at home anywhere and even endeavours, sometimes successfully, to interrupt the process of conception. The merri spirit is also socially disruptive, a corruption of amicable relations, especially at the time of death when the corpse is visible and suspicions run high. merri embodies the truly terminal death, the triumph as Bloch and Parry would have it, of biology over society. The wuguli spirit, on the other hand, is ancestrally regenerative - the strongest possible link between an individual and his or her kin, country and Dreamings.

In the next chapter I look at how Merri is conceptualized in cases of individual affliction that fall short of death. What occurs when a person becomes possessed by a Merri spirit of a dead person and what are the antedotes? Moving from looking at the Merri post-death, I examine the place of Merri in lived existence. To do this I investigate the Marrangu concept of the body in both spiritual and physical senses. How does a Marrangu individual come into being, what is s/he composed of and what more does this say about the place of Merri in individual experience and spirituality.
CHAPTER 6

MERRI, CONCEPTION, THE BODY AND AFFLICTION

In this chapter I demonstrate the correlation between beliefs regarding Merri, bodily nature, external to the body spiritual processes, concepts of individual spiritual composition and attacks upon the body. Taking conception as the start of life (though, as seen, there is significant continuity between death and conception in Marrangu thought) I outline the Marrangu physical and spiritual bodily concepts. I suggest the body is not a visibly discrete form in Marrangu thought and that a division between body and 'soul' does not exist. I show the body is a metaphor for many features of the natural and social environment. But not just a 'metaphor for'; the body is part of this environment and there is an intimate connexion between any extended 'meaning' and bodily image. This is not surprising, as the body is the only available site from which to know the world as well as have sensory awareness of it.

The body in Marrangu thought is also a prime target for affliction through sorcery processes, and attacks on a person's physical wellbeing are thought to directly affect spiritual components. It is in such attacks that a persons wuguli, or spiritual essence, can be made rotten or stolen, resulting in bodily disintegration or death.

The merri 'dead body' spirit and the Merri and Mewal Jungle Spirits are sometimes thought responsible for attacks upon the body. In the conceptive stage of human life, these Spirits are believed capable of restricting the supply of conception spirits and preventing foetal development. In later life these Spirits are held responsible for possession states wherein the affected individual is likely to inflict self injury or injury upon others. When in this state an individual is both physically and socially crippled, unable to perform simple daily tasks, speak coherently, walk upright or interact sensibly with others. In possession cases (and I document one in detail) a
person's wuguli spirit, as with attacks attributed to sorcery, is thought to be endangered because it can be stolen by the attacking spirit, thereby causing madness or death.

The chapter is organised as follows. First I present an account of Marrangu conception and a critique of writings on Aboriginal conception. This is followed by an account of the educative role played by the image of the Merri Spirit during the years of early development. I then examine the properties of an individual and analyse how bodily substances and organs are bound with a person's spiritual properties (wuguli, 'shadow' and 'power'). This leads to a discussion of the varieties of threats that can disrupt bodily and spiritual wellbeing, especially the actions of a sorcerer (galka) and possession states brought on by a merri spirit of a deceased person. Methods of healing by a 'clever' person or marrngitj are also discussed.

MARRANGU CONCEPTION

A human foetus is created through a combination of factors in Marrangu reckoning, not simply by intercourse and not only by impregnation of a woman by a conception spirit. Figure 7.1 shows the elements in Marrangu conception. In addition to intercourse and conception spirit impregnation several other factors are necessary if birth is to result. These include, on the part of either the mother or father, a dream that conception has taken place; interaction with a place, plant, food and/or animal known to possess conceptional potential; and reporting 'finding' a conception spirit. On the part of the mother, carriage of the foetus in utero is also part of the successful development of the conceived child. Hence pregnancy is seen as a state in the conceptional process.

As reported in the literature (see, for example, Ashley-Montagu 1937; Hamilton 1981; Tonkinson 1978; Merlan 1986; Keen 1978) the conception spirit aspect of
FIG 6.1: MARRANGU
CONCEPTION PROCESS

(Adapted from Burnet and Burnet, 1964/58, 213).

KEY

A - Unusual encounter (with conception spirit).
B - Dream that encounter A has led to impregnation.
C - 'Finding' of conception spirit (most commonly by father but may also be mother).
D - Intercourse
E - Impregnation of woman by conception spirit.
F - Pregnancy, carriage.
G - Father procures foods to aid foetal development.
human creation is emphasized more by Aborigines than physiological factors, which are not named as the central cause of pregnancy. Merlan (1986:477) and Hamilton (1981:24) have shown that within this ideology there are significant differences in emphasis between men and women.

Conception occurs when spiritual processes, daily experience and sexual relations combine to result in the birth of a child. A Mieldingi woman told me that to conceive a woman requires a man and 'God': a man as a sexual partner and finder of the conception spirit; and 'God' as the agent that gives the foetus life, bone, skin and eyes. The same woman said a mother sustains the foetus while in utero and may also have the initial 'finding' dream.

Conception spirits are not exclusively of child-like form in Marrangu belief, nor are they of completed human form when they enter a female. Unlike reports from elsewhere in northern Australia (at Jigalong, W.A., see Tonkinson,1987:84; and Yirrkala, see Mountford,1956:309) Marrangu conception spirits are physically dependant upon the mother after impregnation. Conception spirits exist in a more abstract sense, inseparable from the natural objects they occupy; as the eggs in honey, the flesh in fish or the venom in a snake. They are most commonly (though not exclusively) found at particular sites in Marrangu clan country in the form of honey (djareware), water goannas (djarra) and certain species of fish (freshwater bream and saltwater catfish especially). One Marrangu man has described his conception in the following way:

It happened on one of my parents' fishing trips that he [my father’s brother] killed a big water goanna. That night, back at the camp, he had a dream of me. I came to him and said: "Father, you killed my spirit when you caught that water goanna. That water goanna was me."

When he had that dream he woke suddenly and ran to my mother, telling her that she was going to have a baby soon. She didn't believe him at first, until he told her about the dream. Afterwards she became very sick, and about nine months later I was born (Mirritji,1976:9).
Conception spirits are, however, not mortal like the species they are found in. Nor are they of human creation or subject (unless by sorcery) to human manipulation. Conception spirits have their source within the clan's Dreaming repository and therefore 'originated' when the clan's spirituality was formulated and bestowed upon the first human beings by the clan's Dreaming Beings. 

The belief that conception spirits derive from the Dreaming is what Ashley-Montagu has called the "orthodox doctrine" (1937:222) of conception in Aboriginal Australia. From their Dreaming source conception spirits come to be found most prolifically at particular sites in the father's clan country. However, because of their occupation of certain things (for example, plants and animal's bodies) as 'homes', conception spirits can be encountered virtually anywhere in the environment as these entities.

When 'finding' a conception spirit in dream a person gains cognizance of the spirit's independent existence. It is then that conception spirits are talked about as 'children'. In one father's account of such a dream the conception spirit addressed him as "Daddy", in another the spirit child identifies him/herself as the dreamer's "little boy or girl". In all accounts I collected, the father or mother to be has no control over whether the conception spirit will actually impregnate the 'right' woman. The conceptive dream constitutes the 'finding' of the conception spirit, a necessary step in the conception process, but does not imply the mastering of it's actions.

A couple must correctly interpret the conception spirit's intent as revealed in the 'finding' dream if impregnation is to result, as the following conception story makes clear:

A man is out fishing. At first he catches nothing, so he appeals to 'God' for help. 'God' sends a big mob of fish, especially catfish, so he will not go home empty handed. The man catches one, a large catfish, which he takes home, cooks and eats it, sharing it with his wife. That night while sleeping he dreams about the little boy or girl in that fish. It says to him, 'I was in that fish. You get little boy or girl now'. He awakes and tells his wife who is very

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1 Given this source, the term 'conception spirit' seems more appropriate than 'spirit child'.
excited. In the days following the man and his wife 'play around' and a couple of months later the woman becomes aware she has a baby in her belly.

This account, told to me by a Mildjingi woman resident at Galawdjapin, demonstrates the steps in conception: the encounter with a conceptive agent (catfish); the assistance of 'God' in sending the fish; the revelation of the spirit child in dream; sexual intercourse; and the development of the foetus in utero. Significantly, where the husband is credited with 'finding' the spirit child, the dream together with sexual relations is the mechanism whereby the spirit comes to enter the woman's womb. The same woman who told me this story said that the man, through dream and intercourse, 'gives' the baby to his wife.

By several accounts, and this echoes Marrangu notions, conception spirits control their own rate of emergence and impregnation. But although people cannot easily deny the 'will' of a spirit child, they can avoid encountering one. Its no surprise therefore that Hamilton (1981:20-21) in her study of Burarra child bearing and rearing, documented few methods designed to induce pregnancy, as this is thought beyond a woman's conscious control. By contrast, she noted several prescriptions designed to prevent pregnancy, including the avoidance of conception sites, certain foods and drinks and the use of fire to 'close' the uterus (ibid). Measures also existed to induce permanent sterility (ibid:23). Merlan's survey (1986:476) supports Hamilton's Burarra findings.

At Galawdjapin I was told (by a mother of seven) there were three methods available for preventing pregnancy, resulting in permanent sterility. The first involved swallowing a piece of quartz from Ngilipitdji (an important quarry site near Blue Mud Bay in Wagilak mala country). In the second a mother was required to throw the sleeping mats of any previous child onto an ant mound called wurmdti, and the third was the fire method (to close the uterus) mentioned above. Berndt and Berndt (1964/88:154) record several additional methods, including drinking boiling water, pounding the belly with stones or tying a rope tightly around it, the use of herbs and
vigorous exercise. Hamilton (1981:122) has observed that some of these methods would not only be effective contraceptives but also cause severe bleeding or infection, possibly resulting in loss of reproductive capabilities. However, several of the Berndt's women informants said that "the only sure means of avoiding further pregnancies was to keep away from men" (ibid).

The emergence of conception spirits from the environment is not entirely a matter of random 'will' as Ashley-Montagu (1937:377) and Merlan (1986:475) have argued. A conception spirit can, as Hamilton (1981:22) found, make a "deliberate choice" to reveal itself to a mother or father to be, but according to Marrangu belief a merri 'dead body' spirit can intercede to prevent this happening. It is not true to say (in the Marrangu case) that "spirits of the dead" aid conception, as Keen (1978:235) asserts for the Yolngu. Usually a merri of a recently deceased person tries to prevent conception because it is angry at not being able to rejoin the living community itself. Another reason for this behavior, I was told, is that the merri is still close enough to influence daily affairs.

Merri spirits of both 'dead body' and jungle kind are most antagonistic to conception spirits because they, as the Dreaming aspect in the creation of new human life, are the antithesis of death -- Merri's principal companion. One means of intervention open to Merri Spirits is to restrict the supply of foods in which conception spirits are found. Merri Spirits are especially adept at doing this, even to the point of stealing hooked fish from a fishing line. Alternately they may hide, make rotten or consume the food supplies themselves.

Mountford (1956:291) has described a belief at Yirrkala that 'Mokuy' (=Merri) can cause birth defects. When this occurs it is thought an indication that the wuguli spirit (from which, Mountford claims the conception spirit incarnates) has not successfully rejoined the ancestral, Dreaming order. At Galawdjin no one attributed birth defects specifically to the actions of Merri Spirits, though it was certainly held that
subsequent afflictions upon the body were the work of either Merri Spirits or sorcerers. The effect on blood by sorcery is discussed later in this chapter, but it may be noted here that sorcery affecting blood has detrimental effects on foetal development, given the Marrangu belief that the foetus is in part sustained by blood from the mother.

The opposition between Merri and conception is further borne out in geography. The thick forests that are home to Merri Spirits are never reported as sites of conceptive potency, instead they are viewed as places of death, danger and malevolence. In contrast, conception sites are usually those that reward human enterprise, where important food sources are plentiful. Fresh water places, where people bathe, fish and draw water are thought to be fecund both as a natural resource and source of conception spirits. These places tend to be frequently visited (except by women wishing to avoid pregnancy).

The concentration of conception spirits at certain sites is a key feature linking individual spirituality to Marrangu clan country. One man at Galawdjapin, belonging to the ‘top’ Djinang Marrangu clan, had his conception site in the country of the ‘bottom’ Marrangu clan. This gave him an especially strong link with this place, a fact borne out in the pride he took in recalling how his mother had dreamt of a spirit child inside the long-neck turtle, barnda, she hunted there. The conception site grants the conceived child a Dreaming identity synonymous with that site. The site then becomes that child’s “place” (in the sense of identity, not individual ownership).

The plant, animal or other feature associated with the conception site ‘becomes’ the child’s personal Dreaming (again in the sense of identity not ownership; conception Dreamings remain part of the clan’s repository of Dreamings). Alternately, the object dreamt by the mother or father to contain the spirit child (the turtle for example) will ‘become’ the child’s conception Dreaming. In this way the actual dream of
conception by the mother or father is inherited by the child as his/her personal

Dreaming.

While there is a convergence of conception spirits at certain sites in Marrangu
country, these are not the only places where conception spirits are encountered. Water
holes are not the sole source of conception spirits, as Warner (1937/58:21) asserts.
Conception spirits encountered more or less at large will be related back to sites of
recognised conception potency. A small boy at Galawdjapin was conceived when his
Liyagalawumirr father encountered and subsequently dreamt of a water goanna,
djarrka, while near Djimbi Creek. But rather than a site on Djimbi Creek becoming
the child's conception place, a site in Gattji (Galawdjapin) Creek, Boyndjarrkaoridjin,
was so regarded because this was where the Dreaming Water Goanna's tail is thought to
be. What's more, Boyndjarrkaoridjin was thought to abound with conception spirits.
Thus, while the experiential catalyst for conception can occur virtually anywhere, the
Dreaming identity of the conceived child usually highlights a specific place where the
spirit child was 'found'. Conception spirits, like clan Dreamings generally, have
certain sites identified with their presence and a child acquires a conception Dreaming
through association with one of these sites. In this way a child also acquires a link with
the clan ancestors and Dreaming Beings that have given the land its mystical and
empirical fecundity.

But what puts conception spirits into the environment and how is the supply
(1937/58:22) assert a direct link between (a) the return of a dead person's wuguli
or birrimbirt to a site within his/her clan country and (b) the emergence of a
conception spirit from that site. On the basis of inherited names and Dreamings as well
as the spiritual properties of certain sites, there clearly is a link between conception
spirits and wuguli spirits. But no one suggested to me that the wuguli spirit was
'recycled' into a conception spirit. There was certainly no claim that a child to be would
have the same 'spirit' that occupied a now deceased person, as Taylor (ibid) reports for
the Kunwinjku. Nor did anyone contend that the wuguli spirit of a dead person, "has the potential to re-enter the world of the here and now as a conception spirit", as Morphy (ibid) does. The Rungo Yul story (Chapter 5) shows that when a Marrangu person dies they never come back. Moreover, I was told that a foetus does not possess a wuguli spirit. The only spiritual attribute of a foetus is that a spirit child revealed its presence. Beyond this, I was told, the foetus is "just body". Interestingly, a Marrangu foetus in utero does not possess a merri spirit either.

Little emphasis is placed upon sexual intercourse in procreation. Conception is as much a spiritual, experiential and ideological process as it is a physiological one. The lack of emphasis placed on sex in procreation by Aboriginal people generally has drawn considerable anthropological interest. Writers such as Spencer and Gillen (1899), Ashley-Montagu (1937) and Kaberry (1939) have suggested that Aborigines were ignorant of physiological paternity. More recently Tonkinson (1978) has given reserved support to this thesis. Others (in Arnhem Land especially Warner [1937/58] and Hamilton[1981]) have highlighted the co-existence of physiological and spirit child explanations of conception, but that the latter are expressly emphasized.

Merlan (1986) has argued this emphasis is the result of an ideological 'disjunction' between copulation and reproduction. Certain social conditions, she writes, make it advantageous (especially for men) to leave the link as implicit as possible, so that control of women's sexuality does not deny female reproductivity. These conditions include the circulation of women in marriage exchanges, the dependency of female maturation upon intervention by men, the use of female sexuality in political and jural affairs and the insistence that reproduction is not the binding feature of marriage (1986:480-482). Merlan also relates the 'disjunction' hypothesis to socio-territorial organisation (ibid:483-7).
But, as noted earlier, men and women emphasize different aspects of the spirit child explanation of conception. For example, a greater portion of Hamilton's male informants than females said it was their act of 'catching' spirit children that produced babies (1981:24). That is, they emphasized the male role. But among female informants a large majority said they had eaten "strong foods" (honey, fish, etc) while menstruating and that this had resulted in their impregnation (ibid). Curiously only men mentioned intercourse as a contributory cause of conception (ibid). In Tonkinson's Jigalong study, men vehemently denied semen had anything to do with conception, whereas female informants said semen and blood mixed to form the foetus (1978:82-83). Merlan suggests men and women emphasize different stages in the conception process: men underline the male contribution of 'finding' the spirit child, whereas women most value the entry and carriage in the womb (ibid:475-6).

At Galawdjapin men I spoke to made reference only to conception spirits in the context of impregnation, especially the father's 'finding' dream. When they spoke of sexuality (which was rare) it was in terms of desire for a sweetheart and not necessarily with procreation in mind. Women I spoke to placed particular emphasis on the contribution of blood from the mother while the foetus is in the womb. Women also mentioned the 'finding' of the conception spirit, a dream by either mother or father, sexual intercourse and uterine development. Overall, responses from women more freely recognised the physiological dimensions, especially the transference of substances.

R.M. Berndt's Yirrkala informants claimed the foetus is formed by a blood clot made during intercourse (1952:271). At Galawdjapin one woman indicated to me that during pregnancy the menstrual blood is redirected to the foetus which it then nurtures. The foetus itself, however, begins development when it is 'caught' in a woman's "baby net" or bag, her womb. It is here that the semen from the father mixes with the mother's blood. It's not surprising therefore that Hamilton (1981:27) found the Burarra attached no special significance to the umbilical cord post-birth. Unlike women, no
men I spoke to mentioned the mixing of female and male substances in the context of foetal development.

It has long been argued (at least since Ashley Montagu, 1937) and recently reaffirmed (see Merlan, 1986:479) that accounts of Aboriginal conception stating a physical contribution from either parent are not representative of an indigenous belief. Ashley-Montagu and Merlan argue beliefs in substance transference in utero are due to the immigration of ideas from Papua New Guinea or later contact with Europeans. This view is not substantiated in the Marrangu case.

The physical and spiritual contributions of both parents are recognised in Marrangu thought, despite the stated differences in men's and women's views. Hence, not only does the mother contribute blood, but food ingested by her helps nurture the foetus. Certain foods, especially fish, make the baby "come up quick". A woman is believed to be more hungry than normal during pregnancy because, as one woman told me, "that baby wants it". Her physical stamina also suffers during pregnancy because "that baby make 'im sleepy". Men, for their part, contribute semen and assist indirectly by providing much of the meat foods for women who are pregnant. No explicit connection was made between semen and the spirit child as Berndt and Berndt found in western Arnhem Land (1964:151), or between the semen of the father and the bones of the foetus (R.M. Berndt, 1952:271). So, while conception spirits are certainly of Dreaming origin and this origin of conception is emphasized, there is a clear notion that physiological factors also contribute, both in intercourse and uterine development. I suggest the belief that conception involved the transference of physical substances should not be so readily dismissed as coloration from foreign ideas. After all, at Gattji in 1937 Thomson recorded as an apparently indigenous explanation why some women don't conceive the following response, "[the woman is] too dry inside" (Fieldnotes, File No. 62., page 743). In her analysis of the "Wawilak" mythology based on published sources Munn concluded that, "the body itself is created by a merging of body-interior (female) substances and exterior (entering) male substances" (1969:185). In both
cases the uterine environment is linked with foetal development and for the foetus to develop the uterine environment must take contributions of fluids.

A simple demonstration of how physiological and spiritual factors overlap in Marrangu conception is found in the case of food. Conception spirits are, for example, usually found in certain types of foods, animals and plants, in fish or honey. A woman wishing to fall pregnant can eat these foods to increase her chances. Dreams intimating conception reveal the food source that contained the spirit child, and this food source may become the child’s Dreaming. Once impregnated, a woman eats more fish to hasten birth because the foetus is physically dependant on what she consumes. Thus the eating of particular foods known to be “strong” in conceptive potency has both physical (e.g., foetal development) and spiritual (e.g., impregnation dream) ramifications. To ignore either would be unjustified in Marrangu thought. As conception spirits are found latent in the natural environment, so too their development into living humans is dependent on physical changes, this time in the uterine environment, of which foods consumed by the mother are a part.

So, assuming the spirit child has evaded Merri spirits and found and impregnated the right woman, the foetus begins its in utero development partly independently and partly sustained by food and blood from the mother. Pregnancy is described by women as a time when “we carry ‘im”, and by men as the time when a mother “make im”, the baby. Signs that show the baby is developing normally are increased back pain, changes in urine colour and constant lethargy. Despite this, a pregnant woman is not exempted from usual demands, though others may try to minimize her hardships.

The first kicks in the belly are a sign that the baby is “healthy and happy”. This, along with birth pains and the first few years of maternal nurture are, according to Merlan’s evidence (1986:476) the most valued aspects of motherhood. At Galawdjapin, I was told birth is the happiest moment of fatherhood because then a man becomes “just like water”, meaning he is constantly in cold sweats. But the birth is not greeted with much
fuss. There are no ceremonies for example to accord the expectant mother special status (Hamilton, 1981:27) and only a brief "birth ceremony" to celebrate the child's arrival, which may in fact be held months later (see Mirritji,1976:9). In present times, the birth of a child is more marked because it usually means a trip to Darwin Hospital. Formerly, births usually occurred away from the main camp and men. The date of birth is not considered important. The white school teacher at Gattji, for example, had considerable trouble finding out the age of her pupils, as in all cases neither parent could remember. Indeed, I was told everyone is considered to have been born on or soon before or after Christmas day, because Jesus was born then and "we follow 'im, that's our [birth] day now".

Difficult births are blamed on a M/merri Spirit because a mother in labour is thought highly susceptible to M/merri visitation. A young Burarra woman described to me such a visitation at the birth of her first child:

20.11.89: [Person's name] told me that when she arrived at Darwin Hospital she went to the wrong entrance, the morge entrance. She saw lots of coffins, bodies and the smell got to her. She started to worry about the birth of her baby. Later, while laying in bed in the labour ward, [person's name] saw a merri go circling round her room in a wheelchair. It had an ugly face and deformed body. Eventually it left and a few days later she gave birth to a girl.

Stillborn births are not considered due to M/merri influence because a stillborn child is not recognised as human but, for example, an animal that has entered the wrong mother (compare Hamilton,1981:25). Traditionally in this kind of birth the baby was disposed of in the bush along with the afterbirth. In cases of heavy post-natal bleeding a steaming and heating procedure is followed to close the woman's uterus (see Hamilton,1981:20).

Birth is the culmination of the conceptive process. The infant however, is thought to have no less of a "free will" than the conception spirit that helped create it. As the child grows it learns that what it demands it will usually get. Hamilton (1981:128) summarizes the approach as "whatever the child wants is what it needs". A child's knowledge of it's own mind is trusted. To deliberately defy a child's wishes (except
where physical danger threatens) is thought bad parenting because full indulgence of a child's wishes is strongly valued. A further reason for allowing children freedom is that M/merri spirits are thought able to occupy a small child's body and thereby move among people undetected. An upset child can mean a more vindictive M/merri and nobody wants that. Ideally, a well adjusted child knows no hunger, is rarely disciplined and never shamed. As a consequence, adults devise elaborate means of coercion and distraction to curb a child's demands, especially when they start to become independently mobile.

Prominent among these is to simulate the presence of a M/merri spirit which a child quickly learns to recognise and fear. At Galawdjapin an adult would raise a buffalo skull (which otherwise lay around unregarded) to his/her face and this sent any nuisance or wandering child running back to the security of a welcoming lap. Whenever a child was confronted with the buffalo skull mask someone would call "ooa, mokuy, mokuy" or "ooa, merri, merri", so that the child quickly responded to the 'threat'. Another form of this tactic was for a parent to carry a sulking child to the edge of the camp light, point into the darkness and cry "ooa, merri, merri". The sulking usually stopped immediately. By such ploys a child connects the idea of M/merri with the dark of night, the appearance of death (skeletal remains) and the threat of personal harm. Subsequently a child learns to fear the 'presence' of Merri. This has the desired impact of discouraging a child from wandering without the need for physical restraint. The buffalo skull mask was most often used to discourage venturing at night.

So while a child is rarely rebuked directly, strategies involving the inculcation of a fear of M/merri presence helps desired behaviors develop. Such strategies do not challenge the 'free will' of the child. To do so would be pointless. Just as the emergence of conception spirits can not be controlled, the early years of life are thought beyond the imposition of constraining obedience. That comes with the induction of boys and girls into adulthood, usually at a prepubiscient age. Besides, once born, a child acquires virtually the same spiritual properties as that of adults but with the further
dimension that Merri spirits are more likely to site themselves in children’s bodies. It is to an examination of the spiritual properties of all living Marrangu people, as well as the concept of personhood more generally, that I now turn.

**THE BODY, MERRI, WUGULI AND SHADOW**

The living person has an extremely complex composition in Marrangu thought, being made of both physical substance and non-physical essence. Consequently the human body is not made of tissue, bone, blood and skin alone but includes the external to the body corporeal and non-corporeal counterparts of these properties. Hence, for instance, it is said that clothes have the sweat or sometimes 'shadow' of their wearer and that blood and bone contain the wuguli spirit. In this section I explore how these physical and spiritual components of bodily existence are formulated in Marrangu belief.

Firstly, how are the spiritual aspects of a living person conceived? On death the merri spirit of the person is identified with the physical remains, whereas the wuguli spirit is believed to go into a site in the deceased’s clan country. Are these two aspects of individual spirituality as clearly separate in the living state? Perhaps not surprisingly the literature is very convoluted on this point. Warner (1937/58:413) posits an oppositional pairing; the 'warro' (or birrimburr) is “from the totem well and important”; while the 'mokoi' (or Merri) is “a trickster”. Warner says all individuals possess both these “souls” (ibid). Mountford (1956:312) concurs with Warner; but both confuse an individual’s spiritual composition at death as that which holds for the living state also. This is not so, as I now demonstrate.

Prior to death, an individual does not consist of two souls, or even two aspects of the one soul as favoured by Morphy (1984:40) and Williams (1986:32). The living
individual possesses an admixture of spiritual components that on death change or are externalised into the birrimbirr (ancestral) spirit and mokuy ('dead body') spirit. In Marrangu usage there are at least three closely interrelated concepts in this mixture: the wuguli spirit, merri spirit and 'shadow'. In the 'centre', as it is said, is the wuguli spirit and is said to be the 'true' spirit. This is the spirit that links the individual with the ancestors because 'it' is derived from and eventually returns to a site of ancestral power. At Galawdjapin and Gattji it was agreed 'birrimbirr' was the Yolngu word for the same entity.² The wuguli (or birrimbirr) spirit is identified with the body primarily through the bones (but may also be likened to the heart or liver) which are relatively permanent and endure through the paternal line. But the wuguli is also immanent in blood especially near the heart or liver. This link is clearly recognised in that a sorcerer in tampering with a victim's blood, also manipulates the persons wuguli spirit.

Bodily and spiritual wellbeing are closely entwined, but personal qualities (charisma, compassion, strength, etc.) evolve relatively freely for each individual in response to unique life experiences. Such personal qualities, the sum of a person's abilities and strengths, the power of one's presence, are collectively called ganydjarr.

So whereas the wuguli spirit may be termed the 'life force' central to the animate body of each individual, it is largely independent of the actions and personality of that individual. What people do and how they present themselves is an expression of personal choice and power and not tied to underlying spirituality. Hence everyone, regardless of age, sex, position, strength or intellect (but excluding those known to be afflicted) possess a wuguli spirit.

² There is some evidence, from Donald Thomson's Fieldnotes, that 'wuguli' did not originally designate this spirit. Thomson (file number 128:4) records 'wuguli' as a Wulaki dialect word for mali, shade or shadow (discussed below). The word could have entered Marangu usage following close contact with Wulaki speakers. If this origin of 'wuguli' is correct, it would also help explain why I heard 'wuguli', along with 'mali', used to denote 'shadow'.
The second component of individual spirituality is the merri spirit. This 'living human' aspect of merri is closely aligned with the body, but more in terms of vulnerability. Merri 'dead body' spirits can readily intercept a living person's merri. Alternately 'dead body' merri enter the body of a person whose merri is 'weak'. In either case sickness, mental and/or physical, can result. But because the merri spirit is most strongly conceptualized after a person has died (as the corpse) its importance in lived existence seems less clear and is downplayed, though not to the point where it exists as an after death transformation only. People say that every living individual has a merri spirit and that this is a central property for some, especially children. For others, the merri spirit is absent from the body most of the time, preferring the company of Jungle Merri Spirits. Hence, people usually talk about their merri spirit as an externalised presence and not with close personal attachment. It is as if the merri spirit impinges upon the body more from without than from within, usually as an unwelcome interference.

The third component of individual spirituality is a person's 'shadow' or 'shade', called mali. The distinction between a person's mali and merri spirit is not a clear one. Heightening the confusion is the fact that at Galawdjapin 'wuguli' was also occasionally used to denote 'shadow'. Whereas the merri spirit has negative connotations, this is not necessarily the case with one's mali. The mali can be physical such as a photograph or picture, or non-physical such as one's name or visible shadow. The mali of human beings do not -- like merri spirits -- commune together or act collectively. The mali is much more dependent upon the individual to which it is visibly but insubstantially attached. Moreover, the other spiritual components, wuguli and merri, are also thought to have mali aspects, making any rigid division between the three inappropriate.

The interpenetration between these three spiritual concepts understandably makes definitions difficult. Zorc for instance defines 'mali' and "wunguli" in almost identical terms and those terms include reference to "mokuy ghosts" (1986:168,269). It is
perhaps the case that wuguli is the after death transformation of one's 'shadow' in the living state, though this probably takes the notion of shadow too literally. The mali or shadow of a person does not behave like a shadow in the strict sense -- visible and always following the body. But it is an extention of the body, representing something of it's owner yet able to wander (such as into another's dream) more or less at will. One's mali then is reckoned to be both 'true' and wayward, tied to the body and yet 'just spirit', able to liaise with (and at the mercy of) friend and foe, but always an extention of the self.

Keen (1978:298) reports trees and other natural features are 'shadows' which are transformations of the spirits of the dead. Dreaming Beings can not be denied because they left transformations of themselves throughout the landscape. These signs, be they rocks, trees, creeks or any other feature are said to be mali of the Dreaming Beings. For Marrangu people these signs are different from the Beings in form but not in essence. My hosts told me that personal possessions -- clothes, fishing gear, pipes, bags and alike -- contain the owner's shadow. Similarly, dreams can be encounters with 'shadows' of the merri of certain people. But whether visible or dreamt, the mali is a transformation of the entity it is known to be associated with. This association can be put to use in sorcery (of either malign or healing intent) because the mali object, name or whatever is an adjunct to a person's spiritual and bodily wellbeing. Hence the three components of spiritual composition in the living individual (as identified) are closely interrelated between themselves and with the physicality of existence.

BODY SUBSTANCE AND SYMBOLISM

Marrangu thought recognises the importance of certain substances and parts of the anatomy more than others, but the whole body, galangi, is regarded as the "living being" (Waters,1983:39). Probably bone and blood (and perhaps fat) are most significant. As the substance which most visibly 'survives' death, bone embodies the enduring side
of life and especially that which derives from patrilineal relations (Keen, 1978:298). This association is evidenced in the Dreaming character of certain sites, with madayin places of the clan known as "bone countries" (ibid:288). In Djinang Marrangu territory, Malidjul was the chief 'bone' country because here the bones of the dead merged with the source of ancestral power, the Dreaming. The bone of a living person is said to be 'strong', in both a physical and spiritual (madayin) sense. As a person ages the bones weaken physically but strengthen spiritually because the person is approaching a more permanent existence, symbolised by the incorporation of bone into the Dreaming at a place in his/her own clan country. Bone, therefore, is associated with clan regeneration, the immanence of the Dreaming and the ancestral character of country.

Bones are not simply to do with clan continuity and spirituality. The merri 'dead body' spirit is closely identified with the skeletal remains of the corpse and as such is said to be all white in appearance. Recall also that the merri spirit evokes the decay and corruption of physical life, not its spiritual permanence. Further, bone implements are used in sorcery and threats to human life.

In the description and analysis of Bogabod (in Chapter 5) the bones of the deceased were central to the Mewal bunggul. This ceremony highlighted the theme of clan regeneration through the exchange of the bones between men and women and their symbolic 'birth' (having been painted red while in the possession of women). In Bogabod, the bones of the dead person are transformed into the generalised ancestral source of the clan. The relative durability of the bones is the material reality for this spiritual process. Hence, in the living state as well, bone is thought to have spiritual potency.

Less lasting substances are also physically and spiritually important. Fat, flesh and to some extent blood are grouped together in Marrangu thought. All are necessary for human survival and essential for foetal growth. A healthy body is one that is not "dry",.
that is, one containing rich, red blood and plenty of fat. A dry, hot body is often associated with sickness and other forms of affliction (Reid, 1978:102-3). Only the bones should be hard and dry.

Blood is spiritually powerful in that blood from the mother mixes with semen to nurture the foetus in utero. The heart blood, however, is of special makeup. Hamilton (1981:20) noted that only blood from the heart has "supernormal qualities". This is because the wuguli spirit of an individual resides in the heart (or sometimes, as I was told, the liver). Loss of heart blood, especially in sorcery, results in loss of the spiritual energy animating life, culminating in madness or death. As Warner notes, "if a man's blood runs out and he is emptied of all his blood that man dies and his soul is gone" (1937/58:277). In Yolngu thought, the heart is directly linked to the throat (ibid:206). A sorcerer can manipulate a person's wuguli spirit (in the heart) by constricting breath issuing from the mouth (ibid). Heart blood, therefore, mediates closely between a person's spiritual and biological wellbeing. I was told that blood from other parts of the body getting into the heart results in death because it is the "wrong blood".

Blood also carries significant social meanings. "Blood" relations are those existing through ties between women, including both affinal and matrilineal. Women affinally related to the Marrangu mala are said to bear babies for this clan by "giving blood", a phrase connoting more than their physical contribution. At funerals for Marrangu people, female affines mutilate themselves with knives and again this is said to be "giving blood". A profound nexus exists between blood, women, birth and clan regeneration, just as a confluence exists between bone, patrilineal relations and the ancestral character of the country. In this respect Munn (1969:181,185) has likened the properties associated with blood to those associated with water: both liquids are able to breach usual boundaries (blood runs from the body and water floods) and both symbolise exchange and relational processes between, say, women and men, life and death, growth and decay, external and internal realities.
But bone and blood are not the only bodily components to have profound associations. The whole body in various ways is thought to speak as a reality wider than bodily existence. Interestingly, the word galngi not only refers to any physically animate being, but also to any corpse or carcass (Waters, 1983:33). The body is not only an image of human existence but of all life; a grounds upon which geographic, communal, temperamental and ideational realities can be condensed. A few simple examples will illustrate this mediating process. Many kin relationships are correlated with body parts, as Figure 7.2 shows. The body becomes a map of the social world and serves the practical task of allowing news of kin to be communicated discretely by sign language.

Body substances have a different range of meanings. Skin, malk, denotes the exterior surface of the body, the divisions within the subsection system and close, "same skin" relations between kin. Human skin, like hair, mapal, can be tampered with to make a social statement (of physical maturity for example) or to allow mystical penetration in the course of ensorcellment. Skin can also respond, under the concealment of pigments, by making the body as a whole more closely spiritual (Rudder, 1983:183) or able to withstand attack by a deceased's merri spirit (Taylor, 1987:154). Sweat, bunggan, is the pleasant aroma of body perspiration and the fluid itself. Sweat is spiritually laden, carrying in it the 'shadow' of its donor. A sorcerer uses clothes from the victim (which contain sweat) to effect a spell. Clothes containing sweat are in effect a socio-spiritual skin, a detachable, external part of the individual's immanent, non-corporeal identity. Sweat itself also possesses the spiritual power of the Dreaming and for this reason is rubbed in the eyes of initiates when they first see madayin objects, rangga. There is a sense in which sweat smeared on the novice activates the burgeoning spirituality within (see account of Ngarra ceremony by Thomson, 1975:3,8).

There is also strong coalescence between features of the body and geography. For instance, the word for arm, gundjarr, denotes tributaries of a main river or creek which is termed mani, the same word for one's neck. Gandi, denoting thigh, is a tree
FIG. 6.2: MARRANGU KIN CLASSIFICATION AND BODY PARTS.

- Forehead - grandfather
- Chin - grandmother
- Bicep - daughter
- Elbow - wife/father
- Thigh, buttock - brother in law, sister in law
- Calf - brother, sister
- Shoulder - father, father's sister
- Stomach - nephew, niece
- Forearm - mother's brother
- Knee - uncle
limb, the mix of fresh and salt water (and, curiously, tea that is ‘too strong’). Nose, ngurri, refers to a point of land seen from sea or the edge of forest seen from open flat ground. Parts of the body and trees are thoroughly correlated in Marranggu thought, such that the image of the tree personifies erect posture, mobility and bodily completeness. Hence feet, nu, are the tree roots, ‘nu pili’ meaning “those that grip the ground”. The rump and base of the spine, mungin djunggi, is the widest part of the tree trunk. And the tree limbs, gandi, or thigh, together with the leaves and smaller branches are known as gumbirri wykimi mapal (with leaves literally the hair, mapal, of the tree). Hamilton (1981:18) and Schebeck (1978:170) have noted other body-based metaphors pertaining to geography.

Every visibly distinct part of the body, internal and surface, is named. Not all enumerate extended associations. However, those that do (legs, arms, feet, hands, etc.) figure in habitual and essential activities of daily life, such as the flexing of bone joints while sitting, walking eating and procuring food. The flexing of these joints is integral to the bodily involvement of a healthy person within a social and natural environment. Keen notes that among Yolngu groups one of these joints, the elbow or likan, is where feather decorations are placed during both mortuary and circumcision rites (1978:202-235). These adornments, and other designs, are according to Keen “predominantly interlinking elements” (ibid:301) demonstrating the link between the individual, his/her clan, country and Dreamings (ibid:227). In Djinang Marranggu, ‘lurrkan’ denotes the waist (Waters, 1983:62). The bending of the body at the waist is a common posture in daily living, for example while cooking or hunting. It could be that the waist in Marranggu thought has like associations to the Yolngu likan (elbow).

The point being made here is that body use is integral to the rationalizations made about the world and not that body use has necessarily given rise to these rationalizations. The body does not create its repertoire of symbolisms but, as seen with trees and ‘shadow’ carried by sweat, evinces generic connections with social, physical and spiritual
realities. Consequently the body in Marrangu reckoning can not be understood as a
discrete, empirically bounded form, neutral and unresponsive to the ideas it embodies.

The Marrangu concept of the person extends beyond the body into clothes, names, tools
and sweat. Respect for a person does involve the observance of personal ‘space’, but to
a white Australian's habits this space is constantly breached. Same sex adult to adult
contact is high, with close friends often walking arm in arm. The body is neither self
contained, nor private. Desiring solitude, especially at night or when company is
available, is thought odd. Seclusion by choice suggests a failure to be fully and morally
'normal', dis-ease of mind or body, or perhaps spirit visitation. Finally, maintaining
bodily detachment from the social and physical environment means death. But, even
without seclusion, one is susceptible to bodily depletion because the body is essentially
permeable and substances and personal property contain one’s individual spirituality.

AFFLICTION AND SORCERY

This section outlines the origins, forms and (where known) antedotes of ailments
known by Marrangu people. The section concludes with a detailed examination of
Marrangu sorcery and the significance of Merri therein. The Marrangu model of
affliction recognises at least four explanations for bodily and psychological
incapacitation: (a) “just sickness”; (b) emotional imbalance; (c) spirit possession;
and (d) ensorcellment. The final explanation I found to be the most common, whereas
the first two (“just sickness” and emotional imbalance) were suggested considerably
less often. Spirit possession was a common explanation especially where psychological
ailments were concerned. Most deaths are thought to be the result of sorcery and not
physical symptoms, though there are exceptions.

A Marrangu person in good health is said to be in a state “this side” of illness which, if
transgressed, results in them entering the “other side” of ill health and perhaps death.
The significance of the 'sides' concept in Marrangu ideas of bodily affliction is further discussed later, however, certain ailments especially those affecting the very young or old, are said to be "just sickness". 'Just sickness' (a) conditions derive wholly from physical conditions and are not the result of any external influence. Nausea, diarrhoea and certain cuts, bruises and strains (i.e., physiological maladies) are examples of conditions that are 'just sickness'.

Long term ailments are also likely to be viewed as "just sickness", even if the person concerned is in the prime of their life. One woman, for instance, who had been a polio sufferer since childhood passed away in 1990. The fact that she was in her mid 20's did not alter the opinion that she died of 'natural' causes.

How a disability is viewed depends on how a sufferer represents the problem. Minor complaints such as lethargy maybe given a non-physical explanation, such as over exersion in a dream. Physical symptoms are closely tied to the affective state of the individual, the second explanation for affliction. Like physical causes, emotions (b) are sometimes thought responsible for certain incapacities, both bodily and psychological. For example, I was told one Ganalbingu man at the Tank was insane because he was always sulky and never smiled or laughed. This moodiness manifest itself in physical attacks upon his brother's children.

Often, when a person's emotions are strained their spiritual as well as physical wellbeing is affected. One outcome of emotional upset is possession by a M/merri spirit (c) though M/merri possession can afflict any individual at any time. Marrangu spirit possession involves the entry of a M/merri spirit into the body of an individual. This results in detrimental effects upon the wuguli spirit together with psychobiological effects, otherwise known as altered states of consciousness.

Crapanzano (1977:12-13) suggests the key movement in spirit possession is "introjection", where the spirit enters the individual and works from within. This
notion runs counter to the psychoanalytic view of 'projection' where, it is thought, the possessed person throws sentiments to do with the self outward (ibid). Crapanzano's term seems appropriate to a case of possession that I observed. The following details relate to this instance, which occurred at Gattji in 1989. The person afflicted was a Wulaki woman in her mid 40's. Note that the woman's condition is verified by the actions of others present.

**MERRI POSSESSION: CASE STUDY**

26.9.89, Galawdjapin: At about 10pm this evening crying could be heard coming from Gattji, two kilometres away. [10 minutes earlier a gun shot had been heared but was assumed to be somebody at Gattji hunting. Now those at Galawdjapin began to worry]. Robert Gurral and Andrew Margululu left Galawdjapin to investigate the disturbance. At Gattji they found 'B' alone and outside the house (there's only one house at Gattji) all others present having barricaded themselves inside. B was carrying a crowbar and saucepans, shouting and hitting things wildly. When Gurral and Margululu approached, B she ran off in the direction of her sister's grave close by (her sister had died two years earlier). These two men (together with a third who had emerged from the house) took chase, eventually catching B and throwing a sheet over her. With B shouting and struggling she was brought back to camp.

When Gurral and Margululu arrived back at Galawdjapin about half an hour later they described these events. They said B had encountered a Merri spirit when she had walked down the road near Gattji after one of her sons had fired a shot against her wishes. It was while she walked that she 'encountered' the Merri spirit, which entered her body through the ears. Once inside, the Merri "twisted" her tongue rendering her insensible to others' speech and causing her to shout incomprehensible words. Her state of "madness", as it was called, was evidenced by B's attempts to strike her own children with the crowbar and saucepans (resulting in them taking refuge inside the house).

The Merri also attempted to carry B away to its home, a jungle place, Bumbaldjarri. As well as entering through the ears, the Merri impelled B to pick up a small stone which she found she could not release. As long as she had grip of this stone the Merri spirit had total control over her.

Questioning of B (several days later) revealed not one but seven Merri spirits of known deceased individuals (some recently deceased others a generation or two removed) had been responsible. They were of both Wulaki and Marrangu origin. They had acted together to possess B.

About ten minutes after Gurral and Margululu had returned to Galawdjapin, everyone at Galawdjapin including myself went to Gattji, some to offer assistance, others to 'look'. The plan was to bring B back to Galawdjapin which had the advantage of an electric light (Gattji had no power). On the way green leafy branches from ironwood trees were collected. These were used later to brush over B's ears and head, having first been singed in the fire.
At Gattji a most extraordinary scene was confronted. A huge fire (with flames three metres high) was ablaze and crackling loudly from green branches. Two women knelt beside B, verbally and physically comforting her and restraining her. Everyone else, including B’s husband, were saying their own words of comfort nearby. Some stood and threw their arms in the air shouting, “hallelujah, hallelujah, praise the Lord, Jesus is with us, Jesus has touched us, God loves us.”

Women who had just arrived from Galawdjapin went immediately to B, helping to restrain her and speaking words of comfort. Gurral singed the leafy ironwood branches in the fire and rubbed them across B’s face, especially ears and mouth. More prayers were said and later there was singing, accompanied by a tape of Jimmy Swaggart (an evangelist).

George Putti led the prayers. Referring to the Bible, he appealed for help to remove the Merri from B and return it to it’s home at Bumbaldjarri. He asked for help in restoring full health to B. All present echoed his wishes by joining in the prayers midway through. Like a chorus answering, after each line of prayer they cried, “Praise the Lord, I love you brother, sister, mother, father”. A hushed “Amen” concluded the prayers.

B still could not talk properly or understand what was said to her but ceased to physically struggle. She was taken to bed with plenty of candles and lanterns burning in her room. After that the tension eased, though prayers and singing continued throughout the night. Some from Galawdjapin went home while others stayed at Gattji until daybreak.

Next morning everyone was tired but the gospel tapes were playing loudly from an early hour. At mid morning B was taken to the medical clinic at Ramingining, possibly for a tranquillizing injection. She returned later in the day and, wrapped in a sheet, continued to rest though did not eat any food.

That night all at Galawdjapin again went to Gattji to be with B, who remained silent and resting. Everyone seemed more relaxed than the previous night. People sat around chatting, occasionally alluding to the previous night’s events, often with amusement. There was no singing as all were too tired and those from Galawdjapin returned home at about 10pm.

The following morning I was told that after leaving a Merri had again ‘appeared’ at Gattji, in a large white gum tree about fifteen metres from camp. Everyone retreated inside but B was not further harmed. Later the Merri went away.

[four days later]: B still has not eaten since her ordeal with the Merri, and is looking very tired. Two days ago Gattji was abandoned and all are now camped at Galawdjapin, which has the security of an electric light at night. Other women are always within arms reach of B, who remains wrapped in a sheet and is resting.

Tonight B ate her first food since the crisis and was able to sit for awhile. She talked a little, rolled a cigarette and sang a rather mournful sounding song. She then fell silent and again rested. When recovered more she plans to return to Gattji. Meanwhile, her husband left today for Maningrida to consult a marngitj, a healing sorcerer, about his wife’s affliction.
In the above case a dispute leading to an emotional upset triggered the possession state, though B ordinarily is of strong and stable personality. A psychoanalytic interpretation would be that the emotionally disturbed individual created the notion of an external spirit as a defense mechanism, so as not to face and deal with difficult feelings. Once possessed B behaved more like a Merri spirit than herself. Her attempts to strike people and go near a grave site at night are characteristic Merri behaviors. When B did try to run to the grave site it was said that the Merri inside had made her do so because it wanted to steal her wuguli spirit. The form of insanity contingent with spirit possession, the symptoms being deafness, dumbness and aggressive, irrational behavior, is due to the lack of, or injury to the wuguli spirit. For example, B's "twisted" tongue and indecipherable speech were thought to signal an attack on the wuguli spirit because the Merri can steal the wuguli spirit by disrupting ("sucking") the victim's breath. Indeed, one of the uppermost fears people have of Merri spirits is that they attempt to capture the wuguli spirit. For these reasons those present saw B's condition as spirit possession and not the self defence 'projection' of an emotionally disturbed mind.

The response by others to B's affliction clearly moved against the possessing spirit, not B herself, though she was given special status as a 'sick' person. The singing, prayers, use of fire (effectively a Dada ceremony), light and heightened body contact are all actions believed to counter and quell the influence of a Merri spirit. In the prayers the Merri spirit was specifically told to leave B's body and return home to the jungle. The precise form of the possessing spirit was not fully articulated, but a bird form is suggested by the attempt to "carry" B to the jungle and its 'appearance' the following evening in a tree.

A further aspect of the case was its public nature. B's ordeal was not private and subjective but involved everyone and carried the symptoms recognised as Merri possession. The nights and days following the ordeal were filled with animated accounts of what one person had seen and another done, with a suggesting that the whole thing had
been somewhat comical. The 'openness' of the experience was notable. This is all the more surprising as there is nothing in Merri possession which could be termed socially desireable, except perhaps the opportunity it offers for lively discussion.

In local Aboriginal English, B's condition is described as “Merri madness" and this is always marked by psychological and behavioral disruption. However, not all madness according to Marrangu thought is due to the actions of a Merri. Some behavioral disorders are put down to the fragile emotional states of the individual. Physiological ailments are thought to be "just sickness".

Ensorcellement (d) overlaps considerably with conditions resulting from the actions of a possessing Merri spirit. For instance, a “twisted" tongue (one of B's ailments) is a technique also used by the galka sorcerer. Victims with a twisted tongue attract the attention of other Merri spirits who, hearing the 'foreign' language, take further action to cause insanity.

A galka sorcerer resembles a Merri spirit in certain respects. Galka can take both an incorporeal or material form. They can 'appear' in miniature form as children or move unseen through the bush, calling out and running away. A jungle is where a galka is most likely to reside. A galka will seem friendly and personable at first but this is a deception. The galka and Merri spirit are akin in all these respects. Margululu told me the following example of a galka's methods, which has obvious parallels with the activities of Merri and Mewal Jungle Spirits:

26.9.89: A galka will deceive you by behaving as your friend, imploring you to follow him because he has kava, grog or a girl. You follow him into the jungle and he will disappear. You look around and you are lost. The galka comes back and takes the veins from your body by inserting a piece of wood. Then galka places some but but (grass or stick) in your body to make you die in 3-4 days. He does this and that's how a galke kills you.

The crucial difference between the galka sorcerer and Merri spirit is that the galka, in the first instance, is a living human being possessing an ability to change into incorporeal form. A Merri spirit, in contrast, is always incorporeal but may, as seen,
enter human bodies or 'appear' before a victim in animal, child or mutated form. A galka is a person with special powers, a Merri is a spirit with special powers.

But a galka may derive these powers from an encounter, often a near death experience with a Merri spirit. In such an encounter the individual becomes "clever" and is instructed by the Merri spirit in sorcery techniques, especially in how to attack a person's blood (Reid, 1978:106). A galka can also inherit sorcery powers from his (a galka is almost always a male) father, mother's father or mother's brother and may be required to accompany his teacher on some outings where a victim is attacked and killed (Warner, 1937-58:197-8). A galka (like Merri Spirits) kills people by attacking the physical body or spiritual composition of the victim.

By targeting blood, for example, the galka strikes at both the physical and spiritual wellbeing of the victim. I noted earlier the belief that the wuguli spirit resides in the heart blood (or liver). The galka strikes at this blood first, entering under the side of the rib cage in the case of males or through the vagina in the case of females (Warner, ibid:195). The galka pierces the skin, without leaving a mark, using either the bones of dead people fashioned into needles or a special stick, or grass called but but. So punctured, the heart blood drains out. Alternately, the galka places wax from an ironwood tree (a commonly mentioned species for its use in sorcery) in the heart of the victim. Here it gels, preventing the flow of blood into the veins. In each procedure the heart is attacked, causing loss of and damage to the blood and this in turn has detrimental effects upon the wuguli spirit.

All blood, however, is susceptible to a galka's work. Hence, I was told, a galka can kill people in any of the following ways: by putting "wrong" blood into the victims body; by hanging the victim upside down from a tree, cutting his/her neck and allowing the blood to run out; by burning the skin thereby drying the blood inside; by placing foreign objects inside the body thereby turning the blood to powder; or, by 'pointing' at the victim, causing the blood inside to boil.
A characteristic mode of puncture in order to attack the blood is the use of bone implements, and in this there is a strong parallel with the Merri spirit. A Merri spirit uses a sharpened forearm bone from a corpse, called mungy mungy, to point or throw at a victim. I was told that in a galka’s bag of ‘tools’ (co-incidentally, a djirrk dilly bag, which has the additional meaning of ‘womb’) are found bones of the same origin for the purpose. In the context of sorcery the antithesis between blood and bone is not wholly clear and unambiguous, as both have associations with the wuguli spirit. Blood, the fluid, moist substance in which the wuguli spirit is situated, is imperilled by bone, the hard, dry material which, ironically, is synonymous with the survival of this spirit (and to some extent the Merri spirit) following death. Hence, the most permanent aspect of physical being, bone, leads attacks upon the continuation of physical life via the substances that maintain it.

The point to be stressed is that the whole body and its adjuncts is penetrable to both physical and spiritual processes, precisely because the body itself is a mixture of both material and immaterial components. Sorcery affliction is implicitly predicated upon spiritual processes penetrating physical ‘boundaries’, often without trace. Body substances too (especially blood and breath) can be emitted from the body and develop spiritual properties; for example, heart blood can carry the wuguli spirit out of the body, and breath can be swallowed by a galka or Merri. The belief that many afflictions and deaths are not ‘natural’ but the result of spiritual or ensorcelling agents highlights the fact that wellbeing is intimately connected with the actions of others and their roles as sorcerers or healers, mourners or killers.

CONCLUSIONS

In this chapter I outlined the steps in Marrangu conception. These include the encounter with a conception spirit, the ‘finding’ dream, sexual intercourse, impregnation, pregnancy and foetal development in utero. I showed how conception is related to
country with certain sites (not those associated with Merri Spirits) recognised as sources of conception potency. I also reviewed writings by Ashley-Montagu (1937), Tonkinson (1978), Merlan (1986), Hamilton (1981) and others on Aboriginal conception in the light of Marrangu beliefs. Contrary to findings of other writers, I found that bodily substances are thought to contribute to foetal development, especially blood from the mother.

Merri Spirits are thought able to influence conception and foetal development, by restricting the supply of conception spirits and attacking or visiting pregnant women. As synonymous with death and disruption, Merri Spirits are thought antagonistic to conception and birth. In a child's early development, the threatening image of Merri is put to effect as a tool for inculcating desired behaviours, allowing adults to control the child's movements without directly denying the child's wishes.

According to Marrangu belief all living individuals, no matter what age, possess a wuguli and merri spirit, personal strengths and power (ganydjarr) and 'shadow'. Each of these aspects of individual spirituality is linked to various components of the body's physical composition:- bone, sweat, blood, fat and breath especially. There is considerable interpenetration between the physical and spiritual properties of the living person. I argued that Marrangu concepts of the person do not make a straightforward division between the wuguli (birrimbirr) and merri (mokuy) spirits. Instead, the whole person is conceived as a bundle of attributes, including various 'flesh' and 'spirit' aspects.

The body is not a physically delimited entity in Marrangu thought. Bodily substances extend beyond their source, entering into spiritual processes: sweat in clothes is manipulated by the sorcerer and blood is drained from the body causing physical and spiritual depletion, for example. The body and bodily substances also carry various shared metaphoric meanings, especially regarding geography and kin categories. I showed how these associations are integral with bodily praxis and that they
demonstrate the Marrangu ingenuity for condensing physical, spiritual and social realities into an accessible and flexible system of ideas.

Finally I examined the place and importance of the Merri Spirit in Marrangu beliefs regarding bodily incapacitation. The body is thought acutely vulnerable to Merri infiltration, as it is to ensorcelment, with physiological and psychological disturbances thought likely outcomes in either case. Indeed, most ailments afflicting Marrangu individuals, including B's possession case, are believed to have non-biological explanations. That a Merri Spirit is thought able to impact directly upon psychobiological wellbeing highlights the penetrability of the body to spiritual processes and the involvement of the Merri Spirit figure in daily experience. The close involvement of Merri in human affairs illuminates one of the key differences between Merri and Mewal: the latter (in one aspect) is malign in a general sense; whereas Merri has immediate relevance to individual bodily and spiritual maladies.

This chapter finalises the material to be presented regarding Merri and Mewal and related issues. In the following chapter I reassemble the distinguishing characteristics of Merri and Mewal and review their importance in Marrangu cosmology, manikay, mortuary rites, and in ideas regarding spiritual and physical composition and bodily wellbeing. I also draw together some reasons for the ambiguities in understandings I encountered regarding these two spirit concepts. Finally I contrast the nature and organisation of the Dreaming with Plato's Doctrine of Forms.
CHAPTER 7

COSMOLOGY, AMBIGUITY AND FORM

In this chapter I draw specific conclusions and make further comment based on the analysis presented in this thesis. In Chapters 3-6 I looked at the spirit figures Merri and Mewal from several different but closely interrelated angles: in cosmology, song, ceremony, mortality and 'soul' beliefs, and in relation to body substance, spirituality and affliction. Here I recover what I found to be the main results of this survey of Merri and Mewal in Marrangu thought and the significance of the interrelationship between these two Beings.

Later in this chapter I look at Marrangu cosmology overall, highlighting the processes whereby Dreaming entities enter bodily, social and geographic reality. I compare this with Plato's Doctrine of Forms (or Theory of Ideas) which provides a suggestive and well documented framework for understanding the relationship between the so-called 'transcendent' and the phenomenal world.

I also address the question of ambiguity and account for why I found Merri and Mewal to be such ambiguous entities in Marrangu cosmology and daily experience. I argue that it is in the nature of cosmological systems to contain ambiguities but, specifically regarding Merri and Mewal, I point to historical and geographic factors. The process of enquiry itself, I suggest, is further conducive to the discovery of discrepancies.
MERRI AND MEWAL IN THEMSELVES

In Chapter 3 Mewal was introduced in the 'Mewal and Djareware Story' as closely aligned with the Honey Being Djareware. Mewal, in this sense, is partly Bee and partly anthropomorphic, collecting Honey in the manner humans now do. It might be argued Mewal signs the power of fertility because Mewal shows the way to finding Honey and Honey is believed to contain conceptive and creative power. 'Mewal' is also a name that can be used interchangably with 'Marrangu'.

Mewal as an emblem of clan identity is embodied in various other ways also: in the designation in certain places in Marrangu country as 'Mewal' sites; in the use of white down body covering in certain Marrangu ceremonies (a form of decoration the Female Mewal Being established in the Djareware Dreaming); and in the Mewal bunggul where the bones of the deceased become transformations of ancestral and clan regeneration. In each case, Mewal is pre-eminently a token of clan origins and continuity.

Mewal is probably less important than the figure of Merri as a category structuring understandings of everyday and personal events. In Chapters 5 and 6 it was shown that, in terms of individual mortality, merri is a conceptual focus for properties of transience, bodily attachment and decay. When mishaps occur or when dreams are bad, foretelling death, people know to blame a diffuse, malignant energy which they call 'merri'. Hence the Merri Jungle Spirits or the merri 'dead body' spirits are unpredictable agents to whom many forms of malediction are attributed. Mewal, on the other hand, is less directly involved with the human community and is therefore more independent, transcendent and intangible. In this sense Mewal is a creator Being whereas Merri is an inheritance Being, a distinction made by Morphy (1990:313).
In the 'Mewal and Djareware Story' Mewal as Djareware's companion is wholly separate from human interaction, as is Djareware. The transformative acts of bestowal these two Beings perform throughout Marrangu country are carried out somewhat randomly and independently of human behest. Thus Mewal, as symbolic of clan origin and identity, highlights the genesis of this identity as free of human agency, that the Marrangu clan is constituted not upon human affiliation and reproduction but upon a 'Dream', which for clan members, deceased and living, became 'Our Dream'. But in the 'Mewal and Djareware Story' Mewal does interact with the first human beings in the jungle, where Merri is also encountered. This encounter marks a transformation of the Mewal Being.

From this point, Mewal is no longer identified with Djareware (as part Bee or as honey gatherer) but joins other Jungle Spirits to roam at night, making distracting sounds to trick people into the jungle. In the form of Jungle Spirit, Mewal is a corruption of the human body, either ugly and deformed or all skeleton. In behaviour this Mewal is asocial, malignant and hostile. But the Jungle Spirit Mewal interacts (seemingly congenially) with the first humans, teaching them songs and preforming dances for the first time, an act that transfers rights to the songs and dances to the human community. A link with death exists in this interaction, however, in that manikay words are said to be learnt from the spirits of the dead and these spirits, together with the Mewal and Merri Jungle Spirits, make one of their homes inside hollow logs in jungle places.

There are, therefore, two aspects to the Mewal figure: the Dreaming Creator Being allied with Djareware; and a single or a group of jungle dwelling Spirit(s). On this basis Mewal was said to be "bad but 'im not all bad". In the former aspect Mewal may be aligned with the fertility of the land and with the creative efficacy of the Dreaming as a source of clan identity. Mewal further suggests the regenerative outcome of death and ancestral renewal and in this Mewal has certain crossovers with the wuguli spirit which survives mortal
death and continues to exist somewhere within the individual's clan country. The Djareware Dreaming unites all Marrangu clans and so Mewal, as a clan specific entity within this Dreaming, highlights Djinang Marrangu clan uniqueness within the unity of baparru organisation.

In Mewal's Jungle Spirit aspect the significations are more tangible and localised. Jungles are both vegetative and cosmological environs, imaging the loss of direction such as after death or when alone at night. Jungles are unsocialized realms within the physical environment that defy human habitation and acculturation. As a result, these places are thought to contain elements hostile to people, namely, 'dead body' spirits and Merri and Mewal Jungle Spirits. Mewal and Merri Jungle Spirits evoke many of the uncertainties and anxieties of living in this environment. In addition, Jungle Spirits image the involvement of certain spiritual forces which can be both rewarding (Mewal and Merri gave Marrangu manikay to the first human beings) and depleting (Merri and Mewal trap and kill people who 'wander').

Merri, in its Jungle Spirit aspect, is indistinguishable from Mewal. Merri has the further aspect of 'dead body' spirit and spirits of the longer term dead who live at Gorriba, imaged collectively as the Luma Luma spirit. In each of these aspects Merri is considered malign and an interruption or corruption of normal living. Whereas Mewal is "not all bad", Merri is more truly "all bad". But Merri too is redeemed by being responsible for the granting of clan and spiritual identity directly to the people; through the transference of song, dance, ceremonies and objects (that is, madayin property) to Marrangu people. These important acts of bestowal, however, seem secondary, as primarily Merri is thought an anathema to the continuity of social stability and individual life.
Merri (as Jungle Spirit) can exist in various forms: in human form, usually with some deformity but often as a small child; in animal form, such as a small flying fox, cat or frog; or incorporeally, in a sense akin to 'ghost'. The 'dead body' merri is primarily identified with the putrefying corpse and the temporarily 'homeless' and wandering spirit that separates from the body at death. Immediately after death this wandering spirit is acutely dangerous -- wanting to return to the living community and unwelcome and unable to do so. This 'dead body' spirit is likely to be encountered in dreams of violence and disaster, cause accidents, arguments and physical ailments. As time passes since the death the 'dead body' spirit withdraws hostilities from the living and moves to join communities of spirits of the dead at Gorriba and in the jungles, shedding identity with the deceased individual in the process, though not entirely. The 'dead body' merri spirit withdraws from the living community, but does not forget its former 'home' and may continue to visit places and people known by the deceased.

The extent to which 'dead body' merri spirits and Merri Jungle Spirits are recognised as separate and independent is not crystal clear, though I suggest there are slight differences.¹ Both are thought malign, but the Jungle Spirits (and I've taken their usual residence as distinctive of their kind) are hostile to the living in a more general way than the 'dead body' spirits. The Jungle Spirits alter tracks and landforms, cause disputation, interrupt conception processes and try to intercept the wuguli spirit of a deceased person following death, thereby preventing ancestral reunion. But these are generalised spiritual processes in Marrangu thought, not vendettas directed as certain individuals. Moreover, the Merri spirits of the longer term dead and the Merri Jungle Spirits show some similarity and are to some extent synonymous. The connection between the two is also imaged in the 'Mewal and Djareware Story', where the Jungle Merri throw foods to

¹ My use of a capital for one and not the other was for the sake of written clarity. It does not mean the difference in the minds of Marrangu people is clear and always unambiguous.
the spirits at Gorriba. This may be taken as a token of communication and overlap. The cosmological significance of certain places on and near Gorriba maybe taken as closely analogous to the associations of the jungles Djambi and Bumbaldjarri in Marrangu country.

A strong contrast exists between the various aspects of the Merri figure and the cosmological character of Mewal as Djareware's companion (the inclusion of Merri together with Mewal and Djareware in the 'Mewal' group of manikay songs notwithstanding). Merri, in all aspects, exists on the edge of Marrangu cosmology and close to human affairs, to the point of being integrated with bodily wellbeing. Merri is only semi-independent of the human community, despite exercising an uncontrollable hostility towards its members. Merri, especially as 'dead body' spirit, is most feared and dangerous because it is between lived and Dreaming realities, not a creative founder like Djareware and Mewal and not fully party to human enterprise either. By virtue of this position Merri can impact most strongly upon human wellbeing without subordination, at any point in the life cycle whether physical or spiritual, pre-birth or post-death. The Dreaming founders Mewal and Djareware are the antithesis of these influences, evoking and conveying essentially benevolent and socially valued aspects of the Dreaming creation, the reproduction of life and the fertility of land and cosmos.

A further significant quality of Merri (especially in its most 'concretely' malignant 'dead body' spirit aspect) follows from its recognised form and unique position in Marrangu ontology. Merri is a highly effective and valued socializing agent, orienting individuals towards sanctioned behaviors and roles from an early age. Children soon learn to fear wandering in the dark alone because when they do adults point and shout "merri" or "mokuy" and hold aloft a buffalo skull. Children quickly connect these actions with danger. Merri operates to legitimate the positive value placed on community and family bonds
because anti-social behaviour (eating alone, walking alone, sulkiness, silence, for example) is accounted for as a malign predilection brought on by Merri.

The attributions of and interrelationships between Merri and Mewal summarized here demonstrates the importance of these figures in Marrangu cosmology, ontology bodily experience and socialization processes. In trying to present a clear account of Merri and Mewal I've probably simplified and separated them more than their usage by Marrangu people implies. But it was precisely the contradictions and ambiguities in this usage and the apparent discrepancy this showed with my received knowledge, chiefly from Borsboom (1978b) which led to the focus of my investigation.

I have no reason to believe Marrangu cosmological concepts are convoluted to an extent that is unrepresentative of other belief systems found in the region, nor should the complexity of the Mewal and Merri figures suggest this. Mewal and Merri occupy an important but not exhaustive position in Marrangu cosmology; there are many more stories, scenarios and relationships involving different Marrangu cosmological entities not discussed here. Only those aspects of Marrangu beliefs most relevant to the problem have been analysed in this thesis.

In the following section of this chapter I build upon the significations of Merri and Mewal noted here and offer some accounting of their ambiguity in Marrangu thought. I suggest that incompatibilities (and complementarities) in the significations of Merri and Mewal reflects and interprets the current realities of the Marrangu universe in terms of local, historical, geographic, cosmological and experiential features. I conclude that vagaries in understandings of Merri and Mewal are probably no greater now then in the past.
AMBIGUITY AND FORM IN MERRI AND MEWAL BELIEFS

The Beings Merri and Mewal interpenetrate many dimensions of cosmology, the life cycle and experience. I have demonstrated ambiguity is an attendant attribute of Mewal and Merri beliefs, especially in cosmological contexts. It is perhaps by virtue of this feature that they derive all the more attention (certainly it explains why I chose to investigate them).

Everyone I spoke to at Galawdjapin and Gattji knew of Merri and Mewal but not everyone, as seen, said similar things about them. Of course, it must not be assumed that everyone would or should have the same ideas; there were differences in understanding and contradictions as well. But how does one account for divergent understandings in the collective beliefs of a clan numbering less than sixty?

One reason, which ties in with my discussion of Plato's Forms later, is that Merri and Mewal do not correspond in a straightforward way with visible concrete referents. Mewal and Merri are signs which may or may not have physical presence. People cannot point to a visible object, in the way they can with Honey Bees or Stringybark trees and say, "that is Merri" or "that is Mewal". Only by recognised and shared association can, for example, a corpse or a carving be called "merri", or skeletal remains be called "Mewal".

In the absence of visible referents and given the conceptual similarity of Mewal and Merri in certain contexts, discrepancies in the attributes people assign to them are to be expected. Further, Merri is a category structuring subjective experience as well as a Spirit Being. Dream encounters and physical ailments, for example, often involve merri and are a product of individual awareness and interpretation. But there are several other factors that help account for the conceptual ambiguity of Merri and Mewal.
The close proximity of Galawdjapin and Gattji outstations (just two km apart) with the presence of Marrangu Djinang and Wulaki speakers respectively, has led to an accelerated interpenetration of these two peoples' belief systems. This has been particularly marked in the case of the Mewal Being. Wulaki cosmology recognises a Being named Ganingalkngalk as Mewal-like. That is, Ganingalkngalk is in certain contexts a creator Being and in others regarded as a malevolent jungle entity. For example, in one scenario Ganingalkngalk figures in the creation of Gattji lagoon, an important Wulaki Dreaming place. In another, Ganingalkngalk is a jungle living 'merri' with responsibility for the "larkan" hollow log coffin (see Thomson [Peterson]1976:103). Wulaki speakers sometimes use the word 'Mewal' to describe Ganingalkngalk.

At Gattji outstation, with a majority of its residents Marrangu clanspeople, statements regarding Wulaki beliefs were often given using Marrangu names, such as 'Mewal'. Only two middle-aged Wulaki women knew accurately the full range of Wulaki stories and concepts. For the ten Marrangu people under twenty-six years of age living at Gattji little conscious separation seemed to be made between the Marrangu and Wulaki 'Mewal' Beings.

This localised mixing of cosmological beliefs, with the resultant coalescence of Spirit concepts and scenarios, is a process which occurs at a regional level also. In north-central Arnhem Land, with large numbers of Gupapuyngu and Djambarpuungu Yolngu speakers nearby (at Ramingining and Milingimbi) language groups with fewer speakers, such as Djinang, tend to adopt terms used by the more populous language groups. As Borsboom (1978:52) notes, Marrangu speakers use the Gupapuyngu word 'mokuy' coterminously with 'merri'. In addition, I found the Gupapuyngu term 'birrimbirr' used as an alternative to the Marrangu word 'wuguli'. This was not entirely appropriate as
'wuguli' has the extended meaning of shadow or illusion (denoted by a separate term, mali, in Yolngu formulations).

The post war population movements (from small, relatively isolated groups) to large established communities probably increased the rate of diffusion of the more widely spoken languages, as these became the currency for whites to communicate with the entire community. The ascendancy of the Gupapuyngu language at Milingimbi Mission is an example. Borsboom cites the instructive case of a Marrangu Djinang man who had, after living at Beswick Reserve for several years (70 kilometres east of Katherine) acquired the Rembarrnga language word "Belong" which he applied, seemingly without contradiction, to both Merri and Djaure (ibid:54). Demographic and linguistic factors clearly lead to the incorporation and consolidation of previously foreign names, categories and episodes and may cause the dislocation of existing beliefs.

This is an historical process also and acculturation has enjoyed a long history in north Australia. Macknight (1980:139-140) cites evidence for the introduction of Papuan burial customs in the case of the Tiwi people, while Warner describes the use of a Macassan designed mast in 'Murning' mortuary rites (1937/58:433). But these cases are suggestive only; what evidence do I have that there has been historical change regarding Merri and Mewal beliefs? My only guide is what people said to me, coupled with the fact that this part of Arnhem Land has known missionary contact since the 1920's.

Today, people's common response is that 'Heaven' is the 'true' afterlife destination. This belief existed despite a vast system of indigenous beliefs regarding life after death and spiritual renewal (witness the Luma Luma Dreaming). In this context Merri of various forms join communities of spirits of the dead in various locations in and near Marrangu
territory. Each of these locations are connected with a cluster of Dreaming scenarios. The wuguli spirit too has a complex existence after separation from the body, rejoining sources of ancestral power within the deceased's clan country and replenishing the source of conceptive potency in the process.

The impact of unitary, Christian-derived ideas regarding 'body' and 'soul', 'Heaven' and 'Hell' has been to make the local speculations less internally differentiated, with fewer details being recalled and certain scenarios being consolidated with others. For example, the Luma Luma Merri has its own Dreaming stories and associated sites and ceremonies, but some respondents claimed this Merri was simply a synonym for either the 'dead body' merri of the recent dead, or of the longer term dead. Such correlations certainly exist but it is likely these entities were once more sharply distinguished.

My argument here is that the process of syncretism has led to a less elaborate and precise framework of eschatological speculations and that this is crystallized in the response "we go to Heaven now". Kan (1989:54) has recorded a strikingly similar process in the case of the Tlingit (north-west North America), infamous in anthropology for the potlatch.

Tlingit, traditionally, distinguished three non-corporeal aspects of an individual:

(i) kaa toowu - one's mind, feelings and inner being that disappear at death;
(ii) kaa yakwahelqayu - the spirit of living and dead humans, sometimes known as 'ghost', which on death can go to the land of the dead, stay near the burial site or reincarnate in a matrilineal descendant of the deceased;
(iii) kaa yahaayi - the "shadow" of the deceased which goes to the village of the dead but may reincarnate in a matrilineal descendant.

Kan found that prior to the 1950's these concepts were often and concisely used, especially by older Tlingit. However, after this time, which coincided with increased proselytizing from local Christian orders, the Tlingit people were "somewhat uncertain about the difference between them [(ii) and (iii)]" (ibid). Uncertain, but not forgotten. Kan writes, "they [the Tlingit] still distinguished between one entity that left the body at death and remained forever in the land of the dead and another one that eventually
returned and was reincarnated" (ibid). Thus, despite uncertainty, the chief differences between kaa yakqwaheiyagui and kaa yahaayi were known, though with some subtleties lost and the Christianization of certain aspects (the land of the dead, for example, is now also 'Heaven').

Kan's Tlingit findings parallel the Marrangu case in that though the beliefs are still held they are less internally discriminating and have admitted Christian categories. Both Tlingit and Marrangu speculations posit several components of individual spirituality post-death, differences in their continuing existence and a mechanism of ancestral renewal in the life cycle. But further, the impact of a distinction between 'body' and 'soul', a separation foreign to indigenous thinking, has been to collapse the elaborate models of individual spirituality, resulting in conceptions of less clarity. In addition, former generic linkages with, for example, named homes of the dead, have been supplanted by indistinct categories of afterlife existence, such as 'Heaven'.

In noting historical changes towards ill-defined and less complex beliefs, one must not assume that the beliefs prior to European contact were pristine and systematically integrated. The extensivity of the Merri figure in Marrangu eschatology has, superficially at least, been simplified as a result of assimilation with Christian notions, but are these modifications a concern to Marrangu people and how do they view the changes? Are such modifications, in fact, only revealed when scrutinized in the process of enquiry? In fact, Marrangu people see no contradiction in the incorporation of Christian ideas within their own cosmology. Both sets of beliefs are viewed as 'straight', containing truth and 'the Law'. People profess their belief in Christianity to be a harmonious adjunct to their acceptance of the Dreaming. There is no sense, that I could detect, in which Christian ideas are seen as incompatible with indigenous convictions.
There is some evidence from elsewhere in Aboriginal Australia that investigation itself has highlighted ambiguities in indigenous beliefs that were of little concern to the believers themselves. Stanner (1963:260) in his investigation of Murinbata "pure", "clan" and "creature" spirits observed that, "there was no difficulty in getting the Murinbata to agree that their traditions left much unclear, but the conflicts were evidently of little interest to them". He goes on, noting how systematic enquiry led to the unearthing of apparent inconsistencies in Murinbata belief:

All the mythic personages seemed clear cut in ordinary conversation but lost outline or became shadowed by ambiguity under closer study. It seemed to me precisely that property which allowed both their mythological and ritual development... Eventually I saw the wisdom of not forcing the ideas to a precision that was not in them (ibid:265).

Clunies Ross and Hiatt too, in the case of the mythic interpretations of a ground sculpture by participants at a Gidjingali Larrgan (=Bardurru) ceremony, felt their insistence on a coherent interpretation forced ambiguities to come to light whereas otherwise they, "might never have become overt" (1977:139).

At Galawdjapin and Gattji I pursued an enquiry focusing on Merri and Mewal precisely because I detected confusions in responses about them. This thesis has been about showing the different groundings for these confusions. When in the field, I actively collected statements and opinions from as many Marrangu individuals as possible and compared and contrasted them, looking for inconsistencies. I pursued questions which seemed to present the greatest scope for illuminating the sharpest ambiguity. But the fact is I did receive divergent and conflicting statements regarding Merri and Mewal and that this was what triggered the investigation.

None of my hosts shared my thirst for seeking systematic clarification of the various aspects of Merri and Mewal. Like Stanner's informants, they showed "little interest" (ibid) in the puzzles of their own beliefs. For them, probably, no puzzles existed. Unlike
the researcher looking for 'an angle', my Marrangu hosts were not troubled by a couple of spirit concepts with closely parallel connotations. The faith that Merri and Mewal exist, as evidenced by transformations in Marrangu country, manikay and ceremony for example, and in lived experience, seemed to be satisfying enough and generated no predilection to quibble over a lack of clarity.

In the process of documentation ambiguities arise that otherwise would not be revealed. There are related reasons for this. When I first went to Galawdjapin in 1989 my knowledge of Marrangu concepts derived almost entirely from classifications presented by Borsboom in Maradjiri (1978b). I tended to contrast what I was told with his information. This comparison revealed real differences, as I showed in Chapters 3 and 4.

Beyond this, I was confronted at Galawdjapin by a mix of incomprehensible speech, unfamiliar people, places and situations and an inability and uncertainty in communicating. I do not understand many things said to me, nor was I able to think in a fully 'logical' way to Marrangu people. I asked questions which my hosts found self-evident: 'but what is Mewal?' - 'Mewal is our Dream'. My own ineptitude in deciphering the meaning of certain statements no doubt led to a greater degree of confusion in my own mind as to the interrelationship between Merri and Mewal, a state of mind then projected, to some extent, into the subject itself. Finally, as this thesis has shown, I came to the conclusion that Dreaming and experiential context is the critical measure to which one must refer in judgements about relative significations. I have emphasized that contemporary Marrangu cosmology is not a unified, integrated body of beliefs, but comprises 'heaps' of Dreaming scenarios "lumped together", as Morphy (1990:326) has put it for Yolngu clan cosmologies. There is no balanced "system" of coherent truths to be found in Marrangu beliefs, as Rose (1987:260) claims to have found among peoples south-west of Katherine. Marrangu manikay, for example, is a selective extrapolation of
Dreaming entities from two quite distinct scenarios. Other important Marrangu Dreamings, such as Water Goanna, salt water Catfish and Pelican are not represented in the song cycle as named subjects, although contextual markers probably evoke cues to them.

Marrangu cosmology places profound, transformative episodes alongside seemingly inconsequential events, such that significant elements seem disjointed by those of less weight. Does this reflect a process of change and development whereby the mythic and ritual scenarios that are actively celebrated (in ceremony and song for instance) are in a continual state of rotation? The question is to some extent historical and therefore unverifiable but, as Borsboom (1978b) has clearly and persuasively argued, ritual elements do undergo redefinition (the maradjiri bone pole is now the 'birth pole' for example) in response to changes of circumstances (the restriction of secondary burial rites, in this case).

I have no evidence to suggest that Merri and Mewal have undergone a process of redefinition, apart from some limiting of the Merri concept in eschatological speculations. But if lack of clarity in attitudes towards Merri has resulted from this, then one is not justified in thinking this is a corruption of a formerly unified and pristine belief system. Change is an adjustment to new circumstances as they develop. Aboriginal cosmology has probably always formulated and reformulated reality so that everything has a place, its own Law, in a moral, social, natural and cosmic order. Ambiguity is a necessary and no doubt positive outcome of this process, which is as much a part of literate, doctrinal traditions (see Tambiah, 1970: 41-42 in regard to the Pali Canon of Buddhism) as it is of oral traditions.
I have now reviewed some reasons for ambiguity in Marranguru cosmological concepts. Factors ranging from settlement patterns, regional linguistic diffusion, the introduction of Christian ideas, the process of systematic enquiry, my own contribution as interpreter as well as contextual factors specific to Merri and Mewal and cosmological systems generally have been considered to account for the variations in meaning and form.

In the final section of this thesis I broaden the focus considerably to look at the Dreaming as a philosophical system. Of specific interest is the mechanism whereby phenomenal reality exists as 'itself' but also as transformations of a transcendent though living cosmology. How does this happen and what are the implications? To structure this enquiry and to offer a contrast that is to the point, I critically employ Plato's Doctrine of Forms (also known as the Theory of Ideas). I suggest that Plato's Forms and Marranguru cosmology are both systems of ontology with certain structural and conceptual similarities, but that only the latter is, in addition, a system of symbolization. By this I mean that the Dreaming may be viewed as not only inherent in the visible world, but as a vehicle to transform and experience this world.

THE DREAMING AND PLATO'S DOCTRINE OF FORMS

A few Aboriginalists have addressed the relationship between Dreaming concepts and phenomenal reality in Platonic terms, either explicitly or implicitly. Stanner (1963) lists among his "positive features of Murinbata religion" the process whereby shapes, forms and patterns in the manifest world become, "types or symbols of ancient things" and that these ancient things or forces depicted in the Dreaming stories were "immanent in all such places" (1963:254). In pointing out this "correlative relation" (ibid) Stanner's language reflects an interest in the apparent transcendence and immanence of
the Dreaming in the 'lived-in' world, concerns central to Plato's thought on the Forms. Hiatt and Rhys Jones (1988) make a more substantial though still brief excursion into ancient Greek thought, with specific reference to Plato's Forms. They found, "Aboriginal totemism ... contains the lineaments of a Doctrine of Forms" (ibid:18) because contemplations upon the Dreaming such as maniaky songs, do not investigate appearances but, "represent or epitomize the structure of the cosmos" (ibid:19). They write:

"Manikay exhibit some striking features in common with Platonism. In both cases, particulars are seen as manifestations of an archetypal or ideal form; more importantly, the archetypes ... are not conceived merely as essential qualities residing in the natural species or kind, but as separate entities inhabiting a transcendent dimension of reality ibid)."

To appreciate this invocation of Platonism and understand what Stanner (1965:227) has called the "vast sign system" that is the Aboriginal universe, one must first be clear as to Plato's contribution. What Plato meant by 'Forms' underwent development throughout his life's work. In his early writings one finds a notion that the essence of a thing, such as 'Bed', is to be found in every particular bed. In his later writings Plato advocates the position that the essential 'form' of 'Bed' is but imperfectly copied in every particular bed. Plato therefore argued for the existence of universal Forms for objects (such as a bed) and qualities such as courage, justice and beauty (although in Parmenides 130, Socrates explicitly denies the existence of Forms for hair, mud and sealing wax). What Plato searched for in the notion of Forms is told in the Euthyphro (6), an early dialogue:

"Tell me, what is the nature of this Form (idea) so then by looking to it and using it as a pattern I may say that any act done by you or another... has such a character (quoted in Ross,1951:13).

For example, Plato wants to know the true reality of 'courage', not the multitude of people or actions that are 'courageous'. Once the principle or Form or Idea of 'courage' is known then all instances of 'courage' will also be known because, for Plato, definitions precede existence and "to every common name there answers a single entity which is referred to in every occurrence of the name" (Ross,ibid:11)."
The root meaning of the Greek word, eidos, which Plato used and which has been translated into 'idea' or 'form' approximates most closely "appearance" or "look" (Grubbe, 1935:1). For Plato, 'Form' connoted constitution, condition, "the characteristic that determines the concept" and "the objective reality underlying the concept" (ibid:15). One might recall the entailments of the Djareware Dreaming, noted in Chapter 3, as an instance of this generalised meaning of Form.

In Plato's early writings he did not view the Forms as transcendent, that is, with 'objective reality'. For example, in Meno (72) Plato writes, "all the virtues have an identical Form" and in the Symposium views, according to Ross:

> The Ideas as being immanent in particular things... Present in them, placed in them, common to them; the particulars, in turn, possess 'it' or share in 'it' (ibid:21).

In the Republic (435) Plato argues "justice" can be found 'in' a just city, a just state, a just individual, such that "there will be no difference between a just man and a just city, so far as the characteristic of justice goes" (1955 edition:185).

In subsequent writings, from the Phaedo onwards, however, and faced with the realisation that not every particular conforms in every aspect with the Form that it represents, Plato postulated a transcendent reality for the Forms whereby they exist preeminent to the imperfections of ephemerality. Plato viewed the Form world as eternal, perfect, orderly, harmonious and beautiful. Plato's language changes from Forms 'sharing' or 'participating' in particularities, to Forms being 'standards' or 'limits' to particular things which 'imitate' or 'copy' the Form. Hence in the Timaeus (28) Plato says Forms are "the eternally unchanging... pattern", existing "in themselves" (1965 edition:41) whereas things in this world are "a visible and changing copy" (V.48: 67).
Plato populated his Form cosmos, a kind of transcendent Dreaming, with the ultimate creative essence of "being, space and becoming" (*Timaeus*, 52:72) which included the qualities (not substances) of fire, earth, air and water and a divine intelligence or principle of order, called Demiourgos, which was nevertheless causally dependent upon the Forms. Although Plato saw the Forms as occupying a reality beyond the transitoriness and imperfections of the visible world, this reality was assailable by "thought" (*Timaeus*, 51:71) or "mind" (*Republic*, 511:277).

While the Forms occupied a transcendent reality in Plato's cosmology, by contemplation and heightened awareness people could gain cognizance of them, though the Forms remained "imperceptible to the senses" (*Timaeus*: ibid). In this sense, which is how Plato concluded his writings (White, 1981:210), the Forms are both transcendent with their own cosmology and immanent in the 'minds' of people (if not the world of things). Ross (ibid:231) has suggested this is how Plato wanted his Forms to be understood (i.e, as both transcendent and immanent) and that he thought, "the use of two complementary metaphors [e.g, 'sharing' and 'imitating'] is better than the sole use of either" (ibid).

Plato's thought illuminates the notion of the Dreaming in that, like the Forms (if his closing position is to be taken as representative of his overall view) it is thought both transcendent from and immanent in the visible world. The Dreaming, as stated in Chapter 1, has several branches of meaning: it is the story of life and cosmic beginnings, the contemporaneously instituted principle of how things are as they are (the Law), the present moral order, the quality strength, straightness and power in things (madayin) and the essence of all things. The Dreaming is, as Stanner (1965:229) has suggested, one system implying many things -- body, spirit, name, shadow, track, place and totem such that, "cosmogony, cosmology and ontology are embedded in a single matrix" (Williams, 1986:22). The Dreaming, then, is a theory of knowable reality but more than a theory, a
way of conversing with and symbolising this reality. Plato's Doctrine of Forms is also a
theory of knowable reality but not, I think, a theory of symbolism.

Plato saw particulars in the manifest world as imperfectly corresponding to the Forms
themselves as the structure of manifest reality. That is, one might assume, Plato would
contend the substance 'honey' is a reflection of the Form 'Honey' and if this substance
honey were to be something else, a rock for example, then it would no longer abide to the
Form 'Djareware', but to the Form 'Rock'. But the transformation whereby rocks are
Honey or trees are "that Dream" -- that is, the transformation whereby visible
particulars are representations of different Dreaming Forms -- is precisely that which
is common in Aboriginal speculations. It is in this process of symbolic transformation
that the Dreaming differs from Plato's Doctrine of Forms.

Whereas Plato posits an a priori link between Forms and attendant particulars, in
Marrangu thought the physical appearance of something is irrelevant in judgements about
what it 'truly is'. More important is the perceived reality of that 'thing' in terms of
cosmology, its associated symbolism and its place in corporeal reality.

Hence 'a jungle' may be viewed as 'a jungle' or a 'rock as Honey' or a body of people as
'Honey People' or a corpse as 'merri'. In each case the Dreaming Form dynamically
constructs the reality of the 'thing' in question, rather than 'things' being mirror (or
imperfect) images of the Dreaming Forms. Plato's Forms, as I understand, do not envisage
this dynamic process. Plato would see human groups, for example, as designated not by
the Form 'Honey' but by a Form such as 'Community', or 'Republic', or 'City'. I am not

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2 Here I am in danger of over-abstracting the notion of 'the Dreaming' as Marrangu people do not
speak of the Dreaming as something separate from the lived-in world. By the phrase 'this
reality' I mean the reality of the Aboriginal universe that creates the notion of 'The Dreaming'
and not an autonomous realm of existence wholly separate from the peopled universe.
saying Marrangu people think of themselves as 'Bees' or 'Honey' and deny they are human, but they do classify their being via the reality of the Dreaming that established them as 'Marrangu', Honey People.

My point then is that while Plato's Forms and the Aboriginal Dreaming are both transcendent and eternal, only the latter offers a dynamic way of bestowing meaning upon the 'lived-in' world as possessing a unique spiritual character. Plato, in contrast, was anxious not to grant the Forms a "subjective reality" because he was uneasy about what human opinion may ascribe to them (Ross, ibid: 19). But for Marrangu people there is no such anxiety: the Dreaming is the Law of all true knowledge and appearance, not solely a subjective reality. People trust what they take to be efficacious Dreaming transformations in places, objects, songs, ceremonies, etc., by virtue of the involvements of these entities in the ultimate, objective reality of the Dreaming. ³

In this sense the Dreaming transcends the changing, visible world because the true nature of things is not apprehended by the senses -- rocks are not rocks but Honey, for example. Unseen, incorporeal forces pervade the Aboriginal universe as routinely as one encounters phenomenal changeability: for instance, babies are made by dream, spirit-conception and intercourse; bone and blood are both physical substances and seats of spirituality; and spirit possession causes aggressive behaviour and incomprehensible speech.

One can discern the principle that cosmology and life processes exist together in a closely condensed framework of knowledge, awareness and experience. To be part of this world is to interact not only with the "choir and furniture" of earth, but simultaneously with the

³ Therefore, to describe the Aboriginal Dreaming in the terms of Platonic philosophy it needs to be acknowledged that the 'Neo-Platonic Heaven' has provision for an eternally ever-changing, dynamic transfiguration of forms (in places, objects, songs...) occurring in space and time.
"Dream Time marvels" as well (Stanner, 1965:233). Such omniscience offers, to use Plato's terminology, "a certain amount of being and an infinite amount of non-being" (in the *Sophist* 256; cited by Grubbe, 1935:42). But Plato saw the 'infinity of non-being' as assailable only by conscious truth seeking. Aboriginal conceptions see the breadth of both being and non-being in the dailiness of mortal existence.

The key to this 'condensation principle', whereby objective ideals are brought within the gamut of subjective experience, is the autonomy and moral responsibility of people in making the Dreaming immanent. Various ways of doing this have been explored in this thesis and can be summarized briefly. To interact with and care for country, for instance, is to encounter the same space named and given a moral face by Djarware and Mewal on their Dreaming journey (Chapter 2 and 3). Social (baparru) relations are mapped onto country in recognition of this Dreaming track (Chapter 2). Manikay names invoke the names of places and things spoken by the Dreaming Beings (Chapter 4) and rites perform transformations whereby Dreaming scenarios and Beings are embodied in the collective actions of participants -- an interaction based on mutual dependency (Chapter 5). The experience of death, perhaps more than any other in the Marrangu life cycle, offers the potential for individual incorporation with the eternal reality of the Dreaming. The extensivity of Marrangu eschatological speculations reflects this (Chapters 3 and 5). Finally, (in Chapter 6) I indicated how the 'fleshy' parts of being are integral with the spiritual parts, in conception, body substance and affliction.

The complexity and subtlety of the Dreaming conception is such that transcendent, objective reality, the visible world and subjective and bodily experience are incorporated within its compass. The existence of Spirit entities, such as Merri and Mewel, which do not have material referents except by known extension, as well as the events of the creation stories, signify the existence of a living, transcendent, reality.
But, equally, the identification of commonplace objects within the visible landscape and the association of the living body and human mortality with spiritual processes and outcomes, highlights the immanence and tangibility of the Dreaming. Moreover, the entire conception is a dynamic one such that the Dreaming structures experience of sensory reality and this structure is continually renewed (in ceremonies, songs etc.) and updated (the introduced buffalo is now thought of as 'merri', for example).

Plato’s Forms, by the conclusion of his writings (eg., in Timaeus) were envisaged as transcendent and did not exhibit the same degree of dynamism and metaphoric thought. In Plato’s view, the relation between unchanging Forms and particular instances is characteristically one of statis, of reflection or ‘mirror image’. If, for example, ‘snow’ ceases to be cold it ceases to be an instance of the form ‘snow’.

Plato’s Forms do not operate as a system of symbolization for the instances of another Form, but as a model of ‘true’ reality and knowledge as constructed. The concept of the Dreaming operates both as the essence of reality and as a system of metaphoric condensation. There is an overall patterning in the Dreaming that establishes relationships between people and the phenomenal world but which, also, provides the symbols on which the relationships are based.

This thesis has shown that the Dreaming does not constitute a fully integrated and harmonious encapsulation of reality. Dynamism is about change and enhancement not balance and perfect symmetry. This work makes clear that regarding Merri and Mewal, there is considerable overlap and ambiguity in cosmology, in the subjective formulation of experience and in the attributes of these two Spirit entities. The coalescence of realities makes precise contextual denotations difficult, but highlights the dynamic ambiguity of Marrangu cosmological categories.
"IS WULAKI DJINANG?"

Throughout my period of fieldwork I received contradictory responses to the above question. Generally, Murrungun and Marrangu clan respondents claimed Wulaki as a Djinang speaking clan, while Wulaki women (no Wulaki men survive) claim Djinang is not their language and that 'Wulaki' is actually their language name\(^1\). Wulaki women at Gattji say their clan name is Djelaworwor. This view is in agreement with Borsboom's (1978b:23) finding that Djelaworwor is this clan's name, but he stresses 'Wulaki' and 'Djinang' languages are "almost similar". Borsboom (ibid) includes Djelaworwor individuals among the "Djinang community" at Maningrida in the mid 1970's. As this question seems to revolve around linguistic evidence, this designation should be looked at more closely.

Several linguists and ethnographers have made contributions. Schebeck (n.d:11) in a survey of north-east Arnhem Land language places Wulaki in an "unclassified" grouping, separate from "Djinhang". Thomson (Peterson, 1976:103) lists Wulaki as distant from Djinang but seems muddled as to just who is 'Djinang', claiming erroneously two Djinang speaking clans -- Mildjingi and Balmbi -- as distinct language units also. Anderson (1988:7) in a site report for the Northern Land Council refers to a "Djinang Wulaki language" being spoken by Wagu clanspeople, whose country borders Djelaworwor clan country. Waters in his Djinang dictionary (1983) includes Wulaki as a dialect of Djinang, but emphasizes this is not the name of the clan that speaks this dialect (1983:iv). However, in the dictionary proper he does define 'Wulaki' as "clan name [of] territory adjoining Burarra territory in the west" (ibid:112). To add to the uncertainty Waters lists 'Djilawurwur'.

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\(^1\) Wulaki country lies immediately north and west of Marrangu country.
(=Djelaworwor) as, "a clan name for Wulaki people" (ibid:31). Other names of Wulaki clans are Murrungun (yirritjing), Warrda Warrda (yirritjing) and, according to Anderson, Wagu (yirritjing). However, on the basis of language the question of whether Wulaki is Djinang remains unresolved.

Borsboom (1978a:39) has compiled a list of terms from Wulaki and an unspecified Djinang dialect. His aim was to stress the differences between these two "very close" languages. On the left are the English equivalents. In brackets are the Marrangu Djinang terms I recorded.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ENGLISH</th>
<th>WULAKI</th>
<th>DJINANG</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>no</td>
<td>ngege</td>
<td>(ngeki)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>there</td>
<td>nguneban</td>
<td>(ngununge)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>where</td>
<td>njimbere</td>
<td>(ngalungi)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>father</td>
<td>njonje</td>
<td>(marlow)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>anja</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mother</td>
<td>amma</td>
<td>(ngambire)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>brother</td>
<td>nguwwwe</td>
<td>(wowe-EB)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(gurrilmulga-YB)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sister</td>
<td>gedda</td>
<td>(gardidi)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mother's brother</td>
<td>bebe</td>
<td>(bebe)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This comparison certainly shows clear differences between 'Djinang' and 'Wulaki', but also similarities. Note a high degree of correspondence is found across all three columns, such as the word for 'where', but for others the variations are marked, 'father' for example. There is not a consistent pattern of variation. Indeed, the Wulaki word for mother, 'amma' and the second Wulaki term for father, 'anja' actually correspond with the Gidjingali (Burarra) terms and not the Djinang...
counterparts (Borsboom, ibid). Wood (1972:8) has also compared Wulaki vocabulary with Djinang usages. He found of a 270 word survey Wulaki had seventy-two words in common with Marrangu Djinang (27%). Revealingly, Wood also found the Djinang dialects Marrangu and Murrungun have the same degree, 74 words of correspondence. Wulaki therefore stood in no greater contrast to Marrangu Djinang than did at least one other Djinang dialect.

So, the linguistic evidence is inconclusive. My own guess is that Wulaki once was a language unit, like Djinang or Burarra, but now due to declining numbers and strong marriage ties with Marrangu Djinang is thought of as a Djinang dialect name. Wulaki speaking individuals at Gattji, however, are adamant their clan name is Djelaworwor, not Wulaki.

My answer to the question "is Wulaki Djinang?" is: Wulaki people are more Djinang now than what they were in the past. This being due to declining numbers and closer interaction with Marrangu Djinang people at Galawdjapin and Gattji. Wulaki people, it appears, are increasingly oriented toward the Goyder (Glyde) River side of north central Arnhem Land, where Djinang speakers are centered, than the predominantly Burarra speaking Blyth River side. The establishment of Ramingining and the move from Maningrida since the 1970's has contributed to this reorientation. It remains to be seen whether Wulaki clan lands undergo a similar reorganisation with the passing of the last Wulaki clanspeople.
GLOSSARY

balatj - synonym for stringybark tree
baparru - group of clans sharing single Dreaming track or property
barbar - carved ridge on hollow log ossuary
bara - north-west monsoon; a Marrangu manikay song subject
bardurru - final mortuary rite; type of hollow log ossuary; alternate name for Merri
bemborlai - synonym for stringybark tree
birrara - tree platform burial
birrimbirr - see wuguli
bogabod - bone exhumation ceremony
bordjirrai - literally 'ear'; forked stick used in Bardurru ceremony
boruru - a Marrangu cloud Dreaming
bunggul - song with dance
bukubut - see bogabod
bullia - salt water catfish; a Marrangu manikay song subject
Burarra - Cape Stewart area linguistic group
but but - grass used to collect Sugar Bag; used by galka in sorcery
dada - fire and smoke ceremony in mortuary sequence
djadjimirri - grave burial
djareware - honey; Marrangu Dreaming Honey
djarra - paperbark recepticle for bones during bogabod
djarrka - water goanna
Djelaworwor - clan name of Wulaki speaking people at Gattji
djibbadai - ceremonial forked stick used in Bogabod and Bardurru and by Mewal in
Djareware Dreaming
djikada - see bullia
Djinang - north-central Arnhem Land linguistic group
djirrk - dilly bag; womb
djunakai - name of clans calling each other 'mother'; ceremonial role (also called 'policeman')
dupun- hollow log ossuary

Galawdjapin- Marrangu outstation 26km north-west of Ramingining

galka- sorcerer

ganingalkngalk- a Wulaki Spirit Being (similar to Mewal)

ganydjarr- power, strength, stamina

gapi- water; a Marrangu Dreaming

Gattji- Wulaki outstation and 'big' name area 20km south of Milingimbi Island

golwire- cabbage palm; a Marrangu song subject

gumununggu- white clay

guraknere- 'top' company of Marrangu Djinang clan

larrgan- see bardurru

madayin- law; sacredness; name of ceremony

mala- patrilineal landowning clan

mali- shadow, shade, image, reflection, ghost

manikay- genre of clan songs sung by men only

maradjiri- name of ceremony and pole used in this ceremony

Marrangu- honey; Dhuwungi moiety Honey Dreaming Being; clan name; baparru name

marrngitji- healer

mekki- red ochre

melwatdjidi- a Marrangu cloud Dreaming

merri- a Djinang Marrangu Spirit concept: Jungle Spirit Being; group of these spirits; name of spirits of recent and long term dead; corpse

mewal- a Djinang Marrangu Spirit concept: companion of the Honey Being in the 'Mewal and Djareware Story'; Jungle Spirit Being; group of these spirits

minimbirri- jungle

minitji dambung- cycad palm nuts

mokuy- Yolngu term for 'merri'

mongon- see Nongere
mongonirri- see Nongere

morrulul- blue fly linked with sorcery

mullidjji- fish trap; used in Bardurru ceremony and part of Rungo Yul Story; the first rain clouds created in the Dreaming

mungy mungy- bone used by merri to cause injury or death

murja- pelican; a Marrangu Dreaming

narge narge- native cat or possum species; a Marrangu manikay song subject

Nongere- 'bottom' company of Djinang Marrangu clan

nudjambungi- bush string; used on mullidjji fish trap in Bardurru ceremony

rirrkindji- stone used to crush bones in Bardurru ceremony

rungun- paperbark tree

wak wak- crow; a Marrangu manikay song subject

wandjar- washing ceremony in mortuary sequence

wangarr- 'the Dreaming'

warbalulu- see murja

warrala warrala- a Liyagalawumir manikay song subject; a Mewal-like Being; ?-a Wulaki Dreaming Being

wirgugu- funerary wake

wuguli- enduring, ancestrally regenerative 'life force' of individual spirituality

Wulaki- north-central Arnhem Land language group

wuima- pre-wet thunder, lightning and rain

wunggutj- floodwater; a Marrangu manikay song subject

wurrgi- flower, especially stringybark tree flower

wurriganydjarr- see Marrangu

yan- language and dialect; law

yarrpany- see djareware

yurra- 'mixed up' songs; used in sorcery
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