"WE ARE FAMILY, WE ARE ONE":

An Aboriginal Christian Movement in Arnhem Land, Australia

Ingrid Slotte

A thesis submitted for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
of the Australian National University

June 1997
DECLARATION

Except where otherwise indicated
this thesis is my own work

Ingrid Slotte
June 1997
CAUTIONARY NOTE

This thesis contains some names of Yolŋu people who are now deceased. The thesis may also contain photos of people who have died since the completion of the thesis. Since it is Yolŋu custom not to mention names or show photographs of deceased people, great care should be taken so as not to cause unnecessary distress to relatives.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

My analysis of Yolnu Christianity presented in this thesis reflects a combination of research interests dating back to my years as an undergraduate student at the University of Adelaide. During this time I was fascinated by films about Yolnu culture which displayed both the beauty and complexity of Yolnu ceremonial life, and I completed an Honours thesis about Yolnu funeral ceremonies. I also had a more general interest in social change, indigenous responses to colonialism and the Pacific region. Then, by chance, I came across a remarkable photo by Swain (1988) of Warlpiri people performing a re-enactment of Biblical events through indigenous dance and I began to feel that Aboriginal Christianity would be a worthwhile subject for a post-graduate degree.

During the several years of research, field-work and thesis writing which the production of this doctoral thesis has involved, I have become indebted to many people and several institutions. First and foremost I am indebted to the Australian National University (ANU) in Canberra which offered me a generous post-graduate scholarship.

I am immensely grateful for the support provided by the Department of Archaeology and Anthropology at the ANU, and in particular my supervisor Dr. Ian Keen who read and commented on fieldwork reports and all the draft chapters. Dr. Nicolas Peterson has also provided continuous advice and assistance and read and commented on many of the drafts which I produced in the process of thesis writing. I am grateful to the department for providing me with office-space and equipment for my fieldwork such as tape-recorders and camera. I thank David McGregor for his assistance with the technical equipment and Debbie McGrath, Helen Nicol, Alexandra Hill, Jan Lee and Kathy Cullen of the department’s administrative staff. Kevin Cowan in the Department of Geography at ANU produced the maps and ANU Graphics reproduced the photos for the thesis.
Furthermore the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies gave me a grant to cover costs for fuel for a private vehicle in the field and for the payment of assistants in the field. The library staff at the Institute helped me many times to find relevant material, both published and unpublished.

I am much indebted to Djon Mundine who was co-ordinator of Bula-Bula Arts in Ramingining and who was of crucial assistance in arranging the fieldwork and in introducing me to the community. Djon Mundine and Belinda Scott generously allowed me and my husband to stay with them in the initial fieldwork period when there was no other accommodation available in the community. Throughout our time in Ramingining, Djon Mundine offered invaluable advice and assistance. Other staff members and the Ramingining school also offered temporary accommodation.

I am thankful to the Ramingining council for their support of my research project and for giving us the use of one of the Yolŋu houses for one year. It is difficult in the short space provided here to mention all the Yolŋu people who offered their help with this research project. First of all I wish to thank my sister, Ada Nawurulawuy, who adopted me into her family and the Djambarrpuwingulu clan and gave me my "skin-name" (sub-section name) gahi-gahi. My husband was adopted by the Gupapuyulu clan and given the skin-name Gurufi. I owe a great deal to my adoptive family, most of whom were very active in the church. I thank my mari (MMB) Dick Milurrurr, lay-pastor in the church and council president for some time, and my dhuwaymiripyu (sisters- and brother-in-law) Wendy Bandhaminy, Kathy Maranyikuwuy, Linda Wulamara, George Gurrulan and Nancy Warnathana.

A number of other people from Ramingining must also be mentioned. John Baya, a Gupapuyulu man and pastor appointed by the Uniting Church in Ramingining, spent a great deal of time talking to me about Yolŋu Christianity as well as sharing his memories of the mission days. I am grateful to him for allowing me to cite extensively from his
sermons and stories in the thesis. Joanne Balangat, also of the Gupapuyngu clan, provided crucial help with transcribing and translating material from tapes, in particular in the later stages of fieldwork.

Throughout my field-work I worked with a broad range of people in Ramingining and consequently made many contacts apart from my adoptive family. The people who live in Ramingining are from numerous clans, some, such as the Djambarrpuyngu and Gupapuyngu, are land-owners from the nearby islands and were more closely connected with the old Methodist mission station at Milingimbi. Other people in Ramingining are land-owners from the surrounding local areas and speak a number of Djinaŋ dialects, which are very different from the island dialects.

Among the Djinaŋ-speaking people that I wish to thank are Bridget Djingardarr and Dick Mewimi from Gattji outstation with whom I often spent time early in the fieldwork period, and David Malangi and his extended family from Yathalamarra outstation with whom I became close friends. From Yathalamarra outstation I especially wish to thank Elsie Ganbada, Shirley Myuku and Margaret Ginjinimi. I learned a great deal from them about a Yolŋu world-view, including their interpretations of Christianity. Shirley Myuku spent many hours assisting me with transcription and translation of sermons, testimonies and songs even though she was also working full-time at the Ramingining health centre. Roy Yangaygay, a Ganalbinju speaker and his family, shared many Yolŋu Christian stories with me.

Virtually all of the people mentioned above shared their memories from the mission days. Others who have helped with mission stories but who have not been mentioned yet are Paddy Dhatanu, Djanpalil, Bowanmangu, Trevor Djarragaygay, Mary Waykangin, Dick Yambil, Milgurr and Eva Wakwarr.
As part of the fieldwork I made occasional trips to the neighbouring communities Galiwin'ku and Milingimbi. Among the Yolgu people I wish to thank at Milingimbi are Larry Bilanya, Daisy Namarnatj, James Gurrwanju, Dorothy Maywalan, Alfred Guupun and Charles Manydjari. At Galiwin'ku and Mapurr, one of its outstations, I thank my adoptive family members for their hospitality.

During my fieldwork I was delighted to know that two fellow female research students were present in neighbouring communities - Fiona Magowan at Galiwin'ku and Franca Tamisari at Milingimbi. It has been of great value to me to be able to share reflections on research with them. I am indebted to Franca Tamisari for introductions to people and hospitality at Milingimbi, and to both Franca and Fiona for reading and commenting on sections of the thesis. At the beginning of my fieldwork Craig Elliot, who had recently finished an M.A. thesis through the ANU, revisited Gattji, a Ramingining outstation and kindly introduced me to the people there.

From the Uniting Church I wish to thank Howard Amery who visited Ramingining occasionally in his capacity as parish educator. Howard provided me with much help in explaining church structure, and since he travelled around the Northern Territory congregations as part of his work, was able to share some information about the church in other parts of Arnhem Land. I also thank Margaret Brookway and Stuart McMillan at the Northern Regional Council of Congress office in Darwin for their kind assistance with many inquiries. Furthermore, I am thankful to Dr. Rev. Djiriyini Gondarra for allowing me to cite briefly from some of his unpublished works.

Margaret Miller and Sandra Waugarr at the Djambarrpuyulu Bible Translation Centre at Galiwin'ku have helped me by checking through my Appendix of Christian songs. I am grateful for their comments on spelling as well as the additional song-texts and information which they provided.
Staff at the Northern Territories Archives Service were very helpful in finding relevant documents concerning the mission era as well as staff at the Canberra Archives. I am grateful for their permission to cite and include material from the archives in the thesis. The Nungalinya college library in Darwin helped me find further relevant information and as did Lloyd Wilson, also of Nungalinya College, who supplied me with statistics and information about the college itself.

Others whose assistance I would like to acknowledge are Dr. Tom Ernst of the Charles Sturt University who has very kindly read a draft of the thesis and provided helpful comments on theoretical aspects of the thesis. Dr. Michael Young of the Research School of Pacific Studies in Canberra and Dr. Richard Eves gave me references to Christianity in the Pacific which broadened my perspective considerably. Dr. John Rudder provided help with computing problems and by lending me documents produced by the church. Heather McDonald, who has been a fellow Ph.D. student at ANU, gave me many opportunities to air ideas and compare data, in particular since her research is also on Aboriginal Christianity, but in the Kimberleys, Western Australia. She also provided much appreciated assistance by proof-reading the thesis.

I thank my husband Michael Ward for his continuous support and willingness to move first to Canberra and then to Arnhem Land. He provided much assistance in the field by repairing the house which the Ramingining council provided, by keeping our 1952 Willy's Jeep roadworthy and by sharing his own perceptions on our life in Ramingining. Finally I wish to thank my parents in Sweden, Max and Ingalill Slotte, who have provided continuous financial and emotional support over the years in which I have been a student.
NOTE ON YOLNU ORTHOGRAPHY


a, a, b, d, dh, dj, e, g, i, k, l, m, n, nh, ny, η, o, p, r, rr, t, tj, u, w, y

The letter η is a nasal sound. The letters l, d, t, n are produced by placing the tongue in a retroflexed position. The letter a is a short vowel and the letter a is a long vowel. The description of Yolnu orthography below follows Galpagalpa, Wanymulu, de Veer, and Wilkinson (1984:10):

Consonants

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Labial</th>
<th>Apico-dental</th>
<th>Apico-palatal</th>
<th>Lamino-dental</th>
<th>Lamino-dental</th>
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Vowels

Short i u Long e o

There are several languages and dialects spoken in Ramingining. The words which are glossed in the text of this thesis are, unless otherwise indicated, words which are commonly used by speakers of the dialects from the Dhuwal and Dhuwala language groups, for instance Djambarrpuyulu and Gupapuyulu.  

1. The Zorc (1986) Yolnu-Matha dictionary orders words slightly differently from the official alphabet order, see Zorc’s comments on p 1-2.

This thesis contains frequent citations from Yolŋu people. When I cite from historical narratives and sermons I have followed Yolŋu advice by stating the name of the speaker. Yolŋu at Ramingining suggested to me that if I include people's names with the citations, then Yolŋu can feel that they are learning something from a relative, not just a Balanda (European) book when and if they read the thesis. Furthermore, historical material was often obtained while sitting down with elderly people, surrounded by members of their extended family who also listened with interest. In this sense, both historical narratives, as well as sermons, were delivered to an audience of people. In the case of citations referring to other material, the speakers have not been identified in order to protect their privacy.

When Yolŋu people speak English they usually use the Yolŋu word *gadj* in place of the English "and". In order to make the citations easier to read, each time *gadj* occurs it has been replaced with the English counterpart. Sometimes an English word is omitted by the speaker and in that case the missing word has been added in brackets [...].

Many of the citations were made in English with a few Yolŋu words included. In such cases I have simply provided a translation of the Yolŋu word in brackets. When a citation in the thesis is a translation of a statement made in a Yolŋu dialect, I have added a footnote stating the original dialect in which the statement was made. Citations which were made in Gupapuyŋu or Djamarrpuyŋu I have translated myself except where otherwise indicated. Extracts from speeches in the church or stories told in other languages such as Liyagalawumirr or Ganalbingu have been translated with the help of Yolŋu assistants.
ABSTRACT

This thesis presents an analysis of Christianity as practised by Yolgu people in Ramingining, an Aboriginal community in north-central Arnhem Land. The analysis shows that Yolgu Christians have creatively incorporated Christianity with a wider world view based on the activities of Ancestral beings. In this sense Yolgu have not "converted" to Christianity if this is taken to mean a relinquishment of beliefs in Ancestral beings or a cessation of participation in non-Christian ceremonies.

The process whereby Yolgu incorporate Christianity is complex. Yolgu Christians profess a belief in both God and the Ancestors without apparent contradictions, but old men, who officially control much secret-sacred ritual knowledge, are far less involved with the church than women. The frequency of church activity fluctuates, taking place in a series of short bursts, referred to as revivals, and church attendance is related to the pattern of ceremonial activity. Church attendance is low at the height of ceremonial activity. Christians themselves deal with the coexistence of two potentially conflicting belief systems by prioritising church over ceremonies, by arguing that God made the Ancestral beings and by being selective in their adoption of Christian beliefs and practices.

Taken-for-granted attitudes towards religion in the Ancestral domain inform many Yolgu Christian practices. This process is referred to as "internal conversion". Influences from outside such as government and church policies are referred to as factors of "external conversion". The thesis shows that processes of both internal and external conversion have been important in shaping Yolgu Christianity. In using the terms internal and external conversion, and in arguing that both processes are influential I am following Barker (1993).
Yolnu Christianity is a contemporary social movement through which Yolnu express a number of issues which are relevant to them. An important theme of the movement is unity, in particular between Arnhem Land Aboriginal people, but also between Yolnu and Balanda (Europeans), and between Yolnu and all humanity as expressed through sermons and speeches. Another important theme is the Yolnu wish for greater social justice in their relationship to the wider Australian community.

My analysis of Yolnu Christianity proceeds by examining different "expressions" such as historical narratives, rituals, sermons and healing practices. Each form of expression reveals a different layer of a Yolnu understanding of Christianity. In taking this approach to the data the thesis is informed by the theoretical approach taken by Victor Turner and Edward Bruner in their (1986) volume *The Anthropology of Experience.*
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CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

This thesis provides an analysis of Christian beliefs and practices among the Yolnu people of Arnhem Land, Australia. In contrast to the Pacific, few detailed studies of contemporary Christianity have been carried out in Australia. Instead, the majority of studies have been concerned with Aboriginal responses to missions from a historical perspective. When contemporary Christianity has been examined it has often been within the context of the question why Aboriginal people have not converted to Christianity as in the work by Tonkinson (1974), Anderson (1988), Burridge (1988), Kolig (1988) and Yengoyan (1993).

While there is no doubt that Aboriginal people's experiences of missionization have often been negative, with Christian churches acting as "the hand-maiden of Europeanization" (R.M. & C.H. Berndt 1988:53), it is also true that in some areas of Australia missions have been refuges for Aboriginal people at times of expanding European settlement (R.M & C.H Berndt 1988:46). In spite of the varied experiences which Aboriginal people have had with Christian missions around Australia, it seems that in more recent years, in particular since the late 1970s, there are frequent reports of an increased interest in Christianity among Aboriginal people, yet few studies so far have analysed in detail the beliefs and practices of Aboriginal Christians.

In Australia the exceptions are the dissertations presented by Calley (1955), Bos (1988b), and Hume (1989). The research presented in this thesis is an effort to redress this imbalance by providing a detailed analysis of both the form and the content of Yolnu Christianity, showing what it means to be a Christian in a Yolnu community. By form, I
mean the rituals by which Yolŋu express their faith, referred to as Fellowship meetings and Rallies. By content, I mean the topic of sermons, the themes of the songs, and the narratives people tell about their experience of God.

The questions raised in this thesis were inspired by the 1979 Christian Revival in Arnhem Land as documented by Bos (1988b), and a desire to find out what had happened in the aftermath of this Revival. Other reports of Aboriginal people adopting Christian practices by, for instance, Swain (1988) about Christian corroborees (*purlapa*) among the Warlpiri, inspired further questions. Were there any specific indigenous adaptations of Christianity as described by Swain among the Warlpiri in central Australia? What had happened after the Revival in Arnhem Land? Was the Revival just a short-lived phenomenon, perhaps like the brief surge of interest in Christianity as reported by Rose (1988) at Yaraling in the Northern Territory? What role had the Methodist mission played in shaping Yolŋu Christian beliefs? These were among the questions that initiated my interest in this research.

Whatever form Christianity was taking in Arnhem Land I realised that it needed to be considered, at least to some extent, in the context of a fifty year long period of Methodist missionization which lasted from the 1920s to the 1970s. The missions had small beginnings but they gradually grew in size, in particular after the Second World War. Missionary aims of seeing Yolŋu settled on the missions coincided with the government's policy of assimilation adopted in 1951. In 1972 the tide turned when the government announced a new policy of self-determination in relation to Aboriginal people. As a consequence the missionaries gradually withdrew and were replaced by Aboriginal Community Councils. Bos (1988b:77) reports that during the years 1972-78, the first years of self-determination, church attendance was low. Then in 1979 a Christian Revival began at Elcho Island and spread through Arnhem Land. Considering then the long background of Christian influences in Arnhem Land, I intended to find out what role Christianity had, if any, among the Yolŋu in the 1990s.
The research community

Ramingining, where the field-work for this thesis was carried out is located in north-central Arnhem Land approximately 400 kilometres east of Darwin, and twenty kilometres from the coast (Map 1). The township itself is surrounded by eucalypt forest and wet grass-land. The Glyde River runs to the east, the Arafura swamp is located to the south-east, and to the west of Ramingining is the Blyth River. The community is connected to Darwin via an unsealed road in the dry season. Regular flights are available to Darwin as well as all the surrounding Aboriginal communities.

The country on which Ramingining stands belongs to the Djadiwitjibi clan, but people of many other clans who are land-owners from the surrounding area such as the Manharrnu, Balmbi, Murrunj, Marru, Liyagalawumirri and Ganalbiru live there. People of other clans from the nearby islands have also settled there such as the Djambarpuyunu and the Gupapuyunu.

The people who live in Ramingining and in the surrounding north-east Arnhem Land region are referred to as Yolŋu, a local word which means both human being and Aboriginal person. The term is frequently contrasted with Balanda which means White person, or person of European origin. A small group of Balanda work in the community on the invitation of the local Aboriginal council. In 1991 the population of Ramingining was approximately 450 (Australian Bureau of Statistics 1991).²

¹The Arnhem Highway is currently under construction.
²According to the ABS the figure refers to the population for the township only. If outstations are included I estimate that the population is greater, at least 650.
Map 1. Map of Arnhem Land and the Top End of the Northern Territory.
Although Ramingining has never been a mission, and was established in 1972 in the era of self-determination, the church was still very much involved in the planning and funding of the community in its early years. The Methodist mission at Milingimbi had problems with its water supply and as a result perceived a need for a mainland settlement. Initially a settlement was created at Nangalala close to the coast, but as a response to concerns over sacred sites the population centre was moved further inland to Ramingining. Ramingining became an incorporated community in the financial year 1974-75 and gradually replaced Nangalala as a mainland centre.

Approximately half of the adult population at Ramingining has previously lived at Milingimbi mission. The people who actually chose to leave Milingimbi and come over to the mainland usually cite family connections or a wish to live on, or near, their own land as a reason for moving.

Today a number of outstation settlements lie in the country around Ramingining. These are Yathalamara, Gattji, Galawdjapan, Nangalala, Mabirri, Bundatharri, Malyajaranak and Mulgurram (Map 2). In addition a number of people live just outside town in an area referred to as "The Tanks".

Ramingining people have a great deal of social and cultural exchange with the surrounding communities where they travel frequently to visit family members and to attend ceremonies and sometimes Christian gatherings. Ramingining Yolgu travel primarily to Galiwin’ku (also known as Elcho Island), Gapuwiyak (Lake Evella), Milingimbi and Maringrida and their respective outstations. Further away to the east is

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3NTRS 40-7413. Report from 1976 by R. Trudgen. Under a subheading of this report titled "Ramingining is born", the information suggests that there was a council in 1972. To start with it was referred to as the Ramingining-Nangalala council and the meetings were held at Nangalala which was the mainland centre at that time.

4When revisiting Ramingining in 1994 a new outstation called Wulkabimirri had been created and Malyajaranak had instead become attached to Maringrida.
Yirrkala where the people are of the same cultural group, but with whom Ramingining people have limited social relations.

The facilities available in Ramingining include a general store, food take-away, school, library, adult education centre, health centre, outstation resource centre, mechanical workshop and a women's centre. Through Bula-Bula Arts, a well known arts & craft centre in Ramingining, many local Aboriginal people have sold and exhibited their artworks in the great galleries around Australia and the world.

One of the most striking aspects of life in Arnhem Land communities for a first-time visitor, is the co-existence of indigenous traditions and Western technologies. Yolnu cosmology is based on the activities of Ancestral beings (wapa) in a distant past, often referred to in the anthropological literature as the "Dreamtime". The Ancestral beings created the geographical features of the land as well as the clans who now own the land. The Ancestral beings also gave each clan its own mythology or law (yuluna) but major Ancestral figures such as the Djan'kawu sisters are shared by numerous clans.

The relationship between people and land is maintained through ceremonies in which activities of Ancestral beings are re-enacted. Ceremonies are intimately connected with the life-cycles of individuals. Young boys go through initiation ceremonies, and in other ceremonies adults, both male and female gradually acquire greater knowledge until at funeral ceremonies the deceased is perceived as re-incorporated with the Ancestral domain. Yolnu children still grow up to learn their respective clan's songs, dances, dreamings and language. In the thesis I will refer to Yolnu indigenous religion as "Ancestral religion" and it's ceremonies as "Ancestral ceremonies".

Yolnu culture has been extensively documented in the anthropological literature by Warner (1969), R.M. Berndt (1951, 1952), Thomson (1949, 1983), Peterson (1971),
2. Ramingining community.
Map 2. Ramingining and outstations.
Borsboom (1978), Keen (1978, 1994), Morphy (1984, 1991), Read (1983), Williams (1986, 1987), and more recently Rudder (1993), Magowan (1994) and Tamisari (1995). During my field-work I was surprised to find that even much of Warner's account of the Yolngu social system and cosmology, which is based on fieldwork in the early part of this century (1926-29) when many Yolngu had little contact with Western culture, is still in current practice.

In spite of the emphasis on maintaining tradition, Yolngu life has changed a great deal since the arrival of the first missionaries. Nowadays four-wheel drive vehicles, television sets, three-bedroom houses, football, federal politics, Western education and Christianity are also a part of everyday life. As this thesis shows, the ability to incorporate what is new, while retaining a resilient and uniquely Yolngu perspective, is a key feature of contemporary life in Ramingining.

The circumstances of the research and fieldwork methods

I carried out the fieldwork for this thesis between October 1990 and May 1992. Then in 1994 I returned for a final month of fieldwork. I spent the majority of the time in Ramingining Community but I also visited surrounding outstations and the neighbouring Galiwin'ku and Milingimbi Communities.

My husband accompanied me during the majority of the fieldwork. We were both adopted by Yolngu families and given "skin-names" (sub-section names). My husband was adopted by members of the Gupapuyngu clan, and I was adopted by members of the Djambarrpuyngu clan. Throughout the fieldwork our adoptive family members gave a great deal of their time, friendship and support. Several of our family members were very much involved with the church and were happy to help with the research in a number of ways.
Although the local Yolnu council had accepted my research proposal before we arrived, many Yolnu whom I met in the early stage of fieldwork wanted to know more about my research as well as my own relationship to Christianity. I explained that I was a member of the Lutheran church in my native county of Sweden, that I came from a Christian family, that I had been baptised and confirmed but had not been actively involved in the church as an adult. What had fuelled my interest in Yolnu Christianity, I explained, was not so much my own background, as my desire as an anthropologist to learn about Yolnu culture, religion and social change in the region.

In gathering the data for this thesis I used traditional anthropological methods of participant observation and interviews. The historical information for the first chapters of this thesis is based on interviews with elderly people about their memories of the mission-days. My intention with these interviews was to gain a picture of the major themes and ideas which have shaped Yolnu Christianity. In addition to the interviews about the mission days I have also used archival material from the Arnhem Land missions, and books produced by the missionaries themselves.

In learning about the contemporary church I attended the Christian Fellowship meetings which were held in the evenings, often recording the sermons and songs. During the fieldwork I participated in the whole range of church activities such as Action-dancing practice, administrative church meetings and the Weekend Rallies. During 1991 Yolnu asked me to help with some book-keeping for the church. I agreed, after some thought, since it gave me the opportunity to do something practical for the congregation at Ramingining which had so kindly accepted me. In the process I also learned much more about the structure and administration of the church in Arnhem Land. Most of all, though, I learned about Christianity among the Yolnu by simply participating in the daily life of the community. I participated in Ancestral ceremonies, accompanied Yolnu on hunting and fishing trips and spent time with adopted family and friends.
Although I had a close relationship to my adoptive family I endeavoured to work with people from a wide range of clans so that my data would be representative of the views held by Yolnu Christians in the Ramingining area. During the fieldwork my time was divided more or less equally between, on the one hand, my Djambarrpuyŋu and Gupapuyŋu family and on the other hand people from a range of Djinaŋ clans.

Since there are many different clans in Ramingining, and each with its own dialect, I had to make a choice early on which language to learn. Although most Yolnu speak some English, it is only as a second language. Initially I began learning Gupapuyŋu because it is widely spoken and understood in Ramingining. Gupapuyŋu was the “lingua franca” at the Milingimbi mission and I had access to some of this language learning material already in the pre-fieldwork period. However, in the field I soon realised that since I had been adopted by the Djambarrpuyŋu clan, Yolnu expected me to speak Djambarrpuyŋu, and I had to adjust my speech accordingly.

Material concerning the church in Ramingining falls within the category of non-secret, or what Yolnu would call “open material”. Yolnu regard church activities and information to do with the church as “open”, meaning free for all to know about, in contrast to some of the ceremonies to which entry is “closed” except to certain categories of people. However, even church information can become sensitive or even restricted. In the thesis I indicate that one sensitive topic is any criticism of Ancestral religion by Yolnu Christians. During the time of the fieldwork I attended a ten day conference at Galiwin’ku organised by Yolnu in the Uniting Church titled “The Aboriginal Spirituality and Culture Seminars”. The seminars caused some controversy at Galiwin’ku about the relationship between Aboriginal culture and Christianity. When I sought permission from the church

5 Yolnu use the terms “outside for non-secret things and “inside” for secret knowledge (see Morphy 1991:7, 78-99).

6 Morphy shows in relation to Ancestral knowledge that what is secret or not secret varies with time (1991:76).

7 See “The Galiwin’ku Rally” in Chapter 6 of this thesis.
to cite from the seminars, I found, that as a result of the controversy, this information could no longer be used.

At Ramingining the situation was less heated and no such restrictions were placed on my material from Ramingining. The only major restriction which Yolŋu did put on my research was that I should not write about the content of secret Ancestral ceremonies in the thesis.

First impressions of the church at Ramingining

Yolŋu Christians in Ramingining belong to the Uniting Church of Australia, but as this thesis shows, a specific Yolŋu style of worship has developed. Since the time of the 1979 Christian Revival at Galiwin’ku the main form of worship has become the so called Fellowship meetings which are held in the evenings and include guitar playing, singing of choruses, preaching and the sharing of testimonies.

However, when my husband and I first arrived at Ramingining in October 1990 there were no formal church services held in the community. Yolŋu told me that the church had been very active in 1989 but that now there were no church meetings because of “too many problems in the community”. Later, when a series of revivals in church activity followed, it became apparent that the inactivity in the church was a temporary phase.

In spite of the initial lack of church services, people’s everyday conversations contained frequent Christian references. When a young man was buried, the more than week-long Ancestral funeral ceremony was interspersed with Christian Fellowship meetings, including singing and prayer in the evenings. At the burial an ordained Yolŋu minister performed a Christian ceremony and Ancestral songs and dances were performed.
The only other obviously Christian activities during the last few months of 1990 were the so-called Action-dancing sessions which were organised by women in the afternoons. Action-dancing takes place to a back-ground of tape-recorded Christian pop-music. Children, their mothers and other young women place themselves out in three or four lines, all facing the same direction, and do hand and feet movements in time with the music.

On Christmas Eve 1990 mothers and children gathered to sing Christmas Carols by candlelight. But Christmas and New Year also coincided with the Gulf crisis which inspired an upsurge in church attendance. After months of inactivity, Fellowship meetings took place night after night, sometimes going on until midnight. Yolnu interpreted the events in the Gulf in the light of Revelation in the Bible, and it was this interpretation which sparked off renewed church activity. Then as the crisis in the Gulf settled, so did the Fellowship meetings. Over the time of the fieldwork the church continued to experience similar ups and downs.

The argument

The manner in which Yolnu incorporate Christianity with a wider world view based on the Dreaming is both a complex and selective process which can only be understood when Yolnu Christianity is related to Ancestral religion as well as the Australian political context, both past and present.

Yolnu Christians continually assert that Christianity and the Dreaming are not mutually exclusive domains. In Ramingining all Christians go to church as well as Ancestral ceremonies. Christians profess a belief in God as well as the creative acts of Ancestral beings. Even the Yolnu pastors who gain their education at a Christian college in Darwin are encouraged to draw inspiration from Aboriginal culture in their interpretations of the Bible.
In arguing that Yolnu have incorporated Christianity I am not suggesting that one syncretic religious tradition has formed. As Swain (1995:88) points out, the kind of syncretism which completely fuses two traditions is virtually non-existent in Australia. In Ramingining, ceremonies and church are clearly two separate religious traditions which co-exist in the community, but the particular form of Yolnu Christian worship which has developed in recent years is a result of a selective process where pre-existing attitudes towards Ancestral religion guide the direction, content and development of Yolnu Christianity. ⁸

Yolnu Christianity is, like Ancestral religion, strongly participatory in character. Worship is conceived primarily in terms of music and dance. Even the pattern of worship, as this thesis shows, bears a greater resemblance to the pace of ceremonial life than it does to a pattern of Sunday morning worship. There are strong structural similarities between visions and dreams, for instance, with Christian content and those featuring Ancestral beings. Many of these similarities which can be perceived between indigenous religion and Yolnu interpretations of Christianity are not the result of deliberate developments by Yolnu theologians, but rather are the result of spontaneous and unconscious processes whereby Christianity is slowly incorporated and Aboriginalised.

Yolnu are selective in their practice of Christianity. The evening "Fellowship meeting" is the focus of Christian worship but other Christian customs such as wedding ceremonies are not practised. Polygamy, which is common in Yolnu families, is accepted by the Uniting Church in Aboriginal parishes, except in the cases of ordained ministers. At Ramingining, communion services are rarely held and there is no pattern of regular Sunday morning worship.

⁸At neigbouring Galiwin'ku there have been occasional attempts by Yolnu Christians to fuse the two traditions. See for instance my description of a funeral at Galiwin'ku in Chapter 5 and by the creation of musical pieces in indigenous form with Christian content (Magowan 1994).
Yet what may seem on the surface to be a smooth incorporation of Christian beliefs and practices is actually a complex process. Christianity has not been equally incorporated by all segments of society. Women for instance are far more involved with the church than men. Christians often speak of the need to prioritise God over the Dreaming. They speak about "putting God first". At times there is disagreement over the nature of the Christian's participation in ceremonies and sorcery (galka) practices are completely condemned by the Christians.

However viewing Yolnu Christianity only in relationship to indigenous religion is not enough. Yolnu Christianity also needs to be viewed in the context of Yolnu people's perception of their relationship to Balanda and the wider Australian context. From this perspective, the church in Arnhem Land is a contemporary social movement through which Yolnu express their desire for greater power and social justice within the Australian society. Biblical metaphors often provide the language for the sense of oppression and injustice that Yolnu feel in their relationship to the Balanda world.

J. Barker, in his study of Christian conversion among the Maisin in New Guinea (1993), makes a helpful distinction between "external" and "internal" conversion. He defines the terms in the following way:

External conversion addresses the 'secondary community' that links Uiaku with other people in Papua New Guinea; internal conversion draws on the 'local social circumstances' of received culture. (1993:217)

Barker's ideas build on research developed by Horton (1975) and Fisher (1973), among others, in relation to studies of conversion in Africa. The concept of internal conversion is illustrated by a citation Barker includes from Horton and Peel:

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9For another discussion of "internal conversion" see Geertz (1973).
first, that where people confront new and puzzling situations, they tend to adapt to them as far as possible in terms of their existing ideas and attitudes, even though they may have to stretch and develop them considerably in the process. Second, that where people assimilate new ideas, they do so because these ideas make sense to them in terms of the notions they already hold. (Horton and Peel cited in Barker 1993:207)

Barker makes an important contribution to the study of conversion when he suggests that internal and external conversion may be simultaneous processes, both of which need to be considered (1993:208).

In applying Barker's distinction between internal and external conversion to a Yolŋu context, I have defined external conversion as referring to factors which have provided outside influences on the development of Yolŋu Christianity, such as mission and government policies, including present policies and requirements of the Uniting church in Australia (see in particular Chapter 2, Chapter 3). When I speak of internal conversion I refer to factors pertaining to indigenous Yolŋu culture which influence Yolŋu in their approach to Christianity. Several of the chapters of this thesis show that Yolŋu tend to understand Christianity very much in the light of their indigenous religion (see Chapter 5, Chapter 6, Chapter 7 and Chapter 8). In Chapter 4 I refer to both internal and external conversion. The way I use the word conversion then, is to indicate a process or an influence, not as a fait accompli.

My approach then, is different from the approach advocated by Bos (1988b), who points out that Yolŋu Christians sometimes draw parallels between the Christian and the Ancestral domain. The research presented in this thesis suggests that it is not just a question of parallels, but rather implicitly held notions about the nature of Ancestral religion, transfer to a Yolŋu interpretation of Christianity.
Theoretical perspective

In my analysis of Yolnu Christianity I have found the approaches developed in V. Turner and E. Bruner's (1986) volume *The Anthropology of Experience* to be useful. Apart from Turner's and Bruner's essays, the volume contains contributions by, among others, James Fernandez, Bruce Kapferer, and Clifford Geertz. The work of these anthropologists is characterized by their ability to render explicit the meanings and experiences encapsulated in culture. While they all have their own distinctive approaches they share a common striving to present culture from an indigenous point of view. They focus primarily on symbols, meaning, and the transformation of consciousness through ritual, rather than analysis of social institutions and their functioning. Similarly this thesis is more concerned with meaning than function. Specific aspects of their approaches which have been applied in this thesis include Turner's and Bruner's concepts of experience and its expressions; Kapferer's approach to music, drama, and comedy as affecting consciousness in ritual; and Fernandez' concepts of image and metaphor have been useful particularly in the analysis of the relationship between past and present - between mission and the contemporary church.

The phrase "Anthropology of experience" was initially coined by Victor Turner, and he in turn based the concept on ideas developed by W. Dilthey, a German philosopher (Bruner 1986:3). Bruner defines the concept in the following terms:

The anthropology of experience deals with how individuals actually experience their culture, that is, how events are received by consciousness. By experience we mean not just sense data, cognition, or, in Diltheys' phrase, the diluted juice of reason, but also feelings and expectations.(1986:4)

But how then can one as anthropologist gain access to other people's experience of the world when experience as defined above is a process internal to the other?10 Turner and

10This is of course a classical problem in phenomenology. See Kapferer (1986:188) and Schutz (1972: 97-136) "Foundations of a theory of intersubjective understanding".
Bruner (1986), following Dilthey, argue that it is possible through interpreting expressions of this experience. Dilthey defines expressions as gestures, facial expressions, words, but also any other "mental creations" which reveal their author's deeper meaning" (1976:175). The essays in Turner & Bruner (1986) show that these expressions, or "mental creations" may take a number of forms such as performances, stories, texts, artefacts and more. Although it may not be possible to fully comprehend or convey the experience of others, Bruner points to the benefits of this method:

The advantage of beginning the study of culture through expressions is that the basic units of analysis are established by the people we study rather than by the anthropologist as alien observer. By focusing on narratives or dramas or carnival or any other expressions, we leave the definition of the unit of investigation up to the people, rather than imposing categories derived from our own ever-shifting theoretical frames. Expressions are the people's articulations, formulations, and representations of their own experience. (1986:9)

In this thesis Yolju Christianity is analysed by means of the expressions through which it manifests itself. The expressions encapsulate different aspects of Yolju understandings of Christianity and each chapter deals with a different type of expression and the meanings which it reveals, ranging from historical narrative, to ritual, sermons and healing practices.

In evaluating the discussion of experience and expressions in Turner and Bruner's (1986) volume, one might object that conveying experience is what anthropology has always been about. While this is true, Bruner points out that the problem is that experience is often 'filtered out' in the process of writing up our data. He writes:

The anthropological enterprise has always been concerned with how people experience themselves, their lives, and their culture. Traditionally, anthropologists have tried to understand the world as seen by the 'experiencing subject', striving for an inner perspective. Indeed, this is still the rationale for long-term field research, and the field tradition, in fact, is what sets anthropology apart from such related disciplines as sociology and history. The difficulty, however is not in the fieldwork experience but in our conceptual apparatus for interpreting the field data, which tend to filter out experience. (1986:9)
What Bruner argues is that in the process of writing up field research individual experience is often substituted with abstractions such as 'norms, habits, and prevalent patterns of social relations' (1986:8). Recognising the difficulty in conveying the world as experienced by others, this thesis nevertheless attempts to counteract the tendency to bury experience by making extensive use of quotations from Yolnu friends and acquaintances and by letting themes which kept recurring in their conversations guide the outline of the thesis to a great extent.11

In my analysis of the Fellowship meetings I continue to focus on experience by looking at the means by which people become involved in the Fellowship and how the atmosphere accumulates to the point where people claim to experience the presence of the Holy Spirit. Here I draw on Kapferer's (1983, 1986) analyses of Sinhalese exorcism rituals. Kapferer shows how different elements such as music, dance, drama and comedy are employed in order to affect the consciousness of both the afflicted patient and the audience. In this ritual the patient is first drawn into a dramatized reality of the demonic and then moved out of it to a point of reflective distance. Kapferer argues that music in particular has the capacity to affect the consciousness of the patient. He writes:

> music demands the living of the reality it creates. Engaged in music, a listening subject is opened up to the experiential possibility internal to its structure, its duration, change, and movement ... (1983:187)

Kapferer's approach can be applied very well to an analysis of the Fellowship meetings. In the Fellowship meetings music, dance and play are crucial in affecting the mood of its participants. Music, hand-clapping, play, prayer, singing, sermons and speeches all serve to involve the participants, moving them through the service from its light-hearted playful beginning to its dramatic end where the Holy Spirit is believed to descend, causing

11As for instance the following themes which are used as headings and sub-headings: "Breaking Spears", "First Mission", "Killing Mr Robertson", "Making Peace", the subheadings of Chapter 7 and the title of the final chapter "Heaven and Earth".
participants to faint, which is referred to at Ramingining as being "overcome by the Spirit".

Another anthropologist concerned with the concept of experience, and a contributor to Tumer and Bruner's (1986) volume, is James Fernandez. While Kapferer shows how experience is ordered by music and dance, Fernandez shows how experience can be affected by the use of image and metaphor in ritual. In Chapter 7, I show how image and metaphor are frequently used in the sermons, in particular in the context of constructing the congregation as one people, and in drawing out similarities between Yolnu and the Israelites. Such images and metaphors are a means by which issues of social justice are expressed, and in which Yolnu comment on the position in which they perceive themselves in relation to the wider Australian society. Following Fernandez I have defined metaphor as "the statement of an association between things that are normally categorized in separate domains of experience" (1986:176). When speaking of images I refer to pictorial content (Fernandez 1982:531).

Fernandez' approach and concept of images has also been useful in conceptualising the relationship between past and present as in my discussion of Yolnu memories of the mission days. Fernandez shows that images of the past affect the structuring of thought in the present. He writes:

The particular approach I take to the symphonic play of associations assumes that the nether regions of the mind, whatever structures it may have for organizing subsequent expression, are a repository of images of former sociohistorical experiences actively lived through or vividly described. Such an approach contrasts with the usual structural approach in which the nether regions are 'always empty' or at least alien to mental images. (1986:174)

In the thesis I show that Yolnu perceptions of the missionaries in the past influence their understanding of Christianity today. Chapter 3 shows that in remembering the mission days Yolnu stress the missionaries' role as peace makers. This image of the missionaries as peace makers, I argue, is a powerful one, on which Yolnu draw in the Fellowship, and
which structures Yolŋu experience of Christianity today. Yolŋu clearly make a cognitive association between Christianity and the notion of unity, but more than that, unity and satisfying social relationships are linked with health and well being, as opposed to illness, which is associated with social tensions and sorcery. In Chapter 8, I show that this chain of associations which Yolŋu make can help to explain why Yolŋu place such emphasis on healing in their practice of Christianity.

The Anthropology of Experience and the concepts developed by Turner and Bruner, Kapferer and Fernandez (1986) then, are central to the development of my analysis. The perspectives they provide lend themselves in particular to an exploration of meaning and content in Yolŋu Christianity. As a discussion of literature on Aboriginal Christianity shows below, not a great deal of research has been carried out which is concerned with the meaning content in Aboriginal Christianity.

Aboriginal Christianity: A consideration of research trends

In an overview of the available literature on Australian Aboriginal Christianity, the most comprehensive material available so far is Swain and Rose (1988) *Aboriginal Australians and Christian missions: Ethnographic and Historical Studies*. I will refer to this volume at some length since it contains articles by most current writers on Aboriginal Christianity and is representative of the kinds of research which has been carried out in this area.

Most of the contributors to this volume take a historical perspective in focusing on Christian missions to Aborigines. Several of the articles evaluate missionary endeavours and discuss whether missions to Aborigines have failed or succeeded (Tonkinson, Brady & Palmer, Trigger, Brock, Stanton, Anderson). Another recurrent theme in the volume concerns the question why Aboriginal people have rejected Christianity (Rose, Kolig, Anderson 1988). Only a few of the articles take as their major focus an analysis of Christian beliefs and practices among Aboriginal people (Bos, Hume, Swain and Petri &
Petri-Odermann). Bos and Hume analyse Christianity as practised by Aboriginal people in church, while Swain and Petri & Petri-Odermann deal with Christianity as expressed through indigenous forms. Several of the contributors indicate in their articles that there have been recent Christian revivals or some form of Christian activities in their respective research communities, yet a detailed discussion of these activities is beyond the scope of most of the articles. Rather, their main focus remains on the mission era, and as a result, contemporary Christianity as experienced by Aboriginal people remains largely unanalysed. Some of these articles will be discussed below in an attempt to indicate the kind of data which are still very much lacking in anthropological discourse about Aboriginal people and Christianity.

Trigger for instance, states that the purpose of his research at Doomadgee in Queensland is to analyse "whether Christianity has operated historically to legitimate the domination of Aboriginal society" (Trigger 1988:213). While this is the primary question pursued in his paper, I was intrigued by Trigger's comment that there have been two Christian revivals at Doomadgee, one in 1953 and another in 1981 (1988:224). Unfortunately this article does not discuss the revivals nor the aims and motivations of the participants, except for Trigger's statement that the 1981 revival began in response to the circulation of a booklet warning of the "coming holocaust" (1988:224).12 A later book published by Trigger (1992) contains more information about Christianity at Doomadgee but the focus of the analysis is still not on how Christianity is practised and experienced by people at Doomadgee.

Similarly, in a paper on Christianity among the Pitjantjatjara, Brady & Palmer (1988) include a brief description of a Christian revival at Yalata, South Australia which took place in 1981. However the focus of the article is on the changing relationships between

12 Interestingly, a brief revival started for similar reasons in Ramingining in 1992. (See Chapter 4 of this thesis).
the Pitjantjatjara and different churches in a historical perspective and not on a detailed discussion of the Revival.  

Other examples in Swain and Rose’s volume are articles provided by Brock (1988) and Stanton (1988). Brock comments that during the 1980s Christianity has gained new significance for the Andnyamathanha, yet provides no further analysis of these events since the article is focusing on missionaries in the area in a historical perspective. Similarly Stanton’s article indicates a renewed interest in Christianity, but his focus is on an exploration of the history of missionisation at Mt Margaret, Western Australia. Towards the end of the article Stanton mentions the ‘Desert Crusade’ which took place in the 1970s, and a Christian convention which is held annually at Mt.Margaret. The article features a photograph of an Aboriginal woman sitting on the ground, holding up a poster with a Christian motif. This woman, the caption under the photo informs, leads Christian services, but it is not clear from the article what her concerns and motivations may be or what transpires at the church services which she leads.

An article by Kolig (1980) provides an account of an Aboriginal myth concerning Noah’s Ark in the Kimberleys, Western Australia, yet in a later article included in Swain & Rose (1988), Kolig concludes that Christianity has not generally taken hold in the Kimberleys. The only exception he perceives refers to activities taking place at an Aboriginal community called Looma. He states that:

elements of undubitably Christian provenance have become ideologically quite prominent in the lives of a highly traditionally oriented group.(1988:379)

13Some of the sentiments expressed by the participants of this revival appear similar to those of Arnhem Land Christians. Brady & Palmer write about ‘a general philosophy best summed up in the words of the songs most frequently sung ‘we all one big happy family’. People stressed their oneness and unity and their access to a supernatural agency which bound them all together” (1988:245). Similar sentiments were expressed in Arnhem Land, see Chapter 5 and Chapter 7 in this thesis.
From this comment one gains the impression that Christianity has some relevance among the residents of Looma beyond what is documented in Kolig's article on the Noah's ark story. More recent research by McDonald (1997) even suggests that Kolig's conclusion that Christianity has not taken hold among Aboriginal people in the Kimberleys needs to be re-evaluated altogether.

Like Kolig, Tonkinson (1974) has discussed Aboriginal rejection of Christianity, focusing in particular on how the Jigalong people in Western Australia have resisted missionizing. In a later article in the volume by Swain and Rose, Tonkinson adjusts his position, stating that the missionizing efforts may have led some Aboriginal people to incorporate some Christian tenets into their belief system. He writes:

> From discussion in 1982 with several young men at Jigalong who professed a belief in Christianity, it was clear that they were thinking of the Law and Christianity in symbiotic terms, identifying God as the creator of both the earth and *jukurrpa* (Dreaming) Law. (1988:68)

Furthermore Tonkinson reports some Christian activities in the area, including that approximately 2000 Aboriginal people gathered for a Christian meeting at Mt. Margaret in Western Australia. Tonkinson was not carrying out fieldwork at the time of this gathering, and again there is no anthropological record of the events which took place.

In a more recent volume Yengoyan (1993) discusses why Pitjantjatjara people in Central Australia have not converted to Christianity. One problem with this article is Yengoyan's focus on the word "conversion". Yengoyan only considers as Christians the Aboriginal people who have formally converted to Christianity, which in the area required a rejection of indigenous initiation ceremonies. Not surprisingly there are few such converts. At the same time Yengoyan acknowledges that when he did fieldwork in the 1960s

> a good proportion of the community came to Sunday services, but it was obvious that they were primarily interested in the music and choral singing and some of the ritual of the Presbyterian service. (1993:243)
One is left to wonder why the Pitjantjatjara went to these services and how they perceived their participation. It seems that a general analysis of the influence of Christianity, rather than a focus on the lack of absolute conversion, could be more revealing of the nature of Pitjantjatjara people's involvement with Christianity. An article contributed by Rose (1988) provides a comparison between Aboriginal and Pentecostal cosmology among Aboriginal people in Yarralin, Northern Territory. Rose finds that Yarralin people have largely rejected the efforts of white Pentecostal missionaries who were active during the 1980s. However, in 1980-81 there was a resurgence of interest in Christianity. Rose reports that approximately half the community attended Christian meetings at that time, but the focus of the article is on aspects of incompatibility between Aboriginal and Pentecostal cosmology, not on the Christian resurgence itself.

The material discussed above is only a sample from the literature on Aboriginal Christianity, but it is produced by well known researchers and indicative of wider trends in current research. In reviewing them, it becomes apparent that very little material actually addresses what in particular it is that Aboriginal Christians believe, and what sentiments and ideas they express in their songs, sermons, and testimonies. It is my intention in this thesis to provide some of the kinds of material which has, as I have shown, been lacking to a great extent. So far there have been only a few exceptions to the general trend discussed above. The main exceptions are the theses presented by Calley (1955), Bos (1988b), and Hume (1989), and the articles in Swain's and Rose's (1988) volume by Bos, Hume, Swain and Petri & Petri-Odermann.

Calley's thesis provides a detailed description of a Pentecostal movement among Aboriginal people in New South Wales in the 1950s. He includes a discussion of the

14 See also Slotte (1996).
15 In two other articles Rose provides brief descriptions of the content of the church services. See Rose (1981) and Rose (1985).
form of worship, the content of sermons and testimonies as well as a discussion of the relationship between indigenous religion and Christianity. It is interesting to note some similarities with Arnhem Land. Just as in Arnhem Land, the people in Calley's study place a strong emphasis on healing as part of the worship, and as in Arnhem Land, travelling to other communities for religious gatherings is an important feature of the Christian movement.

Bos' article (1988) and thesis (1988b) deal with a Christian Revival which began at Galiwin'ku in Arnhem Land in 1979 and then subsequently spread around Arnhem Land. The main thrust of Bos' material is to describe the movement and explain why it occurred. He finds that the main reason for the movement's beginnings in 1979 was the rapid pace of social change as a result of the transfer of community control from European missionaries to elected Aboriginal councils at the time (1988b:353).

The circumstances of the fieldwork for this thesis differs from that of Bos'. The research for this thesis began approximately ten years after Bos' research, with the intention to see what had happened with Christianity after the Revival had supposedly died down. Furthermore, the social circumstances of the research areas differs. Whereas Bos' research relates to Galiwin'ku which is an old mission town, Ramingining is a relatively new community founded in the early 1970s. Another important difference is that Bos' thesis is based mainly on interviews with the male leadership of the 1979 movement, many of whom are teachers at Nungalinya college in Darwin where Bos himself was principal for a time. My research is based instead on interviews with the general community.

Another work which is relevant in the Arnhem Land context is Berndt's (1962) book *An Adjustment Movement in Arnhem Land*. While this movement, which preceded the Revival at Galiwin'ku, is not analysed by Berndt as an explicitly Christian affair, it clearly had some Christian features. The movement consisted of the construction of a
"memorial" openly displaying what were normally hidden sacred objects (*marga*). The memorial included the display of a cross attached to one of the sacred objects, and a sign on the fence around the memorial carried a number of inscriptions, including the following words as translated by Berndt:

The leader Badanga has the memory ('head') of the old way - the ranga [sic]. Now we have changed our mind and worship God (1962:47).

Berndt states that the Yolŋu hoped, through this display of sacred objects, for some reciprocity in material form from the government. He writes:

The ends of this movement, then, are relatively modest and on the whole 'realistic': education, economic security, employment, and more control over their own affairs. (1962:89)

As mentioned in the first section of this chapter, Berndt states that another aim, expressed by the Yolŋu who made the memorial, was greater unity among East Arnhem Landers. He finds that the movement should be viewed as an "an attempt to integrate the traditional Aboriginal world with the outside world" (1962:24). Berndt's reference to a wish for unity is of particular interest to my research thesis since similar sentiments about unity are expressed by Christians in the present.16

Hume in her (1989) doctoral thesis, is another of the few researchers to provide a detailed account of a contemporary Christian movement. Her research was carried out at Yarrabah in North Queensland. At Yarrabah too there was a Christian revival in the 1980s, and there are many interesting similarities with the Christian movement in Arnhem Land. Like the Arnhem Landers, Yarrabah residents place great emphasis on visions with Christian content. In her thesis Hume provides a detailed discussion of the content of these visions, as well as excerpts from testimonies and sermons. It appears that Yarrabah people also

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16 See also Bos (1988b:315-320).
have what they call 'Fellowship nights', and as in Arnhem Land part of the rhetoric in the church is the reference to 'The Family of God'.

Hume's thesis is similar to Bos' in that she places a strong emphasis on exploring the causes that gave rise to a Christian movement. Similar concerns with the possible causes of religious movements were explored at the "Symposium of Aboriginal Religious Movements" held at the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies in 1981. The papers contributed to the symposium are held by the Institute and include contributions by among others Bos, Rose, Rudder and Tonkinson. Each article discusses whether Aberle's (1972) model of "deprivation theory" and Wallace's (1972) concept of revitalization movement are applicable to Australian conditions. Most of the contributors find that the concepts are not directly applicable.

Swain (1988) provides one of the few other contributions on the actual beliefs and practices of an Aboriginal Christian movement. In his article Swain describes Christian corroborees (putlapas) which the Warlpiri in Central Australia perform. In the putlapas events from the Bible are enacted, and his article includes a photo featuring the crucifixion of Jesus. Yet his material differs in crucial aspects from that discussed above since the songs, dances and ritual objects are expressed through indigenous forms, even though the themes are biblical.

Similarly the Wanadjara cult, described by Petri and Petri-Odermann (1988), is a Christian inspired movement expressed through indigenous forms of music and dance. The movement was observed in the 1960s in the West and Central Australian regions. The movement displayed millenarian tendencies with the participants propagating the belief that Jesus had appeared to Aboriginal people in the area and foretold a future of wealth and control over all land if only Aboriginal people would adhere to their own Law.
As the discussion above has shown there are a few, but not many, writers who deal with the actual content of Aboriginal Christianity. Most have instead focussed on Aboriginal responses to Christianity from a historical perspective. It is possible that if the content of Aboriginal Christianity was analysed more widely some general patterns would begin to emerge. In comparing the data in the articles and other works referred to above it seems that there are certainly intriguing similarities in the Aboriginal practice of Christianity among widely differing regions.

One distinctive feature is the tendency towards temporary bursts of Christian activity. This is a distinctive feature of the church in Ramingining, but it seems to occur elsewhere as well. As mentioned above Trigger (1988) reported revivals at Doomadgee in 1953 and in 1981, Brady and Palmer (1988) refer to a revival at Yalata, South Australia in 1981, Brock (1988) claims that Christianity acquired renewed significance during the 1980s among the Adnyamathanha. Western Australia experienced the "Desert Crusade" as reported by Stanton (1988) and Rose reports a brief period of heightened interest in the church in 1980-81. Both Berndt (1962) and Bos (1988b) analyse revivals which occurred at Galiwin'ku. Even the cults described by Kolig (1988) and Petri and Petri-Odermann (1988) are similar in that they appear to be of a temporary nature.

Visions and dreams are an integral part of Ramingining Christianity and Hume's (1989) material from Queensland shows a similar emphasis on visions. Several writers refer to healing as a significant aspect of Aboriginal worship, for instance Calley (1955), Bos (1988b), Hume (1989), and it is also briefly mentioned by Rose (1988). Another recurring theme appears to be the notion of "the family of God" and more generally Aboriginal unity as discussed for instance by Hume (1989) and Brady and Palmer (1988). A final issue is the extent to which Aboriginal churches are becoming advocates for issues of social justice. While this is certainly not the case everywhere, the Uniting Church, and more specifically, the Uniting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Christian
Congress, a federal Aboriginal Christian organisation, are advocates for social justice, land rights and reconciliation.

If Aboriginal Christianity was analysed in greater detail around Australia, it would be possible to begin to draw some more general conclusions about the nature of Aboriginal people's responses to Christianity. Considering the similarities of data discussed above it seems that viewing Christian revivals in Aboriginal communities as isolated incidents is simply not an adequate approach. A more widespread analysis of the content of Aboriginal Christianity in Australia may also bring out some broad similarities and differences between Australia and the Pacific region more generally. So called "Holy Spirit" movements as described by Barr (1983), which have swept across the Pacific in the 1970s and early 1980s, share many features with the Christian Movement found in Arnhem Land, and as it appears from the limited information available, with Aboriginal Christianity more generally.

Thesis outline

Following on from Turner and Bruner's (1986) concern with experience and its expressions as discussed above, the thesis is organised so that each chapter explores a different medium or expression through which Aboriginal Christianity is manifested. The expressions which are considered are historical narratives, theology, ritual, sermons, and healing practices. Each form of expression reveals a different aspect of Christianity as experienced by Yolnu people. Chapter 2 and Chapter 3 are concerned with historical narratives and how Yolnu have come to perceive Christianity over the missionary period. These perceptions affect Yolnu understandings of Christianity in the present. Chapter 4 provides general background information to the church in Ramingining, participation rates, organisational structure and the education available to Yolnu pastors, including a section on Aboriginal theology.
Chapter 5 and Chapter 6 focus on the major Christian rituals which are the Fellowship meetings and the Rallies which are large Christian gatherings held from time to time around Arnhem Land. In Chapter 7 I discuss the sermons and in Chapter 8 beliefs and practices associated with healing are explored, in particular in relationship to indigenous healing practices. In the final chapter, Chapter 9, I summarise my findings and suggest possible directions for future research. The thesis has two Appendices. Appendix 1 contains documents from a court case concerning the spearing of a missionary at Milingimbi. Appendix 2 contains the songs which were performed at Fellowship meetings at Ramingining.

A theme throughout the thesis concerns the idea of unity which is a pervasive concern in Yolngu Christianity. Most of the chapters contain a discussion of a particular aspect of unity as developed in church contexts. When Yolngu speak about unity in the church they most often refer to the unity of themselves as people from the Arnhem Land Aboriginal communities (especially the old Methodist mission areas), but it is also common to hear the preachers speak of the unity between Balanda (Europeans) and Yolngu, and more generally the unity of all mankind.

The theme of unity is significant because it addresses the contexts which have emerged since the establishment of mission settlements and communities. Yolngu people from widely disparate, and in the past hostile clans, have settled in Aboriginal communities. The clan is no longer the only significant social unit, but the community council, the Christian congregation and a range of Aboriginal organisations are new units through which Yolngu co-operate and interact.

The historical chapters demonstrate that the concept of unity was specifically associated with the establishment of mission stations and the idea of "making peace" between clans in order to live together on the mission. Ideas of unity are vigorously expressed through the music, ritual and the speeches of the Fellowship meetings and the Rallies. Ideas of
unity and conflict are also important in the context of Yolnu notions of sickness, health and healing methods.

Another recurrent theme in the thesis is that of social justice. In Chapter 3 I explain that social justice emerged as an issue in the church during the 1970s when the government's self-determination policy was implemented. Social justice is now an important aspect of official church policies, in particular the Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress are advocates for a range of social justice issues as is demonstrated in Chapter 4. In the Yolnu sermons as well, discussed in Chapter 7, there are constant calls by the preacher for greater justice for Aboriginal people within the wider Australian society.
CHAPTER 2
FROM "SPEARS TO SPADES" IN MISSIONARY TIME

When Yolŋu speak of "Missionary time" they refer to the entire era of Methodist missionization in Arnhem Land which spanned the period from 1916 with the establishment of the first mission to the 1970s when the missionaries finally withdrew their control in favour of Aboriginal elected councils. Several Methodist missions were established during the mission era; Goulburn Island in 1916; Milingimbi in 1923; Yirrkala in 1935; and Elcho Island in 1942. In this chapter I will discuss Yolŋu memories of Missionary time with specific reference to the Milingimbi mission.

Within the span of Missionary time, Yolŋu at Ramingining and Milingimbi demarcate a series of shorter time-periods. They speak of "The Early Days", "The Second World War", "Welfare Days" and "Government Days". The first two time-periods will be discussed in this chapter, covering the years from 1916 to 1950. The following time-periods will be discussed in Chapter 3. Both Chapter 2 and Chapter 3 include Yolŋu memories of the mission days as well as discussion of mission and government policy in the region as revealed in archival sources and the literature.

"The Early Days" refers to the first few years of mission settlement. The concept is somewhat fluid and can refer to the time just before settlement and cover the entire era up until the Second World War, depending on the context which the speaker is referring to. "The "Early Days" refers to the time of first contact between Yolŋu and Balanda which was, as the establishment dates of the missions shows, a gradual process. "The Early

1"Spears to Spades" is the title of a (1938) publication by T.T. Webb, one of the first and the most influential of the Arnhem Land missionaries.
"Days" was a time when the missions were still small-scale operations and Yolnu depended for day to day sustenance mainly on supplies from the bush.

James Fernandez (1982) in his analysis of an African religious movement examines images from the colonial, as well as the pre-colonial, past which are at play in the sermons and beliefs of a Christian cult. He shows that these images are significant in the process of structuring experience in the religious movement he studied. Here, I will analyse the images of the missionary past and show that such images structure a Yolnu understanding of Christianity in the present.²

The key issue which Yolnu remember about "The Early Days" is fighting and warfare, and the process of pacification which was a result of missionization. Pacification took place in several different contexts - in relation to intruders into the areas such as trepangers, explorers and traders, in relation to Yolnu and missionary interaction, and in particular to warfare between Yolnu clans. Yolnu refer to this process as "making peace" and sometimes describe it as a time when missionaries as well as Yolnu were "breaking spears". Pacification is viewed in a positive light by Yolnu, but their feelings about the mission system as a whole are mixed. Sometimes they refer to the repressiveness of the mission system; at other times they speak of the mission with a great deal of nostalgia.

The following statement by Dick Yambal, a senior man of the Liyagalawumirr clan, covers several themes which kept recurring in conversations with Yolnu about the mission days:

I remember the missionaries as in some ways good and in other ways bad. Initially people came in to the missions to work or trade for tobacco, tea leaves, flour and clothing. They would settle there for some time. The good things which the missionaries did were to teach people to read and write and how to keep gardens. Also, they helped to keep peace between the many tribes. If it was not for the

²A different approach to Aboriginal oral history is taken by H. & F. Morphy in relation to material from the Roper Valley. They discuss Aboriginal images of "the wild black-fellow" and treat this image not just an "image from the past" which influences the present, but that it is also an "image of the past" created in recent times (1984:62).
missionaries I may not be alive today. They would talk to the people who were making trouble and offer tobacco if they did not fight. Also, they asked each tribe to select a leader who would help keep the peace. The bad things about the missionaries were that they would send people away from the mission as a punishment, sometimes for two or three months. Some missionaries did not really understand Yolnu culture. Once when a group of Yolnu people were singing in the evening one of the missionaries came rushing out and was upset at them for singing.

The establishment of missions and the process of pacification which this involved led to significant changes in life style for Yolnu. Whereas in the past Yolnu lived a semi-nomadic existence in small family groups (see Warner 1969, Peterson 1971), today's life-style in the Arnhem Land Aboriginal communities build on the life style established during the mission era when Yolnu from a range of clans gathered in one place at the missions. This change in settlement pattern has been one of the most significant social transformations experienced by the Yolnu.

Yolnu memories of the mission days are significant for the analysis in this thesis because the memories are clearly a factor in shaping Yolnu Christianity in the present. Yolnu strongly associate Christianity with concepts of unity and peace. Yolnu say that "Christians do not fight" (*Christian yaka mari djima*). In the Fellowship meetings they sing "Father make us one" (*Mori wagguny manapal*) and the sermons, as I will show, are permeated with allusions to unity. Even the official logo of the Uniting Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress features a symbolic reference to the peace-making process (Figure 3). The logo includes a fighting stick to remind people of Harry Makarrwala, the Yolnu "head-man" at Milingimbi mission "who always carried the stick as a sign of peace and reconciliation, especially when intervening in fighting situations" (Uniting Church of Australia 1983b:12). The images of conflict and peace then, have a key place in structuring a Yolnu understanding of Christianity in the present.
Early Days: Conflict in the pre mission era

In the 19th century Arnhem Land had acquired a reputation for being a wild and dangerous place populated by a savage people (McKenzie 1976:3, R.M. & C.H. Berndt 1954:123). Explorers, government officials, and traders who ventured into this area were often attacked and occasionally killed (R.M. & C.H. Berndt 1954). In retaliation there were punitive expeditions, but how many Aboriginal people died as a result is difficult to estimate. In 1884 Florida station, which was located not far from present day Ramingining, was taken up and the property continued under the name Arafura station from 1903. Yolnu in the Ramingining area still tell of how their ancestors in these early days speared cattle and how the people associated with the station retaliated with brutal shootings (Heide 1985).

Other sources of conflict which concerned the government at the time were visits by Macassans and Japanese to the Arnhem Land coast. The Macassans, referred to as *Manggathura* by Yolnu, have been visiting the coast of Arnhem Land for at least three centuries in search of trepang. While the relationship between Yolnu and Macassans was long-lasting and Yolnu in general remember the Macassans with fondness, the Berndts (1954) show that tensions did start to build up in the second half of the last century when the European presence complicated the relationship through competition as well as government interference. The Berndts report instances where Macassans were killed and then retaliated by killing Aboriginal people. Indeed, according to the Berndts, several whole crews of Macassans were killed in the Wessel Islands where the tensions were particularly severe (1954: 112).

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3 The Berndts write; "Official records do not elaborate on these police expeditions; but north-eastern Arnhem Landers tell of two police patrols that came into their district on punitive expeditions" (1954:101).

4 A problem with the Berndts' argument that conflict intensified after the mid 1800s is that documentation is scant.
At the beginning of this century Japanese pearlers and trepangers started to visit Arnhem Land, and they too came into occasional conflict with the Yolŋu. It seems that major causes of grievances between Yolŋu and Japanese, as well as Yolŋu and Macassans, were disputes about interference with women, and payments for work (R.M. & C.H. Berndt 1954:20).

As a response to the problems in Arnhem Land the government commissioned a report by Sir Baldwin Spencer in 1913, who recommended the creation of a reserve. Bleakley made a similar recommendation in another report in 1929. However it was not until 1931 that the government declared Arnhem Land a Reserve (Dewar 1992:3).

In reaction to Spencer's 1913 report a meeting between the different churches was organised by an interdenominational committee (Dewar 1992:15). At this meeting, the churches agreed on a division of the Northern Territory into different spheres of influence. North-east Arnhem Land became the Methodist sphere of influence. Archival documents from the time show that the government was closely involved with the funding and establishment of the first missions. It was within this context then that the first missions were established. The primary aim of the missions was religious conversion, but a consequence of their presence was also a process of pacification.

It seems that Yolŋu have incorporated the rhetoric about themselves as "wild people" in historical accounts. When speaking of the early days of missionization Djardie Ashley commented:

> Before the missionaries came, Balandas would kill Yolŋu people and Yolŋu people would kill their cattle and destroy their fences. At that time they [the Yolŋu] were really strong people. They would get all the food from the bush. They were wild and savage people then. Yolŋu people used to be strong, now we get everything from Balandas.

5CRS A3 N.T. 1923/4594.
6See also Heide (1985:103) who reports Watson talking about a desire to set up a mission among all the "unspoilt and uncontaminated natives". Years later T.T Webb, a missionary at Milingimbi used the same language.
A similar reference to Yolnu as 'wild people' was made by Jimmy Burunyila in the context of speaking about fighting between Yolnu clans and between Yolnu and Balanda:

Round 1920s when the first missionary came, missionary came on that time, British Army colony time when they were settling in Sydney. [This was] also in the time when Yolnu killing Balanda and Balanda killing Yolnu so the government sending missionary to every settlement so that Yolnu was, I should say all over the world, Yolnu people was wild men, Aboriginal people primitive people. ...Then after that missionary came, missionary came to teach them through the Bible, missionary societies I should say, then [learn] more about the Christian way of life, because Yolnu people long time ago was fighting. Yolnu fighting each other, also Balanda, they were fighting each other for land, for miyalk [women], promise system, and for madayin [law] things.

H. & F. Morphy (1984:62) suggest in relation to similar material, but from the Roper Valley, that images of the "wild black-fellow" are not so much "images from the past", as they are "images of the past". While their interpretation is probably correct in relation to the image of the "wild black-fellow", my intention in including the citation above is to show that Yolnu in the present are quite aware that the establishment of missions in Arnhem Land was linked to the government's need to control conflict in the region.

First mission

The first Methodist mission in Arnhem Land was established in 1916 by Rev. James Watson on Goulburn Island (McKenzie 1976:9). As historical material shows, early relationships between Aboriginal people and missionaries in Arnhem Land were tentative.

As Watson arrived at Goulburn Island, the Aboriginal people fled the island and only gradually came back. When the people started to return Watson offered flour, sugar, tea and tobacco in payment for work. Watson and his Aboriginal assistants constructed a store, a shelter, which served as schoolhouse, and a number of cottages intended for the Aboriginal people. Soon more mission staff joined. They established gardens and a trepanging enterprise (McKenzie 1976:10-18). Children who attended the mission school
lived in dormitories, but this system proved to be short-lived on Methodist stations in Arnhem Land.

The establishment of Goulburn Island mission was not without incident. McKenzie, the mission historian, describes how a young man apparently organised a strike on the mission. McKenzie states that he "encouraged the boys to break out of school", and organised "the abduction of some lubras" (1976:17). Watson's response to the incident was to hand the man over to the police in Darwin (McKenzie 1976:18). On another occasion one of Watson's Balanda companions was speared. Again the police became involved and the offender ended up in jail in Darwin. Mission authority then, rested on the cooperation of government authority. As this and the following chapter shows, mission policy and government policy must be viewed as interrelated (see also Keen 1994:25).

Watson also established the second Methodist mission on the Arnhem Land coast at Milingimbi in 1923. Although Goulburn Island was the first Methodist mission in Arnhem Land, Milingimbi was the first mission within the north-east Arnhem Land region where the Yolngu people live, and consequently Yolngu in this area now refer to Milingimbi as "first mission".

Watson's initial journey to Milingimbi took place after he had been asked by authorities to investigate the murder of two Malays (McKenzie 1976:14). On arrival at Milingimbi, Watson was apparently met by a large group of Aborigines who had gathered there for a ceremony. McKenzie, the mission historian, provides what seems to be a rather imaginative account of Watson's first meeting with Yolngu in the area. While it is difficult to say how much of this account depends on literary licence, it may illustrate something of the apprehension and uncertainty which early missionaries experienced in relationship to the Aboriginal people:
As the boat drew into shallow water, literally hundreds of ferocious-looking Aborigines appeared on the beach. Their bodies were painted and all were armed with long spears and spearthrowers. The men in the boat could hardly believe their eyes and were not a little afraid. The trembling crew wanted to turn around for the safety of deep water, but Watson prevented them. After the first shock he had stopped to think, and he realised that this was an important moment in his life. These were the people he had come to serve. He could not flee from them. The two white men approached handing out beads, mirrors, fish-hooks, and other gifts as a sign of their friendship. The tension began to ease, and soon small knots of men were sitting along the beach in avid discussion. Watson’s party sat with three of the leaders. (1976:14-15)

Whatever really transpired at this first meeting, the result was that Watson decided to one day establish a mission in this area.

Settlement at Milingimbi followed a similar pattern to that of Goulburn Island. Watson and his assistant, J. Robertson, established gardens and again they set up a dormitory for children. They provided daily rations of food to the Aboriginal people, obviously with the intention of attracting people to the mission. As at Goulburn Island there were violent incidents. The problem was that the mission attracted a wide number of clans from the surrounding areas, some of whom were traditional enemies, and who were now gathered in the same area. According to archival material much of the fighting which erupted was between different factions of Gupapuyku from Elcho Island and Burarra from further to the west of the mission on the mainland.7

Yolŋu remember the fighting as a key issue in the early days on the mission. Dick Milurrur, a lay preacher from the Manharrŋu clan referred to the situation at Milingimbi in the years preceding the second world war as “the war of faith”. The expression, he explained, refers to the fact that clans were fighting each other but on Sundays they went to church together on the mission. He said:

...lot of people fighting each other, killing each other, we call Milingimbi, is place we call “the war of faith” ...They [were] fighting, [and then] every Sunday they went to church. ...Lot of people coming from Elcho, Yirrkala, Lake Evella. If something wrong in a big fight lot of people going in to Milingimbi. They went over across by canoe, and they had a fight. Same thing like [in] Palestine. They got

7CRS A431/51/1397 Report ‘From establishment to 31st December 1949.’
different king and they got different king, and then they combine fighting each other. From different, different place, ... A lot of people saying that, I mean they doing that in Milingimbi because coming from different group and from other group like Bura... Ritharrij, and Djinaŋ, Gupapuyŋu. They combine and then they fight group [against] group.

Considering the amount of conflict which took place on the mission one may ask how it is possible that Yolŋu have come to associate the mission with unity and peace. The answer is that although the presence of the mission did in itself create problems by attracting a variety of clans to the area, over time the mission presence had a pacifying influence.

Why then would Yolŋu want to go to the mission at Milingimbi? Aboriginal people in Arnhem Land were clearly not in the situation of many Aboriginal groups from other areas of Australia who were pushed off their land by pastoralists and European expansion and forced on to mission settlement and reserves. Yolŋu in Arnhem Land were living on their own land and supporting themselves from hunting and gathering. Comments by Yolŋu show that one of the main reasons was the desire for goods such as flour and tobacco as suggested here by John Baya, the pastor at Ramingining:

In mission days many people came in to the mission only reason for the gifts....Mainland people coming because they have no tea, sugar, smoke.

Yolŋu say that they were also motivated by curiosity and a wish to learn more about the Balanda and their activities at the mission. They tell how their ancestors went to Milingimbi by canoe (lipa-lipa). At other times they swarm from the mainland to Milingimbi while holding on to a piece of light mangrove wood (wughku). In the early days of the mission establishment the majority of Yolŋu maintained their life in the bush and only came in to the mission for short periods of time. Alfred Guguŋun of the Gupapuyŋu clan at Milingimbi explained:

But mostly their life was at bush. They used to come sometime there [to the mission] to sell their ntawiri [what you call it] guriri [things], basket, net, crocodile
Archival documents support the statement that life was mainly in the bush. Throughout the 1920s and 1930s the population figures stated in annual reports for Milingimbi mission indicated that there were about 200 people staying at the mission, and 250 visitors partly dependent on the mission. A report from the 1930s stated that all the people on the mission at the time should be regarded as visitors since they only stay for a few weeks at the time.

Some years later some Yolŋu assisted the missionaries in encouraging other Yolŋu from the mainland to come to the mission. One of these Yolŋu was Andrew Birindjawi, now described as a "first believer". He went to the mainland to tell other Yolŋu about the missionaries bringing a picture of Jesus with him. Alfred Gupupun told how his fellow clansman Birinydjawi enticed the mainlanders to come over to Milingimbi. He would say:

Come come we got Balanda here, we got good news, manymak dhawu [good story], come and listen. This is [here is] qumal [tobacco] for people and gatha [food] and some gum [things].

The goods provided by the Balanda missionaries were obviously in high demand, but interestingly a story from Gupapuyŋu clan mythology shows a reversed picture where Balanda goods are rejected. This is the only case I know of where a Biblical figure has been incorporated with Ancestral mythology. The story was told by Dorothy Maywalan, an elderly Liyagalawumirr woman at Milingimbi, and James Gurrwanŋu, her Gupapuyŋu son. In the story Djurany-djurany, the Ancestral dog encounters Noah who...

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8CRS A431 51/1397. See annual reports. In 1927 there were 290 dependants, and 250 visiting partly dependent. In 1931 205 dependants and 250 visitors. In 1933 there were 179 dependants and 250 visitors. In 1935 there were 203 dependants and 235 visitors. In 1937 there were 210 dependants and 220 visitors.

9CRS A431 51/1397. Report on Milingimbì mission, n.d. The report is not dated but considering the staff list, the report must be from the 1930s.
has anchored the ark by the Arnhem Land coast. Noah offers matches and a blanket but Djurany-djurany rejects the goods. According to Gurrwangu, Djurany-djurany said "Yaba [no] I can't accept that, I got my own blanket [from] paper-bark and matches that rub two sticks together. We call it shuntji [firesticks]." According to the story Djurany-djurany did not even travel with Noah, but built his own boat which he called Dharrwaal, meaning "purposeful movement".

"Killing" Mr Robertson

In reminiscing about the mission days, one of the most frequently told stories is the story about how Mr. Robertson, a lay missionary, was speared at Milingimbi in 1927. Robertson was not actually killed, but 'killing' is used here in the Aboriginal English sense, where killing is a translation of the Yolgu word burra which means both to hit and to kill. What is interesting about this story is that it is told by people from a variety of clans, and that it exists in a number of different versions. While the main outline of the story remains the same, the reasons given for the spearing differ widely.

While many Yolgu have fond memories of individual missionaries and often seem reluctant to offer any criticism of them, this is not the case in the story about Mr. Robertson, where the story-tellers take great delight in recalling the spearing as a retribution for his behaviour towards Yolgu. While the main outline of the story remains the same, a range of reasons are offered for the spearing in the many versions of the story. It is suggested here that the stories about Mr Robertson have in retrospect come to symbolically embody aspects of the relationship between Balanda and Yolgu. In the

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10 I refer to him as Mr Robertson, rather than just Robertson, because this is how Yolgu refer to him.
11 The word can also mean to collect and gather shell-fish or to prepare tobacco. It seems the word relates to action which involves prodding or hitting with something, as for instance when one probes the mangrove swamp with an iron bar, looking and feeling for mud-crabs, or the prodding action required to stuff tobacco into a pipe (bamutuwa). The word can also mean to create - in this context referring to the creative acts of the Djan'kawu as they moved across the land, hitting their sticks into the ground.
stories, it is as if Mr Robertson has come to embody all the insults and mistakes carried out by the European missionaries. The first description of events included here is a published account based on mission records, and written by Maisie McKenzie the mission historian. Her account is strongly biased in favour of the missionaries, portraying them as innocent and heroic. There is no suggestion in her account that a specific incident may have triggered the attack. Her version has been included here simply as a counterpoint to Yolgu versions.

The morning service that Sunday took place on the ground behind one of the galvanised-iron buildings. About 350 Aborigines attended, with T.T. Webb conducting the service and Robbie assisting. Suddenly three Aborigines appeared, their heads, faces and bodies painted with white clay markings that indicated war. They were a fierce-looking trio. One of them, Erranungen,\textsuperscript{12} menaced one side of the congregation while the other two, Makani and Dowarra, intimidated the other. Then, unexpectedly, Erranungen flung a spear at Webb. Fortunately he ducked in time and the spear went right through the iron wall up to its shaft. Robbie rushed into the near-by mission house and grabbed a rifle. He also gave guns to two trusted men. In the meantime Aborigines had crowded in to protect the Webbs and their children, and Miss Fish, the newly arrived schoolteacher...Robbie pointed his gun at Erranungen, who drew back his arm to throw a second spear. Then, suddenly, two things happened. Robbie fired a shot, and at the same instant Erranungen thrust the spear deep into the young man's body so that it penetrated his left forearm and hand and the lower right side of the chest. The crowd then managed to drive off the attackers. So the Sunday that had started so peacefully ended in the kind of violence that often bubbled under the surface at Milingimbi.(1976:33-34)

A document from the court case which followed in Darwin shows that the judge considered whether the spearing took place as a result of provocation (Appendix 1).\textsuperscript{13}

Witnesses were cross-examined in regards to forms of discipline at Milingimbi. When questioned, Robertson confessed that he had on some occasions resorted to flogging as punishment. T.T. Webb, the present superintendent at Milingimbi, denied that this form of punishment had taken place during his term, and stated that the forms of discipline

\textsuperscript{12}Erranungen, as referred to by McKenzie, is simply a different spelling of Rirrganydjum as referred to by myself.

\textsuperscript{13}CRS A431 51/1397 D. Roberts, Judge of the Northern Territory, "Reasons given when passing sentence in the King V Erranungen (alias Chalbar), Markarney and Dowarra".
COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA—POSTMASTER-GENERAL'S DEPARTMENT.

RECEIVED TELEGRAM.

Station From. Words. Charge. Time and Date Lodged. No.

[Redacted information]

THE MARRIAGE OF T. H. MCGREGOR AND M. MCGREGOR.

AUGUST 31, 1921

W. I. McCauley

[Redacted information]

Figure 1. Telegram reporting the spearing of Mr. Robertson.
used was 'banishment from the station' in serious cases, and withholding rations for minor offences.

Webb said that he knew that Robertson had resorted to some form of physical punishment in the time when Watson was superintendent and before he (Webb) became superintendent. In the end the judge sentenced the attackers to three years each with hard labour for wounding Robertson with intent to murder.

Some Yolŋu versions of this story feature a flogging as a reason for the spearing, but other explanations are also offered. According to Yolŋu, Robertson had offended some people with his behaviour at Milingimbi. In retaliation they decided to get rid of him and sent a letterstick, or what is sometimes referred to as a contract, to the mainland asking the people there for the spearing. It is said that the Warramiri clan asked for the spearing and in return gave tobacco as payment to the mainland Yolŋu to carry it out. The key people who were involved in the attack were Rirrmャndjун and Dowara, two Balmbi men from Yathalama, and Makani, a Mildjiri man from Bundatherri. The first version of the story as related below is an abbreviated translation of a story told by a Dick Mewirri, a Marraguy man and Bridget Djingardarr, his Wulaki wife.

Yolŋu at Milingimbi had been stealing corn and potatoes from the mission store. It had made Mr. Robertson very angry and he had whipped some people as punishment. Yolŋu retaliated by organising a revenge party from the mainland which included a man called Yalba from Yathalama. The revenge party arrived by canoe on a Sunday when the missionaries were in church. It was an outdoor church in those days. Yalba and his party advanced on their hands and knees. Robertson was standing up talking, and when he had said Amen, Yalba threw the spear. Robertson held his hand up, and the spear went into his hand, through the arm and into his chest. It was a shovelspear thrown with a woomera. Later Yalba and the other Yolŋu were arrested by a policeman called McNab and another man. The Yolŋu went to prison in Darwin. After they served their sentences they came back to Arnhem Land.16

14Paddy Dhataŋgu said "Warramiri people give us narali" [tobacco]. At this moment Dhataŋgu pointed to his forearm, indicating the sign for a stick of tobacco. He said, "Warramiri people asked for killing, they would give smoke."
15Rirrmャndjун is the person referred to as Eranungen by McKenzie on the previous page.
16Craig Elliott kindly helped translate the story as it was told, since at the time I had only been in Arnhem Land for a short time.
In a second version of the story offered by Paddy Dhataqu of the Liyagalawumirr clan there is no mention of any theft but Dhataqu stated that Robertson was speared because he whipped a Yolgu man:

One Balanda make trouble, Mr Robertson. One Yolgu every mubagu, godurr [morning] him sleeping. Mr Robertson say 'you get up', whipping Yolgu, go dhana [work] without breakfast.

In yet another version told by James Gurrwanju and his mother Dorothy Maywalan, Robertson supposedly destroyed a sand sculpture:

He [Robertson] made mistake and rub ceremony ground. ...He was preaching on a Sunday and Yolgu send letterstick to mainland and said that this and this happened, so and so rub ceremony ground. Enemy came here, Mr Robertson and this [is] Yolgu law. Manymak [very well], Sunday they speared him dhryan [here] in the arm.

Rirranydjun’s daughter, Margaret Ginjimirri, a Balambi woman from Yathalamarra outstation, suggested that the reason her father speared the missionary was because Mr. Robertson had sexually harassed a woman (humbugged miaulk). Yet another version alleges that Mr. Robertson stole some sacred dillybags. Other researchers have reported versions of the story too although they only include one version of the story. P. & J. Read include a version where Mr Robertson had “whipped some of the men to force them into monogamy” (1991:63). Their version is based on an account by Willi Walilepa from Galiwin’ku:

Ah, Mr Robertson, you come here with too many humbug for this island. You breaken down our culture for the Yolgu people, Aborigine people. We usem that wife, we married wrong culture from our idea [from our point of view], from our law, for the Aborigine people. We don’t [want] this law, that just your European law. You go away, Mr Robertson. We don’t want you come and talk me any more, question asking me about, talk to me. You’ve go no right [to] talk [about] my wife. How many wife you got? Five? Six? That mine! That my business! (P. & J. Read 1991:64)

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17 A similar comment was made by another woman from a different family.
Yet another version of events is referred to by Harris (1990:792) although it is not clear who his source is. Harris states that Mr Robertson was speared because he had used a water hose on a man who had dared enter the church wearing ceremonial paint.

Whatever the reason may have been for Mr Robertson being speared, it seems certain that Mr. Robertson deeply offended Yolnu by breaking their law, as Baya, the pastor at Ramingining suggested:

Mr Roberts, lay missionary, refused the Aboriginal life in time of Mr Webb. And what happened? He broke Aboriginal law, and he was speared during service by mainland people one Sunday morning.

While the details of why Robertson was speared varied, the main outline of the story as well as the sign language associated with the story remained the same. All Yolnu who told this story used exactly the same hand signs in the process of speaking - one arm raised, hand open, and then an indication with the other hand the point where the spear entered the palm of Mr Robertson's hand, penetrating his arm. On occasion the story was referred to simply in this way: the speaker said, 'you know what happened', and then signed to indicate the spearing. Yolnu already express history through the medium of sign language in the enactment of Ancestral events in ceremonies. Perhaps then, one could argue that the emphasis on the sign as a central feature of the stories about Robertson should be related to the tradition of history as expressed and embodied through dance in Ancestral ceremonies.19

One way of viewing the stories about Mr Robertson is as a symbol of the relationship between Balanda missionaries and Yolnu. In the stories, it is as if Mr Robertson has come to embody in one person all the flaws of European missionaries. The stories about

19Similarly, Yolnu women refer to the Djan’kawu creative beings by a key gesture - the vigorous movement of the arms back and forth as they imitate prodding the ground with sticks. The Djan’kawu are represented in similar ways through dance in ceremony.
Mr. Robertson can also be viewed as part of wider genre of stories which Yolgu tell about the fighting in the early days of the mission. Once the mission was more firmly established conflict decreased and over time Christianity became firmly associated with notions of peace and unity. In particular it appears that conflict decreased at Milingimbi mission after the arrival of the Rev. T.T. Webb and his family in 1927.

Making peace

A consequence of missionization was the gradual pacification of Yolgu clans in the area. The general situation had not impressed T.T. Webb when he took over as superintendent from Watson. He notes:

Fighting and brawling were of almost daily occurrence and altogether a state of chaos and utter futility existed. So we found that we had to build up by first of all pulling down. (Webb 1947:19)

Among other early missionaries at Milingimbi were Harold and Ella Shepherdson. They joined the Webbs in 1928 at Milingimbi as a replacement for Mr Robertson. They stayed in Arnhem Land for fifty years, until 1977. Shepherdson too refers to the fighting which took place on the mission and his own attempts to stop it:

Usually we found them [the Yolgu] quite cooperative. Only when there was trouble on were they difficult, particularly when one tribe had a grievance against another and things could be very awkward and very hard to control and to keep the peace between them. Quite often, when things became too serious, we would have to get hold and break their spears. That usually upset them badly but put a stop to it. Sometimes it was very hard to take in a way the fighting that went on. We'd known every week there would be some problem to come up against with trouble between the different dialects or a beating, perhaps a wife-beating. I remember when they would have beatings among themselves and go hammer and tongs for quite a while. And in those early days, they were a different sort of people than they are now-a-days. 20

20N.T. Archives Service, NTRS 226, Interview with Harold Shepherdson.
In speaking about the early missionaries Yolŋu today emphasise the role of the first missionaries as bringing peace, as illustrated by the statement below by James Gurrwanŋu at Milingimbi:

From early days it was a primitive place, yet still fighting Yolŋu between tribe and tribe from some reasons, other reasons, tribal fight, and mission came in and trying to stop the tribal war between [them]. They brought the gospel, good news. Yet, most fighting was stopped, but some still fighting.

Gurrwanŋu continued:

They [the missionaries] were strangers. They were trying to make peace [by] giving gardening, necklace and whatever. They brought it with them. That make peace for the missionaries so they can sit alone and start preaching the gospel and Bible story.... Yet, I got that Christmas present free... Yet, for making peace in that way. By giving ration free for long time and bring all those tribe yapurr [with] family that had been fighting...and then they had free tobacco, same [as] payday, but mission expense, and then the message went out to other people in the bush. They have everything there’...so everybody came [to the mission]. Yet, and make peace, and every tribe was living [together as] one community....They [the missionaries] influence Yolŋu by bringing ration ... by giving ration to making peace. But we didn't know that they were giving peace you know.

When I asked Jimmy Burunyila at Ramingining why Yolŋu went to the mission at Milingimbi he even suggested that one reason they went was to get away from the fighting between clans:

Because they wanted to learn something about Christian way of life, they say no more fighting. Some people say we give away fighting, we give ourselves to the [Christian] God, come to be a Christian society. ...Yolŋu people were fighting, old people controlling, missionary came here cover everything, took Bible to give Christian way of life.

Yolŋu insist that it was not only the missionaries who brought peace between the clans, but that they had their own people who were "breaking spears" too. Trevor Djarragaygay, a Gupapuyngu man at Ramingining, emphasised that even before the missionaries arrived his grandfather was already "breaking spears". Then when the missionaries arrived his uncle went and committed himself straight away to the missionaries. His clansman, James Gurrwanŋu made a similar statement, most certainly referring to the same ancestor:
So that why we had freedom and we survived through the tribal war, because our grandfather was a peacemaker. Yes...He was a leader for Gupapuyku and ceremony and line [family].

Another source which supports the suggestion that warfare was a big issue not just to the Balanda but Yolļu as well, is Warner's (1969) book, based on research in the 1920s. Warner asserts that warfare was "one of the most important social activities of the Murungin [Yolļu] and surrounding tribes" (1969:144). Warner includes references to Yolļu attempts to stop warfare, supporting the present Yolļu claim that they had their own peace makers. Warner describes a meeting by some senior Yolļu men, where outbreaks of warfare was discussed and how further fighting could be prevented.

At this meeting it was suggested that a special peace-making (makarṛa) ceremony should be held. A makarṛa ceremony is a form of duel where two aggrieved groups gather at a short distance from each other. The makarṛa provides an opportunity to express anger, but the plan is that the spears which are thrown should not actually hit or mortally wound the people they are aimed at (1969:163-164). At the meeting where Warner was present an alternative to the makarṛa was a suggestion to hold an all in fight a (gany̱garr). According to Warner this gany̱garr it was said, would be the "spear fight to end all spear fights" (Warner 1969:487). Warner cites one man as saying:

Let us stop all war. This killing of our young men is no good. It is better that we have ceremonies all the time and never have war. Let us have a gany̱garr [sic.]. (1969:487)

After the meeting another Yolļu man, Makarrwala, expressed his scepticism about the gany̱garr to Warner. Makarrwala said:

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21 According to I. Keen, pers. comm., the person is probably Djawa, a well-known figure on the mission referred to as "head-man" by the missionaries.

22 According to F. Tamisari the word makarṛa is related to makarr which means thigh, and refers to the ceremonial spearing of the thigh.
When I was a boy I saw a spear fight to end all spear fights, he said. Many men were killed. It was not good. We must not have it. My people did not stop fighting. As you see, we are fighting today just as we did before. Spear fights do not end spear fights. (Warner 1969:487)

This wish to stop the fighting appears to have been longlasting among Yolgu. Yolgu talked about it to Warner in the 1920s. Much later, Ian Keen who did fieldwork at Milingimbi in the 1970s reports that "older Yolgu people express considerable satisfaction over pacification" (1978:18) Considering comments made by Yolgu in the 1990s, pacification is an issue which Yolgu still perceive to be an important historical issue.

Rev. T.T. Webb became a key figure in the development of policy in the area. He was chairman of the Methodist missions in Arnhem Land, and stayed at Milingimbi until 1939. His approach to policy during his years at Milingimbi was later summarised in a publication poignantly titled "Spears to Spades" (1938).

The cover of his book features a picture of two Aborigines brandishing spears at a boat of European origin (Figure 2). While pacification was not an explicitly stated aim of the mission, the cover page as well as the overall policy content shows that pacification was clearly an expected consequence of mission life. Indeed, pacification was a necessity for the efficient functioning of the mission enterprise where numerous clans had to coexist in the one area, and Yolgu worked side by side in gardens and other ventures regardless of their family or clan membership.

In a chapter of the book titled "The tragedy of contact with civilization" Webb argued that conflict between white Australians and Aborigines was caused by mutual misunderstandings due to cultural differences. He writes:
Figure 2. The cover of T.T. Webb's (1938) book.
Frequently his [the Aboriginal's] interpretation of a white man's action will be incorrect, as he can only take that action to mean what it would mean in the case of a fellow tribesman whose point of view is identical to his own. Just as frequently his reaction, particularly to real or supposed injury will, though perfectly legitimate according to his own code, be contrary to what is allowable by our British law. (1938:50)

Webb viewed the solution to this problem to be a gradual process of educating Aboriginal people on missions. He continues:

What is necessary in these and similar matters is not that the aboriginal should be left to follow entirely unaltered his traditional manner of life, but that he should be educated and instructed with a view to enabling him to adjust himself to his changed environment and that, in every case where his inherited culture comes into conflict with that of the white man full consideration should be given to his psychological outlook ... (1938:50)

Webb, it appears, had a more liberal approach to missionisation than Watson. Webb abolished the dormitories which separated children from their parents, considering the dormitory system as an unacceptable interference in Yolŋu family life (Webb 1944:68-69). They were never used again on Methodist missions in Arnhem Land. The free handouts of food and tobacco were stopped since Webb felt that this attracted people to the mission for the wrong reasons (Webb 1947:19-21).

In 1927 and in 1928 the anthropologist Lloyd Warner visited Milingimbi, and from him Webb gained useful insights in how to approach the Aboriginal people (Webb 1944:68-69). Webb was keen to learn about Aboriginal culture and language, believing that it was a necessary prerequisite for converting Yolŋu to Christianity. The language which he selected was Gupapuyŋu, commonly spoken by people in the nearby Buckingham Bay and Howard Island area.

Webb made it mission policy that staff should learn Gupapuyŋu but there were always difficulties with its implementation. Reports show that it was a constant battle to keep up the language studies when there were always so many other practical tasks waiting to be
done. Obviously too, not all staff were equally willing or able to learn Gupapuyju. Mission records show that despite the emphasis on language learning as a policy, the mission was still dependent on Aboriginal interpreters during church services in the 1960s.²³

In 1934 Webb published a booklet intended as an introduction to Yolgu society, describing kinship, marriage, religious beliefs, ritual, arts & crafts, and with an introduction by the anthropologist Donald Thomson. Webb's intention with this booklet was to spread some accurate information about an Aboriginal people to the public. Webb wrote:

The history of contact of this Aboriginal race with white settlement is indeed a tragic one. Behind the tragedy lies the almost absolute failure to recognise the fundamental rights of these people as human beings, and the absence of any real attempt to understand their social organisation, spiritual beliefs, tribal laws, and sacred sentiments. (1934:29)

Webb's method of approach has been acknowledged positively by anthropologists as well as people involved in church matters (Bos 1988:143-147, Edwards & Clarke 1988:192, Morphy 1991:15). Bos (1988:350) as well as R.M. & C.H. Berndt (1988:52) have suggested that the reason Aboriginal people in Arnhem Land today are able to combine Christianity and traditional beliefs is that Methodist missionaries, like Webb, were relatively accepting of Aboriginal culture.

Webb, like many other social theorists of his time, viewed history as stages of civilization. Although propagating respect for Aboriginal culture, Webb perceived European culture as being the most advanced and Aboriginal culture as among the most primitive. Religious belief, he thought, followed the same evolutionary structure.²⁴ Reflecting the

²³Similarly Keen, pers. comm., suggests that in the early 1970s only three of the mission staff members were fluent in Gupapuyju.
²⁴Webb writes "We are dealing with a people who in general culture are among the very least developed of all the races of men. We on the other hand represent not only the most advanced accredited religion, but also the most highly developed general culture." (1938:54)
anthropological orthodoxy of the time he believed it was impossible for Aborigines to embrace Christianity while still retaining a nomadic hunting and gathering existence.

Since Webb viewed Aboriginal people as situated on a scale of evolution, he perceived his task as elevating them to the next stage of development. The next stage, he believed was a change from nomadic to pastoral or agricultural life (1938:57). Consequently Webb focused on teaching gardening and the use of basic handtools. Over the years Christian Fijian, Tongan, Samoan and Torres Strait Islander staff were employed on missions in Arnhem Land to assist with the education programme. The Pacific Islanders were viewed as suitable for bridging the gap between European and Aboriginal culture.

The gardens and industry established during Webb's time were initiated primarily for the purposes of educating the Yolnu, although creating supplies for the mission was also important (Webb 1947:19). Webb describes his first attempts to introduce gardening and the use of a spade and a hoe to the Yolnu, and how different crops were experimented with. Successful crops were sweet-potatoes, tapioca, peanuts, melons and tomato. Furthermore coconuts, mango, banana, paw-paw and custard-apple were planted (Webb n.d:148-149). There was not much schooling - Mrs Webb started a school in the 1930s but had to give it up for health reasons.

In 1931 Arnhem Land was finally declared a Reserve. It was hoped the establishment of the Reserve would prevent European as well as Japanese trepangers and pearlers from visiting the area and creating problems with the Aboriginal people. Yet in spite of the creation of the Reserve, and the presence of Milingimbi mission with its program of education, conflict in Arnhem Land culminated in the 1930s with the now famous killings at Caledon Bay in 1932 and Woodah Island in 1933. According to the Berndts the Reserve was constantly being violated by both whites and Japanese (1954:185-186). The problem was that the Reserve was too large for the government to patrol. The
establishment of Yirkala mission in 1935 was a further attempt to avert any more killings and to pacify Yolnu in the area.

Five Japanese trepangers were killed at Caledon Bay in 1932. Although the motive for the killings is not entirely clear, it appears that Japanese interference with Yolnu women was a likely cause. The Japanese trepangers are also said to have insulted, and to have whipped and fired shots at Yolnu, provoking their anger. Another incident involved the killings at Woodah Island of two Australian men, Fagan and Traynor, who were travelling along the Arnhem Land coast on the way to Thursday Island. Along the way they were in contact with both Fred Gray, a long time trepanger in the area, as well as Webb at Milingimbi. Both advised them to turn back since their boat, as well as equipment, appeared inadequate. Webb anticipated problems between them and the Yolnu, but they did not follow his advice. The circumstances surrounding their deaths are not clear, but in summarising the available information it seems that Traynor and Fagan were sexually involved with Yolnu women and that this was the cause of the attack (Dewar 1992:50). A third death occurred at Woodah Island when constable McColl was speared. McColl was part of a police party searching for the killers of the Japanese crew. Again the exact circumstances surrounding his death did not emerge from the following court case, although one Yolnu man was sentenced (Dewar 1992:53-55, R.M. & C.H. Bemdt 1954:134-152).

The killings referred to above received a great deal of publicity and were referred to as the "Black War" by journalists at the time (Dewar 1992:56). A range of solutions to the problems in Arnhem Land were suggested. The Northern Territory administrator, Colonel Weddell requested a punitive expedition by police, but this was halted in response to opposition from the public (Thomson 1983:20). Instead the Church Missionary Society

25Dewar shows how difficult it is to determine the cause since "no two witnesses told the same story" (1992:46). R.M. & C.H. Bemdt point out how unfair the trial that followed was toward the Yolnu involved stating that "the natives had no real opportunity of expressing their views, or presenting their case" (1954:174).
with Reverend Dyer from Oenpelli organised a so-called 'Peace Expedition' in order to make contact with Yolgu in the area. Not only did they make contact with the Yolgu in the Caledon Bay and Groote Eylandt area, but they found the people responsible for the murder and brought them back to Darwin. The Aboriginal people had come with them willingly, simply because they had no concept of what would happen to them upon arrival in Darwin (Dewar 1992:69). As it was, the Peace Expedition received a great deal of criticism from the public. In particular the participating missionaries were criticised for acting more or less on behalf of the police.

Hearing of the events in Arnhem Land the anthropologist Donald Thomson offered himself as leader of an expedition to Arnhem Land. He hoped that by going to Arnhem Land and by living with the Aboriginal people around Caledon Bay and Blue Mud Bay it would be possible to ascertain the cause of the fighting in the area and hopefully restore peace (Thomson 1983:21). Thomson received the money for the expedition and set out in 1935. As a result of his travels in Arnhem Land, Thomson wrote a report in which his main recommendation was the need for complete segregation. He felt that segregation was necessary in order to protect Yolgu against foreign diseases, and in order to keep their social structure intact. He emphasised the need to prevent exploitation of Aboriginal labour by trepangers and other visitors to the area, and was opposed to the establishment of missions which he felt would disrupt the nomadic lifestyle of the population (Thomson 1983:80).

Another solution was offered by the Rev. T. T. Webb. He had been very sceptical about the value of the Peace Expedition and had refused to join it when invited. He felt that such an expedition could be of little value, and if anything it would hardly be beneficial for the missionaries if they were seen to work together with the police. Instead, he contacted the Methodist Board of Missions and suggested that a long-term solution would be the establishment of another mission. He writes:
Obviously what was needed was that these aboriginals should be patiently instructed, by word and example, in the laws and customs to which they were expected to conform. Utterly useless was it merely to tell them what they must or must not do. Not so would the beliefs, traditions, and practices of a thousand years be modified. Until such permanent educative influences were established no significant change in their way of life could be looked for, and such tragedies as that of Caledon Bay would be sure to recur. (Webb 1947:248)

Webb’s wish was granted and in 1934 he set out to look for a suitable place for the mission in the Caledon Bay area. In 1935 Yirrkala mission was established and the first missionaries there were the Reverend Wilbur Chaseling and his wife. Elkin states in an introduction to a book by Chaseling about life at Yirrkala, how important the mission was for maintaining peaceful relations between whites and Yolŋu in the area. He writes:

It was obvious that some type of buffer should be established in the eastern part of this comer of Arnhem Land, to stand between the native on the one hand, and the occasional intruder on the other hand. The area was an Aboriginal Reserve, but it could not be patrolled in such a way as to preserve its inviolability; it is difficult, out-of-the-way country. Moreover, the best buffer would be one of a permanent nature which would reveal the white man as one desirous of serving the native, not just making use of him or his country. (Elkin in Chaseling 1957:xv)

In a similar fashion R.M. & C.H Berndt, too, speak of the establishment of missions in Arnhem Land as “bulwarks against the more unpleasant aspects of European and alien contact” (1954:193).

After Yirrkala, the next Methodist mission station to be established in Arnhem Land was Elcho Island mission, founded in 1942 by Harold and Ella Shepherdson. One reason for the move was the greater availability of cypress pine for building purposes (Shepherdson 1981:65). The efforts of building up the missions, however, soon ground to a halt with the advent of the second world war.

The Second World War and the end of an era

During the Second World War most missionary activity ceased and the missionaries were, with a few exceptions, sent back down south. Webb retired in 1939. Harold and
Ella Shepherdson stayed on during the war. Ella Shepherdson stayed at a bushcamp, at a place called Wurralgura on the mainland, and Harold Shepherdson stayed at Elcho Island. At Milingimbi, only Rev. Elleinor, a Fijian called Kolinio Sakum, and Rupert Kentish remained during the war (Shepherdson 1981:70).

Yolŋu memories from the Second World War are referred to briefly here because the war made a deep and lasting impression, which fuels the current Christians emphasis on the Book of Revelation and so the expected coming end of the world. As a discussion of the sermons in Chapter 7 reveals, Yolŋu Christians anticipate the coming end as one where enemies will arrive and bring war and strife to the community.

In 1942 Darwin was bombed by the Japanese and in the same year, Milingimbi became a R.A.A.F base where hundreds of army personnel were stationed. The army presence brought a new pace to Yolŋu life style. R.M. & C.H. Bemdt (1954:193-197) emphasise the influence of new work opportunities, and how money and Balanda goods flowed in at a completely different rate than what had been available previously from the missionaries. Other Yolŋu moved back out bush to the mainland, or went to find employment at army camps along the Stuart Highway.

Another group of Yolŋu, fifty-one in total, joined the anthropologist Donald Thomson’s special reconnaissance unit. Their base was at Caledon Bay and they were trained in guerilla warfare in the event of a Japanese invasion. Never before had Yolŋu faced a Balanda war or an enemy like the Japanese bombing planes. As Dorothy Maywalan, an elderly Milingimbi woman, pointed out: "the war is so frightening because that mininu [enemy] is garrwarpy [from the sky]."

When Yolŋu reminisce about the war they often tell about how they heard the planes coming, and then how they ran and hid at a place in the bush at Milingimbi called Garrki.

26 R.A.A.F. stands for Royal Australian Air Force.
They remember the fear they felt and the ban on fires in the evenings. There were some casualties both Balanda and Yolŋu in the area. Two Europeans, including the missionary, Len Kentish, Webb’s successor as chairman of the district, were captured and killed by the Japanese along with three Yolŋu men (Shepherdson 1981:69). In addition there were some narrow escapes by Milingimbi residents from the bombing attacks. The church building at Milingimbi and a dispensary were destroyed, and some other buildings were damaged.

The Second World War had some unexpected consequences for the Yolŋu. The mission presence had already resulted in significant pacification in the area, but as Charles Manydjari, a school teacher of many years at Milingimbi suggested, the Second World War contributed even further to this process of pacification between Yolŋu clans. He stated:

...Aboriginal’s war, fighting was stopped because of this white-man war came in. ...yò [yes], everybody, every families, every tribes comes together. yò [yes], we fighting together, we come together and joined. Yolŋu war is all gone because of this Japan. Japanese bombs came in and stop it our trouble.... and when the war was finished ... things were very different. Things were very different because Birkili, Djambarpuyŋu, Warramirri, different, different tribes came together to the mission, became as one community.

Thus the Second World War marked the end of an era from which the predominant images are: fighting in the Early Days, establishment of the “first mission”, “making peace” and “breaking spears”. As the next chapter will show, great changes did in fact occur on the mission after the war. In particular it was the implementation of a new government policy of assimilation which completely changed the pace of life on the mission.
CHAPTER 3
FROM MISSION TO COMMUNITY

This chapter continues to trace the historical foundations of Yolŋu Christianity. In the last chapter I showed how images of unity and peace, which are values continuously expressed in the contemporary church, originate in the particular events associated with the early years of missionization. In this chapter I explore the strong connections which Yolŋu Christians perceive between Christianity and the concept of "community". I show that a foundation for this connection is to be found in developments taking place at Milingimbi mission in the 1950s. Other events, significant for an understanding of present-day Christianity, which are discussed in this chapter relate to the self-determination policies of the 1970s and the Christian Revival at Galiwin'ku in 1979.

In Ramingining, the preachers often said in their sermons that the church is for everyone, not just the Christians. In explaining this statement John Baya, the pastor at Ramingining, showed how closely linked the church is with community life in his perception, portraying the church as a resource and a help to the community. He said:

So church is there, Fellowship area, and that church is for the community. So we employ church leader, not the council, but [the] council will realise that this church [is] for [the] community. ... We have baŋu [no] police so this will give you abawi ...[the following will serve just as an example]. If the council have police ...He will work here and care for the people from bad things and solve up the problem. That police is helping the community and community brought this policeman. This police is working for the community so community will learn what the structure [is] for police regulations. Like law, eh? And same meaning in the community we can have health. We get accidents and we go to the clinic, and community school buildings so our children will go to the school. This community needs power and water. We need power and water. This community needs resource centre, because that resource centre will have trains [will be training] the Yolŋu people to learn in homelands. And other things like mechanic to help community with their vehicle, council vehicle to be done. So in one big community, in one community like Ramingining elsewhere every department is there, and church is the same thing. Church is the number one thing. Therefore community need the church and they need the people, they employ by the community. Those church leaders can help the community.
At official community celebrations or events the connections between church and community are clearly evident. At such occasions the church is often present as a representative of the community alongside performances of indigenous music and dance. For instance when the Ramingining library was opened in 1990 a short ceremony (bugul) was held at the inauguration, followed by Christian Action-dancing by school children. At the Arafura sports festival where youth from Arnhem schools competed, the evening featured a performance by Ramingining gospel singers. At an Aboriginal Health Workers graduation ceremony at Milingimbi a bugul was held first and then an Action-dancing performance. The question is, how did Yolngu come to make this connection between church and community?

In this chapter I argue that the basis for the conceptual link between church and community originated during the post-war era when the missions greatly expanded their activities, and implemented the government's assimilation policy. It was at the mission that Yolngu were introduced to Balanda concepts of work, housing, clothing, education and gardening. While there were Yolngu people working at the mission in the pre-war days, the program which was implemented on the missions after 1951 was on a much grander scale, involving far more Yolngu than ever before. From Yolngu statements as well, it is clear that the processes of "learning to work" the Balanda way and "learning about God" were simultaneous and intimately interconnected process.1

The word community is used here in this chapter in two ways. First it refers to the incorporated community, as in Ramingining community, Milingimbi community etc. Secondly and more widely, the word community, as used by Yolngu, refers to a place where a number of clans coexist, where they live and work in one place.2 In this sense

1Sometimes during the field-work I even gained the impression that some elderly Yolngu people, who were not literate, did not actually distinguish between the English words "mission" and "machine". The words were pronounced in an identical fashion.
2In this sense community living differs from life on outstations which is more immediately organised around land ownership and family connections.
the notion of community is based on a similar set-up to the old mission settlements. In both instances much of life circles around the services provided such as the store, the health centre and the school, as well as the opportunities for employment and cash income. The links between the concepts of mission and community are further illustrated by the comments of an elderly Liyagalawumirr man at Ramingining who insisted on referring to Ramingining as a mission, and not as a community. After all, he commented, "who built the first houses? Who taught us to grow gardens? The missionaries did".

Community lifestyle contrasts sharply with the previous Yolŋu mode of living which centred around smaller semi-nomadic family groups. This change from living in small family groups to life in a large community has been one of the most significant forms of social change which the Yolŋu have experienced. Although clans congregate in different areas of the community, and most social interaction is still with close relatives, community life-style inevitably provides new arenas of social interaction through employment, council management, church, sports events, health workers’ conferences and so forth. In the section below I will show that the link which Yolŋu make between church and community originated in the assimilation era, when the infrastructure of the mission was greatly expanded in order to implement the assimilation policy.

Welfare Days and the Assimilation Policy

In 1951 the Australian government announced a new policy of assimilation in relation to Aboriginal people. It was stated in this policy that:

all Aborigines shall attain the same manner of living as other Australians, enjoying the same rights and privileges, accepting the same responsibilities, observing the same customs and being influenced by the same beliefs, hopes and loyalties. (Lippmann 1981:38)

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3 Not all Yolŋu live in the community all the time. Many move between their outstations and the communities.
The new policy required a shift in direction for the missions in Arnhem Land. Up until this time the policy of the Methodists as developed by Webb had been one of a gradual education process while maintaining segregation of Aboriginal people from what was considered to be undesirable outside influences. A review report of the mission's policies from inception up until 1949 mentions that Milingimbi mission had been run with the aim of creating a self-supporting community. This item in the report was viewed as particularly objectionable by the Northern Territory Government, and a document was sent to the Secretary, Department of Territories in Canberra, stating that mission policy would hardly be conducive in achieving the new goal of assimilation as long as the mission aimed to become a self-supporting community. The letter states that the mission may well aim to be self-supporting, but for the Aboriginal people the eventual aim should be absorption into mainland industry.

From 1951 to 1972 the Government regarded missions and settlements as "key instruments" for the implementation of the assimilation policy (Tatz 1964:18). It was envisioned that once this assimilation process had taken place, Aboriginal people would qualify for citizenship. Yolŋu often refer to this era as the Welfare Days. During the majority of this time Aboriginal affairs in the Northern Territory was administered by a Northern Territory division of a federal government department referred to as the Welfare Branch, later renamed the Social Welfare Branch in 1964, and then again renamed as the Welfare Division under which name it remained until 1972-3. (Encyclopedia of Aboriginal Australia:1168-69). During this era the so called Welfare Ordinance was in operation from 1957-1964. Under the Welfare Ordinance Aborigines were Wards of the State which meant among other things that if Yolŋu ventured in to Darwin they could be forcibly removed and sent back to the mission. However within Arnhem Land, Yolŋu

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5 CRS A431 51/1397 Document sent to Secretary, Department of Territories in Canberra from M. Culima, date ca Dec 51/Jan 52.
continued to move between mission and the bush according to their own wishes, but more and more often they stayed on the missions.

In order to implement the assimilation policy the Director of Welfare listed a number of facilities to be available on the missions (Tatz 1964:18):

(a) buildings of satisfactory standard for housing
(b) satisfactory sanitary arrangements
(c) adequate health and treatment facilities
(d) education facilities
(e) satisfactory recreation facilities
(f) vocational training facilities for adults and children
(g) an employment and guidance service
(h) gardens and similar facilities

The changes in government policy had a profound effect on Milingimbi. The above mentioned facilities were of course conceived to be European in nature, and the government started to pour in a great deal of money to implement the changes.

Yolgu too remember this era as a time of change and expansion. John Baya stated:

After the Second War, the mission grew and a lot more people came in there to live, get a job in the mission, making the airstrip, ... working on two mission boats, ... working in cattle and taming horses, also hygiene works..., farming, more machinery, ... fencing, mission grow a little bit at a time, people began to understand Western life, some people learn how to live [in] peace without trouble.

During this era education was greatly expanded on the mission. Until this time education had been piecemeal. Mrs Webb taught a group for a short time and later Mrs Ellemor ran a small school, but this was interrupted by the war. The first qualified schoolteacher, Miss Beulah Lowe, arrived at Milingimbi in 1951 to teach and with her formal school education soon began. To start with she ran the school by herself, teaching all the students, who were of different ages. Later she was joined by Aboriginal teaching assistants and more Balanda staff. There were so many students that they had to be

divided up in two sessions, morning and afternoon. In 1959 there were 93 students in the school. Lowe was a linguist and in addition to her teaching work started translating the Bible into Gupapuyku, beginning with St. Marks Gospel. Many hymns were translated and a program set up for mission staff to learn Gupapuyku.

The goal of assimilation required a completely new level of Western education. If Yolngu were to become proficient in a range of trades and employment, education was a necessity. In addition to the normal school program which included literacy, numeracy, and religious instruction, other training programs soon began. By 1962 the school held a number of special classes in addition to the normal curriculum covering a variety of subjects such as carpentry, agriculture, sewing, native crafts, hygiene, and religious instruction. A night school was run for those who had not been able to attend normal school.

In reminiscing about his school days in the assimilation era, James Gurrawangku, the assistant principal at Milingimbi school, shows how highly structured the educational environment was. In an essay prepared for his teacher training he states:

The school was very strict and I had to be quiet all the time. Gradually as the years passed by I was beginning to learn their way of Education and I realised that Mission teachers showed me a lot of things that were not part of my culture. The mission teachers taught me about health and hygiene, how to keep neat and clean at school. They dressed me up in uniforms and showed me how to comb my hair. They taught me how to play Balanda sports that I did not know. For rations the teacher gave me a square of cut aluminium labelled M for morning, L for lunch and A for Afternoon. If I lost one of these tickets I couldn’t have any meals at all. Their view of curriculum was very narrow compared with modern education (Gurrawangu 1991:2).

Archival documents from the assimilation era also reveal ambitious plans for a vocational training program for Yolngu students in agriculture, carpentry, pastoral work, electrical, and engineering. Each of these training programs covered a curriculum of five year's

8NTRS 40-7399 Inspection of Milingimbi School, 6th of January 1959.
9NTRS 40-7399 Station Report to Synod 1962 - Milingimbi.
training, requiring a literacy level corresponding to grade four or five. For instance, apart from practical skills with tools etc, an Aboriginal carpentry trainee would need to be able to read a house plan. An electrical apprentice had to spend time at night school in addition to day-time practical training, learning basic mathematics and physics.

In the 1960s responsibility for the school was eventually handed over to the government. Kornilda college opened in Darwin and Dhupuma college at Yirrkala where some students were sent for further education. This college education was at the level of preparing students for high school.11

The work which the missionaries engaged themselves in continuously expanded during this era, and so did the mission population. Milingimbi's population was 493 in 1961, 665 in 1967, and 772 in 197212. More people meant a need for more gardens and crops, and the pressure on the water supply was a growing problem. Significant amounts of food were grown at Milingimbi. Pumpkin and watermelon alone were grown at the amount of 4.5 tons each and other fruits 9.5 tons.13 Annual reports refer to consistent expansion in all areas - more clearing of land, more head of cattle, more buildings and more staff. The situation eventually led Edgar Wells to make the following comment in his annual report to the 1958-59 Synod:

as the developing life of the district involves a certain employer-employee relationship our position needs clarification.14

Another area in which the missionaries were particularly involved was health care. Children received special attention. The nursing sister examined all children attending school on a daily basis.15 The mission also provided special rations for babies three times

12NTRS 40-7399.
13NTRS 40-7399, Station Report to Synod 1962.
15NTRS 40-7399, Inspection of Milingimbi School, 6/1/59.
a day. This practice continued until 1968 when it was modified to a daily ration. Not until the 1970s was the feeding of babies by mission staff discontinued.

"Learning to work" the Balanda way

When Yolnu today speak of the mission days it is clear that for them the mission was just as much about learning to work the Balanda way as it was to learn about Christianity. Learning about God and learning about Balanda work were interlinked and simultaneous processes. One example which illustrates this point is the story one man told of how his father first came with his family in to the mission at Elcho Island. Larry Bilanya, a lay-pastor at Milingimbi asserted that his family had been called by God to go the mission:

God call them and they were start making building first off, and then you know that's their start, nhakuna [that is to say] their ministry, [it had] started already.

In his view, then, doing building work was a part of what it meant to be a Christian and to live at the mission.

Alfred Gujupun, another Milingimbi man, who worked with the missionaries for many years, made a statement bringing out similar sentiments about the process of work and Christianity going hand in hand. He said:

Yo, they establish mission and then they start teaching good story about Jesus, God...people from all over Arnhem Land they come and listen to that good news, and then they used to have service on Sunday morning...And then they teaching how to work...like paw-paw, banana, water melon, potatoes, peanuts, they used to teach them,...missionary taught us one manymak [good] way. Manymak [Good]. Only djama [work], work ga manymak dhiwu [and good story] and that's it. Baygu card [no card playing], they didn't bring any card. Ga balunya gauny[i] [and likewise no alcohol].

In comments such as those cited above one can see how a specific perception of Christianity started to emerge. The mission routines, its work practices and its functioning
as a community, all completely alien practices to Yolgu to begin with, became associated with Christianity as a faith.

"Learning about God": Expanded religious education

The policy of assimilation allowed consolidation and expansion of the mission’s evangelical efforts. Documents from the time give the impression of a very thorough program of religious instruction designed to reach and involve as many of the mission residents as possible. At school, students received brief but regular religious education. The Sunday school was the chief medium. In 1960-61 there were over 100 Sunday school students at Milingimbi divided up in twelve classes of differing age groups.16

There were numerous activities and clubs. The assimilation policy had stated that recreational facilities had to be provided on the mission and this was implemented through religious social groups that were organised by the missionaries. In the archival material numerous groups of this kind are referred to, such as the ‘young men’s meeting’, a couple’s club, and a boy scout group.17

A new women’s group started up in 1962 designed to “reach people who don’t usually go” to church.18 In 1961 the first church service was held at Arafura by the Florida cattle station.19 In the same year two Yolgu men went to the mainland on a preaching tour to reach the people there.20 In 1963 a youth camp was held for the first time at Goulburn Island for a group of students from the surrounding Methodist stations.21 These were to be held on an annual basis at different places. In 1965 three Milingimbi men were sent to

16 NTRS 40-7399, Report to Synod on Young People’s Work 1960-61.
17 NTRS 40-7399, Report to Synod on Young People’s Work 1962.
18 NTRS 40-7399, Station Report to Synod 1962.
19 NTRS 40-7399, Station Report to Synod 1962.
20 NTRS 40-7399, Report to Synod on Young People’s Work 1960-61.
21 NTRS 40-7399 Report to Synod 1964.
Goulburn Island for a local preacher's course. Thus, the mission environment provided a full scale educational program on every level.

In assessing the changes which took place during the 1950s Ann Wells, the wife of Edgar Wells, superintendent at Milingimbi mission, states:

The result of our steady policy of all-over education were to be seen in the almost unbelievable changes in Milingimbi during our ten years there. Tribal fights which happened almost every week during our first two or three years, had almost diminished until an argument involving spears was an almost vanished event in our last term. The younger men and women were becoming interested in, and proficient in, many normal civilized activities and the whole people were learning to adjust their way of life in an entirely new pattern. (1963:90-91)

Throughout the 1950s and early 1960s Methodist archival material refers to small scale but continuous progress in its religious pursuits. For instance in 1958-59 the missionary Edgar Wells reports that seventeen people committed themselves to God at the opening ceremony of the new church. The succeeding missionary Marcel Spengler reports in the year 1960-61 that two people came and asked for baptism and that two men had volunteered to go on a preaching tour to the mainland. He also stated that "services have been well attended".

As literacy levels developed communication was improved, and the Bible started to become accessible to a growing group of literate Yolnu. Mrs Shepherdson points out that before the war the missionaries had been more or less completely dependent on just two Yolnu - Harry Makarrwala and Andrew Birndjawuy - for translating the church services to the other Yolnu. Now more interpreters became available, and Bible teaching could become more detailed.

The work of the missionaries was not without its difficulties however. The missionaries always felt they had too little time to spend on religious matters, and had to spend too much of the day on running the station and its administration. There appears to have been a continuous problem in attracting the older men to church.\(^{26}\) Attendance appears to have fluctuated. One report refers to good attendance at Christmas time but laments that "there is no indication of stable Christian experience".\(^{27}\) In spite of the reported difficulties the tone of the missionaries lingering through the documents from this time is one of modest optimism. However in 1967, and in the years following, a real downturn in church attendance and interest is evident. In his 1967 report Spengler writes:

There has been a decline in church attendance except when films have been shown at evening services. Sunday school attendance dropped off to the extent that all classes except those for staff children are conducted by teachers (staff and aboriginal) meeting groups in the camps. The situation has caused many questions, including some uncomfortable ones, to be asked. Is there evidence of Satanic forces at work subtly trying to tear down and cause confusion where there had been an edifying work of the Spirit.\(^{28}\)

This tone of pessimism continues into the 1970s and the era of self-determination.

A document titled "The development of Indigenous leadership within the church", produced by the mission linguist and teacher Beulah Lowe, suggests that the cause of the demise in church attendance was the decreasing dependence on the missionaries for access to European goods. While the Methodist church had a policy promoting tolerance of Aboriginal culture, it appears from Lowe's comments that there was still far too much reliance on European structures and practices for the Christian message to grow, and for there to be a development of indigenous leadership. Lowe's critique of mission practices is presented from the perspective of her reading and reflection on the development of indigenous churches in other parts of the world. The following is an extract of the main points from the document:

\(^{26}\)NTRS 40-7399, Station report to Synod 1962.
\(^{27}\)NTRS 40-7399, Annual report to Synod July-Aug 1961.
\(^{28}\)NTRS 40-7399, Report to Synod 1967.
Without going into detailed analysis of the situation on our stations in Arnhem Land, I would suggest that what we have is not an indigenous church in the true sense of the word, but a European church with Aboriginal attendants...Instead of Christianity meaning a personal relationship with God, it often means a relationship with the missionary...when food and money were in plentiful supply, and the people were much more dependent on the Mission, it was usual for church attendances to be high...Nowadays, with much more contact with the outside world, more money and food etc., there is less dependence on the Mission and church attendances have dropped considerably...On some of our stations, few of these socially significant members of the community even attend church more than rarely...To most Aborigines Christ is a balanda.²⁹

Lowe goes on to question what the aim of the missions in Arnhem Land should really be:

What is our main aim as missionaries? Is it assimilation or is it the bringing of the Aboriginal people to Christ?³⁰

In retrospect, it seems that Lowe’s comments address key problems. In the 1970s and the era of self-determination Yolgu preachers began to receive training at Nungalinya. Self-determination also gave room for greater expression of Aboriginal identity. Both factors, as we will see, were crucial in creating a foundation for the Christian Revival which took place later in 1979.

**Government Days and the self-determination policy**

In 1972 the Whitlam government announced a new policy of self-determination to replace the old assimilation policy. Self-determination was defined as:

> Aboriginal communities deciding the pace and nature of their future development within the legal, social and economic restraints of Australian society. (Lippmann 1981:73)

As the Methodist church gradually relinquished control, the mission settlements were turned into incorporated communities with elected Aboriginal councils in charge of their...

³⁰NTRS 40-7407, ibid, p. 5.
affairs. Instead of a mission superintendent, a Senior Officer or Community Advisor was employed as an advisor to the council. Government agencies took over responsibility for health and education. Yolgu refer to this era and the time since 1972 as "Government Days".

Some reforms had already taken place before 1972. In 1964 the Welfare Ordinance which had made Aboriginal people wards of the state was abolished. In 1965 Aboriginal Village Councils had been set up; they had an advisory role to the mission superintendent but no formal power. The new Training Allowance scheme of 1969 meant that Aboriginal people could no longer be paid in rations but had to be paid in wages, but below the award wage.

The Methodist church did not withdraw immediately from community administration, but there were significant changes in the way in which it operated. In 1972 the Methodist church had been incorporated into the United Church of North Australia (U.C.N.A), consisting of a union of Methodist, Presbyterian and Congregationalist churches (Bos 1988b:184). U.C.N.A became responsible for the ministry, but in line with the new government policy, administration and community development was transferred to a U.C.N.A. agency called C.E.D.A.R (Community Education and Development Arnhem Land).\footnote{31} Later in 1974 C.E.D.A.R. changed its name to A.A.D.S (Aboriginal Advisory and Development Services) and in 1986 to A.R.D.S., Aboriginal Resource and Development Services (Bos 1988b:184-185). In the meantime the church had also changed its name slightly to the Uniting Church of Australia, when the union between the Methodist, Congregationalists and Presbyterians was formalised in 1977 (Bos 1988b:213).

The old paternalism of the mission was intended to be replaced by new concepts such as a 'hand-in-hand relationship' and a 'liberating style of community work', but there were
many problems with the implementation of the new policies as letters and documents of the time testify. One community worker from Milingimbi writes:

There is great confusion over roles. Staff are supposed to be tending to the role of advisor, I gather. I can find scarcely one role that fits anything else but the theme 'manager'.

The shift in policy was indeed a great one. While previously the goal had been assimilation, now the goal was "retention of cultural identity". The role of staff had shifted course to be that of 'stimulators' and 'enablers' in the process of Aboriginal people finding their own directions in the control of their communities.

Similarly at Ramingining there were many problems in the initial years. One community advisor discusses the difficulties he perceived among the Aboriginal people with the idea of community and working for the common good as a community. Up until the time of self-determinaton most Yolŋu decision-making processes would have been on the basis of family and clan membership. While it is shown in this chapter that the idea of community was one to which Yolŋu were exposed throughout the mission era, the process of decision-making through this new system of councils was not without difficulties. Another community development report from Ramingining in the 1970s indicates a problem but also shows some optimism:

A year ago Ramangining Council was not strong and was not supported by the community, people did not see clearly the importance of council or the responsibilities of a council. Now people have begun to work and talk together and the council is seen as a part of the community, people are taking responsibility in areas that before they were not prepared to think about.

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32NTRS 40-7397, Letter from B. Harris 16/5/74.
33NTRS 40-7399, undated document (from mid-70s) titled "Role of the U.C.N.A., A.A.D.S. staff at Milingimbi.
35NTRS 40-7413, Community Development Report, (undated, 1970s) by N. Broad.
Other issues of concern which correspondence from this time period refer to are the high number of Balanda in the community, and the tensions developing between Balanda and Yolgu. Liquor was coming into Milingimbi, and often led to flare ups between Balanda staff and Yolgu. Yolgu were saying that there were too many Balanda coming in to the community, expressing fears that Milingimbi would eventually turn in to a Balanda town.36

In response to the new government directives the Uniting Church in North Australia conducted a survey in 1974 among the Aboriginal people of Arnhem Land in order to establish new directions for the church. The intention of the survey was to find out what Aboriginal people were thinking about the new situation and then determine future structure and direction of the church in Arnhem Land.37 The results were gathered in a report titled 'Free to Decide'. The key issues which the interviewers found to be emphasised by Aboriginal people in Arnhem Land were land rights, the right over minerals and other resources, and the right to be in control of their communities. At the same time it was generally expressed that the missionaries were still wanted. One Yolgu comment in this report which appear typical of opinions at the time states:

It is our land and we have to say what we think. We will organise things, organise the work and all this, but we want the missionaries. (United Church in North Australia 1974:6)

At this stage then Yolgu voiced a preference for Christian staff over secular Balanda, and as it was Christian staff continued to be employed through the U.C.N.A as well as its development agency at Milingimbi, Ramingining and other communities around Arnhem Land. One of the most telling aspects of the link perceived by Yolgu between church and community is that council meetings at Milingimbi and Ramingining frequently began and finished with prayer.38

36NTRS 40–7397, Letter to G. Symons from B. Harris 16/5/74.
37 In particular A.A.D.S. - the Aboriginal Advisory and Development Services.
38See for instance NTRS 40–7398 variety of Milingimbi council minutes and NTRS 40–7413 a variety of Ramingining council minutes.
What impact then did the new policies of this era have on the shape of Yolŋu Christianity as it exists as present? During this era new educational opportunities became available for Yolŋu which created a foundation for the possibility of the development of an indigenous Christian movement in contrast to the Balanda controlled church during the mission days. Nungalinya college opened in the 1970s and Yolŋu started to receive theological training for the ministry. Djininyini Gondara was the first to be ordained. Others followed: Minyipirriwuy Garrawurra, Rronang Garrawurra, and Joe Mawunydjil were all ordained in 1985 (Uniting Church of Australia 1985a).

At Ramingining leadership in the church was an important issue. Since Ramingining was initially an outstation to Milingimbi it was serviced by the ministers appointed to Milingimbi, but in 1976, a Fijian, Jovilisi Ragata was appointed lay-pastor at Ramingining. Later the congregation at Ramingining received visits by Joe Mawunjdil who was then pastor at Milingimbi. Independence from the former Milingimbi mission was an issue, with notes from a congregational meeting at the time asking if people from other communities are always invited to hold the services how will local leadership develop.

In terms of its evangelical purpose the mission had little success during the 1970s. By 1972 the Rev. B. Harris who had recently arrived at Milingimbi concluded that:

> the Church is in a bad way. Although membership numbers are good, they do not reflect participation in worship.

In 1973 his tone is similarly despairing:

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39 In 1985 Minyipirriwuy was minister at Milingimbi, Rronang at Yirrkala, and Mawunydjil at Galiwin’ku.
40 Incidentally the question of church leadership has continued to be an issue in the 1990s and many church meetings during my fieldwork period were devoted to attempts to gain an ordained minister.
42 NTRS 40-7399 Milingimbi Missionary Report; Rev. E. B. Harris, August 1972
I am at the time of the year when I need to make an annual report, and wonder what can be said to justify my continued work here.\textsuperscript{43}

Harris blames the lack of attendance on the format of the church services saying that they were simply not perceived as meaningful among the Aboriginal people. However some Aboriginal fellowship nights organised by Yolnu for Yolnu were well attended. Apart from the problem with the format of the services, Harris blames the "hovering and unintentional paternalism of European staff" for the decline in the church.\textsuperscript{44} The following year he again drew attention to the lack of Yolnu leadership and initiative in the church, and referred to one church council meeting where there were so many Balanda that Yolnu had later expressed concern about "being pushed out of church affairs."\textsuperscript{45}

At the same time there were signs that in instances when there was room for expression of Aboriginal identity in the church, there was more success. In some ways the occurrence of the Revival which took place later in 1979 is not such a great surprise. There are occasional indications in documents from the 1970s which show the direction towards a Revival and the growth of an indigenous Christian movement. The Rev. Harris at Milingimbi stated already in 1976 that as a result of the hand-over of power to Yolnu there "has been a notable spiritual awakening as people have been thrust more and more on themselves."\textsuperscript{46} Also in the 1970s some Yolnu people started to receive theological training. Furthermore, in a letter from 1975, Harris refers to the reluctance of Balanda staff to allow a more Yolnu style form of Fellowship.\textsuperscript{47} The letter states that many staff felt uncomfortable with sitting Yolnu style on the ground during a service or with Yolnu talking to each other while a service was in progress. It seems then that there was a budding Yolnu style of worship, repressed at the time by the strong Balanda presence.

\textsuperscript{44}NTRS 40-7399 Milingimbi Missionary Report 1972.
\textsuperscript{46}NTRS 40-7397 Letter from B. Harris 14/4 1976.
\textsuperscript{47}NTRS 40-7397 Letter from B. Harris 30/3 1975.
Then in 1979 a Christian Revival began at Elcho Island. R. Bos (1988) who has conducted a detailed study of the 1979 movement, argues that it needs to be viewed within the background context of both increasing opportunities and the new problems generated by self-determination in the 1970s (Bos 1988b:353-355).

**The 1979 Christian Revival**

The 1979 Revival which began at Galiwin'ku in Arnhem Land, has been highly influential on Christianity as practised in the present. Yolnu in Ramingining said that in the mission days people did not really 'understand for God' or were only "half Christians", but say that since the Revival Arnhem Land people have become "true Christians". The Holy Spirit, they say, was re-born in Arnhem Land in 1979.

According to Bos (1988b), who has completed a doctoral thesis on the 1979 Revival, the Revival at Galiwin'ku began when a group of Yolnu had unusual experiences at prayer meetings. They reported that the Holy Spirit appeared among them in the shape of "a foggy mist or clouded wind" (Bos 1988:77). There continued to be occurrences at prayer meetings over the next few days - at one meeting people started to speak in tongues, at another meeting people came forward and knelt down in the centre of the group. More and more people started to come along. Bos (1988:80) reports that two to three hundred people were present each night, which meant that about half of Galiwin'ku's total population of 1300 was attending regularly. From Galiwin'ku the Revival spread to other Arnhem Land communities as well as communities further afield in the Northern Territory.

A feature of the Revival was the unusual visions and dreams experienced by some individuals:
A man called Wirriyi (Liyagawumirr) had a vision whilst he was sitting down resting in the evening. He was suddenly gripped by a feeling of panic and saw a great fire start at the point (the old hospital site) and sweep right through the town. The whole landscape was scorched black. But then immediately green grass was growing everywhere. Then he saw Christ holding Galiwin’ku and all its people in his hand. Prior to the vision he had stopped coming to church. Now he rededicated his life. When he told of his vision, it caused great excitement at Galiwin’ku. (Bos 1988b:107)

This emphasis on visions and dreams is still an important feature of the Yolgu church and, as it seems, a definite legacy of the 1979 Revival. Similarly the emphasis on a personal experience of the Holy Spirit remains a crucial feature of worship in Ramingining and in Arnhem Land more generally.

An alternative version of how the Revival started was provided to me by Yolgu people in Ramingining. One man who was deeply involved with the church suggested that the Revival really started at Milingimbi. According to his version a Balanda teacher at Milingimbi called Mr Van der Staal had a child who miraculously recovered from an illness. He explained that the child’s recovery was a sign that the Holy Spirit had been born at Milingimbi. After that, he said, the Holy Spirit started moving and crossed over to Galiwin’ku. The Holy Spirit was born at Milingimbi first because the old people there had carried on their ministry. The old women, especially, he emphasised, had kept going to church all the time.

The same man associated the beginnings of the Revival with a religious crusade led by Dan Armstrong, an evangelist from Canberra, and the late Kevin Rurambu, a Yolgu lay preacher. Rurambu had a special gift, he said, for preaching and interpreting the Bible in Yolgu language, and as a result a lot of people came forward. The crusade visited communities all around Arnhem Land and the Revival began. He said:

... Holy Spirit already moving all around Arnhem Land, lot of people hear him. Lot of people coming in. You know old people hear him ... young people, middle aged people, ... children and all going to Fellowship.
Bos also mentions the crusade in his thesis, although he does not portray the crusade as triggering the Revival. Bos states that the Revival began on the 14th of March 1979 at Galiwin'ku and that Armstrong visited Galiwin'ku in May 1979 (1988b:75,80). However, considering the Ramingining man's comments, the Armstrong and Rramambu crusade may have been crucial in spreading the Revival beyond Galiwin'ku to the communities around Arnhem Land.

Bos shows that the crusade had an impact on the style of worship in Arnhem Land. For instance, after the crusade Yolngu adopted the practice of using microphones at Fellowship meetings. The evangelical style of the crusade also left an imprint. Bos writes:

Dan Armstrong's ministry consisted mostly of preaching for conversion to Jesus Christ. At the conclusion of his address, people were invited to come forward as a sign of their new commitment. He also encouraged the Yolngu Christians to take responsibility for evangelism, counselling and praying with people. Another two hundred or so people committed themselves to the Movement during Dan Armstrong's visit. (1988b:80-81)

According to Bos another result of the Revival was the emergence of the Fellowship meetings as the central form of worship (1988a:426-431). These meetings were in a very different style to the services held by the Methodist missionaries, and displayed a number of particularly Yolngu features. For instance the meetings were held out-doors in the evenings, people sat on the ground, and they involved a great deal of physical participation through actions accompanying the songs. During the fieldwork in Ramingining, I found that the Fellowship meetings are still the main form of worship and follow a similar pattern to that outlined by Bos (1988b:88-99). However, Bos does not mention that similar services did in fact exist long before the Revival, but were known then as camp-services or fellowship nights. As a letter from the Rev. Harris at Milingimbi, referred to in the previous section of the chapter suggests, a similar form of worship existed. The problem was that many Balanda Christians in the Arnhem Land communities felt uncomfortable with this style.48 It seems then that the Revival resulted in

48NTRS 40-7397 Letter from B. Harris 30/3 1975.
a political legitimization and elevation of the Fellowship meeting as a Yolŋu style of worship.

Another perspective on the emergence of the Fellowship meetings has been offered by Rudder (pers. comm., 1996). Rudder who was employed for many years at the Elcho Island mission (now Galiwin'ku) suggests that the word Fellowship, meaning any gathering of Christians to pray or sing was in use at the mission long before the Revival, but after the Revival the word Fellowship meeting began to refer to the specific Christian ritual with its distinct phases as discussed by Bos (1988b) and myself in this thesis.

In considering the information available about the Revival, one may conclude that during the Revival a combination of a Yolŋu style of worship as well as influences from the Armstrong's evangelical crusade shaped the specific form of worship which is now known as Fellowship meetings.

According to Bos the Revival lasted for about two years. Then in 1981, he writes that "it became difficult to sustain the intensity of the nightly fellowship meetings" (1988:124). Christians started to meet instead on a weekly basis for Bible study or small family fellowship meetings. However, every year since 1979 an annual commemoration of the Revival is held at Galiwin’ku in February/March. The 1991 commemoration of the 1979 Revival is described in this thesis in a chapter on Christian Rallies.

Conclusion

In these two historical chapters I have shown something of the ways in which Yolŋu perceive their past, and how the images and understandings of that past influence Yolŋu Christianity in the present. A discussion of the effects of the assimilation policy in this chapter, has shown how the notion of community became associated with the mission, and more recently the church.
The missions were responsible for implementing the government's assimilation policy, which meant that they had to expand their activities in Arnhem Land significantly. Religious education was no longer enough, but schooling, vocational education, employment and even social activities organised on the mission were seen as essential instruments in the implementation of the policy. An unintended result of this situation was that many Yolŋu began to perceive the Christian message as intimately interlinked with the secular activities of the mission; from a Yolŋu point of view "learning to work" the Balanda way and "learning about God" went hand in hand. While Yolŋu may have had this perception even in the first years of the mission, I have argued in this chapter, that it was during the assimilation era that this perception was more widely established.

This history then, provides the background to the present Yolŋu perception that church and community are connected. Considering the view Yolŋu have of Christianity as a unifying force, as well as the idea of people of different clans living and working together in one community, one can begin to understand the present role of the church in linking Arnhem Land people and communities together. Such links are most obviously expressed at the Christian Rallies which are discussed in Chapter 6.

In this chapter I have also examined the role of the subsequent policy change from assimilation to self-determination. This change had an impact on the Yolŋu church in that the training of Yolŋu ministers began and as the missionaries withdrew, the opportunities to develop a more Yolŋu style of worship increased. During the time of the 1979 Revival, the specific ritual which is known as the Fellowship, became the main form of worship, and a more charismatic style of Christianity established itself in Arnhem Land with emphasis on visions, dreams, evangelism and a personal experience of the Holy Spirit.
CHAPTER 4
A CONGREGATION AT RAMINGINING

In this chapter I provide a description of the church in Ramingining: its basic organisation, membership, patterns of worship, theological education of pastors, and the wider links which Ramingining people have with other congregations and Aboriginal people through the Uniting Church. An analysis of this material shows that the particular ways in which Yolgu incorporate Christianity with a wider world view based on the creative activities of Ancestral Spirits, is a process which is both selective and complex. Yolgu people at Ramingining claim that there is no conflict between church and ceremonies, and that Christians can attend both, but the actual data presented in this chapter suggests that such comments by Yolgu need some qualification. Varying segments of Yolgu society embrace Christianity with differing degrees of interest and the pattern of worship is more similar to the pattern of ceremonial activity than it is to a schedule of regular Sunday morning worship.

The patterns which have developed in the Ramingining church in regards to worship, participation and organisational aspects such as decision-making processes, are not the result of deliberate decisions which Yolgu people have made about their church, but rather, are the result of a process of internal conversion where small and every-day decisions about the church are made in terms of what makes sense in the particular cultural context. Specific, and more deliberate, attempts to accommodate Christianity and an Aboriginal world view are made by Aboriginal theologians at Nungalinya College in Darwin, where all the Yolgu preachers receive their theological education, and through the work of the Uniting Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress (UAICC). More
generally, the Uniting Church attempts to accommodate the needs of Aboriginal people through their support of land rights and issues of social justice.

**Local church organisation**

As I will show in this section church organisation in Ramingining is based on a nationwide Uniting Church model, but there are many local modifications which demonstrate selectiveness on the part of Yolŋu in their practice of Christianity. Contrary to standard Uniting Church practice, Sunday morning services are not held regularly at Ramingining. Instead, the main form of worship in Ramingining is the Fellowship meetings which are held in the evenings any day of the week.

Similarly, communion services were not held regularly in Ramingining, mainly because Ramingining did not have an ordained minister who could perform this service. An ordained Yolŋu minister from another community could have been called in to hold such a service, but there was no particular pressure from the Christians for this to happen. The only time a communion service was held at Ramingining during my time in the field was at a Weekend Christian Rally in November 1991, and then the ordained minister from Maningrida led the service.

Other Christian rituals which are not generally practised are infant baptism and wedding ceremonies. Only one infant baptism took place in Ramingining, again this was at the Weekend Rally, and the child was from Maningrida. Adult baptism, in contrast, is practised, usually with a large number of Yolŋu being baptised at the same time. However, during the time of my field-work no such baptism took place. In regards to wedding ceremonies, I only knew of one case where a couple had been married in the church, and this was many years ago in the assimilation era at Milingimbi mission.
Polygamous relationships, which are common among Yolŋu, are accepted by the Uniting Church, except in the case of ordained ministers.¹

There were no specific Bible study groups, although such groups were apparently organised at Galiwin'ku and had, I was told, been held in the past at Raminginning. Instead, Christian worship was entirely focused on the Fellowship meetings, and the occasional Rallies as described in chapters below. So called Action-dancing was the main form of youth activity, often practised in the afternoons, and then performed at Fellowship meetings in the evenings and at special occasions (see Chapter 5).

In terms of its structural organisation, the Raminginning congregation conforms to a Uniting Church model in so far that Raminginning and the nearby congregation at Milingimbi form one parish within the Uniting Church. Raminginning and Milingimbi congregations are one administrative unit from the point of view of the church and share one pastor, since either congregation is viewed as too small to provide the financial support required to keep their own pastor or minister.

In 1990-92 John Baya, a Gupapuyku man from Raminginning, was the appointed pastor in the parish. He was not ordained but was in the process of completing his studies in theology at Nungalinya college. Half of his wages were paid by the Uniting Church and the other half was raised by donations from the parish. In subsequent chapters I will refer to him as "the student pastor" or as "the Raminginning pastor".

A number of other unpaid lay-pastors assisted in the church. Dick Milurrur, a Manharrju man, frequently preached alongside Baya at Raminginning and organised Fellowship meetings when Baya was away. Baya made occasional trips to Milingimbi for Fellowship meetings and for visiting congregation members there, but most of the Fellowship meetings were held at Raminginning.

¹In a conversation, an ordained Yolŋu minister expressed his disagreement with this rule, arguing that he really ought to have the right to take a second wife.
meetings at Milingimbi were organised by Larry Bilanya, an unpaid lay-pastor, and his wife Daisy Namaratj. All of the lay-pastors had attended some theological courses at Nungalinya College in Darwin.

The role of elders is important in the Uniting Church. Each congregation is supposed to have a council of elders who meet together on a regular basis to plan their ministry, assisting the minister in the task of evangelism. Ramingining did have a group of people who were recognised as elders, but they did not hold regular meetings. Their ministry consisted of informal conversations on Christian topics with people within their social circle, prayers for sick people, reading the Bible with people and sometimes inviting people for a meal and prayer. The most important role of the elders in the Ramingining congregation was to lay on hands and to pray for people at Fellowship meetings.

Whenever a funeral was held at Ramingining, an ordained minister visited the congregation. This was usually Minyipirriwuy Garrawurra, a Liyagalawumirr man, who was employed as minister at Yirrkala in 1991, but who has many relatives in Ramingining. Such a Christian funeral service followed at the end of a week-long Ancestral funeral ceremony and accompanied Ancestral songs and dances at the actual burial.  

In the Uniting Church the parish council takes care of church business, for instance the employment, wages, and housing of the minister. Decisions are made by voting. The idea of having such a church council is to free up the time for the minister and the elders to concentrate on ministry. The parish council, then, is supposed to take a number of decisions without the minister and elders even being present.

In reality this standard Uniting Church management process was never followed at Ramingining and Milingimbi. The idea of holding church meetings among a group of

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2For a discussion of Fellowship meetings at funerals see Chapter 5.
church councillors without the minister and elders present seemed to go against the grain of Yolŋu decision-making processes. Yolŋu perceive the minister and the elders as the people with authority in the church because they are people who know the Bible and have personal experience of the Holy Spirit. Therefore a decision made in their absence would have no validity. Furthermore, Yolŋu decision-making processes are based on consensus, not majority-vote.  

Whenever a decision about something needed to be made in the church, the student pastor announced a time and a place for a meeting, and anyone from the congregation who was interested came along. Participants at church meetings were mostly from the small group of Christians who attended church regularly, consisting of both elders and congregation members. The student pastor was always present. The people at the meeting discussed, for instance how to raise money for a particular purpose, and if a general consensus was reached the decision was implemented. If opinions were divided the participants either abandoned the idea or planned to meet again at another time to discuss the issue further. As one can see then, Yolŋu have adapted the standard Uniting Church management process to one which better fits their own cultural context.

The Christians

In spite of the long missionary presence in the area, I was initially surprised at the number of people in the community who claimed to be Christian, since there was little apparent church activity in Ramingining at the time I arrived in the community. Later the 1991 census cited 94% of the population in Ramingining as affiliated with the Uniting Church (Australian Bureau of Statistics 1991). The census figure appears extremely high but most probably reflects the tendency among Yolŋu in Ramingining to say that "everyone"

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3 For a further discussion of Yolŋu decision-making processes see Williams (1985).
is a Christian in the community. Depending on how the census question was posed, and how the information was collected, a different percentage may well have emerged. A question which is more important to ask than how many Yolnu Christians there are in the community, is what Yolnu actually mean when they say that someone is a Christian. Individual Yolnu give a variety of definitions. Some said that only people who go to church regularly are "true Christians", but mostly the definition was broader, including anyone claiming to be a believer, or as it appeared, anyone who has been exposed to Christianity at some length in the past. A large proportion of the adult population who now live in Ramingining grew up on Milingimbi mission where they attended Sunday school and church services. Later, in 1979 many people were affected by the Revival. When Yolnu say that "everyone" is a Christian in the community, they are not speaking of the number of Christians who are actively involved in the church at any one time in the community, but are referring to the people who have been involved with the church at some stage over the years, and the historical affiliation which they experience with the Methodist church and the Uniting Church as opposed to other Christian denominations. According to my own data, during 1990-1992 35% - 40% of the adult population attended church at some time in Ramingining, but only a smaller group of approximately 35 adult individuals formed the core of the church, attending regularly. On special occasions attendance in the church soared. The highest attendance at any one Fellowship meeting was 118 (73 adults and 45 children) in December 1991 out of a total population of 450. During a special Rally at Ramingining in November 1991 there were approximately 200 adults and 50 children present one evening. The latter figure, however, included visitors from Maningrida.

4In contrast the census data for the Arnhem area as a whole in 1986 states that 35% are Christians, but then 40% of the people have not stated their religion at all.
All the participants and preachers in the church referred to here are Yolnu. None of the resident Balanda in Ramingining attended the Fellowship meetings, the only form of organised Christian worship held in the community. In contrast to Galiwin'ku, where many of the Balanda staff are Christians, there was only one Balanda family at Ramingining who were active Christians, and they preferred to worship at home, expressing a dislike for aspects of Yolnu styles of worship such as the irregular days at which Fellowship meetings were held.

When Yolnu say that "everyone" is a Christian in Ramingining they are not implying that they have made a choice between Christianity and the Dreaming. All Christians at Ramingining, including the pastors, participate in Ancestral ceremonies. The Yolnu pastor at Ramingining explained to me on several occasions that Christians can go to all ceremonies as long as they "put God first" in their minds. By prioritising in this manner Yolnu manage to incorporate Christianity and yet avoid any contradiction with beliefs in a world of Ancestral spirits.

Another way in which Christianity is accommodated with Yolnu culture is through selective participation: Yolnu from virtually every household in Ramingining attend church, yet the vast majority are women. It was women who organised the Action-dancing groups and were the stewards collecting money for church activities and the pastor's wages. The majority of elders who lay on hands and pray with others during Fellowship services are women. While the two male pastors in Ramingining did the preaching, women contributed to the leadership of the church by giving testimonies and "sharing", which means to stand up and speak about one's personal experiences of, and reflections on, Christian life during the Fellowship meetings.

Very few men at Ramingining go to church. At any one Fellowship meeting there were usually only two to four men including the pastor present. There were three senior men who regularly participated in the Fellowship without taking an active leadership role.
Another two men contributed with guitars, two were preachers, and then there were a small group of men who made occasional appearances at Fellowship meetings sometimes preaching, playing instruments or just sitting down listening.

Yolnu do not have a clear-cut explanation as to why the church appeals mainly to the women, but it is widely noticed that there are more women involved with the church. One woman commented that Yolnu women have an "open heart" to Jesus, but men do not. Sometimes the preachers commented in their sermons on the presence of many more women than men in the church, but they could offer no ready explanations as to why this was the case. One of the few explanations to this question, was offered to me by a woman at Galiwin’ku who commented that women, to a greater extent, are free to go to church, they are not bound to ceremony and inside (secret-sacred) things to the same extent as men are.

I discussed this explanation with a number of people at Ramingining, including the pastors, all of whom disagreed. Yet in spite of their assertions, the explanation offered by the Galiwin’ku woman seems plausible. To start with, the hierarchy of the church has, since its inception in the mission days, provided an alternative power structure to that of the old men who control Ancestral knowledge.

The mission was sometimes described as a "haven for the women and children" and missionaries continuously complained about the difficulty in attracting the older men to church. Much of missionary efforts in the past were directed towards women and children as seen in particular through the infant feeding program.

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6Another report, Review Report Milingimbi Institution; From Establishment to 31st December, 1949, A431 51/1397, shows that there were more women and children staying at the mission than men. The report states that: "An average wet season population would be 50 men, 80 women and 130 children...".
It is not known whether it is as a result of the mission presence that women no longer practise the ceremonies which were held in the past for young girls as they reached puberty. Ceremonies for the initiation and circumcision of young boys, are however, held regularly, and are considered to be an essential feature of a male's social development. The circumcision ceremony is the first step in learning about the secret-sacred and entering the hierarchy of knowledge controlled by the old men.

The Methodist missionaries, as we have seen, were relatively tolerant of Yolnu culture, but attempted (largely unsuccessfully) to undermine aspects of the Yolnu social system such as polygamy and the system of promising young girls to older men in marriage by advocating the right of young people to take a spouse of their own choice. In addition, present, as well as historical, controversies concerning some Yolnu ceremonies such as the Gunapipi, add to the impression that at a certain point it becomes difficult for men to pursue authority through the ceremonial system as well as the church.\(^7\)

In any case it is difficult for a Yolnu Christian to be critical about ceremonies because there is always the possibility that there may be some form of retaliation in the form of sorcery. One man said:

If I am a preacher I can't say leave the culture, rubbish, come for the church. I can't say otherwise I [will] be in trouble by Yolnu people in culture way you know.

The same man explained that the difference between Balanda and Yolnu is that a Yolnu person cannot criticise the culture since he[or she] is himself a product of the culture by having his own songs and dreamings. And in any case, he continued, "if we judge the culture then God will judge us because God made everything whether good or bad".

\(^7\)Christians at Ramingining attended Gunapipi ceremonies, but at neighbouring Galiwin'ku I was told that Christians cannot go to this ceremony because "the devil's dances" are performed there. In particular it was the secrecy surrounding the ceremony which Christians took objection to. I was also told that in the mission days Harold Shepherdson banned the ceremony from Elcho Island (Galiwin'ku) and that it has not been held there since.
What Christian people have to do, he suggested, is to sit down and pray and ask themselves whether something is from God or not. Then God will give a message, "Don't worship for this one, or this one manymak[good]."

Another explanation for the greater participation of women than men in the church was offered by a woman who suggested that it is because women identify with Mary in her role as the mother of Jesus. Another woman also discussed the concern among mothers for their children and their future as a factor in bringing them to church. She stated that she brings her children to church so that they will gain an appreciation of spiritual values to counteract the increasing materialism that she perceives in the community.

Yet another woman suggested that there is link between the emphasis in the church on the Book of Revelation and women worrying about the future of their children. She said "men love to drink kava, play cards and watch television, but women think of the second coming and that is why they bring all their children" to church. The church at Ramingining has a strong emphasis on future events as stated in the Book of Revelation. Preachers speak about the coming end of the world and the question of who will be saved. Both community and world events are interpreted in terms of the prophesies in the Book of Revelation, and occasionally trigger a very high attendance at Fellowship meetings including numerous children who are brought along by their mothers.

Many Yolnu Christians only rarely attend Fellowship meetings. On one occasion such people were described to me as "outside Christians" contrasted with "inside" Christians who go to Fellowship meetings all the time. "Inside" and "outside" are terms which are usually used in reference to knowledge of Ancestral designs, songs and ceremonies and are not commonly used in describing Christian activity, but the terms do illustrate an awareness that active participation in the Fellowship meetings is not necessarily the only marker of being a Christian, and reflect a situation at Ramingining where a significant proportion of those who claim to be Christians do not attend church.
Yolgu Christians who do not participate in the Fellowship meetings cite a variety of reasons for their absence. Sometimes arguments with other Christians or their families are a reason for not attending. At other times objections to the preachers are raised, or the manner in which the message is delivered. It is often said that the style of speech which preachers use in the Fellowship is strong or hard (deh). Preachers use microphones and sometimes speak in a loud or angry voice, calling out to people in a commanding tone of voice to come to church and to change their lives. In other social situations telling people directly what to do in such a tone of voice is in Yolgu opinion particularly objectionable and referred to as "forcing". A further reason for not attending church was the feeling that other people were jealous or critical of testimonies and contributions a person had made to the Fellowship. Finally, for outstation people it may only be practical to attend Fellowship meetings in the community once in a while, or they may simply prefer listening to Christian music and have a small Fellowship with their family group instead of the larger and more frequent meetings in town.

When there are no Fellowship meetings on, or if people do not want to go the meetings, an alternative is to have a gathering with just the family, to play guitar and sing Christian hymns or just listen to Christian cassettes by local singers. In 1990-1992 it was common to see a family get together this way, and the cassettes in particular could be heard any evening when one walked around the community.

A final factor which influences church participation is a person's family connections, important in virtually every Yolgu context. In the church at Ramingining the extended families of the two pastors formed nearly half of the group of people who attended church regularly. Yet family connections cannot be regarded as the sole determining factor in church participation; far from all the close family members of the pastors participated. Moreover, when community interest in the church was at a high level family membership appeared to be of less importance, with a much more diverse range of people
attending, including people from virtually every household, family and clan in the community. One of the main concerns expressed by Christians was over relatives who did not participate in the church and what would happen to them at the time of Revelation.

A certain predominance of Gupapuyku people in the church can be detected in the Ramingining-Milingimbi area, dating back to the mission era. The Gupapuyku formed a sizeable part of the permanent population at Milingimbi and Gupapuyku language was the *lingua franca* adopted by missionaries. Furthermore, one of the most prominent Yolŋu leaders at Milingimbi in the latter part of the mission era was Djawa, a Gupapuyku man, and many of the interpreters in the mission church were Gupapuyku.

Two of the three main pastors were Gupapuyku and two other men who occasionally preached at Ramingining were also Gupapuyku. The third pastor was married to a Gupapuyku woman and she and her sisters were very active in the church, organising Action-dancing and other activities. Yet it is far from true to say that Gupapuyku people controlled the church. There were a range of clans represented in the church - Manharrnu, Liyagalawumirr, Ganalbinu and so forth. When I visited Milingimbi some people stated that Wangurri people have a special relationship to the church in that community because of their links with Makarrwala, a prominent Wangurri man on the mission.

According to Bos (1988b:232, 235) two men called Walalipa and Batanga were highly influential at Galiwin'ku in the mission days and Bos shows that ancestry through these men still affects church hierarchy at Galiwin'ku. Rev. Dr Djiniyini Gondarra is Walalipa's son and another prominent evangelist from Galiwin'ku who died in 1991 was the son of Batanga.

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9 Baya, the Gupapuyku pastor in Ramingining, made a list of Yolŋu interpreters in the church from the 1930s to 1940s and the 1950s. Ten of the fifteen people listed were either from the Daygurrgurr Gupapuyku clan or the Birrkili Gupapuyku clan.
A pattern of revivals

In the introduction to the thesis I referred to the Yolŋu church as being revivalistic, and explained that I meant by this that interest in the church fluctuated significantly over time.

Week long periods without Fellowship meetings were interspersed with times of intense church activity. In the time period October 1990 to May 1992 Raminginiring experienced three waves of increased interest and participation in the church, referred to here as revivals, when frequent Fellowship meetings were held, sometimes every night. The revivals had in common their initiation in response to special events such as Christmas and Rallies, or to community and world events perceived as signalling the impending end of the world.

Yolŋu use the word revival in two ways: firstly to denote the 1979 Christian Revival which took place at Galiwin'ku. In the text of the thesis this event is referred to as Revival with a capital letter. Secondly, Yolŋu use the word more generally to refer to a temporary increase in church participation. It is in this sense that I use the word when I speak of there being three revivals at Raminginiring, and in this instance I use lower case.

In between the revivals there were usually a handful of meetings each month, but in some months there were no church meetings at all. In this section I suggest that the pattern of fluctuating attendance has become characteristic of the church in Raminginiring, and possibly more widely so in Arnhem Land.

During the end of 1990 there was little church activity in Raminginiring. Yolŋu attributed this lull to a variety of problems in the community.10 Between the beginning of October and Christmas there were no ordinary Fellowship meetings at all. Meetings only took place in association with a funeral of a young Christian man, and there were some

10 Among the problems referred to was a disagreement over the leadership of the church, tensions developing as a result of a death in October, and other conflicts between family groups in the community which culminated in November.
Action-dancing sessions held in the afternoons which will be referred to in greater detail in Chapter 5. The student pastor attempted to start up Fellowship meetings, waiting at the church stage with his wife and children, but nobody joined them.

Then suddenly the church started up again on Christmas Eve with a "carols by candle light" evening. As it turned out this was the beginning of a revival in church activity. Approximately thirty adults and thirty-five children attended on Christmas Eve, and later a large group of boys walked from house to house around the community singing Christmas carols. The turnout at Christmas was impressive, considering the previous lack of participation. Within the next few days more Fellowship meetings were held and it was decided to organise a Rally in order to give the local church a new beginning. Usually a Rally is a large weekend convention where Christians from other communities are invited, but this time the Rally was planned for a week and intended for the local congregation only.

As the Rally began, international events started to impinge on the local scene. Tensions in the Gulf were escalating as the deadline set by the United States for Iraq's withdrawal approached. Yolgu viewed the events in the Gulf with great concern, fearing the possibility of a third world war, and relating the events to prophesies in the book of Revelation. News coverage at the time was dramatic and Ramingining had only a few weeks earlier received television access, which meant that some Yolgu could watch the news and see with their own eyes what was happening. Older people remembered when Milingimbi was bombed during the Second World War, and expressed their fear that it could happen again. During this time attendance at Fellowship meetings soared.

The intensity of worship continued throughout January and most of February 1991, but gradually, over the next few months, the number of people attending and the frequency with which meetings were held declined, only to grind to a complete halt in mid-July.

A television was available in the local library and a few people had their own sets.
One factor which contributed to the absence of Fellowship meetings in July was that the student pastor had to be in Darwin for his course work. However, his absence cannot be a sufficient explanation for the lack of activity in the church since there were other people in the community who were able to organise a Fellowship meeting.

A second revival began in early September as plans were being made for a weekend Rally with invitations sent to congregations from other communities around Arnhem Land. When the Rally was rescheduled for November, attendance slowed down again only to rise again at the end of November at the time of the Rally. After the Rally the church continued with a busy program throughout December and Christmas.

Interestingly, during much of the time when there was little or no church activity, there was a great deal of Ancestral ceremonial activity taking place.12 In October and November 1990, as well as from May to October 1991 one ceremony followed another in town as well as on outstations. However, ceremony and church do not always exclude each other - while a large ceremony was taking place at nearby Nangalalal outstation in September, the church in Ramingining was at the same time very busy. Neither is there an intentional planning of church activities when there are no ceremonies in progress, but what is true is that the rise and fall in church activity is related to the wider rhythm of community life and events. A period of frequently held Fellowship meetings are followed by a period of rest which resemble the pace of Aboriginal ceremonies much more than a European pattern of regular Sunday morning worship.

12In October, November 1990 there was a funeral bungul in town, a Maradjim ceremony at the Tanks, and a large ceremony in the vicinity of Djapindjapin creek. From May to October 1991 there were several funeral ceremonies in Ramingining township, two Maradjiri ceremonies, a Mandalyala ceremony, an initiation ceremony at Gattji outstation, Gumupipi ceremonies at Nangalala and Milingimbi which then continued at a Mamingrida outstation area. When the church was at its peak in December 1990 and January 1991, November 1991, and May 1992 there were to my knowledge no ceremonies taking place, except for one funeral at Yathalamarra during Christmas 1990.
A third brief revival took place in May 1992 and was associated with the circulation of a pamphlet predicting the return of Jesus Christ in October that year. The pamphlet had been sent by church members from Milingimbi who in turn had received the pamphlet from Darwin. It was printed in N.S.W. by the Mission for the Coming days Australia Branch Church, and carried the headline 'An Emergency News - Be ready for the coming of Jesus quickly'. The pamphlet was placed on the wall of the council office and distributed to Ramingining outstations. In response to the pamphlet many people turned up to Fellowship meetings. One evening there were as many as forty adults and sixty children attending Fellowship, and the following night when another large Fellowship was held, many people came forward to kneel down at the cross. Some days later a message was received from the Uniting Church in Darwin that in spite of what the pamphlet stated, nobody really knows the day and the hour when Jesus will return, and soon attendance at Fellowship meetings decreased.

Attendance at Fellowship during the same month was again briefly refuelled when a rumour spread that a woman had risen from the dead at a Maningrida outstation. According to the rumour the funeral ceremony was well in progression when the deceased woman woke up and stepped out of her coffin. While the pastor at Ramingining took a sceptical approach to the matter, a number of rumours concerning the events circulated in the community. According to one, the woman had said as she woke up, "I am Mother Mary, don't be frightened, I am here with God's power". Her family allegedly fled the outstation in fear, and the coffin was said to be sitting empty at Maningrida police station. In response to the story one family suggested that perhaps God had made a new law now, allowing some people to return from the dead.

As the information above shows, the frequency with which Fellowship meetings are held varies a great deal. Although I suggest that this variation is more in tune with the pattern of Yolnu life than the European tradition of Sunday morning services, it was not perceived by Yolnu in Ramingining as an ideal state of affairs. Yolnu Christians
commented that if all was well there would be a Fellowship meeting every day. On two occasions church members drew up preaching schedules with Fellowship meetings planned on a daily basis, with Sundays featuring both a morning and an evening service. In reality the schedules proved to be too demanding and were only adhered to in part.

The revivals which I refer to in Ramingining need to be viewed in the context of other Christian resurgences in the area. It seems that revivals have occurred at different times and places around Arnhem Land. There is the 1979 Christian Revival at Galiwin’ku. Secondly, according to Rudder (1993:72-78), Yolgu at Galiwin’ku now refer to the so called Adjustment Movement of 1957 (R Berndt (1962) as ”the first Revival”. According to Rudder’s informant there is a similarity between the events of 1957 and the events of 1979 - at both occasions the participants were perceived to be blessed by the Holy Spirit (1993:75-76).13

Further evidence that participation in the church has fluctuated from time to time comes from archival material. A report from 1961 shows that church attendance went up and down at Milnganbi, usually with an increase at Christmas. Marcel Spengler, the superintendent in charge at the time writes:

Services at Christmas have drawn the usual larger numbers, but there is no indication of stable Christian experience.14

During my fieldwork in 1991 I learnt that Maningrida had experienced something of a Christian revival during the year. I first heard the news when attending a ceremony where numerous Maningrida people were present. According to a group of women from Maningrida unusual events had taken place in the community. Papers with the sign 666

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13Rudder (1993:76) is probably right when he suggests in a footnote that R. M. Berndt (1962) has undervalued the religious aspects of the Adjustment movement in focusing on social and economic aspects of the movement. Some of the information provided about Christian aspects of the Adjustment movement in Berndt’s book is not discussed in terms of Berndt’s wider analysis.

had been sent to the hospital and to the shop. People did not know where the papers had come from, which had frightened them. The women said that now "everybody" at Maningrida had started going to church - including young boys, children, men and old people.

Some weeks later, in November 1991, when Ramingining held its Rally more than two hundred people from Maningrida attended. Ramingining people commented that many of the boys were former petrol sniffers and drinkers who had now become Christians. Later in 1993, I received news that yet another resurgence in church activity had taken place at Maningrida. The fluctuation in church activity, then, is clearly not a feature of the Ramingining church alone, but similar resurgencies and variations have appeared in the past and continue to appear in the present around Arnhem Land.

A regional network

As members of the Uniting Church the congregation at Ramingining is connected to a network of Aboriginal parishes around the Northern Territory. Firstly, the Yolŋu who live at Ramingining have their primary social connections with people from Milingimbi, Gapuwiyak, Galiwin'ku, Maningrida, and the respective outstations of these communities. Yolŋu from Ramingining regularly travel to these communities to visit relatives and attend ceremonies including church events such as Rallies.

Connections with Aboriginal congregations further away are made through the presbytery, referred to as the Northern Regional Council of Congress (NRCC). The NRCC is a union of the Aboriginal parishes in the Northern territory, and is one out of four Uniting Church presbyteries in the Northern Territory (Uniting Church 1991a:42). The NRCC is the Northern Territory Branch of a much larger federal organisation funded

by the Uniting Church and referred to as the Uniting Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress (UAICC).

The parishes in the NRCC presbytery form one administrative unit. The NRCC pays part of the wages for all the pastors in the presbytery. In 1991 there were ten Uniting Church Aboriginal parishes in the Northern Territory (Table 1).

**Parishes**

Darwin

Malalkukuj (consisting of Waruwi and Minjilang congregations)

Mowanjum

**Arnhem Land Parishes:**

Galiwinku-Gapuwiyak

Maningrida

Milingimbi-Ramingining

Yirrkala

Laynhapuy Homelands

**Centre Area Parishes:**

Lapatam Regional (Aputula, Indulkara, Revd. Raymond Banditja (a Yolŋu man from Ramingining))

Pitjanṭatjara

**Ministers**

Revd. Wali Fejo (a Larrakeyah man)

Revd. Joe Mawunydjil Garawirrja

Revd. Dudley Warra'warra (also known as Dudley Cooper Gabunaboi)

John Baya Gaykamangu assisted by Dick Milurrur and Larry Bilanya

Revd. Minyipirriwuy Garawurra.

Table 1. Aboriginal parishes in the Northern Regional Council of Congress 1991. The names of ministers and pastors have been added where known. Source: For a list of parishes see H. Amery (1994).
Since 1991 some of the details of Table 1 have changed. Ministers have left or moved to other communities and Lagarra, an outstation to Milingimbi has since become an independent parish referred to as "Gumurr Rawan" (Uniting Church of Australia 1994:120).

**Education at Nungalinya college and the development of an Aboriginal theology.**

All the pastors involved with the church in Ramingining and throughout Arnhem Land receive their education through Nungalinya college in Darwin. Some of those who are regarded as leaders in the Arnhem Land church are attached to the college as teachers. The majority of the students at Nungalinya come from Arnhem Land, but students come from other areas of the Northern Territory and Australia as well. The students often stay in accommodation provided on campus which has contributed to the college becoming something of a Yolnu enclave in Darwin.

Nungalinya College was established in the early 1970s and has been run by the Uniting Church and the Anglican Church. Since 1994 the Catholic church has joined in the management of the college. The courses offered at the college may lead to ordination within any one of the three churches and are designed particularly for Aboriginal and Islander people.

Apart from theological studies, the college offers a range of other courses such as Community Development, Bi-cultural Life Studies and Arts & Crafts units. Numerous people from Ramingining and Arnhem Land in general participate in courses offered at Nungalinya from time to time.

The college has produced numerous students of theology and lay pastors throughout the Arnhem Land communities. In 1991 there were nine ordained Yolnu ministers in the
Uniting Church in eastern Arnhem Land: Djiniyini Gondarra, Minyipirriwuy Garawurma, Dudley Warawarra, Mawunydjil Garawirtja, Dhalinganda Garawurma, Rronaj Garawurma, Gawirin Gumana, Raymond Banditja and Liyapidiny Manika from Yirrkala who was ordained in 1991 as the first female Aboriginal minister in the Uniting Church.

Candidates for ministry at Nungalinya must be approved by their own communities. Before a candidate is accepted a number of aspects are considered including the person's character, behaviour, personality, knowledge, spiritual maturity, knowledge and understanding of traditional law, English language knowledge, health, what the spouse says about it, and most importantly how the community feels about the prospect of the person being ordained (Northern Regional Council of Congress 1994). Altogether a candidate has to be approved by three different levels - their local congregation, their presbytery and then finally by the 'national Ministerial Education Board' (Carrington 1989:2).16

While a Yolŋu who aspires to become a minister on the one hand has to pass this examination of his or her as a person, there are, on the other hand, no specific educational prerequisites for studies at Nungalinya, which allows a person with a limited educational background to begin studies (Carrington 1989:1). Furthermore students can choose whether to complete their theology courses over a number of years by completing only one component of the course at a time and thereby only spending short periods in Darwin or alternatively they can finish the course on a full-time basis. The part-time option is included to enable students to maintain their obligations in their communities. The policies set out by the college are, according to Carrington (1989:1), deliberately formulated to overcome the problems which have prevented Aboriginal people from becoming ordained ministers in the past.

16In this case the Northern Regional Council of Congress (NRCC) is the presbytery.
Nungalinya College has a policy of employing Aboriginal lecturing staff where possible and since 1995 the college has had an Aboriginal principal - Rev. Wali Fejo, a Larrakeyah man from Darwin (Nungalinya College 1995:1)\textsuperscript{17} The college promotes the development of an indigenous Aboriginal theology as explained in a college publication:

...we were not about the business of giving Aboriginal leaders a western theological education. Teachers had rather to become facilitators, midwives assisting at the communal birth of Aboriginal Theology. Aboriginal leaders had to learn how to do theology and become theologians rather than to give back Western theology that had earlier been given to them. (Carrington 1989:4)

The most prominent person in this process has been Dr. Rev. Djiniyini Gondarra who is a Yolgu theologian employed by the college. Gondarra is also the Executive Officer of the Northern Regional Council of Congress (NRCC) and former Moderator of the Northern Synod in the Uniting Church. Gondarra is frequently cited in a variety of Uniting Church and Aboriginal Christianity contexts as expressing an Aboriginal perspective on Christianity.\textsuperscript{18} Gondarra has received an Honorary Doctorate of Theology in recognition of his work and Yolgu Christians at Ramingining refer to him as their leader in the church. His ideas and writings have been highly influential at Nungalinya college and on the theological training provided there.

The theology advocated by Djiniyini Gondarra is outlined in some detail in his (1986) publication \textit{Series of Reflections of Aboriginal Theology}. The basis of Gondarra's theology is the idea that God was present in the beginning of time with the Aboriginal people and worked through the Aboriginal people and their culture (1986:iv). In another publication Gondarra states more directly that God "gave us the dreaming" (1988:6)

\textsuperscript{17}Rev. Wali Fejo was previously the Chairperson for the Nungalinya College Council and is a member of the Central Committee of the World Council of Churches (Nungalinya College 1994:1).

\textsuperscript{18}However, according to the NRCC office in Darwin, Dr. Gondarra is currently (1997) in the process of reassessing the content of his writings and therefore Gondarra's viewpoints as referred to in this thesis must be viewed as representing his views at the time of publication and not necessarily in the present.
Since Aboriginal culture is viewed as God-given it can be compared with other Christian cultures such as that of the Israelites.

In his (1986) publication Gondarra develops a "theology of the land" where he compares Aboriginal sacred sites with places of special significance for the Israelites in the Bible. He states:

In the Old Testament particularly, the covenant people of God had special places of deep religious significance. We read of the special meaning of places like Bethel where meetings and struggles took place. Great importance is given to Sinai, the mountain of God where Moses received the law. Shiloh was another place of significance.... Their [the Israelites' understanding] of places where the law was retained and remembered is very close indeed to the understanding the Aboriginal people of Australia have of "sacred sites". ...In Aboriginal culture, when persons approach a sacred site, a sacred object, or a totem, it is as if they are approaching the tablets of stone Moses brought down from the mountain." (1986:29-30)

In Gondarra's perspective the New Testament brings the possibility for re-interpreting Aboriginal culture, just as the New Testament is believed to shed new light on the customs of the Israelites. Gondarra urges Aboriginal Christians to "try hard to look for the good things in our traditional culture", (1986:v) although he acknowledges that some ceremonies and aspects of Aboriginal culture may not be of God (Gondarra 1988:7).

The theology, then, which is promoted by Nungalinya college and Djirriyin Djirriyin Gondarra is one which is largely accepting of Aboriginal culture and ceremonies, and where Aboriginal Christians are encouraged to draw inspiration from their cultural heritage rather than deny it. Most probably the theological training which Yolnu Christians receive at Nungalinya contributes a great deal to the present situation at Ramingining where Yolnu state that Christians can go to church as well as ceremonies.

Another key aspect of Aboriginal theology as developed by Gondarra is a strong emphasis on social justice. In Gondarra's view "God is a God of justice" (1986:22) The struggle for social justice for Aboriginal people is reflected in all levels of the Aboriginal church; in the policies of Nungalinya College, in the sermons by preachers at...
Ramingining, and as discussed below in the policies of the Uniting Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress and the Uniting Church more generally. The Christian message, then, promoted at Nungalinya College provides Yolnu with a means to express the injustices they experience in their dealings with the wider Australian society.

**National links: The Uniting Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress and Uniting Church policy**

The final aspect of the Ramingining congregation to be discussed here, will be its links with the wider church. Through the Northern Regional Council of Congress, Yolnu at Ramingining join the nationwide organisation referred to as the Uniting Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress which is funded by the Uniting Church.

The UAICC was formed in 1982 when a group of Aboriginal Christians met in the vicinity of Townsville. The initiative for this Congress came from Rev. Charles Harris, a man of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander descent who had been ordained a couple of years earlier in 1980 through Nungalinya College (Spyekboer 1983:13). Harris was in turn inspired by Maori leaders in New Zealand who had developed their own Maori church structure (Delphine-Stanford and Brown 1994:7). The first meeting of the congress took place not long after the Revival at Elcho Island which probably contributed to the enthusiastic response it received (Bos 1986:172). It was also a time when more Aboriginal people were beginning to receive theological training and were approaching ordination at Nungalinya College.

Yolngu people were involved right from the start of the Congress - among the Yolnu people present at this first meeting was Rev. Djiniyini Gondarra, the first Yolnu to become ordained in 1976. The purpose of the congress was to create an organisation which would unite Aboriginal people in the church around Australia and enable them to discuss issues of particular relevance to them. Delphine-Stanford and Brown writes:
It was a vision of black Christians in Australia united, in control of their own organisation, setting the agenda for mission among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. It would be a body that was concerned with people's lives in a holistic way, committed to minister to them in their daily experience of racial discrimination, dispossession of the land, oppression by structures imposed upon them by Australian Government and church institutions, poverty and despair. It was a vision of a church preaching a gospel of hope and liberation, and living in solidarity with their people as they struggled for justice. (1994:8)

Other key areas of concern which the UAICC has emphasised since its inception is the concept of "holistic ministry" and the development of an indigenous theology. Holistic ministry means that:

"Evangelism must reach past the purely spiritual to touch the whole person, in every area of his or her life - individually and communally. (Uniting Church of Australia 1986c:2)

Furthermore, the UAICC states that:

"Evangelism must reach into every area - economic, social, political. Evangelism must involve the rebuilding of people's lives and community. Evangelism must be immediately related to social issues, and linked with a fight to right wrong (Uniting Church of Australia 1986c:2).

The second meeting of the Congress, in 1983 was held at Galiwin'ku in Arnhem Land. Among the key issues discussed were community development and Aboriginal theology (Uniting Church of Australia 1983a:7). An Executive National Committee was elected consisting of eleven members, two of which were Arnhem Land Yolngu - Djiniyini Gondarra as vice chairman and Geoffrey Rronan from Yirrkala (Uniting Church of Australia 1983a:7).

Even the official symbol of the UAICC (Figure 3), constructed from events of the 1983 congress, illustrate the close links with Arnhem Land."
A church magazine describes the symbol, and its connections with Arnhem Land, in the following terms:

This logo is composed of objects given as symbols to the president of the Uniting Aborigines [sic] and Islander Christian Congress by different Aboriginal communities. The people of Aurukun gave two message sticks used by the people to convey important messages. They were formed into a cross and represent the proclamation of the gospel of good tidings. Galiwin’ku people (Elcho Island) and particularly the Wongun tribe gave the fighting stick at the top of the logo. It has important historical associations with Milingimbi and one of the earliest converted men, Harry Magarrwala, who always carried the stick as a sign of peace and reconciliation, especially when intervening in fighting situations. The black and white hands symbolise unity and renewal in Arnhemland. The bird represent the Holy Spirit and tongues of fire. The colors used are the Australian Aboriginal colors of red, black, and yellow (Uniting Church of Australia 1983b:12).

The demand for social justice for Aboriginal people as part of the message from the UAICC is also reflected more generally in Uniting Church policy statements. In 1981 the World Council of Churches produced a document titled Justice for Aboriginal Australians after a tour around Australia speaking to Aboriginal people and organisations. It was a highly publicised media event, and the document which was produced contained numerous recommendations which it invited the Australian Council of Churches to adopt.
This document contains recommendations in regards to racism, land rights, mining, the legal system, health, housing, education and employment.

Another publication produced by the Northern Synod of the Uniting Church in 1984 sets out the general position in regards to land rights by the Church:

The Northern Synod supports Aboriginal people’s struggle for land rights as an issue of justice, and as part of the Church’s recognition of the part it played in the often destructive contact which has occurred between Europeans and Aborigines (Budden 1984:27).

In more recent years reconciliation and the so called covenanting process have been prominent issues as reflected at the Assembly meetings which are held every three years, the three most recent meetings being in 1988, 1991, 1994. The 1991 Assembly was held in Brisbane and issues relating to Aboriginal people that were discussed were reconciliation, the covenanting process and land rights in relation to a case in the Kimberleys which the Assembly decided to support. (Uniting Church of Australia 1991c:14). The Assembly also displayed symbolic gestures in recognition of Aboriginal people in its opening service:

The service began with retiring President, Sir Ronald Wilson processing halfway into the hall acknowledging that Aboriginal people have ‘suffered dispossession and destruction’ over the last 200 years. Framed by a banner featuring black hands on a white cross and the words ‘Forward Together’, Uniting Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress members met Sir Ronald halfway. Congress Chairperson, Rev Dr Djiniyini Gondarra welcomed his non-Aboriginal brother and sisters in Christ to his homeland and on the journey with God (Uniting Church in Australia 1991c:8-9)

This symbolic display was followed by singing in a number of languages, including the Arnhem Land dialect Djambarrpuyku.

Covenanting refers to a process of active reconciliation where a church group forms a covenant with a local Aboriginal group. Covenanting may involve forming a study group to learn more about relationships between Aboriginal people and non-Aboriginal people, financial support of an Aboriginal group or organisation and spending time with Aboriginal people.
In the same year, in 1991, the World Council of Churches held a meeting in Canberra and here Aboriginal issues too were prominent. This meeting occurs only every seven years. The magazine Journey reports that major concerns raised during this meeting were the Gulf War, church unity and Aboriginal issues:

The Assembly gave prominence to the concerns of Aboriginal Australians. WCC delegations which visited two remote Aboriginal communities before the Assembly reported that racism in Australia is not just horrific, but genocidal and that Aboriginals were ‘demoralised’ because of exclusion from decision-making processes in virtually every area that determines their lives. Aboriginal art and spirituality were prominent. One plenary treated Aboriginal history and concerns through testimonies and a multimedia presentation. The Assembly endorsed a WCC commitment to support and monitor a ‘treaty process’ between Aboriginal Australians and the Australian Government. It called on the church in Australia to return land unjustly taken from Aboriginal people. And it asked WCC members to support struggles of indigenous people everywhere for self-determination, land rights and religious freedom (Uniting Church of Australia, 1991b:9).

At the assembly meeting in 1994 the president of the Uniting Church Assembly addressed the chairperson of the Uniting Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress, apologised on behalf of the church for wrongs which have been done to Aboriginal people, expressed joy over the High Court’s Native Title decision, and among other things reaffirmed the church’s commitment to work towards national and state policy changes which, as the policy-makers hope, will end discrimination and bring equality in terms of housing, health, education and employment opportunities for Aboriginal people (Uniting Church of Australia, 1994:47-48).

On the basis of reports and publications from the Uniting Church then it appears that Aboriginal issues are of importance and receive general support and recognition by the Uniting Church, if not the least through its funding of The Uniting Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress.
Conclusion

In this chapter I have attempted to create a picture of the congregation in Ramingining and its relationship to the wider church. The intention has been to provide a background context to more specific discussions in the chapters below where particular expressions of Christianity are examined such as the ritual of the Fellowship meetings and the Rallies, the content of the sermons and Yolgu healing practices.

The information in the sections above shows that in the process of incorporating Christianity with a wider world view, Yolgu are highly selective and are engaged in a process of internal conversion. In Chapter 1, I adopted Barker’s (1993) definition of internal conversion as a process where people adapt to new concepts and ideas in terms of their pre-existing system of thought. As a result of this process in Ramingining, Fellowship meetings and Rallies have developed as the major forms of Christian ritual, whereas other rituals common in the Uniting Church are rarely practised or completely ignored. Furthermore, in this chapter I have shown that the composition of the congregation, and even the patterns of worship, are subject to this same process of internal conversion. It is mainly women and children who attend church, whereas older men, who control much of the secret-sacred knowledge pertaining to Ancestral ceremonies, are hardly ever seen in church. The pattern of worship fluctuates in waves of intense activity followed by periods with little or no church activity. In this sense the pattern of worship follows a similar rhythm to that of ceremonial life, and clashes between church and ceremony can be avoided since there is little church activity when people are the most preoccupied with Ancestral ceremonies.

In this chapter I have also explored the links which Ramingining people have through the Uniting Church on a regional, as well as a national level, and discussed the more deliberate attempts by these organisations to promote the development of an Aboriginal theology and to accommodate Christianity with an Aboriginal worldview. I have also
shown that the links which the congregation at Ramingining has with the Uniting Church as a nationwide organisation provides a context of external conversion. For instance Yolŋu are expected to adhere to the organisational structure of the Uniting Church and its management procedures, although, as I have shown, there are in fact many local modifications.

In the following chapters I will continue to examine the process of internal conversion which takes place in Ramingining. To begin with, an analysis of the Fellowship meetings will show the uniquely Yolŋu style which the Ramingining congregation has developed in relation to Christian ritual.
In this chapter I discuss the Fellowship meetings, which have become the main form of Christian worship in Arnhem Land. Practices relating to the Fellowship which are also discussed here include Action-dancing, enactments of Biblical events and the incorporation of Christian ritual in funeral ceremonies.

The Fellowship meeting is a powerful ritual in which the participants call on the presence of the Holy Spirit. It is a ritual of transformation where the sick are perceived to be healed and the weak are empowered. In the Fellowship meetings old divisions between clans and families are relinquished, if only for the duration of the meeting, and a new sense of unity forged between its participants as metaphors of unity and the Family of God are played out.

In my analysis of the Fellowship I show how the atmosphere gradually builds up to a dramatic climax where the participants experience the presence of the Holy Spirit. In considering the mechanisms which lead to such experiences, I draw on the work of Kapferer (1983), and more generally Turner’s (1969) notion of ritual as a process. Kapferer (1983), who applies a phenomenological perspective to the study of ritual, shows how music, dance, drama and comedy can transform the consciousness of participants in ritual. Music in particular, Kapferer shows, has an ability to structure experience in ritual, since "...music demands the living of the reality it creates" (1983:187). In Kapferer's study of a Sinhalese exorcism ritual, the patients fall into trance as the drummers in the exorcism ritual play the demon rhythms, but as the drums slow down the patient comes out of the trance (1983:189). Kapferer shows that the success of
the ritual rests on the premise that the participants are drawn into the objective structure of the ritual. Similarly in the Yolnu Fellowship meetings, as we shall see, the interplay of music, dance and metaphor gradually directs the consciousness of the participants towards a state of mind in which they are able to experience the presence of the Holy Spirit.

This chapter also demonstrates that the Fellowship meeting, despite its seemingly Western features, is subject to a process of internal conversion where taken-for-granted attitudes towards religion in the Ancestral domain influence Yolnu in their approach to Christian worship. This is particularly evident from the emphasis which music and dance receive in the Fellowship meetings. Aboriginal Christianity is, like Aboriginal indigenous religion, distinctively participatory in its character. As Djiniyini Gondarra, the Aboriginal theologian, writes:

Aboriginal people have been in bondage to the European style of worship.... We want to make worship that is alive and involved, that has Aboriginal spirituality. Everyone is energetic, active. (cited in Bos 1988a:429)

The ritual of the Fellowship

Fellowship meetings take place in the evenings, any day of the week, and constitute the main form of Christian worship in Ramingining. Fellowship meetings take place out of doors, usually in the open space next to the council office. A stage has been constructed there for the church musicians, who are mostly male, and a large cross erected in front of the stage. The ground is covered with sand and the participants spread out sheets and blankets to sit on during the meetings. As an alternative, meetings are occasionally held outside people's homes at other places around the community. Ramingining has no church building so, if rain is approaching, meetings are held under a shelter next to the council office.
Yolnu say that Fellowship meetings are "open" which means that anyone can attend. In making this statement Yolnu place Fellowship meetings within a conceptual domain where all ceremonies, objects or knowledge are classified as either "inside" (djirrnga) or "outside" (warnagul). Inside refers to the secret-sacred domain, outside to that which can be known by all. If a ceremony is referred to as open everyone can go, if a ceremony is referred to as closed access is restricted.

Among Yolnu people in Arnhem Land the word Fellowship refers to the specific ritual which developed during the 1979 Christian Revival. A Fellowship is always structured along the same lines. In my analysis I divide the Fellowship into three phases which describe the shifting moods of the ritual. The Fellowship meetings, which are held at Ramingining, follow the same structure as the meetings which were held after the 1979 Revival at Galiwin'ku, and which have been described by Bos (1988b:88-100), although Bos prefers to divide the sequence of events into four phases.

In the Fellowship, the singing is particularly important for drawing the participants into the ritual process. Dance, play and metaphor, as we shall see, are also important media by which the consciousness of the participants are affected. Through their engagement with the ritual the participants embark on a process of transformation where the sick can be healed, the weak gain strength and individuals, from a range of clans, become united in the Family of God.

The theme of unity is constantly expressed through the Fellowship and has been referred to previously by Bos (1988a:431-432, 1998b:315-320) and Keen (1994:284-285). Both Bos and Keen refer to a Yolnu wish for greater unity between Balanda and Yolnu as well

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1 At an early stage of the fieldwork I asked if I could make tape-recordings at Fellowship meetings. I was told quite adamantly that I could because Fellowship meetings are open, in contrast with some Ancestral ceremonies.

2 Bos perceives the following phases: the singing of choruses, the opening, sermons and the closing of the Fellowship. In contrast I prefer to refer to the opening and the subsequent delivery of sermons and testimonies as one phase, better viewed as one phase. See also Rudder (1993:73) who like myself perceives three phases.
as a pan-Yolŋu unity. For the sake of clarity I wish to express here that while unity between Balanda and Yolŋu was an aspect expressed through speeches and sermons in Ramingining, unity between Arnhem Land Yolŋu received more emphasis by the participants in the Fellowship.

Phase I:

The Fellowship begins with joyous and energetic singing accompanied by guitars and sometimes a keyboard. There is no set time for the beginning of the Fellowship, but it usually starts at about seven or eight in the evening. Amplifiers and a microphone are used - they have usually been set up already in the afternoon. When people start to arrive and the pastor comes along with his guitar, the singing starts and gradually becomes more energetic as more people arrive.

The first phase is a time of fun and laughter, and some of the songs are particularly directed towards the children. There is a strong emphasis on dance and physical movements accompanying the songs. Most of the songs or choruses performed in the Fellowship meetings originate in evangelical churches around Australia (Bos 1988:90). Their tunes are catchy and there is a great deal of repetition in the song texts. Yolŋu then modify the songs through translation into a variety of languages. A few of the songs are entirely Yolŋu compositions and do not have English equivalents.

Often a song is first performed in English and then it is repeated in one or more Yolŋu languages. In the Fellowship this mixture of English and Yolŋu languages is an important way in which a sense of unity is created. One of the best examples is a song called "Jesus is the Sweetest Name I Know". This song is performed first in English and then repeated in five Arnhem Land languages. I suggest that the choice of languages in the song

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Some of the texts to songs performed in English at Ramingining can be found in a booklet titled 'Scripture in Song' (1976) which has been distributed via the Salvation Army and Nungalinya College in Darwin.
demonstrates an effort towards inclusiveness between Balanda and Yolŋu domains, as well as unity between Yolŋu clans participating in the Fellowship:

**Jesus is the sweetest name I know**
and he's just the same
as his lovely name
That's the reason why I love him so
Jesus is the sweetest name I know

Djesunydja ḱunjhi yaku ḱamakurrunga
Godku gathu'mirrŋu
Garay marrkapmirr
Yakunydda ḱayi nininygu dharranhayŋu
Djesunydja ḱunjhi yaku ḱamakurrunga

Djesunydja ḱunjhi yaku manynamkunga
Godku gathu'mirrŋu
Garay marrkapmirr
Yakunydda ḱayi nininygu dharranhayŋu
Djesu ḱunjhi yaku manynamkunga

Djesum baŋa yaku ḱuwakuru
Godku gathu'mirrŋu
Garay marrkapmirr
Yaku baŋa nininygu dharranhayŋu
Djesu baŋa yaku nowakuru

Djesusma ḱunjhin Garar manynamkane
Godkuŋ walkur bani
Garay marrkapmirr
Garraŋma ḱunjhin nininiŋun djurweraŋgene
Djesusma ḱunjhin Garar manynamkane

Djesus analunto molu molu
Gata rihepi
Analunto molu molu
Giniŋiya anolu djalgini anolowa
Djesus analunto molu molu

The unity of the participants is also expressed through metaphors in songs. One song which was frequently performed during the first phase has provided the inspiration for the title of this thesis since it captures the central theme of unity. The text reads:

**We are heirs of the Father**
**We are joint heirs with the Son**
**We are children of the Kingdom**
**We are family - we are one**

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4 This is the only song which is sung in Bumara at Ramingining. At Milingimbi there are more Bumara songs.
The songs in the first phase have many body movements and dance actions accompanying them. During the initial phase most of the participants gather by the church stage and clap, sing, and do the accompanying song-actions, while some others stay seated but still joining in by clapping and singing. Everyone is expected to participate in some way. One song which is performed in Gupapuyku involves the whole body in movement, with a different part of the body emphasised in each verse:

Limurr dhu mār-yingathirri Godkala
Limurrungala bukimakthu rumbalyu
Limurru ga mār-yingathirri Godkala
Limurrungala bukimathu rumbalyu

We will praise God
All of us truthfully as one body
We are praising God
All of us truthfully as one body

Limurru dhunupa'yu luku giritjirri
Limurru dhunupa'yu luku giritjirri
Limurru dhunupa'yu luku giritjirri
Limurru ga mār-yingathirri Godkala

We will dance/shake our right foot

Limurru wiŋ'kuŋur luku giritjirri
Limurru wiŋ'kuŋur luku giritjirri
Limurru wiŋ'kuŋur luku giritjirri
Limurru ga mār-yingathirri Godkala

We will dance/shake our left foot

Limurru dhunupa'yu waŋa garrwarthirri
Limurru dhunupa'yu waŋa garrwarthirri
Limurru dhunupa'yu waŋa garrwarthirri
Limurru ga mār yingathirri Godkala

We will wave our right arm above

Limurru wiŋ'kuŋur waŋa garrwarthirri
Limurru wiŋ'kuŋur waŋa garrwarthirri
Limurru wiŋ'kuŋur waŋa garrwarthirri
Limurru ga mār yingathirri Godkala

We will wave our left arm above

Limurru liya bungu bunguyuyun
Limurru liya bungu bunguyuyun
Limurru dambu bungu-bunguyuyun
Limurru ga mār yingathirri Godkala

We will nod our head

(as in last two lines of the first verse)

Praise the Lord
Alleluia
Praise the Lord
Alleluia
Praise the Lord
Alleluia
Other body actions are linked to specific words in songs - for instance the word Alleluiah which often occurs in the songs and choruses is usually accompanied by swaying both arms above the head.

Through the singing and the dance actions people become involved, they laugh, and "warm up". Sometimes people joke that they are getting their exercise. In the Fellowship there is a way for everyone to contribute. However, in the first phase, a special effort is made to involve the children whom the women organise in song and dance actions. The following is a song which is often performed with the children:

Praise the Lord
Born, born, born
All the children praise the Lord
Lift up your heavy burden
Lift up your holy hands
Let all the children praise
the Lord
Born, born, born

Throughout this song the children dance along and when the adults sing "born, born, born", they put their hands on their hips and do three little jumps. During another song the children move around in a circle waving their arms in imitation of flying movement. The song usually produce a great deal of fun and excitement as the women lead the children through the dance. The song is performed first in English and then repeated in Ganalbiagu, with a chorus section in English in between.

I fly away
When I die
Alleluiah by and by
I fly away

I fly away oh glory
I fly away
When I die
Alleluiah by and by
I fly away
Chorus\(^5\);
The joy of the Lord is my strength
The joy of the Lord is my strength
The joy of the Lord is my strength
The joy of the Lord is my strength
Ah, ha, ha, ha, ha, ha
Ah, Alleluiah
(Repeat)

(Repeat chorus).

If there are visitors at the Fellowship a song which encourages people to shake hands is performed. During this song some stay seated while others walk around and shake hands.

The performance of this song is much more significant in a Yolngu cultural context, than if it was performed in a Balanda church. In everyday life Yolngu socialise mainly within their own family group, but this song encourages contact across family boundaries.\(^7\) On special occasions, or if there are many visitors present, the handshaking can be very elaborate with a long procession of people walking all around the Fellowship area.

shaking hands with those who sit.\(^8\) The handshaking, then, is yet another way in which a sense of unity is brought between disparate families and clans in the Fellowship.

\(^5\)M. Miller at the Djambarrpuyu Bible Translation Centre at Galiwin’ku suggests that what is represented here as a chorus is in fact a separate song. However, at Ramingining it was performed as part of the song “I fly away’. As one can see the song “I fly away” subsequently continues, but in a Ganalbiyu version.

\(^6\)Translated by Shirley Myuku.

\(^7\)One man commented that Balanda, in contrast to Yolngu, are powerful because they can talk to anybody, i.e. people from any family group.

\(^8\)It is even possible that the hand-shaking could over-rule avoidance relationships. If such a large group of visitors are present it would be difficult to keep track of relationships during the handshaking, but there was no deliberate breaking of avoidance rules at Ramingining. However at Galiwin’ku I heard of one instance when, for the sake of breaking down the barriers between people, a Yolngu man hugged his Balanda ‘poison cousin’ (person to whom he stands in an avoidance relationship).
meeting. The song which people sing as they shake hands is simple, performed in English only, and repeated a few times:

Smile away and give your face a rest  
Raise your hands to the one you love the best  
Now shake hands with someone new  
And greet them with a smile

Songs are usually followed by responses which become more vigorous as the atmosphere builds up. The preacher or other guitar players call out and then the participants respond. The exclamations provide yet another way in which the participants can become involved and engaged in the Fellowship as the atmosphere is gradually building up:

Preacher: Praise the Lord!  [Response]: Alleluiah!  
Preacher: Praise His Name!  [Response]: Jesus Christ!  
Preacher: Alleluiah!  [Response]: Amen!

The first phase continues for about an hour or longer and the repertoire of songs is quite large. (See Appendix 2.)

Just because the first phase has an emphasis on singing and fun, it does not mean that this phase is somehow unimportant or not really part of the Fellowship proper. As I have shown the first phase is crucial in engaging the participants in the ritual process. Through the ritual the participants move from a state of enjoyment in the first phase, to a more serious and reflective mood in the second phase, and, as we shall see, to a state of spiritual openness in the third phase where the presence of the Holy Spirit can be experienced.

The singing in the first phase is perceived as an act of worship which generates the powers of the Holy Spirit (Dhuyu Binimbir). Yolŋu, it appears, perceive Christian songs in a way which is similar to the way they perceive songs, paintings, and dance which emanate from the Ancestral realm. Such songs, paintings and dances are powerful
because they contain *maur*. In his book about Yolnu art, Morphy explains the concept of *maur*:

The power (*maur*) that paintings have is the same as that which emanates from the sacred objects of the clan and which can be created by the invocation of sacred names (*likar*) sung out by the ceremonial leader (*djarraiy*). ... Maaur is intrinsically good and cannot be used for negative purposes.... Maaur is generalized power in that it is necessary for the health and fertility of the Yolnu world.... Maaur is always power that emanates from a mardayin, a specific set of ancestral beings associated with an area of land or a set of places. It is the power of the crocodile or the shark ancestor and comes from the ancestor through the songs, paintings, dances and land forms that are the visible manifestations of its being. (Morphy 1991:102-103)

Just as maaur is viewed as generally beneficial, Yolnu who are sick often listen to cassettes with Fellowship songs with the understanding that the act of listening to these songs may cure the illness. The Fellowship is viewed as having a positive effect on people's health and well being. One man commented, "There has been no Fellowship for a long time... that is why everybody is getting sick". 9

*Phase II*

As the singing of the first phase comes to an end, Yolnu gather in a circle, which is referred to as the "opening" of the Fellowship. So far I have indicated a number of ways in which unity is constructed through the symbolism of the ritual, and the very formation of a circle by the participants as the Fellowship opens is yet another example. As the Fellowship meeting opens there is a marked shift in atmosphere with the participants shifting to songs performed in a much more sombre style. Usually one or two songs are performed - in particular the following song:

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We are gathering together unto Him
We are gathering together unto Him
Unto Him shall the gathering of the people be
We are gathering together unto Him
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9 A more detailed analysis of health and healing in relation to Christian beliefs will follow in Chapter 8.
After the singing, everyone prays as they stand in the circle. Then they go back to sit down on sheets and blankets to listen to the sermon which follows and perhaps some testimonies. Usually the preacher reads a selected passage from the Bible in English and then elaborates on its meaning and relevance in a mixture of English and Yolgu language.

Giving a testimony is referred to in English as "sharing" or in Yolgu dialects as *gurupanminiri*, which literally means to give. A testimony can be an account of a personal religious experience such as being healed after prayer, about experiencing some sign of God's presence or recounting an unusual dream. Participants may share their reflections on community events, simply give an additional elaboration on the sermon or discuss a passage from the Bible. The giving of a testimony, then, is an opportunity for members of the congregation to stand up and speak.

The idea of unity between the people present continues to be expressed throughout the second phase. The preacher refers to the people in the congregation as brother (*waiwa*) and sister (*yaapay*), and to God as *God Rupa*, which means God Father.10 The minister is also referred to as *bipa*, a practice dating back to the mission days when the superintendent and his wife were referred to as father (*bipa*) and mother (*guridi*).11 Through the Fellowship then the congregation is constructed as one family - the family of God.

Other ways in which the preachers used the metaphor of family was in the context of referring to the congregation as "the children of Abraham", thus claiming a common descent of all the clans represented at the Fellowship meeting through Abraham. As I

10 In contrast Bos (1988b:277) reports that at Galiwin'ku in the 1970s, Yolgu referred to God as God *Wagur*, with *Wagur* being the word also used for Ancestral beings. At Ramingining Yolgu never used the expression God *Wagur*. They only used the term God *Bupa* (father) or occasionally other dialect words for father as for instance *mor*,

11 Note that while present church ministers are referred to as *bipa* their spouses are not referred to as *guridi*. 
will show, in a separate chapter about the sermons, such comparisons with the Israelites were common.

Phase III

When all preaching and sharing has finished, the pastor announces the closing of the Fellowship. Again people gather in a circle and start singing. As in the opening of the Fellowship the singing is in a sombre and serious tone but it continues for much longer than in the opening. The songs follow each other without any break in between and the atmosphere is one of deep emotion. Sometimes the preacher reads a prayer loudly over the music. At this stage the participants place an emphasis on songs which call on the presence of the Holy Spirit. The following song is frequently performed:

Sweep over my soul, sweep over my soul,
Sweet Spirit sweep over my soul
My rest is complete as I sit at his feet
Sweet Spirit sweep over my soul

Unity as a theme continues to be emphasised through the words of songs. The song below is virtually always performed: 12

Father make us one
Father make us one
That the world may know
Thou has sent the Son
Father make us one

Mori wangany manapal
Mori wangany manapal (Gupapuyku)
Marr ga yolgu mangithi
Nhungu djal nhurgu
Nhungu nagat'mirriju

After a few songs people start to come forward and kneel down in the circle, and depending on how many kneel down, the singing in this last phase may continue for an

12See also Bos 1988:317.
hour or more. People kneel down when they feel overwhelmed by the Holy Spirit, if they want to change their lives, or be healed from illness or problems. Sometimes mothers kneel down with their sick children. The pastor and elders walk up to the people kneeling down, pray for them and lay on hands. Occasionally people swoon and fall seemingly unconscious to the ground which is interpreted as being "overcome by the Holy Spirit".

Once when explaining the laying on of hands one pastor provided yet another example of the congregation conceptualised as one family. He said of the person kneeling down that "...he or she is our new family, Christian family coming in". In continuing the conversation about laying on hands he pointed out that it is important that the elder feels free in his or her heart, bringing only the gifts of God when laying on hands:

...I heard that person is very sick, *vo* [yes] and then that person *gayi djal* [he/she wants] me, I have to come and pray for that person so before I go I have to leave *mak* [maybe] one or two days to pray to ask God to strengthen me with God's power before I go and pray for that person to be healed before I lay hand, and not with two kinds of thing...And if I am not free...then nothing will happen. That person will be keep on sick. *Vo.* [Yes.] Because people, I am not with one God's Spirit, but with other different spirit, and that's not working together. Earthly things and God thing like that, two thing is controlling one person, say maybe an elder and if that person lay hand that person will not heal because two boss is just argue each other, that mean God's spirit and Satan's spirit, and working in one person like elder it won't work.

This last part of the Fellowship is the culmination of the whole service. The Fellowship is considered successful if many come people forward at this last phase which shows that the Holy Spirit was present.

Yolgu explain that when the Holy Spirit descends it feels like something cold, like water on the skin. They say that the Holy Spirit enters the body first through the head and then moves through other parts of the body. The student pastor described the experience in the following way:

We can feel that something is touching and we feel free - that is Jesus. So when we kneel down and feel the God's Spirit is working in us because we feel very quiet and God's Spirit is come with *nawari* [whatisit] happiness and joy and we feel that really God's Spirit is working in us.
Yolnu say that if an elder lays on hands the power from God goes first through the hands of the elder and then into the person who is kneeling down. The elder should not actually touch the person kneeling down with their hand, but just hold it slightly above the person, so that it is God's spirit and not the elder's hand that the person feels.

There may also be other signs of the Holy Spirit's presence than just people feeling the presence of the Spirit and then coming forward in the circle. For instance one man stated that some people had seen a light above his head and that of his wife during a Fellowship meeting one evening. He interpreted this as a sign of the Holy Spirit's presence both at the Fellowship and in the lives of him and his wife.¹³

The singing continues until there are no more people kneeling down. Then the pastor says "Let us pray" *(Lumuru dhu bukuumirrima)*. After the prayer the Fellowship is finished and people go home. Through the Fellowship as a ritual the participants have acquired a new sense of unity with each other. Some may find that they have been healed from an illness. Others have made a fresh commitment to God or just feel emotionally renewed and strengthened as they leave.

**Action-dancing and Drama**

As seen in the Fellowship Yolnu place a strong emphasis on lively physical participation through clapping, hand movements and dance. A specific form of dance referred to as Action-dancing has become very popular among Yolnu Christians in Arnhem Land.¹⁴ In Ramingining, a group of Christian mothers teach their children, both boys and girls, to

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¹³An interesting comparison can be made here in regards to ancestral beliefs. H. Morphy writes that "...Yolngu who have experienced ancestral intervention sometimes refer to it as a flash of light or a bright light filling the head" (1991:194).

¹⁴A brief article by M. Brady (1989) describes how people at Angurugu, Groote Eylandt learned Action dancing from Galiwin'ku people. Brady writes that when Action dancing was introduced it "took Angurugu by storm", and was performed every night for several hours.
do the Action-dancing, and then they join in too. Practice sessions usually take place in the afternoon before a Fellowship is to be held (Photograph 3).

During these sessions, the dancers place themselves out in three or four lines, all facing the same way while doing arm and hand signs in time with Christian pop-music. While the dancers do not sing, each hand sign symbolises a word in the song. As the music plays the feet of the dancers move too in a stepping motion, keeping time with the music. It takes many hours of practice for the dancers to become neatly coordinated with each other.

Action dancing is practised in particular by young women and their children, but sometimes special Action-dancing groups are formed with older women. At Galiwin'ku for instance the large Christian women's club formed an Action-dancing group at the 1991 Thanksgiving Weekend. At Ramingining men do not participate in Action-dancing, in contrast to Galiwin'ku where men participated in an Action-dancing at the weekend gathering mentioned above. Later that year when Ramingining held a Rally, a large number of young men and teenage boys visiting from Maningrida displayed their Action-dancing skills.

Action-dancing is very much oriented towards performance. It was performed at special occasions such as when the Ramingining library was opened in 1990, or at a health worker's graduation ceremony at Milingimbi. On both occasions the Action-dancing followed the performance of Ancestral dances (buggul). At other times Action-dancing was performed at special Fellowship meetings for instance at Christmas time or during a Rally.
3. Action-dancing practice in the afternoon.
It is not entirely clear how Action-dancing initially developed, but according to a Balanda who was previously employed in Ramingining, already in the mission days some of the songs such as "Wide, wide is the ocean" were accompanied by hand movements. Other Action-dances have been introduced by Christian Balanda staff via Galiwin’ku in the 1980s. Yolnu women at Ramingining claimed they had learned Action-dancing from a Salvation Army video cassette.

Like singing in the first phase of the Fellowship, action dancing is not regarded as being performed just for fun. Action dancing is perceived as an activity in which Christians express their faith, and needs to be viewed in the broader context of a Yolnu style of worship which places a strong emphasis on physical participation and enactment.

One could argue that it is on similar grounds that Yolnu have developed a penchant for dramatisations of Christian themes. Such dramatisations were introduced in the mission era, and are referred to in mission records from time to time. For instance a Report to Synod on 'Young people’s work' from 1965 making such a reference states:

...under the direction of Manydi in a group of young men using didgeridoo and clapsticks and dialogue presented the Crucifixion Scene in tableau form. This was eagerly viewed by a larger than usual congregation.16

Another report refers to a series of dramatisations, among them an enactment by the Yolnu school teachers of ‘Philip and the Ethiopian’17:

It was mainly young people who took part in a number of services during Christmas and Easter Festivities. Dramatisations of parts of the Christian faith took place in the camps and the Church. One worthy of special mention was performed by school children at Macassar Well during the Easter Week.18

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The dramatisations continue in the present. With the possible exception of the crucifixion scene mentioned above the dramatisations have all been Yolgu adaptations of a European style of drama, in other words, the dramatisations are not performed in a traditional Aboriginal style as in Swain's (1988) example of the Christian Purlapas among the Warlpiri.

In 1990 plans were made for a dramatisation of the nativity story at Yathalamarra outstation. A shelter representing the stable was built, but the enactment had to be cancelled when, just before Christmas, an elderly person suddenly died. In 1991 a shelter representing the stable was again built next to the student pastor's house although there was no re-enactment planned. When I re-visited Ramingining in December 1994 a group of people were rehearsing a nativity play in the afternoons and evenings (Photograph 4). The play had already been performed on the last day of school in front of the parents, and the plan was to perform it again at the planned Christmas Day Fellowship.

The play featured Yolgu dressed up as the characters in the nativity story - Mary and Joseph with the baby Jesus, the wise men, the shepherds, the angels and King Herod. The play had a simple structure in which the actors were stationed around the church stage representing the places in the Christmas story such as the stable, Bethlehem and king Herod's court. The actors did not have to remember lines, just move between the different stations at appropriate times as another woman read out the Christmas story loudly through a microphone in Gupapuynu. Costumes were also kept simple although effective by improvising with scarves, lace and cloth wraps. A large group of children represented the angels.

At Easter 1992 a re-enactment of the crucifixion was carried out. At this time a man playing the role of Jesus led a procession of people down the main street of the community, surrounded by men with spears representing the multitude who led Jesus to his crucifixion (Photograph 1). The enactment ended at the cross at the church stage with
4. Young women build a shelter for nativity play.
a crucifixion scene and the singing of hymns. Other dramatisations also took place as part of the Weekend Rallies held at Ramingining and Galiwin'ku. However, they will be discussed in Chapter Six which deals with the Rallies.

**Christian aspects of funeral ceremonies**

Fellowship meetings and other Christian aspects have also been incorporated with Yolnu funeral ceremonies. Funerals in Ramingining feature several days and evenings of singing and dancing based on Ancestral events, but usually a Fellowship meetings is also held during one of the evenings, and a Christian minister officiates at the burial.

In the past Yolnu funeral ceremonies were performed in three stages. In the first stage the dead were either buried in the ground or placed on a platform to decay. In both instances the relatives returned after some months for a second ceremony which included exhumation of the bones. A third stage involved placing the bones in a special hollow log (Morphy 1984:42, Warner 1969:420-432). As a consequence of the mission presence Yolnu ceased the practice of exhuming the bones and nowadays emphasise what was previously the first stage of the funeral ceremonies (Keen 1994:230-231, Morphy 1984:43). Morphy explains that at Yirrkala, exhumation of the bones was replaced with a da da yun ceremony, in which the possessions of the deceased were either destroyed or purified with smoke and when hollow log ceremonies were held, the bones were no longer placed in the log (Morphy:1984:43).

During my fieldwork in Arnhem Land I attended a number of funeral ceremonies and burials, and as far as I am aware there were no instances where bodies were removed from a grave for exhumation. Neither did I witness a ceremony in which the possessions of a deceased person were disposed of, or a hollow log ceremony performed, such as described by Morphy, although it is possible that they took place without my
knowledge. In the following passages I will provide a description of the usual pattern by which funeral ceremonies were carried out, and as I will show a number of Christian aspects have been incorporated. My material is based mainly on funerals held in the Ramingining township, but I was also present at one funeral at Mapuru, an outstation to Galiwin’ku, a funeral at Yathalamara, a Ramingining outstation, and a very large funeral of a Christian evangelist at Galiwin’ku.

When a person dies a meeting is held where the death is announced. Relatives as well as community members attend. At Ramingining such a meeting was sometimes referred to as bapuru, the same term which also applied to the subsequent funeral ceremony. Since it is a Yolŋu practice not to mention the name of a deceased person, the announcement is made by the use of clapsticks and singing which indicate who the deceased is. If a Yolŋu learns of the death of a relative through a dream, which sometimes happens, or finds out about the death by any other means, he or she keeps it quiet until it is publicly announced at the meeting. Once people know who has died the name of the deceased can no longer be mentioned for many years to come and photos of the person are often destroyed.

As the announcement takes place women wail loudly and if they are close family members throw themselves to the ground. The women also injure themselves in specific places on the body which are symbolic of different relatives. Later at critical moments of the funeral such dramatic expressions of grief are repeated.

19 Rudder (1993:119) makes a similar observation from Galiwin’ku stating that the jiluyu ceremony was a minor affair and that he only knew of one instance when a hollow log was erected. Moreover, Tamisari (1995:190) who did fieldwork in the Milingimbi area, states that the lids of the coffins were not painted, as Morphy reports they were at Yirrkala.

20 See also Tamisari (1995:187) who refers to the announcement as bapuru gana, which means to hear the announcement of the death.

21 Even for Yolŋu it can sometimes be difficult to tell from the clap-sticks and singing who it is that has died. In one instance a man thought that his mother had died. His wife and her sisters threw themselves to the ground in grief, only to learn later that afternoon that it was another woman who had died.

22 In one instance a woman stated that she and her sisters painted their shins with yellowish colour instead of injuring themselves.
Shortly after a death has been announced, speculations begin in the community as to the cause of the death. Frequently more than one story circulates. People usually attribute deaths to sorcery but other causes are recognised such as neglect by family members, cancer or too much cigarettes, kava or alcohol. Yolŋu also know that Balanda give 'accidents' as a cause of death. However it seems that Yolŋu are more likely to attribute death to natural causes when they are speaking of death in a hypothetical way, and less so if they are referring to specific known people. There appears to be no difference between active Christians and other Yolŋu in the way that they perceive the causes of death. Christians believe in the effects of sorcery as much as others in the community do. The younger the deceased is, or the more unexpected the death, the more likely that sorcery will be blamed. In such cases the family of the deceased are more vigorous in pursuing those who may be blamed. The anger which relatives feel at the death is expressed by male relatives who arm themselves with spears, usually during the early stages of a funeral. In some instances specific people are directly threatened.

Before a funeral begins, a procession of people carrying smoldering branches of leaves may visit the main places which the deceased was associated with. They bash with their hands on the walls of the buildings and make a great deal of noise. The purpose is to frighten away the *mokuy* (bad spirit associated with the deceased). The people who shared their home with the deceased move out and do not return until at the earliest when the funeral is over and a purifying smoke ceremony has been held in the house.

If the person has died in Darwin, and if there has been a post-mortem, there is a waiting period of a couple of days or more before the coffin with the body, arrives back from the coroner by plane to the community. The plane is met by a procession of cars at the airport. The men perform a dance as they load the coffin on to a truck which will take the coffin to the funeral area. If there are women at the airport they will again throw themselves to the ground and attempt to injure themselves.
The coffin may be placed either in a shelter made of leafy branches and a tarpaulin built solely for the purpose of the funeral, under a corrugated iron roof extension to a house, or in one of the rooms of a house where the funeral will be held. A few of the relatives sit and sleep next to the coffin throughout the ceremony. These relatives, due to Yolngu beliefs about pollution, are not allowed to mix unrestrainedly with others and must not cook and handle food for others or touch the water taps.23

At several funerals in Ramingining a cloth banner featuring in large letters a verse from the Bible was suspended on one of the walls of the house where the funeral was held. The banner stated first in English, "I am the way, the truth and the life. No one goes to the Father except by me" (John ch.14, vs.6), and then repeated the same text in Gupapuyu. This symbol of Christian belief was often seen side by side with symbols from the Ancestral domain. At one Ramingining funeral the banner was mounted on the left hand side of the wall of a house, above the coffin and on the right hand side were three sacred *bathi* (dillybags) with clan designs and cords hanging from them.

At Ramingining a funeral ceremony continues for approximately five to seven days. Yolngu refer to a funeral with either the generic term *bungul* which means ceremony, or with the more specific term *bapurrnu*. Large sections of, or sometimes the whole community, participate in the funeral ceremony. Relatives from other communities arrive by trucks and planes. At Ramingining there is no differentiation between those who are active Christians and those who are not - everyone participates in the ceremony, in its songs, dances, and by painting themselves with white clay or red ochre. As in the funeral in May 1991, referred to above, even the student pastor participated as one of the leading dancers, his body painted with white clay, carrying a dillybag (*bathi*) with diamond design and cord in a string around his neck.

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23According to Tamisari (1995:190) people in such a state of pollution are referred to as *gog wukundi* which literally means "poisonous hands".
During a funeral, songs and dances of the deceased's own clan, and closely related clans, are performed. Groups of visitors and local people alternate in performing their segments, with the men usually dancing vigorously in the center of the dancing grounds and the women dancing on the spot along the sidelines. The songs and dances follow the tracks of Ancestral beings and are re-enactments of the events which took place in the Ancestral realm. The songs and the dances are accompanied by clap sticks and didgeridoo. The relative coolness of the early morning, late afternoon and evening is usually the time when the most intensive dancing takes place, although the singing often continues through most of the night.

During a funeral there is often one evening when there is a Fellowship meeting at the funeral ground. More Fellowship meetings are held if the deceased was known to be particularly active in the church. The Fellowship meetings which were held during funerals at Ramingining were small, and, as one can imagine, started with the singing of a few sombre hymns rather than the usual vigorous and joyous contributions which mark the first phase of the Fellowship. Microphones and amplifiers were not used. Otherwise the Fellowship proceeds with a similar format.

Even though a Fellowship meeting is held at the funeral area, it does not necessarily mean that everyone who participates in the funeral also participates in the Fellowship. Usually an electric light is mounted and then the participants in the Fellowship gather in a small circle. Others who have come for the funeral, dancers and musicians for instance, may sit back from the circle without actively participating. It was generally perceived that holding a Fellowship at the funeral area is a way in which to console, comfort and support the relatives of the deceased.24

24Similarly Tamisari (1995: 290-292) states that Yolgu perceive participation in the Ancestral dances as a way of expressing love and concern for the deceased and his or her family.
Since most deaths are attributed to sorcery, the pastors sometimes addressed this issue in their sermons at funerals. At a funeral at Ramingining in May 1991, a Ramingining pastor, as well as Minyipirriwuy Garrawura, an ordained minister from Yirrkala, spoke about the evils of sorcerers (galka) attacking innocent people. In this instance it was believed that the deceased had died from stepping on something "hot" which had been placed out by a galka and had caused a deadly infection. The preachers then, do not question the belief as such in sorcery but condemn its usage. In the sermon the Ramingining pastor pleaded "don't kill my sheep with galka'. Instead he urged the listeners to love each other and to think of the community:

...what about our community, put our children to school,...learn to work, health, school ?....I praise God....I love every tribe that's gunuku [my] parish."

During the same evening Minyipirriwuy also preached. Minyipirriwuy sometimes referred to himself as a "culture-man" and demonstrated this in his sermon by saying that "when I come to the gate [of heaven] I will dance my bungul [Ancestral clan dances]", but the remainder of his speech contained a firm condemnation of the use of sorcery. The comments by the Ramingining pastor as well as Minyipirriwuy show that it is not the Ancestral songs, dances, and ceremonies that Yolgu Christians oppose, but rather, as it is often expressed, the "misuse of culture" in particular through sorcery.

The songs and dances in the funeral bungul depicting the events of Ancestral beings are selected on the basis of the moiety and clan membership of the deceased. According to Warner (1969:433) and Morphy (1984:46-48) the purpose of the dances is to guide the soul of the deceased, referred to as birimbiri back to its clan land. The songs and dances then which are selected may vary according to which route the relatives choose for the return of the soul. While I was not told explicitly that the purpose of the bungul itself is to affect the journey of the soul back to its land, I learned in more general terms of several possible destinations of the soul.25

25Similarly Keen (1994:236) notes that at Milingimbi in the 1970s people did not
Yolngu tended to speak in terms of the soul (*birrimbir*) as either going to heaven (*djiwarlil*) or staying on earth (*munatha*). One woman explained that it depends on a person’s belief where the spirit goes:

Sometimes he thinks God all the time, and when he dies he goes to God. If he doesn’t think of God then he stays here [on earth].

Others would say that spirits go either straight to heaven or back to the land, or first to the land and then to heaven. One woman said "only God *bapa* [father] knows". Her husband provided an alternative Christian explanation:

I believe if I die my spirit [will] not go straight to heaven. My spirit [will be] waiting until one hundred people die. I [will] go when Lord sends angels who bring trumpet. Balanydja [Like this] horn [imitating the sound].

If a soul is not thought to go to heaven, there is more than one possibility. For instance the spirit of a Liyagalawumirr woman was said to have gone back to Mirarrma, a clan water-hole, because that is where she initially came from.

Another story referring to events shortly after the burial of a man reveal that a spirit may take the shape of an animal:

We went to cemetery and back home and after that we heard *perk* [sulphur-crested cockatoo] calling at top of *djambag* [tamarind] tree. We heard that cockatoo and we [were] crying, and we say ‘Our father has come back so he can look after for us’.

Among other possibilities referred to by Rudder (1993), who did fieldwork at nearby Galiwin’ku, is the notion that the soul of a deceased person may go to a land of the dead. According to Rudder (1993:107), the soul of a Yirritja moiety person may go to a place called Batu and the soul of a Dhuwa moiety person may go to Burralku.

explicitly say that the “purpose of the ceremony was to separate the soul of the dead from the living and guide or transfer it to the ‘clan’ waterhole”.
Thus as the examples above illustrate, Yolgu notions of the spirit's destination varies. Keen (1978, 1994), Morphy (1984), Rudder (1993) and Tamisari (1995) all indicate similar situations at Milingimbi, Yirrkala and Galiwin'ku respectively of Yolgu offering a range of alternatives for the destination of the soul.

Christian influences on funerals are particularly evident on the day of the burial.\textsuperscript{26} The coffin is taken to the cemetery in a procession of cars followed by people on foot. At the cemetery there is again a \textit{bugul} at the grave-side as the coffin is lowered in to the grave. The people who have gathered sing hymns, and the minister may continue with a sermon and then finally read the universal Christian words "from ashes to ashes, dust to dust". Alternatively a Fellowship may be held at the funeral area before the people move on to the cemetery, followed by a shorter Christian ceremony at the grave-side without a sermon.\textsuperscript{27} Finally some more hymns may be sung, and as a final gesture the mourners place floral wreaths on the grave. The wreaths are usually in silk or plastic and have been flown in from florists in Darwin. Later, a cross may also be erected above the grave.

The situation, then, at present in Ramingining differs from the situation at Milingimbi in the 1970s as described by Keen. According to Keen once the body was driven to the cemetery, Yolgu felt that they had "given the body to the mission" (1994:236). Nowadays Ancestral songs and dances are performed alongside the Christian ceremony at the burial.

When the burial is over only brief purification ceremonies remain. As in a funeral which took place in June 1991 in Ramingining, after the burial the participants returned to the \textit{bugul} area where some of the men lit a fire and brushed everyone with smoldering branches while some singing of Ancestral songs continued. The following day the

\textsuperscript{26} Tamisari (1995) states that on rare occasions a service was held in the church at Milingimbi. Since there is no church building at Ramingining the Fellowship meetings were confined to the funeral area, or to a Fellowship at the cemetery on the day of the burial as described in the text above.

\textsuperscript{27} As was the case at a funeral at Yathalalarnu outstation.
puriﬁcation process continued with a brief washing ceremony where water was ritually poured over the participants.

Funeral ceremonies it seems have been the subject of change and innovation for many years now. As discussed earlier in the chapter, missionaries pressured Yolgu to cease the exhumation of bones and the subsequent hollow log ceremony. But even now that the missionaries have left and burials at the cemetery have become the norm, Yolgu still attempt new innovations.

In my description of funeral ceremonies above I have shown how Christian ceremony co-exists side by side with Ancestral ceremony at funerals. In some cases where the deceased had been particularly involved with the church there was an inclusion of Christian features beyond the ordinary. The first example refers to a funeral which took place at Ramingining in October 1990. A young Christian man had died suddenly and unexpectedly while visiting Darwin. Although his funeral followed a similar pattern to other funerals, it differed by having many more Fellowship meetings than usual, as well as a Sunday morning service at the funeral ground. At the day of the burial a very large procession of people followed the coffin to the cemetery. An unusual feature of this procession was that it included students from the school marching together, all dressed in their football outfits in honour of the deceased.

Another funeral held in late 1991 at Galiwingu was extremely elaborate in its Christian symbolism and innovations, and was unlike any other funeral ceremonies I had seen, deliberately syncretic in its symbolism. The funeral was for a well known man, who had been one of the leaders during the 1979 Revival. Yolgu from all over Arnhem Land as well as Balanda from around Australia attended. The funeral dancing was spectacular in the number of groups that contributed and almost every evening large Fellowship meetings were held at a specially designated area.
It was on the day of the burial that the mingling of Yolgu and Christian symbolism and innovations was the most obvious. In the church the coffin was placed at the front surrounded by four palm fronds and four young girls seated at each corner of the coffin. The girls were decorated with Ancestral orange feather string in their hair and one of them carried a special dilly-bag. The female church choir was seated near the coffin, at the front of the church, its members all dressed in white with red waist ribbons. Further down in the church a large group of men were seated together, many from Nungalinya college in Darwin, all dressed in white shirts, black ties and pants. The floor was strewn with flowers. The coffin itself was wrapped in an Australian flag as well as cloth with clan design. This kind of stylised arrangement in the church was something completely new, as well as the way in which symbols from the Ancestral domain were employed and placed out.

At the cemetery there was no dancing or singing as is customary at Ramingining. However one of the lead dancers was present and just watched the proceedings. Then another man, still painted in clay from the dancing earlier in the day, simply took a branch with which he smoothed the sand around the coffin. As the coffin was lowered into the grave a stone in the shape of Australia, which has symbolic significance dating back to the 1979 Revival, was placed on the coffin.\textsuperscript{28}

The women had been told not to throw themselves to the ground as is customary. Instead the Galiwin'ku Christian women's group, all in their white cotton dresses, sang hymns at the cemetery. It was said that people should not cry since it was certain that the soul of the deceased had gone straight to God. However, some women did throw themselves to the ground but were gently helped up by women from the choir.

\textsuperscript{28}The finding of this special rock in the sea was considered to be one of the unusual events which took place during the Revival along with special dreams and visions, see Bos (1988b:108).
The funeral at Galiwinku was exceptionally elaborate, well attended and staged for a person with a high profile. The deceased had been an evangelist and one of the leaders of the 1979 Revival, as well as involved in many other community and Aboriginal organisations. Whether the innovations at this Galiwinku funeral will set a precedent for further change to funeral ceremonies in other communities around Arnhem Land remains to be seen.

Conclusion

In my description of the Fellowship the intention has been to show, not only how the Fellowship is structured, but also how people become involved in the ritual process. In doing so I have drawn on the theoretical approach developed by Kapferer (1983) by showing how participants become involved through clapping, singing, dancing, laughing, listening and sharing, and by showing how music is used to direct the atmosphere and the nature of the participant's involvement in the Fellowship. Through the process of the Fellowship ritual the consciousness of the participant's is affected, enabling them to move from a state of lighthearted fun and praise at the beginning of the evening, on to a more reflective and thoughtful mood as they listen to the sermon, and then finally to state of mind where they experience the descent of the Holy Spirit.

In my discussion of the Fellowship meetings, I have also shown how taken-for-granted attitudes toward religion in the Ancestral domain transfers to the Fellowship meetings. In particular I have discussed the emphasis on music and dance, which is crucial in Ancestral ceremonies, and which receive a similarly great emphasis in Christian worship. I also referred to the Yolngu perception of power (mäurr) as emanating from Ancestral songs, dances and paintings and how there appears to be some similarities with the way Christian songs, and indeed the whole Fellowship is perceived. Participating in the Fellowship and listening to Christian songs is viewed as being beneficial for people's health and well-being.
Other aspects of similarity between Ancestral ceremonies and the Fellowship meetings which have been mentioned by Bos (1988a:428) include the choice of the evening as the main time for meeting, and the fact that meetings are held outdoors. As at ceremonies, people arrive gradually rather than at a set time, people sit on the ground in family groups, and children can play or go to sleep.

Similarly the emphasis which Action-dancing and drama receives as church activities over above Bible studies for instance, resonates with the emphasis placed on dance and dramatisation of Ancestral activities in indigenous Aboriginal religion. In the case of funeral ceremonies one can draw comparisons between the inclusion of Christian Fellowship meetings and the way in which segments from other genres of ceremony such as the Mandayala are sometimes incorporated within funeral ceremonies (see Keen 1994:236).

While it is true that one can draw out many similarities between Christian forms of worship and Ancestral ceremonies, mostly these similarities are taken-for-granted aspects and Yolgu themselves do not perceive Fellowship meetings and Ancestral ceremonies as similar, even though they recognise that Fellowship meetings are held in a Yolgu style, in contrast to worship in the Methodist mission church.

From a Yolgu viewpoint Fellowship meetings and Ancestral ceremonies are held for different purposes, and Fellowship meetings have none of the definitive organisational characteristics of Ancestral ceremonies, where tasks are divided between the owners and managers of the ceremony, and between Dhuwa and Yirritja moieties. A further distinction is that in Yolgu cosmology everything to do with Christianity is perceived as pertaining to heaven (djiwarlpuy), whereas ceremonies and everything else to do with the Ancestral domain is referred as being "from the earth" (miwarlqalny).

29 For a more detailed discussion of this distinction, see Chapter 8.
Another aspect of the Fellowship which has been discussed is this chapter is the theme of unity. I have shown that in the Fellowship meetings, the idea of the unity of the participants is continuously emphasised - through the songs, the circle formation at the opening and closing, and by the manner in which the congregation is addressed. This emphasis on unity in the church often contrasts with the actual reality of social life in the community where relationships between clans and families are not always smooth and relationships between Yolnu and Balanda staff are often strained. Yet at the same time the emphasis on unity can also be viewed in relationship to new and emergent entities of cooperation discussed in Chapter 3 such as the community council, and a number of Aboriginal organisations, including the church. In the following chapter I will continue to discuss the relationship between the Ancestral domain and the church, as well as this pre-occupation with unity as a theme in the church.
CHAPTER 6
RALLIES

From time to time Yolnu organise large Christian gatherings around Arnhem Land which they refer to as Rallies. At such occasions the congregation who plans to hold the Rally sends out invitations to the neighbouring communities and sometimes to more distant locations around the Top End area of the Northern Territory as well. At one Arnhem Land Rally there were even people from interstate and overseas.

Surprisingly, there are no descriptions of Rallies in the anthropological literature of the area, even though the Rallies are events which draw hundreds of people together at a time from all over Arnhem Land and which have been held regularly since the 1979 Revival. Yolnu usually hold such Rallies over a weekend. They stage Fellowship meetings each evening and always include a Sunday morning service as well.

In 1991 Yolnu Christians organised three Rallies in the north-east Arnhem Land area: at Galiwin'ku in March, at Milingimbi in April and in Ramingining in November. The Rally which they organised at Galiwin'ku is an annual event, held every year in remembrance of the 1979 Christian Revival. Yolnu usually refer to this Rally as the Annual Thanksgiving Weekend. In this chapter I will discuss the Rally at Ramingining first and then turn to the Galiwin'ku Rally for a comparative perspective.

A significant aspect of the Rallies is that they unite Yolnu from all over Arnhem Land in a common ritual. Each visiting group and congregation contribute to the Rallies with

1 Strictly speaking there were four Rallies if one includes a small Rally intended for the local people only at Ramingining.
performances of music and/or dance. No matter where people come from in Arnhem Land, it is easy to fit in at the Rallies and contribute because all the congregations around Arnhem Land share the Fellowship as one common form of worship, and the Rallies are conducted according to a familiar formula. Even most of the songs are known to all the Christians around Arnhem Land, although they are performed in different languages. In considering the Rallies, then, as a form of gathering of a variety of people, it is possible to draw some parallels with Yolgu Ancestral ceremonies. For instance in funeral ceremonies, as Keen shows, visitors come from both near and far and each group has the opportunity to make its own contribution in recognition of the deceased. Keen writes:

During the first three days of the wake various groups danced upon their arrival to visit the dead man and to say good-bye. The visitors were from the settlement and from other communities, some as far away as Yinkala and Maningrida (1994:232).

Furthermore, in discussing Ancestral ceremonies Keen (1994:141-143) distinguishes local and clan-based (madayin) ceremonies from so called "regional ceremonies". Regional ceremonies, he explains, such as the Gurapipi, unite people from wide areas in Arnhem Land under a common symbolism, in contrast to the clan-based madayin ceremonies. He writes:

Performances of Gurapipi then, more than any other kind of ceremony until a Christian Revival began in 1979, united the population of a very wide area in common ritual, extending the area of sociability beyond the everyday (1994:267).

Similarly, it can be said that the Rallies unite people from a wide area under the same set of beliefs and symbols, although the Rallies are even more inclusive in character than Ancestral ceremonies since they also include Balanda, and sometimes Aboriginal visitors, from other areas of Australia.

In fact as this chapter shows Yolgu themselves perceive a similarity between the variety of people gathered together at a Gurapipi ceremony with the many visitors gathered together at Rallies. The significance of the Rallies as regional gatherings is particularly
illustrated by the emphasis which the preachers place on naming all the groups that are present at Rallies and by their lengthy and elaborate welcome speeches.

While there are some continuities, then, with Ancestral ceremonies, there are obviously also some major contrasts. Ancestral ceremonies are based on the co-operation of clans, whereas, at Rallies a new range of social entities can be represented such as congregations, communities, or groups representing an educational institution such as Nungalinya College, or an Aboriginal organisation such as the Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress. Furthermore, the range of sociability extends beyond Arnhem Land, incorporating Aboriginal people from other areas of Australia, as well as Balanda or other Christian people from overseas.

Fellowship meetings during Rallies follow the same basic structure as ordinary Fellowship meetings beginning with singing, then forming a circle for the opening, followed by a sermon and then again forming a circle for the closing of the Fellowship meeting. The theoretical approach applied in the previous chapter to an analysis of how the consciousness of the participants is affected through music, dance and metaphor would apply equally to an analysis of Rallies.

The main differences between Rallies and Fellowship meetings are the many visitors and the emphasis on performance at Rallies. Performances by choirs, bands and Action-dancers, representing their respective communities, outstations or clans take up at least half or more of each evening at the Rallies and the meetings usually continue until well after midnight. Another feature of the Rallies is that they are more evangelical in nature than ordinary Fellowship meetings. The preachers call out to new people to come forward and for existing Christians to come and renew their commitment to Christ by kneeling down in the circle at the closing phase.
Another difference is that Rallies are more obviously modelled on Western style religious crusades. As mentioned previously, evangelists such as Dan Armstrong from Canberra as well as an African American from the Billy Graham team visited Arnhem Land in the late 1970s and had some influence on the style of worship. Other contemporary influences are the many video tapes of American evangelical gatherings which circulate in Yolnu communities. At Rallies, this Western influence is particularly evident in the style which the preachers use to address their audience.

The Ramingining Rally 1991

When the Ramingining Rally was in its planning stage, the congregation sent out invitations to Aboriginal communities all around the Top End of the Northern Territory, not just Arnhem Land. However when the Rally did take place the vast majority of visitors came from Maningrida, a neighbouring community to the west of Ramingining. Maningrida had recently experienced a revival in their church and consequently many of its residents were keen to travel to Ramingining. Yolnu at Ramingining said that many of the young men from Maningrida who attended the Rally were former petrol sniffers and drinkers, but now, they said, "God has changed their life." A handful of people also came from Milingimbi and two women came all the way from Jabiru in western Arnhem Land.

In comparison with the many visitors from Maningrida the participation of people from Ramingining appeared small. Approximately two-hundred visitors from Maningrida attended the Rally. In contrast the highest number of attendants from Ramingining at any one time during the Rally was at the Sunday morning service where approximately one-hundred people attended in addition to the people from Maningrida. A factor which had a somewhat negative affect on the number of people attending from Ramingining, was that an argument had developed between two families just prior to the Rally.²

²The argument did not have anything to do with the Rally, but concerned the relationship
Each evening of the Rally the participants performed a variety of music and Action-dancing items. From the Maningrida region people represented outstations and areas surrounding Maningrida such as Mumeka, Ji-marda, Cadell, Bulgurram and Gibana. There were also performances by groups representing Nakkarra and Gunavidji language groups. Among the groups from the Ramingining-Milingimbi region were a Rembarra group from Malyaranak outstation, a combined group of Ganalbijju clans people from both Ramingining and Maningrida, a special performance by Gupapyuru people, and a variety of other groups representing the Ramingining congregation.

A Rally affects the whole community, which is flooded with visitors, and the Ramingining council responded by donating money towards food for the visitors and by making the Women’s Centre and the pre-school available for accommodation. Council members were also involved in welcoming visitors to the Rally on behalf of the community.

Each Rally has a special theme. The focus at the Ramingining Rally centered on sections from the Old Testament concerning the Israelites and avoiding idol worship. The theme was printed in large letters on the board behind the church stage. The message read:

I AM THE LORD YOUR GOD WHO RESCUED YOU FROM EGYPT WHERE YOU WERE SLAVE WORSHIP NO OTHER god BUT ME DO NOT BOW DOWN TO ANY IDOL OR WORSHIP I AM THE LORD YOUR GOD.

A sub-theme for the Rally which also related to the Israelites was the expression "Ramingining rawak ranhdhak" which means Ramingining is dry, thirsty land. Like the desert where the Israelites travelled, Ramingining is pictured as dry and barren. The

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between two young people.

3 Rawak = dry, dried up, burnt, overcooked, stale. Ranhdhak = dry, thirsty.
reference to the dry land is meant as an analogy of the dry or barren spiritual life in the church as perceived by the preachers. The pastors at Ramingining hoped that the Rally would bring new life to the church, and, as one pastor said in his opening address, that the congregation would "thrive like a plant which receives water".

As is common at Rallies, the musicians at Ramingining stood on rather than by the stage, and used a greater variety of instruments than usual. Apart from the usual guitars, they also had a drum-kit and a key-board on the stage. Items which the participants presented were followed by applause from the congregation. The performers took greater than usual effort with clothing and grooming, for example the Maningrida children all had matching T-shirts for one of the evening performances.

While the preachers stressed the importance of the theme to the gathering, the participants devoted the majority of the time to performances of music and Action-dance. The visitors' enthusiasm was so great that the convenor of the Rally had to ask them to perform only one or two items each so as to give everyone a chance. The preachers also reminded people of the theme of the Rally, telling them to "leave a place open for the Spirit to come into your life".

The Rally took place over four days, between Thursday the 27th of November to Sunday the 1st of December. In addition, interest in the church generated by the Rally meant that large Fellowship meetings occurred for some days both before and after the Rally. In the following pages I examine some of the most significant features which took place over the time of the Rally.

*Most of the visitors from Maningrida arrived on the Thursday and that is when the singing and performance began, although the pastor at Ramingining felt that the Rally proper did not begin until the Friday.*
Thursday night:

The Ramingining congregation staged the Rally at the sandy oval where they normally hold Fellowship meetings. The pastor and some helpers decorated the stage with cycad palms and erected a very large white wooden cross in front of the stage on the oval (Photograph 5). They also added a wall to the back of the stage on which the pastor wrote the text which formed the theme of the Rally.

On the first evening of the Rally approximately one-hundred-and-twenty adults had gathered, most of them from Maningrida. An atmosphere of excitement and anticipation pervaded the crowd as they gathered, waiting to perform their music and Action-dance items. Then someone switched the lights on, the musicians tuned their instruments and the singing began.

The first singing was led by a group of musicians from Maningrida standing on the stage. The songs were from a similar repertoire of songs to those used by people in Ramingining, but were performed in a number of languages local to the Maningrida area. For instance the Ramingining congregation usually sing the song "Jesus is the Sweetest Name I Know" in English first and then repeat it in Gupapuyyu, Djambarrpuyyu, Wanguri, Ganalbiyu and Burrara, the latter being a language spoken only at Maningrida. The visitors from Maningrida performed the very same song this evening but in languages from their own area. Throughout the evening the visitors performed several more songs which included some verses in languages from the Maningrida area as well as verses in languages spoken at Ramingining as for instance the songs "I fly away", "Jesus overcame Satan's power", and "We are one big happy family". In performing these

5Since Maningrida and Ramingining are neighbouring communities there is obviously some overlap in terms of the languages spoken. For instance Ganalbiyu is spoken by people both at Ramingining and Maningrida. However, most languages or dialects spoken at Maningrida are not spoken at Ramingining.
songs in several different languages, Yolngu display a sense of inclusiveness and unity among the people present at the Rally. It is also possible to argue that the songs which were performed completely in English serve similar ends since English is a language which is shared by all the groups present, but belongs exclusively to none. Among the songs performed in English this evening were "If you are happy and you know it clap your hands", "Praise the Lord" and "Father Abraham".

In this context one can make a comparison with Keen's (1994:162) comments about regional ceremonies. Keen points out that regional ceremonies allow people to co-operate within the same frame-work of ceremonial structure but at the same time allow individual groups to express their own distinctiveness. Similarly, it seems that the Rallies are events where people from a wide region can meet, work together, share their faith and forms of worship, but also express their distinctiveness by their choice of languages in songs.

During this first evening of the Rally, the Ramingining preachers placed great emphasis on welcoming the visitors from Maningrida. This emphasis is yet another way in which sentiments of unity and inclusiveness are displayed at Rallies. The participants sang the song which encourages people to "Now shake hands with someone new", and one of the women from Ramingining urged the people through the microphone to "greet a person you have never seen before".

Then the Fellowship meeting was "opened" by forming a circle, and John Baya, the pastor for the Ramingining-Milingimbi parish, made a welcome speech. In commenting on all the people who had gathered together Baya said, "This is like a Gurapipi gathering. All of us from the Dhuwa and Yirritja moiety ceremonial group (jikangu Dhuwa Yirritja) are here", he said. Referring to the many new Christians from Maningrida he said "Joy and peace has come to stranger, well we are not strangers, we are one body". Time and again, in his speech, he expressed his very warm welcome (miritiri man-gamithiri) to the people.
Other features of the evening included sermons by John Baya and Larry Bilanya, a lay-pastor from Milingimbi, but the remainder of the evening was devoted to the performance of musical items by groups from Ramingining and Maningrida. Some of the groups even performed the same song, but the important issue seemed to be for each group to have made a contribution rather than avoiding repetition. The Ramingining groups consisted of a song group with women from the congregation singing choruses accompanied by men on guitars, a song group led by a Gupapyuugu man who has composed his own gospel song and young Ramingining women performing Action-dancing.

**Friday**

During the following evening, Friday night, the emphasis on welcoming the visitors continued. As Baya welcomed the visitors a big round of applause followed as he mentioned the name of each group or outstation:

So I am giving you warm welcome to Markkolidji Pan and Mumeika and Buluka... on this side. Well, God be with you brothers and sisters! I am giving you warm welcome to Ji-marda, God be with you! And Ji-bena, God bless you brothers and sisters. And my mother's people from Gundurrugu and Wangwarg from Maningrida. God bless you. Warm welcome to you and all the people from Warra'warrn [the Maningrida minister's] yothu-yindi God bless you. And also from Balakini, Nundurra yothu-yindi God bless you. God bless you yothu-yindi from Yilan. Alleluijah. Praise the Lord. So lot of God's people here. On behalf of my congregation and the community I give you welcome. You can't see my heart but the Lord Jesus Christ and his Father God can see my heart. My whole being is love .... to you and for my people here, Ramingining. God bless you. .... Yo, sorry my people, God bless you yothu-yindi from Mirmatjiirr.

The musicians played the song "Now shake hands with someone else" again and whilst this took place a Ramingining lay pastor called the elders from both Maningrida and Ramingining together for a special prayer for the success of the Rally and for the Ramingining congregation. The previous evening many Ramingining people had not

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6In this instance yothu-yindi refers to a group of people and their matrilineal relatives, which in effect is both moieties, Dhuwa and Yirriŋa.
attended the Rally, probably because there had been an argument between two family groups. As one of the preachers commented: "I felt something strongly last night, good spirit and bad spirit was fighting each other".

Then Dick Milurnurr made another welcome speech to the visitors in his role as lay-pastor at Ramingining, convenor of the Rally and chairman of the community. His speech was followed by Yambal, the community council's liaison officer who welcomed the visitors on behalf of the Ramingining council. After that a Maningrida man spoke briefly drawing attention to all the groups that had gathered together from different places, but pointing out that in spite of the many groups, "one God no matter what tribe, no matter what language."

During this evening Raminging singers had a more notable presence than the evening before. The singing was very vigorous and joyous and the songs were followed by shouts of praise like, "Praise his name!", with the audience responding, "Jesus Christ!" Among the performers was a group from Malyaranak, a Ramingining outstation, and a song group with people of the Ganal biscuits clan from both Ramingining and Maningrida. Action-dancing groups from both Ramingining and Maningrida performed.

As the closing of the meeting approached, Baya called on the elders to come up to the front by the stage and be ready to lay hands on the people. The closing phase was much longer than during normal Fellowship meetings. Many people came forward and knelt down in the circle. The preachers urged the participants to make a commitment to Christ, to bow down by the cross in the centre of the circle, and for people to come forward with their sickness or problems so that the elders could pray for them.

7Malyaranak is now an outstation to Maningrida.
Saturday

On the Saturday morning of the Rally church activity began to intensify. The visitors from Maningrida started to practise their singing by 10 a.m. in the morning and continued until about 1 p.m. Following an afternoon break the singing began again at about 4.30 p.m., and then some of the women from Ramingining organised a barbeque and cooked food for the visitors.

The evening Fellowship meeting started early at about 6 p.m. and continued until well after mid-night. More people had arrived from Maningrida during the day and this evening approximately two-hundred adults attended as well as the many children accompanying their parents. In the first phase of the Fellowship, before the opening, the singing was very vigorous and continued for at least two hours.

Baya offered another warm welcome to the people on behalf of the elders, then one preaching assistant from Maningrida stood up and greeted everyone, using the word "family" to express his feelings of unity with the Ramingining congregation:

I see many faces here and I pray that this will be our blessed night...everyone of us has come all the way from outstation and also Maningrida parish...we have come to share, share the love of Christ with you family here.

Dudley Wama'warra, the minister from Maningrida, also spoke. He too made references to the unity of the people present by saying, "We are here all of us, with all family, all tribes, we have come together, shared together..."

While the Rallies, like ordinary Fellowship meetings, have many distinctly Yolnu features such as the sitting on the ground and the strong emphasis on Action-dancing and music, the Rallies are also influenced by Western evangelical crusades or gatherings. For instance the Rally had a "convenor" who introduced performers and events during each
evening. The influence from Western crusades also showed in the style of speech and the manner in which the preachers addressed the gathering.

For instance the convenor or the preachers called out to the congregation in between the different items to encourage applause - "Give him big clap!" The following exchange which took place on the Saturday evening was typical:

Speaker: Good evening family! Good evening!
Response: Good evening!
Speaker: Praise the Lord! Everyone happy?
Response: Yeah!

On another occasion the speaker called out to the congregation, "Are you still awake? Everybody stand up!" Other exchanges in the same style occurred throughout the Rally:

Speaker: Good evening everyone!
Response: Good evening!
Speaker: Yes, that's better (speaker acknowledging the loud response). We are the people of the Lord!

In addition to these kind of exchanges other calls such as "Praise the Lord!" with the response "Jesus Christ!", were extremely common and occurred virtually after each item that was performed.

In spite of the obviously Western stylistic features of the Rallies referred to above, Yolŋu also found the opportunity during the Saturday evening to draw directly on Ancestral mythology for a special dramatisation. A group of Gupapuyunu people provided the highlight of the evening in this way. Baya, the pastor, introduced the item as a representative of the Gupapuyunu clan. During the performance some younger men stood on the stage and played didgeridoo while others sang. Bilanya, the pastor from Milingimbi who is also Gupapuyunu, accompanied with clap-sticks. A group of Gupapuyunu women performed the accompanying Ancestral dance, to the music, as they mimicked drinking alcohol from empty bottles (Photograph 6). The dance is referred to as
alcohol (*ganiji*)

As in the context of an Ancestral ceremony, the enactment of this segment was received with some laughter and amusement. In the context of the Rally the dance was intended to symbolise the sinful living of humanity which preceded the flood.

A simple re-enactment then proceeded, which connected the alcohol (*ganiji*) dance with the story of Noah. A group of children represented the human survivors on Noah's ark, sitting together on the sandy ground in front of the stage as the music finished and the "drinkers" were swept away with the flood.

Then Baya announced the singing of a chorus type song about Noah. This song, composed by Dhalmarawuy a Gupapyuru man, is sometimes sung at Fellowship meetings, accompanied by guitars. The song is perceived to be somewhat humorous, but Baya emphasised that "this is not for fun, this is serious". Apparently the song was inspired by a visit from a circus to Milingimbi. When the animals were unloaded from the barge it made people smile and think of Noah. Before the song was performed Baya reminded people on a more serious note that when God sent the flood Ramingining was covered in water too. He referred to the flood as 'the first sacrifice", pointing out that God has promised not to send another flood but instead he will send his only son to return to earth. Then the song about Noah was performed. A translation is provided in the right-hand column:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Limurrunyndja bukmar</th>
<th>We all</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>marngi nurukiyi marthangu</td>
<td>know about that boat/ark</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nunjhi rayi gurulyun limurrunha</td>
<td>that came to see us</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dhipala Yurwililli</td>
<td>here at Yurwi (Milingimbi)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

chorus:

Noahinha walala wanankurma
Noahinha gana garjula warakanmala
Noahinha walala wanankurma
Noah gana garjula warakanmala

They [Balandu] acted like Noah
Only Noah brought the animals
They acted like Noah
Only Noah brought the animals

8The segment is part of an Ancestral song series which incorporates songs about the Macassans, who were visitors to the Arnhem Land coast in the past.

9Translated with assistance of Daisy Namaratj.
Litmilily
джаккута
gittithunmirri
NJurrukiyi warakangu mala
Bayjuna liyungu ngilangu dharragulu
Linyugu limuru gongpany Godkulu

(repeat chorus)
NJarnanhanydja liya bilmarama
Nathilinulili dhawulilli
Nunhi rayi God dhu wa wa lupmarapala
Noah ga warakanmala walitghina

I was reminded of the Old Testament
that God sent the flood
Noah and the animals were saved

(repeat chorus)

Throughout the evening many Action-dancing performances by Ramingining and Maningrida youths followed as well as musical items performed by a wide variety of groups. Among the Maningrida outstation groups which performed this evening were Jirmarda, Markkolidjpan, Muneka, Ji-bena and Cadell.

Maningrida youths also formed one large combined group, performing Action-dancing in a huge circle around the oval and all wearing their special T-shirts designed for the occasion. Other features of the evening included the performance of songs by a very large choir from Maningrida, standing by the stage. A group of mature women from Ramingining and Milingimbi performed the song "Joy like a fountain, come Holy Spirit let your fire flow" (Photograph 7). In contrast to children and young people's Action-dancing, the music they danced to had a more sombre sound, with movements at a slower pace, and a very polished co-ordination of their movements. Through the different performances, then, a variety of groups were represented. Individuals who performed at one stage in groups representing outstations or clans, also had the opportunity to regroup and join a larger choir or dance-group representing a whole community.

At the closing of the meeting, elders from Maningrida, Milingimbi and Ramingining were called up to the front by the stage. As Ramingining singers led the closing songs Baya talked and prayed through the music, admonishing the Ramingining congregation...
for their relatively poor turn-out at the Rally. "Look", he said, the Maningrida people "they are one - one spirit, one body. They used to play cards but now they have changed." Maningrida and all its homelands, he said, are an example to us. As he continued talking the elders kept on laying on hands and praying with people kneeling down in the circle until no more people came forward.

Sunday

On Sunday morning, the last day of the Rally, a morning service was held on the lawns at the school. Although it was referred to as a Sunday morning service, rather than as Fellowship, its basic structure was that of a Fellowship meeting, with the exception that people did not kneel down during the closing phase. Unlike a normal Fellowship meeting, the service also in included a baptism and communion.

As the crowds gathered together the singing began. They opened the Fellowship by gathering in a circle (Photograph 8) and then sang the familiar Fellowship songs such as "Jesus overcame Satan's power", "Nyarrangka dhawala yajkurruru minthiri" (Here am I full of sin) and "Praise the Lord", accompanying the songs with vigorous arm and body actions.10

The Sunday morning service was led by Dudley Warrwarr who was the only ordained minister present. He conducted the baptism of a child and then the communion service where damper and cordial was distributed. As the communion progressed the rain started to pour down but the service continued. Throughout the service all the lay pastors were gathered together at the front - John Baya and Dick Milurrurr from Ramingining, Bertie Warrnga and Larry Bilanya from Milingimbi as well as some other lay preachers from Maningrida (Photograph 9). As the meeting closed the people gathered once again in a

10 See Appendix 2 for the text to these songs.
5. The church stage at Ramingining.
6. Dancing ḣanitji (alcohol). Woman in orange dress pretends to drink.

8. Opening the Sunday morning service.
Pastors from left to right, standing: John Baya, Larry Bilanya Bertie Warrnga, Dick Milurrurr.
10. Closing the Sunday morning service.
11. Action-dancing by mothers and children from Ramingining.


14. Elders lay on hands.
huge circle singing "He's the Saviour of my soul" (Photograph 10), and while the singing continued Baya read a special prayer for the Ramingining people and its church.

In the afternoon children, youths and some mothers from Maningrida and Raminging practiced Action-dancing under a shelter between the church stage and the council office while the rain poured down (Photographs 11 and 12). The dancers were spaced out in long rows with leaders in front conducting the movements. Among the songs they danced to were "Oh my Lord", "Mary's Boy child" and the "Rivers of Babylon" by the group Boney M, and "The sky is the limit" by Cliff Richard. Other very popular Action-dance songs which were repeated several times were "The only way up" and "God is watching us from a distance".11

In the late afternoon the Fellowship meeting began. Children and youths from Maningrida put on their T-shirts made for the Rally for their Action-dancing performances. The participation of a large number of young men and boys from Maningrida in the Action-dancing was notable (Photograph 13). Among the young men from Ramingining, there were no participants in Action-dancing.

Many musical items were performed throughout the evening by groups from Maningrida and Ramingining. A highlight of Ramingining singers' performances was the song "I am the way the truth and the life", composed by members of a Guapapuyu clan family. The sisters from Jabiru performed again and then Ramingining and Milingimbi people formed a joint singing group. Baya called on everyone from Ramingining and Milingimbi parish to come up on the stage and as the singing began he said, "this is a miracle", referring to all the people who joined him on the stage. The song group represented everyone from the Ramingining-Milingimbi parish including outstations such Yathalamara, Nangalala and the "Tank-area" outside Ramingining. The song was performed in Guapapuyu and a translation is offered in the right hand column. The group sang:

11 Composer not known.
Djesuwa dharpa dharraka
bukujura Calvary
Nunjhi walala
dhurrwara Djesunha
Namarra garraku Djesunha

The cross of Jesus is standing
on the mount of Calvary
They
heard from Jesus' lips
I am Jesus

Chorus:
Garray, Garray, Djesu
Nhenydraunjhi Godku gathumirrigaray
Djesu marra mirri ga walpurri

Lord, Lord, Jesus
You are God's son Lord
Jesus beloved and Saviour

Nhenydraunjhi djulkmarapda
Dhinganamirri rom mala
Ga ganydjammydra nhungu ghumuru
Dhurrwara npara dhinganamirri rom mala

You rose [lit. beat, surpass] from the death imposed by the law people
Your power is great
I said it was the law people who ordered the death sentence

(repeat chorus)

Limurrungydra marrrji guwatjmana
Dhuwalaunjhi dharpa nathirrugi
Nunjhi Djesuwa burakina
Limurrungu bukimakku yoljuwa

We go up to
This cross of old
On which Jesus was crucified
All of us people

(chorus)

During the evening a special induction ceremony was held for new church elders from Maningrida. Baya read from Romans chapter 12, vs 1-21 which speaks about life for God's servants, and the Revd. Warра'warra also addressed the elders, talking about their new responsibilities in the church to serve and encourage the members of the congregation. As the singing of hymns began Warра'warra laid hands on the new elders as they kneeled down. Finally the song which encourages people to shake hands was performed again. At the end of the induction ceremony all elders were called up to the front to join the new elders so that they could stand together as equals (rumbagi).

The closing stage of the Fellowship lasted for a long time as many people kneeled in the circle and the elders prayed for them. (Photograph 14). The following day the visitors started to return to Maningrida yet church activity continued vigorously in Ramilingining over the next few evenings and a special meeting was held to elect new church elders.
The Galiwin'ku Rally 1991

Another Rally was held at Galiwin'ku in March the same year, and it will be discussed here for comparative purposes. The comparison shows that the Rallies followed a more or less set formula. An analysis of the Galiwin'ku Rally also brings to the forefront my suggestion that Rallies are significant as a type of "regional ceremony" by bringing people from the whole region together. A group of Ramingining people were among the wide variety of visitors to the Galiwin'ku Rally.

In comparison with the Ramingining Rally the Galiwin'ku Thanksgiving Rally was an even more elaborate affair. It drew a wider variety of visitors, it had more guest-speakers, more people attending, and unlike the Ramingining Rally, a number of Balanda were involved - as visitors, speakers or by just being part of the crowd singing and praising. The Galiwin'ku Rally had a somewhat more varied program and was also slightly more formal in style - smoking was forbidden and children were not allowed to play in the Fellowship area. Yet the basic structure of the Rally was very similar, featuring Fellowship meetings from Friday to Sunday night with a Saturday morning service and a Sunday morning service with communion.

In addition to the evening meetings at the Rally, prayer meetings were held at Galiwin'ku every morning at 6.30 a.m. and again at noon, although they were only attended by small groups of people. A special teaching session was held on the Friday morning by Ron Trudginger, an elderly European missionary from Emabella in South Australia, whom the Galiwin'ku congregation had invited as guest-speaker. Other activities during the Rally included Action-dancing practice during the day for the evening performances and women cooking food for the visitors.
The Rally was held under a very large roofed area in the centre of the community, referred to as the "opera-house". The theme of Rally was written on two large banners hanging above the church stage. The banners read:

LET THE KING OF GLORY COME IN

and below it:

WHAT SHALL THE END BE?

The Galiwin'ku congregation had decorated the stage with fan-palm branches and drawings with Christian motifs and statements by local children. They had also placed lights around the stage area.

The Galiwin'ku congregation held the 1991 Annual Thanksgiving Rally immediately prior to a ten day conference titled the "Aboriginal Spirituality and Culture Seminars". The organisers of the seminars intended to discuss the relationship between Aboriginal culture and Christianity. These issues had already been under discussion for some time at Galiwin'ku and the different viewpoints which had developed were reflected to some extent in sermons and speeches at the Rally.

12The seminars were also referred to as "The Gospel and Culture Seminars". Although I was present at these seminars I have chosen not discuss them in this thesis beyond the brief references to differing Yolŋu viewpoints as expressed in the sermons at the Rallies. Further discussion has been omitted for two reasons; 1) There were no Ramingining people present at the seminars although Aboriginal people from all the other communities in Arnhem Land were there. 2) The Northern Regional Council of Congress views all material relating to these seminars as sensitive and not for public view. The seminars caused a great deal of controversy at Galiwin'ku between different factions. Djiniyini Gondarra, who was a driving force at these seminars by presenting discussion papers on a daily basis, now considers that the format of the seminars was unsuccessful, largely because of the controversy they caused. As a consequence all material relating to these seminars held by the church is now unavailable. Furthermore, according to the NRCC office in Darwin, Dr. Gondarra now feels that some ideas put forth at these seminars are not really representative of Yolŋu views.
In brief, it seemed that two differing perspectives had formed at Galiwin'ku. One perspective advocated the need to free Galiwin'ku people from "the bondage of demonic spirits", as one Yolnu man expressed it. The same man also suggested that it was not only a question of eliminating ceremonial practices that go against the Bible but that it was also a matter of re-evaluating the priority and amount of time people spend on ceremonies. This viewpoint appeared to have strong support, or may have originated, among Balanda staff at Galiwin'ku and was shared by the ordained Yolnu minister.

The other perspective chiefly propounded by Dr. Djiniyini Gondarra and a number of other Yolnu and Balanda associated with Nungalinya College in Darwin, took the view that Aboriginal culture, including ceremonies, were a gift from God to the Aboriginal people. According to this perspective the aim is to develop an indigenous Christian theology which is anchored in Aboriginal identity and spirituality.

Friday 15/3/91

Among the long-distance visitors to Elcho Island was a group of Pitjantjatjara people from Emabella. They had come all the way to Arnhem Land in the company of an elderly former missionary, Ronald Trudginger. Trudginger was previously superintendent at Emabella (from approximately 1940 to 1960), but explained that he had recently returned to Emabella after some of the old people had asked him to come back. He returned in the formal role as community horticulturalist, but as his presence at Elcho Island indicated he was still working with the church.  

According to Trudginger, a high percentage of elderly people at Emabella are Christians, whereas he described middle-aged people as having "missed out on Christianity". In recent years some older people have turned to charismatic churches which have created some tension with other Christians at Emabella. Trudginger also referred to youth-camps being held in order to catch young people before they turn to petrol-sniffing.
Trudginger was invited as a guest-speaker to the Elcho Island Rally and gave a special session on the Friday morning about building up the church. His main message was, for the church to function well people need to be joined together in agreement - if people fight each other there can be no church. Trudginger was clearly in the camp that viewed much of Aboriginal culture as demonic. At a Fellowship meeting held a couple of days before the Rally began, he talked about how Jesus performed miracles and threw out demons, and that "whenever a church grows, the devil tries to get in."

During Friday evening, the first evening of the Rally, approximately three hundred people attended. As is often the case at ordinary Fellowship meetings, there were far more women than men present. As usual the meeting started with singing. A group of male musicians, standing on the stage, accompanied the singers with a key-board and guitars. They performed a similar repertoire of choruses as found in Ramingining, but in addition song groups from Galiwin’ku also performed more elaborate hymns.

As during the Ramingining Rally the welcome of the visitors and the naming of the places which they had come from was an important feature of the evening. The Revd. Joe Mawunydjil Garawirrtja, the minister for Galiwin’ku-Gapuwiyak parish, began by calling up the people from his own parish to sing a special welcome song for the visitors. After the song he delivered a lengthy and elaborate welcome speech. As each community or place represented at the Rally was mentioned the congregation applauded loudly. The following is an extract from the welcome speech:

...first of all I would like to welcome the people from South Australia ...the people all the way from Emabella, Pitjantjatjara people, please can you stand up! All the Pitjantjatjara people! ... We go to Darwin, Darwin people congregation, Balanda and Yolgu, everybody, Nungalinya College, NRCC (Northern Regional Council of Churches) office you may all stand, all of you, Darwin people! So all the staff [at] Nungalinya College, [and] our office the Uniting Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress office, you may all stand, all of you!...So we welcome you in the name of Jesus. Thank you very much.

We go to Malakukutj parish and Mindjilang and Warruwi, they are here, could you stand up please! Over here on my right. Yo, ... we welcome student pastor Andrew Leku, he is doing his fieldwork at Malakukutj parish. We welcome you. Right. We go up to Maringrida, any Maringrida people here? Bungu [nothing] Right
Milingimbi, Ramingining ... I hope they are here .... Yirrkala... under the leadership of Rev. Ken Minipirriwuy Garrawurra so Yirrkala congregations are here ... Any from Groote Island? Nothing. Umbakumba ... Numbulwar ... they come tomorrow ... And we had visitors all the way from Perth ... I ask them to stand up ... Our sister here, she is our Aboriginal sister from Perth ... We welcome you, big clap for sister. We go inland now, inland we go, we have also in this group from World Mission, all the way from Sydney, or Canberra, Sydney, ... He is Kevin May ... Rev. Turnbull our moderator Uniting Church, Northern Synod, ... at Nungalinya College our sister from Papua New Guinea... we have also visitors, they are doing a course at Nungalinya College also, and they from Anglican church, and from Catholic church, please brothers can you stand!

After his speech Mawunydjil asked the Moderator for the Northern Synod, the Rev. Turnbull, to come up on the stage and open the Rally which was to be the 13th Anniversary Thanksgiving meeting since the 1979 Revival.

A special welcome was also extended during the evening to the Rev. Dr. Djinyini Gondarra. Gondarra is from Galiwin'ku but was at the time residing mainly in Darwin.

The speaker emphasised how proud and happy he was to have this "first full-blood Aboriginal doctor" (of theology) present at the Rally.

The preacher for the evening was the Rev. Wali Fejo, a Larrakia man, from the Darwin congregation. He was brought up to the front in the midst of a group of dancers in what was to be one of the evening's most colourful performances. Aboriginal male and female dancers from Darwin and Nungalinya College formed a procession mimicking the paddling of canoes. They had garlands of flowers in their hair and more garlands draped around their necks. They were all wearing the colourful, traditional Islander wrap sarong and moved to music which appeared to be of Islander origin. They moved in formation up to the stage where they joined the musicians singing "Where he leads me I will follow".

Other features of the evening included a performance by the Pitjantjatjara choir and Action-dancing by a group of Elcho Island women. They Action-danced to the song "Come Holy Spirit, let your fire flow" which was the same item as the mature women

\[14\]He is now the principal for Nungalinya College.
performed at the Ramingining Rally. Throughout the evening the participants gave a great deal of applause to each of the Action-dancing and music-groups that performed. In fact the preachers and the speakers constantly encouraged loud and enthusiastic applause throughout the evening. The Rev. Joe Mawunydjil Garawirrtja reminded the people of the time when the UAICC (Uniting Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress) was formed and the Balanda applauded for an hour. Preachers and speakers would also keep calling out to the congregation to stand up or to respond to greetings or calls of praise.

The emphasis on greeting and welcoming the people from every community and every place, speaks of the significance which the Rallies have in bringing people in Arnhem Land together as well as joining Arnhem Landers with Balanda and people from other places around the world. As during all other church events in the area sentiments of unity were also expressed more explicitly as in the prayer by one man asking for the people to be made one (waggany manapanmin).

**Saturday 16/3’91**

At the Saturday evening Fellowship approximately 240 people were present. The male musicians and a small group of women led the music from the stage. The women had organised special clothing, all wearing blue floral skirts and pink tops. Throughout the evening, the music and the dancing provided a variety of Aboriginal groups, men and women, Balanda and Yolŋu with an opportunity to participate and perform.

For instance during the evening a group of Yolŋu adults associated with the church in Darwin performed a special Action-dance item. Among the dancers were Djiniyini Gondarra and his wife as well as other mature men and women. It was the first time that I had witnessed mature men doing Action-dancing - at Ramingining only women, youths and children dance. In addition to the Action-dancing, at Galiwin’ku men were also accompanying the chorus songs during the evening Fellowship with vigorous arm and
body-movements. For instance the song "Praise the Lord" involves some energetic shaking of the arms and the legs as if and then some jumps to the side. Again, in Ramingining it is usually only women and children who accompany chorus songs with such vigorous movements while the men either play instruments or sit down and watch. At Galiwin'ku even the mature men and leaders in the church such as Djiniyini Gondarra joined in the dancing together with Balanda such as Les Brockway, the principal of Nungalinya College.

Other features from the evening program included the Galiwin'ku women's choir, and singing by the Pitjantja'tjara people from Emabella. Some form of drama, or symbolic enactment is often performed at Rallies. This evening at Galiwin'ku a bundle of branches, symbolising a tree, had been placed in the ground, in the shape of a cross right through the Fellowship area and then people were invited to come and take a leaf from a branch. Each night had a different preacher. On Saturday Kevin Rurambu, a man well-known among Arnhem Land Christians for his involvement in the 1979 Revival, preached.15

There were also many opportunities for others to come up on the stage and read passages from the Bible in addition to the main sermons. During the evening Liyapidiny Marika, a female pastor from Yirrkala, who has since been ordained, read from Revelation and a Timorese staff-member from Nungalinya College read a section from John's Gospel.

Sunday 1.7.1991

The participants in the Galiwin'ku Rally held the Sunday morning service in the same roofed area as the other Fellowship meetings, although Galiwin'ku does have its own church. It was a somewhat smaller gathering with approximately 150 people present. As Yolgu and Balanda seated themselves in small groups in the sand, forming an approximate circle around the shelter, a group of Galiwin'ku women led the singing from

15Rurambu died later the same year.
the stage. They sang the joyful chorus songs which usually preceded the opening of the Fellowship such as "Rejoice in the Lord", "Jesus overcame" and "Now shake hands". As the latter song was performed some women walked around the shelter shaking hands with people while others stayed seated only shaking hands with those seated next to them.

The Galiwin'ku Rally had a much wider range of visitors than the Ramingining Rally, several of whom were associated with Nungalinya College in Darwin, and some of whom had been present at the Northern Regional Congress of Churches meeting in Darwin shortly before the Rally. Some others were staying on after the Rally for the Aboriginal Spirituality and Culture Seminars.

Then the Rev. Mawunydjil Garawirrtja introduced visitors to the gathering. The visitors were a preacher and his wife from Sri Lanka whom, he said, bring greetings with them from the Uniting Church in Madras, South India. Mawunydjil pointed out that there were all sorts of people present at the Rally, not just Aboriginal people but every colour - "black, brown, whatever". On invitation from Mawunydjil Garawirrtja, the Sri Lankan man stood up and spoke about how happy he was to be at Galiwin'ku and how he, as a Tamil, and belonging to an oppressed minority group, felt a great deal of sympathy for Aboriginal people and their struggles. In his speech he emphasised his respect for Yolgnu culture saying:

Thank you very much, good morning to you all. In fact we are very happy to be with you this morning to participate in this beautiful Thanksgiving service... Even though I belong to churches of India I come from Sri Lanka. Sri Lanka is a small island south of India. In fact I feel very proud and happy and homely when I am here this morning with you all because of many reasons. Number one, I myself am a Tamil, a minority in Sri Lanka. When I am here with the minority people in Australia I am in solidarity with you. I am also a person who struggles in life and culture. We are very happy the church in this part of the country are doing wonderful work among the Aboriginal people. I know that you have your own culture which is more valid than the culture we have in other parts of this country. We bring greetings from Uniting Church in South India... We are looking forward to participate in this beautiful service, your culture and way of life, your belief... Thank you very much. God bless you all.

His speech was followed by an enthusiastic round of applause from the congregation.
Throughout this chapter I have commented on the inclusiveness of the Fellowship. This tendency was also evident in the variety of people who were invited to preach or read from the Bible. At the Sunday morning service it was Djiniyini Gondarra’s turn to preach, but before he addressed the congregation he provided yet another gesture of inclusiveness by inviting two women to read from the Bible. First a Balanda woman read a section from the gospel of John, chapter 13, vs. 1-20 "The Master becomes a Servant". Then Djiniyini Gondarra asked his wife Gelunj to read from Philippians ch. 2, vs. 1-11, "Unity Through Humility".

When Gondarra subsequently spoke it was in relation to the Bible passages which the women had presented, on the theme of Christianity as a life of service. He talked in general about the need for renewal in the church, recalling the 1979 Revival, saying "I was first full witness" and calling on the people in the congregation who witnessed the 1979 events to "put up your hands... stand up so that others can see you". When the Revival, he said, took place in 1979 there was gospel singing all around the community and people stopped going to the health clinic to ask for medicines. Council meetings had started with prayer and in general the whole Galiwinku community had been renewed.

Djiniyini Gondarra made no direct references to the debate about the place of Christianity in relation to Aboriginal Culture in his sermon, but unlike most of the ministers, he spoke entirely in his own Yolŋu language not partly in English as preachers usually do, and in that way he was making a subtle point about the need for a greater indigenisation of the church. Towards the end of his speech he urged the congregation not to listen to any other man or woman but just to try and listen to what Jesus is saying to the Aboriginal church.

Even though the Rally seemed well attended and successful it obviously did not display the kind of spiritual renewal which Gondarra had hoped to see. Gondarra said he could feel the church dying in Arnhem Land and throughout Australia, urging people to start
building it up again. After his sermon, communion was held. Once again the tendency to inclusiveness was displayed with Gondarra sharing the distribution of the sacraments together with two other ordained Aboriginal ministers - Ronan Garrawarra and Wali Fejo.

During the Fellowship meeting in the evening many different groups had an opportunity to perform their items. In fact the many groups were so keen that Mawunydyiljil remarked that "we are wasting time giving too many items", saying that when it is finally time for the sermon people would already be asleep. Exactly the same kind of comments were made at the Ramingining Rally which shows the extent to which emphasis is placed on music and dance performances during Rallies. Due to the many items which were performed the Sunday Fellowship meeting at Galiwin'ku did not finish until 1.30 a.m.

During the evening a group of Galiwin'ku Sunday school children read aloud a passage from the Bible, Galiwin'ku youths and the Galiwin'ku women's club performed Action-dancing. The Pitjanjatjara choir performed a song, this time with accompanying arm actions in a similar style to that of the Arnhem Land people. Another choir from Croker and Goulbourn Islands performed and Milingimbi youths did Action-dancing.

Other items included a special dramatisation performed by Galiwin'ku youths. In this piece a group of actors mimed a series of scenes to a background of tape-recorded music. First the youths acted out a scene where they were drinking and hanging out with friends, standing in groups, laughing, and showing a preoccupation with their appearance by combing their hair. One boy had the role of Christ and leaned against the cross in the midst of the young people. In the following scene the youths dramatised their discovery of Christ, shielding their faces with their hands and arms as if blinded by his light, accentuated by some strong lamps. The final scene showed the youths bowing down to Christ and then raising their arms in praise. Possibly this dramatisation inspired the
somewhat similar performance by the Gupapuyku group at the Ramingining Rally later in the year.

Several other performances followed, including a choir formed by a group of people from Ramingining, another choir formed by Djiniyni Gondarra and relatives from Galiwin'ku and what was referred to as an "ad-hoc" choir made up of Galiwin'ku women, Yolngu associated with Nungalinya and an assortment of Balanda in a group on the stage.

On this final night of the Rally, it was the turn of Mawunydjil Garrawirrtja, the local minister for Galiwinku-Gapuwiya's parish, to preach, but, as on other evenings, other people also had a chance to speak. Mawunydjil first invited Les Brockway, the Balanda principal of Nungalinya College to read a passage from the Bible. Then Liyapidiny Marika, the female preacher from Yirrkala, talked about her trip to the World Council of Churches meeting in Canberra and then she read a passage in the Gumatj language from the Bible. Yet another woman was invited by Mawunydjil Garrawirrtja to read a passage from the book of Revelation.

The sermon by Mawunydjil Garrawirrtja was delivered in a highly charged and emotional style. It was directly concerned with the discussions coming up after the Rally at the Aboriginal Culture and Spirituality Seminars. In his sermon he said that he knew that many people at Galiwin'ku felt critical of comments he had made in regards to Ancestral ceremonies and the church, but explained that he felt that God wanted him to speak out. Among the things he said, which clearly contrasted with the more liberal views presented by Djiniyni Gondarra, was that it is not true that God was present in the beginning with the Aboriginal people. Aboriginal people, he said, were in darkness until the missionaries came with the gospel. He then continued his sermon in relation to the theme "What shall the end be", linking it to Revelation and how people must make a commitment to the church or they will be left behind on the day of judgement.
Mawunydjil's sermon was symptomatic of the debate which was going on at Galiwin'ku at the time in the church. At Ramingining, in comparison, no such open debate existed, and church and Ancestral ceremonies co-existed without apparent conflict. A number of Ramingining people had been present at the Galiwin'ku Rally, but one reason that they did not stay on for the Seminars was that they did not wish to be put in a situation where people would debate the role of indigenous culture and ceremonies in relation to Christianity or, as they put it, "criticise culture".

**Conclusion**

In this chapter I have attempted to show that the Rallies are significant because they bring Aboriginal people together from all around Arnhem Land and that in this sense the Rallies are comparable to "regional ceremonies" as described by Keen (1994). Sometimes too the Rallies provide the opportunity for Yolŋu to extend their sense of unity beyond the Arnhem Land region, to include Aboriginal as well as Balanda visitors from other areas of Australia, and even Christians from overseas.

In comparing the Ramingining and the Galiwin'ku Rallies I have also intended to show that Yolŋu structure the Rallies along very similar lines regardless of where in Arnhem Land they are held. Both Rallies were held over weekends, and featured nightly Fellowship meetings including Sunday service with communion. Each nightly meeting included performances of music and Action-dance by visiting groups, and ended with laying on of hands. At both Rallies this final section was much more lengthy than at ordinary Fellowship meetings as many new people came forward.

Some differences which emerged in my comparison of the Rallies is that the Galiwin'ku Rally featured a much wider range of visitors such as the Balanda guest-speaker and the Tamil family. The Galiwin'ku Rally also involved a number of Balanda in contrast to the
Ramingining Rally, and the items of performance were somewhat more stylised and more elaborate. Special prayer meetings were held in the mornings, although only a handful of Yolgu attended. The differences may be attributed to the fact that the church at Galiwin'ku has a stronger base and a more developed infrastructure than the church at Ramingining.

At Galiwin'ku, virtually all the Balanda staff employed in the community are active Christians, and at least some must have helped with the organisation and planning of the Rally, even though Yolgu clearly took the lead at the Rally with Yolgu preachers and Yolgu performers. Furthermore Galiwin'ku has a church building, the Djambarrpuyulu Bible Translation Centre, an ordained minister and, unlike Ramingining Galiwin'ku was initially a mission settlement. Finally, Galiwin'ku was the centre for the 1979 Revival.

At the Rally in Ramingining, in contrast, there were no Balanda involved at all. The Ramingining Rally was strictly a gathering of Arnhem Land Aboriginal people. Even though the community was flooded with visitors and the music and dancing went on day and night, only one Balanda staff member stopped by to watch the proceedings for a little while. This general lack of interest and participation in Yolgu activities was similarly reflected at times of Ancestral ceremony. In fact Yolgu sometimes complained at funeral ceremonies, that so few Balanda would come to join them and sit with them at the ceremony ground.

To some extent one can see that the Ramingining Rally was modelled on the Galiwin'ku Rally. A special dramatisation was scheduled in both instances for the Saturday night. Both dramatisations had a theme of "sinful lifestyle" with a subsequent transformation occurring - at Galiwin'ku the actors "found the light" and at Ramingining the sinners were swept away in a flood. Furthermore the mature women's Action-dancing performance featured the same musical item at Galiwin'ku and Ramingining.
Inspite of the minor differences between Rallies, overall one can say that the Rallies provide a form of ritual which is shared by Yolŋu from all the different communities and which enables them to come together, yet at the same time maintain their distinctions by contributing in their own dialects and languages.
CHAPTER 7
PREACHING AND SHARING

My dear friends, the growing feeling that we find in our communities or in our whole Aboriginal world is that we belong together, this is not only found in western culture. We all want to be united with the rest of humanity. Our hope is to accomplish that through a community where all are one in Jesus Christ. (Djiniyini Gondarra 1990:7)

In this chapter I will discuss the content of sermons and "sharing" sessions in Fellowship meetings and Rallies. Yolnu sermons have not been discussed previously by other researchers in Arnhem Land. Not even Bos, who writes about the 1979 Revival (1988b) at Galiwin'ku, includes a discussion of the content of sermons from that time.

In Arnhem Land the Yolnu word (*djawrankthun*) means to preach. The preacher (*djawrankarra*) usually begins the sermon with the reading of a passage from the Bible in English, which he subsequently translates into his own language. The preacher then elaborates on the meaning of the Bible passage in relation to his own community and circumstances, which means that the sermons become unique commentaries by Yolnu on their own society.

The sermons are delivered partly in English and partly in Yolnu language. Even within the same sentence there is often a mixture of Yolnu and English expressions. The preachers themselves explain this mixture by saying that they speak this way so that everyone can understand. Another likely reason is that theology courses at Nungalinya College which the preachers attend require an understanding of English language. In that sense, mastery of English expressions displays the preacher's familiarity with the Bible.
A final reason may be that some expressions which are frequently used do not have a precise Yolnu translation as for instance "wasting time" and "love".¹

Sometimes English words are Aboriginalised and acquire their own specific meaning relevant to the Yolnu context. Examples of such words are "sharing", "idol" and "bow down". These words are key concepts in Yolnu Christian thought, and their use in the sermons will be explored in detail in this chapter.

The material in the chapter is organised around metaphors and images which the preachers used frequently in their sermons.² Firstly, I discuss unity which was constantly referred to in the sermons in a range of different contexts. Here, Yolnu often used "family" as a metaphor for unity. Then, I discuss Yolnu images of the end of the world, and the time of Revelation, when they believe that Jesus Christ will return. Images and metaphors pertaining to the Israelites are also used a great deal by the preachers. As I will show, the Israelites, their time in Egypt and their journey through the desert provide Yolnu with powerful means of identification and comparison in expressing their own struggles. Images of the Israelites are also important in contexts where Yolnu speak about "idols".

When the preacher has finished the sermon other congregation members may stand up and speak. Yolnu refer to these speeches as "sharing" (gurrupanmiirti).³ While some of what is said in a sharing session reflects the themes of the sermon, sharing is usually about more personal issues or problems which the speaker perceives in his or her own life or family group.

¹The word love was translated as man-ganathiri which according to the D. Zorc Yolnu matri dictionary means be happy, love, welcome.
²A definition of "metaphor" and "image" was offered in Chapter 1.
³Yolnu frequently used the English as well as the Yolnu word.
In addition to discussing the actual content of the sermons an effort has been made throughout the chapter to discuss how the sermons are relevant to Yolŋu contemporary life and place within the wider Australian society. I have also drawn on interviews with Yolŋu and their explanations of the sermons in order to provide a deeper understanding of the sermons.

"We are one family"

The idea of unity between people was constantly referred to in the sermons. Unity was referred to in relation to a) the historical context of Arnhem Land mission stations, b) the congregation, and sometimes more inclusively, the whole community, c) Arnhem Land Aboriginal people, d) Balanda and Yolŋu and e) the unity of all mankind. Images of the family were often used to express unity, mainly I suggest, because the family is the central unit for cooperation and interaction in Yolŋu society. This section will provide a discussion of several aspects of unity as referred to in sermons.

*Historical context*

In Chapter 2 I discussed Yolŋu memories of the mission, and explained that a key image was of the missionaries as peace-makers between clans. Such sentiments were reflected in a sermon, given at Christmas in 1991, in which Baya, the Ramingining pastor, recalled his childhood at Milingimbi mission. Baya said that all the children at the mission looked forward to Christmas, the time when the rains and the white clouds gather. His sermon was intended to remind people of the significance which Christmas, as well as the church, had in the mission days. In listening to the story in his sermon he hoped that people would once again gather in great numbers and be united through the church as he felt they were in the mission days. The following translation is a somewhat abbreviated paraphrase of the original speech: 

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Translated from Gupapuyŋu with assistance from S. Myuku.
They used to be happy and yell, "Hooray, Christmas time! We can get our presents, marbles, tennis ball, and loincloth (magu/calico and what else will my presents be, maybe toys". They used to feel happy. Well, long ago missionaries used to give presents from World Council of Churches. They sent through five districts, Methodist Overseas Mission, MOM, long time ago. They used to receive some presents over Christmas, they were happy, happier than today. They always felt happy, all day. Even enemey (kariru) was happy too. Bad people feel happy too. Old people too. Milingimbi, Galwinik, Yirrkala, Goulburn, Croker, there were five district in MOM, I am telling a true story. Some old people know, some old people passed away, and some young people growing up, you don't know this story. I was only a child but I learned what happens during Christmas time. I was brought up in the time of MOM. I grew up in the 1940s.

Us children used to sit on a mat up in the front of the church. The minister and his two helpers used to preach. The children picked all the flowers for Christmas Day. The minister would come and ring the bell and everybody would come to church. Everybody. People who hate others (guy-mokuymin malal) people with curse (miki-min malal) people with old arguments (maru-dikurur malala) they still come along at Christmas Day to Milingimb church. They used to make fire signal at Dhubila so that someone from Milingimbi would come in canoes and pick them up. They brought love and sharing from the mainland. They went for one purpose - for Christmas and to make [Jesus] king. That was in the time of MOM, missionary time. Early [days]. Some people are dead now, some are still alive and some are getting old. They know this story.

People came across from Dhubalan, from the west, they all went to one place to celebrate Christmas. That was before Maningrida was established. Burarra and Anbara and Gitiya, all kinds of clans come to Milingimb on Christmas Day. Gangaljja people would come and Dhulpu-Dhulpu, all kinds of clans. And people would come from Garin. They went through Gatti, the people who were celebrating Christmas. Very wonderful seeing them when I was a child. Very special with old people, very wonderful. People used to have arguments but when Christmas came they were gathering together, people who [at other times] hated each other. Yes, everyone changed when Christmas came and loved one another. Long-time enemies. Love and give greetings. Some mainland people brought magpie geese and file snake, and freshwater turtle. Some people brought a special vegetable food (tainiya). I saw people's love when I was a child. They used to make fire signal at Dhubila and people used to come paddling, not with outboard motor, but paddling, canoe (lipu-lipa). In Methodist time people helped each other (gungayana rom) at Christmas.

In the mission days, he continued, children went to Sunday school every Sunday and people were preparing themselves for the return of Jesus Christ. But what is happening now, he said? There is no love, there is a different law pouring out in Arnhem Land - it is the government's law. There are no spiritual gifts to the community anymore and what you learn today is bad, he said. This generation, he continued, is learning bad things, but back then we learnt good things (manymak rom) we learnt about the truth. In the
mission days there were just a few Balanda in the church but many Yolnu came to
church. In the mission days, he concluded, Christmas was really special.

The congregation and the community

As in the mission days, Christmas celebrations in 1990 brought the congregation
together, after months of inactivity in the church. During Christmas and in the weeks that
followed the sermons contained constant references to the unity of the congregation. On
Christmas Eve Baya appealed to people, saying that on Christmas Day there would be a
really big Fellowship meeting, and emphasising that he wanted everyone to come. In his
statement he referred to the congregation as "God's children" and in that sense all the
congregation members are constructed as part of the wider family of God. He said:

This is for everyone, not only for Christians, but non-Christians. We are all God's
children because God loves us.

The preachers frequently appealed to people's sense of unity as members of the one
congregation or as members of the one community, i.e. Ramingining. The preachers used
the expression wangany manamanmiri which means to come together as one. Such
appeals were particularly apparent after Christmas, in early January 1991, when the
church had just resumed. At this time the Ramingining congregation decided to hold a
Rally just for the local people in order to renew the church.

At the Rally in January 1991 the preachers prayed that their ministry would start once
again. The language they used continuously appealed to the sense of unity of the
congregation, and to the congregation as a family. As one Ramingining lay-pastor stated:

...we church people .... we will get together and share about how we [the church]
will grow. This is our church, us Yolnu ...... this is our Rally ..... we will be
sharing as one family (limuru dhu nhakuna sharing wanganygura nhakuna
family).... we will build up .... all of us will sing , it is not just for Christians. This is
our local rally, for Ramingining and outstations. We will not call out to Balanda and
other parishes, but it is only for us locals ...get together and share a great deal and
we will give many items, and [there will be] singing, and testimonies....we will get
together and hear the church begin once again.

In the following days similar sentiments were frequently heard. On the 12th of January at
the height of the Gulf War controversy, the Ramingining pastor said at the Fellowship
that together with the congregation he would ask for God's power and blessing so that if
Christ returns, Ramingining and the outstations will "stand together as one in peace".

While the references to the unity of the congregation were particularly elaborate in
January 1991 they continued throughout my time in the field. The preachers habitually
addressed the congregation by saying, "sisters and brothers, we will share together",
meaning we will listen to each other, and contribute sermons, songs and speeches. In
calling out to people to come to church the preachers constantly emphasised that the
church is for everyone; old and new Christians (gurrugu ga yuŋa), for women and men
(miyalŋa ga dịnumu), children and old people (djumarkuli ga gilkurruwumu).

Yolŋu in the Arnhem Land communities

Sometimes sermons referred more generally to unity among Yolŋu and the communities
around Arnhem Land. A common stylistic feature which the preachers applied to the
sermons was to reinforce the relevance of what was said by referring, not just to
Ramingining, but also to all the surrounding communities by listing their names. For
instance in one sermon a preacher talked about what would happen at the end of time:

Jerusalem and all the people who live at Ramingining, Galiwin'ku, Gapuwiyak,
Yirrkala, Yurrwi, Bulnu, Maringrida, Waruwi, Minjilang, Darwin, Gunbalanya,
Numbulwar, will be washed away.5

More often the preachers listed all the five districts of the Methodist Overseas Mission -
Milingimbi, Galiwin'ku, Yirrkala, Goulburn and Croker Islands. Alternatively/or

5Translation from Gupapuyŋu.
additionally the nearby communities with which Ramingining residents have a great deal of social contact were listed: Milingimbi, Galiwin'ku, Maningrida and Gapuwiya. In one sermon the preacher stated:

... here at Ramingining and at Milingimbi, at Gapuwiya, at Galiwin'ku, at Yirrkala, at Maningrida, at Goulburn, Croker, and however many people live there. Where there is a church - Anglican Church, Presbyterian Church, Baptist Church, Holy Church, Congregational Church, Methodist Church, Catholic whatever churches they belong to one body Lord Jesus Christ.

A similar penchant for inclusiveness was displayed in the welcome speeches at the Rallies as discussed in the previous chapter. At the Rallies as well, the preachers placed great emphasis on naming and listing all the communities and groups who were present.

_Balanda and Yolgu_

In the sermons at Ramingining occasional references were made to the unity of Balanda and Yolngu through the church. Mostly the references were made in a general context of the preachers calling on people to come to church and saying that the church is for everyone - Balanda and Yolngu, young and old, men and women. At other times expressions of unity between Balanda and Yolngu were more explicit. At a funeral for a Yolngu evangelist in 1991 the Rev. Wali Fejo, a Larrakia man from Darwin made the following statement about the unity of Yolngu and Balanda. Even in this context, the notion of family is used to express unity:

_The Gospel reconciles people to God and reconciles Yolngu to Balanda. ... Jesus Christ breaks down the walls and unites people of different races in a single family._

Similarly Bos (who was a principal of Nungalinya College) discusses the call for unity between Balanda and Yolngu as an aspect of the 1979 Revival (1988b:328-331), and cites the Rev. Djiniyini Gondarra:

_This is not only for Yolngu, but also for Balanda, not just staff, but others too. It is bringing the two people, the two races together as brothers and sisters in Christ._
God is setting us free. Skin [colour] does not matter. Language does not matter. Christians have a common love for Jesus and live together as one people. (Godarrara cited in Bos 1988:328)

Unity as part of the wider message of the church is also illustrated in the symbolism adopted by the Uniting Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress whose logo features the picture of a handshake between a black and a white hand. (Figure 3).

The unity of humanity

Through the church, Yolŋu see that they have something in common with all Christians around the world. For instance at a funeral at Ramingining in March 1992 the pastor preached and then read from the book of Luke, elaborating on the destruction of Jerusalem. He said:

...this story is for all people, all nations, all tribes, Dhuwa and Yirritaŋa [moieties].

At a Rally held at Miligimbi in May 1991, one of the speakers talked about the tree of life and the healing of all nations and portrayed all people, regardless of race as sisters and brothers in the family of God;

...whether he/she is red, black, yellow, white, our sister and brother, God [is for] all nation[s].

Unity then, as I have shown, is a pervasive theme in the Yolŋu church, and in particular the family is an important image by which this unity is expressed regardless of the context in which unity is referred to.

In summarising my discussion on the different types of unity, I suggest that unity beyond clan and family has become an increasingly important issue since the mission days as Yolŋu life has changed and new social categories have emerged such as "communities", land councils, church bodies and a range of other regional interest groups. Increasingly
Yolŋu identity, then, is not solely vested in family and clan membership, but is also based in being Yolŋu from a specific community such as Ramingining, Gal wi nk u or Milingimbi, and more generally in being Aboriginal people from Arnhem Land, who share a similar cultural heritage as well as common goals and interests through the organisations they involve themselves with. Furthermore, missionization and westernization has brought an increasing awareness of the world beyond Arnhem Land and Australia reflected in the references to a sense of unity with all mankind. Yet, as my discussion above shows, metaphors and images pertaining to the family are still the main means by which these new alliances are expressed.

"The time is near"

In the sermons and speeches of the church in Ramingining, one of the most frequently referred to sections of the Bible is the Book of Revelation, which contains prophecies about the approaching end of the world. The prophecies in the Book of Revelation detail coming natural disasters, conflict, death, the release of Satan and finally the return of Jesus Christ and the establishment of a new order where God will reign. According to the Book of Revelation each person will be judged according to their deeds. Angels will come and mark the Servants of God and their names will be written in the Book of Life, but those who are not accounted for will be left behind to suffer a second death.

One can only speculate why it is that Yolŋu place such an emphasis on Revelation and a predicted end to the world. What is certain, however, is that Yolŋu have experienced rapid social change over a relatively short time-span, and in spite of current policies of self-determination, are in a situation where they are frequently under pressure to adapt and conform to Balanda culture. In conversation Yolŋu Christians often used the words

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6 The Uniting Church, to which the Arnhem Land Parishes belong, does not generally have such an emphasis on the Book of Revelation, however, it is a common feature of Pentecostal churches. Keen, pers. comm., suggests that a comparison can be made with Yolŋu Ancestral mythology where pollution or major disturbance of places associated with the giant snakes results in cataclysm.
"suffering" and "persecution" in describing their contemporary situation, which I understood to refer on the one hand to their experience of racism and the struggle for self-determination and land-rights, and on the other hand to problems internal to the Yolŋu community such as conflicts between families and sorcery (galka) attacks. In addition, some Yolŋu perceive themselves to be in a situation where social problems and ill health are increasing, as opposed to a sometimes idealised past. Others lament that people are becoming more materialistic or money-minded and increasingly spiritual in their approach to life. One of the pastors commented:

At the moment a lot of things are happening, the government are bringing a lot of things ....... In the old days we were God's people and then the government came and then government people ....... What for? We thought "we want to be rich, millionaire", eh? We get [have] a lot of money in the bank, we have a shop, we are in business and sell to people, eh? Take money from the pocket, eh? We will build ourselves up [as bosses] instead of Jesus Christ. At the moment this is how [people] in Arnhem Land are acting.7

The emphasis on the prophesies from Revelation in the sermons, then, speaks of a people who feel a sense of threat in their existence. Such feelings are echoed by Djiniyni Gondarra who writes:

Today there is still a struggle among our people for survival. This is not only for our physical well-being and health of Aboriginal and Islander people. But there is another dimension to survival, and only I and my people know it. It has to do with our true identity as Aboriginal and Islander people. (Gondarra 1986:23)

In this section I will explore in detail Yolŋu images in the sermons pertaining to the Book of Revelation. As discussed in Chapter 4, there were three revivals in Ramingining, two of which focused on the approaching end of the world. One revival occurred in relation to events taking place in the Gulf War in January 1991. The other revival took place after the distribution of a pamphlet featuring a time-table for the Rapture in May 1992.

7 Translation of statement delivered partly in English and partly in Gupapuygu.
From Christmas Eve 1990 and throughout January and February 1991 the focus of sermons and speeches was firmly on the Book of Revelation. The Fellowship meetings had resumed at Christmas after some months of inactivity, and as events in the Gulf escalated the intensity of participation and preaching from the Book of Revelation increased. The sermons which were delivered around this time were permeated with images of the approaching end of the world. The preachers stated that "time is getting short" (galkithirinydjka marrija walunjyla) and "the time is coming" (walunjyla dhulawa marrija ga). They emphasised that "those who have done good will raise and live", and "those who have done evil will raise and be condemned". It was said that for those who are "honest to God" and believe (maarr-yuwalk) there will be salvation (walar), but for those who disbelieve (maarr-djulkhun) there will be death (diqanawuy). One preacher made a comparison in a sermon of the day of judgement with the magistrate's court in Darwin. That is how it will be, he said, - "guilty, or not guilty".

After the Christmas celebrations in 1990, it was decided to hold a local Rally just for the Ramingining congregation to renew the church. Fellowship meetings were held every night for about a week in early January 1991. During this time the preachers frequently called for people to "stop wasting time" and for the congregation to "start a new ministry". One preacher predicted in a sermon that 1991 would be the year when all the Yolŋu would enter the church, using the image of crowds entering the church like bees who enter a hive (limuru dhu gami-gami).

In preaching from the Book of Revelation the preachers showed how they envisioned events preceding the end of time. One preacher spoke of how "there will be difficult things happen in world maarr [in the world]". Another preacher referred to "bad things happening", "boss leading wrong way" and a "world of trouble". There were references

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8 Both English and Yolŋu expressions were used interchangeably.
9 Walŋa literally means life.
made to a great war coming, linking the Book of Revelation with events taking place in the Gulf at the time.

When the Gulf Crisis reached its maximum in mid January, Baya made a special speech through the loudspeakers from the council office urging people to come to church. In his speech Baya predicted that 1991, 1992, and 1993 would be bad years and called on the congregation to come and pray for God's mercy. He warned, "We are at the last page of Revelation" (Dhuwala limuru ga nhiranyefja last page Revelation-gura). The Fellowship meeting which followed that evening was exceptionally well attended and after the sermon many people stood up and shared their feelings about the events in the Gulf.

The Fellowship that evening began as usual with singing and then Baya led the congregation in prayer. The theme of his prayer was that the congregation had in their weakness left God but now wanted to turn to God. In the prayer he asked for God's protection against the enemy (mirigu).  

He said:

We remembered you [God] because we are powerless. Only you are powerful, and have the ability to hold back war, and [you] are our shelter.  

Yolnu references to themselves as powerless recur frequently in the sermons. God is in contrast perceived as powerful and as able to protect Yolnu. Later the same evening Baya said:

We will ask for power and the Father's help so that Ramingining and homelands and other places [such as] Yurrrwi, Galiwin'ku, Gapuwiyak, Maningrida, and other places down south will have peace. We will ask for power and for God to hold back bad things.

Yolnu believe that the time of Revelation will bring war and suffering for people. The end of time is near and will come suddenly as the preacher warned:

10 "The enemy" is both the Devil and his manifestation through the war in the Gulf.
11 Translation from Gupapuyku.
The enemy will appear, do not follow after. He will appear here [as suddenly as] a shoot of plant or a strand of grey hair and about this we will pray.\footnote{Translation from Gupapuynu. In this instance as well “the enemy” is the Devil pictured as a leader of wars.}

Other speeches by people the same evening illustrated how the end of time was envisioned. People mentioned war, diseases, hunger, hatred, Christians who turn to trouble, natural disasters such as earthquakes and a dream about a tidal wave was mentioned. One woman addressed the congregation sharing her perception of the time of Revelation. Referring to the Gulf crisis she said, “We all know what is happening at the moment”. This, she continued, is like the time of Noah when thousands and thousands of people were washed away. She related current events to Revelation and spoke of the bad things to come. She said:

He [the Devil] will bring death and hate ... and disease has already come ..... powerful diseases will come ... Christian will fight Christian, family [will fight] family, [it is] happening today. Bad things are appearing.\footnote{Translation delivered partly in English and partly in Liyagalawumirr.}

As she continued talking her speech became more passionate, calling for people to "stand for Jesus". "Are you ready to accept Jesus?", she continued, urging elders and leaders, "You stand firm!"

When the sermons had finished that evening a number of elders stood up and shared their thoughts about the events in the Gulf. The following extracts are from two of the elders in the congregation and show the depth of feeling at the time:

**Female elder no.1**

We hear story, rumours about what is happening in Gulf War. I hear it is true as our leaders are saying that war is coming closer. Let's change now before it happens .... Let's stand up, when the time comes, we will be shaking to stand in the presence of God .... I am old woman, I am the backbone of the church. When will you young girls take the Bible and work for the church?\footnote{Translation from Liyagalawumirr.}

In May 1992, the death of revolution came and became the basis of a new society.
Female elder no. 2

I am saying this because my heart is shaking, I am standing and I am shaking, about that story [Gulf War], because I watch TV ... I am telling truth, because I have fear in my heart, ... I don't know what to think, I have always gone to church and I am worried about my children ... what will happen to them?15

The focus on Revelation continued over the next evenings. The events in the Gulf clearly provoked Yolnu memories of the Second World War and the bombing of Milingimbi. In his sermon Baya reminisced about the time at Milingimbi when they heard that the Second World War had broken out and told a story about how he was rescued by a relative when the Japanese planes arrived.

In February, the high frequency of Fellowship meetings which the events in the Gulf had provoked, gradually ceased, but the preachers concern with the end of time continued. At a funeral held in Ramingining in March 1992, the preacher began by reading from Luke, chapter 21 about the destruction of Jerusalem:

> When you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies then you will know that it will soon be destroyed ... For those will be the days of punishment to make all that the scriptures say come true. How terrible it will be in those days for women who are pregnant and for mothers with little babies.

He emphasised that this message does not just concern the Christians and the people who go to Fellowship meetings but concerns all people, meaning that Christians and non-Christians will all be equally affected by the future events detailed in the Book of Revelation. He continued:

> He [God] will destroy Ramingining very soon. Because we Yolnu are disbelievers. And that is why hunger is going to pour in. He will send hunger every year...16

In May 1992, the Book of Revelation once again became the focus of a revival in the Ramingining church just as it had been in January the previous year. The circumstances

15Translation from Liyagalawumirr.
16Translation of statement delivered partly in English and partly in Gupapuyku.
of this revival related to a pamphlet which had been sent to Ramingining via some people at Milingimbi and for a short time there was a great resurgence in church attendance. According to the pamphlet, which originated in New South Wales with the Mission for the Coming Days Australia Branch Church, the so called Rapture would take place in Darwin at 12 p.m. on the 28th of October 1992. The pamphlet stated that at this moment Jesus would return and receive the people to be saved and take them with him to Heaven. Furthermore the pamphlet described a 'super computer' located in Belgium, and stated that already hundreds of people have received the number 666 which is the mark of the Devil through this computer.17

Several stories about this pamphlet circulated in town. One woman interpreted the information in the pamphlet as saying that Balanda who worship Satan will come to Ramingining soon. They will look at the computers, see how many people here, how many there, how many on outstations, and then they will give the mark 666 to people. The Balanda will say, "You want number?", and some Yolgu will answer "Yes" and be given the number. The people with the mark will stay on earth but the Christians will be lifted up to heaven.

In the sermons around this time there were constant references to the approaching end of the world and to the details of the pamphlet as described above. I first heard this pamphlet referred to at a Fellowship meeting at Milingimbi at the beginning of May but it was only a matter of days until the news had spread to Ramingining. At Milingimbi the preacher referred to the power of evil spreading throughout the world, controlling governments everywhere and that "time is running out". "Yolgu are powerless", he said, "but we are seeking the power of God". He called out to the congregation to come forward and "receive eternal light". A woman continued to speak and elaborated on the rewards that

17 At another occasion a Milingimbi woman talked about the barcode on things from the shop. She explained that if one gets a barcode with 666 in it one should throw the item away. Similar ideas circulated among people I met from Maringrida.
will be there for those who are honest and faithful to God. They will not be washed away in the floods caused by the Devil, she said.

The sermons which followed at Ramingining some days later were very similar in content. On the 15th of May a lay-pastor read from Matthew chapter 24 in the Bible about the problems which will afflict the world at the end of time. According to his interpretation of the pamphlet there would be another seven years of life on earth after the Rapture in 1992. He then talked about the signs which he could see of the approaching end. There are wars, and armies are practising, he said. Families are arguing and we have sorcerers (galka) and bone-pointing (mangi-mangi)." God will be judging you", he said to the congregation.

The message by the student pastor, only a couple of days later, had a similar emphasis on the Book of Revelation, telling the congregation to "be ready for the coming of Jesus, very quickly ... the enemy is coming (mina<y>ka ga marri)." He then read from chapter 22 in the Book of Revelation about the rewards that will be given to each person according to their deeds.

It seems that the emphasis on the end of the world and the idea of judgement is particularly relevant in a context where Yolngu Christians use words such as suffering and persecution to describe their contemporary situation. Yolngu Christians find comfort in the belief that one day justice will finally reign and God's people will be rewarded. The following section of this chapter shows that other concepts such as oppression, justice and freedom are reflected in the many sermons where Yolngu compared themselves with the Israelites.

18According to Reid, mangi-mangi refers to "a pointed object such as a bone taken from a dead man's forearm which is sharpened and threaded at one end with a string. It may also be a stingray barb or hard ironwood point" (1986:42).
"We are descendants of Abraham"

Yolnu frequently employed metaphors in the sermons which equated them with the Israelites of the Bible. For instance in a sermon in January 1991 the student pastor in Ramingining stated "We are descendants of Abraham", explaining to the congregation that as Christians they are all "part of Israel". The preachers also drew frequently in their sermons on images of the suffering of the Israelites and their journey through the desert. These metaphors and images were often employed by preachers to articulate the problems which Yolnu experience in their relationship to Balanda and the wider Australian community.

Yolnu perceive that they are similar to the Israelites in that they belong to different clans, just as the Israelites were descended from twelve tribes. In explaining his perception of the similarities between Yolnu and the Israelites one lay preacher drew the following analogy:

In the wet season my father used to live at Dhabila, making shelter [from] gulwirri [palm tree, Livistona benthamii or Corypha elata], big job, they used to carry from Djilmgarr to Dhabila, not with the truck. That was wet season time, and every Friday mak [maybe] Thursday [they] make the signal and people come and give. They bring [from Milingimbi mission] anything they are short [of]. Late wet season ... everybody move out from Dhabila to Gilimgarr, at the same time, time for goanna, fish, gathu [vegetable foods] waterlily, same time [as] water stop they move out. Same story as Exodus, people in the olden time. Wedj [wallaby], gurumutjii [magpie goose], goanna, time of guwa [fish], they keep on moving until dry season, everybody going to Wuljirr ... until warmer time. During that time still lot of people stay [at] Yathalamarra, they can't stay in one place, same as Israelites, Lord try test them to stay in one place.

In the sermons and speeches during the Ramingining Rally in 1991 references to the Israelites were particularly frequent. Ramingining and Maningrida were equated with Israel and Yolnu were referred to as God's chosen people. One preacher from Maningrida said in a sermon:

The Lord is the only God. The Lord says listen now Israel, or Ramingining or Maningrida, my servant, my chosen people, descendants of Jacob. I am the Lord who created you.
He continued:

The Lord who ...protects Israel, Maningrida, Ramingining. The Lord Almighty has this to say; I am the first, the last, the only God. There is no other God but me.

Yolnu Christians often speak of themselves in sermons as God's chosen people just as the Israelites were. They compare their own struggles in the community with the struggles the Israelites experienced as slaves in Egypt and on their journey through the desert. In the sermons they express a wish for a society of greater justice, and freedom from oppression and suffering. In a sermon at the Ramingining Rally, Dudley Warra'warra, the ordained minister from Maningrida elaborated on this theme. He said:

...we are that God chosen people. God has called us to stand up for Christ, to stand up for justice and freedom. And I think it is time that we need to stand for our people, ... there is many other places, many people are suffering, ..... Maningrida, Goulburn, Croker, throughout this Arnhem Land. ..... God is coming back. ..... He won't be coming back as a small baby in a manger. He will come back with his angels. He will come back with his sword. He will come back with fire...

Yolnu use the words "struggle", "suffering" and "persecution", and call for greater "justice and freedom" as in the citation above, but the sermons are rarely more specific in naming the actual problems. Therefore I will draw instead on comments provided by Matthew Dhulumburk who explained in more detail to me what he viewed as some of the key issues and problems which Yolnu face in their communities.

Dhulumburk is a Yolnu man from the Ramingining-Milingimbi area who works as a teacher at Nungalinya College. He refers to his work as (W)holy stick ministry. (W)holy stick ministry, he explained, is the practical side of Christian community work which the ministers and the pastors do not do. The concept refers to the need to attend not only to the spiritual needs of people but also to social and economic issues.
A major problem which he spoke about was that Yolnu are too dependent on Balanda in the communities. Yolnu, he said, want independence but not according to a "Balanda rule-book". Here in Ramingining, he continued, "Balanda have all the power". Balanda staff in the community are employed by Yolnu and the council and they should ideally be like secretaries for the Yolnu. In reality, he said, it is often the other way around. Yolnu people need to be given a go but Balanda are afraid to let them. Look at the community, he said, "only Balanda have keys" (to the different services). Balanda are afraid that if Yolnu are given responsibility they will make mistakes.

As it is today, he said, Yolnu are confused. There are problems with education in the Aboriginal communities when there are too many changes all the time. If a person begins a course in something they are not learning the same thing at the end of the course as they did at the beginning because the Balanda teaching staff come and go so quickly.

If there is a problem with the government there can be barriers to change. Many Yolnu are afraid to speak up if there is a problem, he continued, because they do not have the English language skills to express themselves adequately, or they do not understand government procedures. Some Yolnu are even afraid to create problems in case they will be sent away from the community, just as people were in the mission days. The real problem, Dhulumburk continued, is that many people in the communities simply do not realise that they live in a democracy.

The problems which Dhulumburk referred to show that in spite of the 1972 self-determination policy, Yolnu still do not feel empowered in their relationship to Balanda. Church newsletters from the 1980s speak of "suffering" and a feeling of "oppression" among Arnhem Land Aboriginal people. One article states:

Recent government funding strategies, often implemented by untrained workers, have meant suffering for many Aboriginal families. (Uniting Church of Australia 1986a:9)
An article in another newsletter states:

While Australian Aboriginals are not slaves in the same way as black Americans used to be, the feeling of oppression is still very strong. The use of Moses' rod and the cross at some of the ordinations recently were clear examples of this. (Uniting Church of Australia 1985b:9)

As Dhulumburk suggests, similar problems continue in the present. During my fieldwork I witnessed numerous disagreements between Balanda staff and Yolgu in regards to the allocation and control of resources at the different service centers in town.

Dr. Rev. Djiniyini Gondarra, the well-known Yolgu theologian, has been an outspoken advocate in social justice issues, often using metaphors about the Israelites to illustrate his concerns, as for instance in the title of his (1986) publication *Let my people go - Series of reflections of Aboriginal Theology*, which refers to Moses' call to the Israelites to leave Egypt. In the book Gondarra discusses his vision of an Aboriginal theology. His emphasis is constantly on the need to create a theology which addresses the contemporary situation of Aboriginal people. He writes:

> Indigenous theology must be more than words. We must put our theology into practice in words, deeds, and actions. This means helping our people who feel oppressed, lonely and lost in our community or society, and bring them the gospel of liberation. (1986:17)

His book has been influential on Yolgu preachers through the education they receive at Nungalinya college. As the material in this section has shown the preachers frequently refer to the Israelites, and a comment by the student pastor in Ramingining in 1991 showed that, in his perception, Gondarra's (1986) book is linked with the struggle for equality and self-determination. The pastor recommended Gondarra's (1986) book to me and stated:

> That struggle is still happening - in the church and in community life. In the Bible Moses and his brother Aaron also said "Let my people go".
As one can see then, metaphors and images alluding to the Israelites have become important in the church in articulating the social problems which Yolgu experience. In the following section I will continue the references to the Israelites but in a somewhat different context.

"Do not bow down to any idol"

The statement, "Do not bow down to any idol", was heard from time to time in sermons, and was, as I showed in the previous chapter, also the theme at the Ramingining Rally. Similarly the sub-theme "Ramingining raawak raahdhak", meaning that Ramingining is a (spiritually) dry and thirsty place, played on the imagery of the Israelites travelling through the dry and barren desert.

At the Rally the preachers talked a great deal about idols. One preacher elaborated on how people in Ramingining have forgotten about God and made a comparison with the Israelites who worshipped the golden calf and forgot about God. He called out to the congregation, "Can we say that tonight we belong to God, or we want to worship that idol?"

"Bowing down" is also an important image in church contexts and is linked to the concept of idols. The congregation are told not to bow down to idols, but they are encouraged to bow down to God. During one of the evenings at the Rally in November a preacher said: "All of us will bow down and worship the king'. The following evening it was said in prayer:

God our loving father, we bow down before your throne, we bow down before your angels, before your Holy presence Lord.

The image of bowing down is crucial because from a Yolgu point of view it determines what is, or is not, idol worship. Baya, the student pastor at Ramingining, explained that
when Yolgu go to ceremonies it is not like idol worship because Yolgu do not bow down to anything in the way that people from other cultures may bow down to a Buddha figure.

Similarly Djiniyini Gondarra states that Yolgu do not worship idols when they attend ceremonies, but his explanation is somewhat different from Baya's. Gondarra distinguishes between idols on the one hand, and totems and symbols on the other. He states that Aboriginal totems in Ancestral ceremonies are not idols, they are symbols. They are not worshipped but simply remind people of something. Gondarra compares Aboriginal totems with the Ark of the Covenant in the Old Testament:

The ark of the covenant is not an idol because it was not worshipped by the people of Israel. It is a totem which reminds them of the everpresent God-Yahweh. (Gondarra 1991:2)

Most of the time, however, Yolgu use the word idol in a broader sense. The word does not simply refer to the worship of a false God, like the Israelites worshipping the golden calf. When the student pastor in Ramingining first announced that the theme of the Ramingining Rally was "Do not bow down to any idol", I asked him to explain further what he meant by idols. He said that idol worship is when people "misuse" culture for instance by doing sorcery (galka) things. As examples of idols he referred to sorcerers (galka) and (ngalk) who kill people by pointing something (mangi-manugi) or by singing something (nyim).

A even wider definition of the word idol was given by Milurrurr, a lay preacher, and his wife. Milurrurr emphasised that idol is a "big" name. "Idol really covers all bad things", he said, "everything which is a sin here on earth". His definition below is very broad because he is referring to anything which he feels takes people's minds away from God.
idol is
worshipping or believing different things instead of believing in God
carving (like a Buddha or something)
to see something you want and long for it (garra djil)
greediness
forcing people to give by saying 'I want money, money, money'
mixed woman who gets another man
man who will have four, five, six, seven, eight, nine, ten women
woman who has ten or twenty men
children who are scattered from their families
children who do not listen to their father and mother
anger at other people
sorcery (galka)
murdering other people
jealousy of other people
shooting
killing
adultery
lust
hate
criticism
to hate one's own family
sons who go to other places and make trouble and drink grog
being drunk all the time
people who hate each other even at a special ceremony
fighting and murdering each other after special ceremony stop
stealing money from the bank (this is in Balanda society)
stealing money
Balanda and Yolnu fighting each other over exploration and mining
tobacco
kava
alcohol

Milurrum's broad definition of idol corresponds to some extent with a definition provided by Djiniyini Gondarra who states that virtually anything can be turned into idols for instance football, money, television, motor cars "if they become more important to us than God" (1991:4).

While many aspects of the sermons have been related so far to issues of social justice and the relationship of Yolnu in Ramingining with the wider Australian community, the latter theme about idols and not bowing down to them is more directed towards issues internal to Yolnu society. In the following section I will continue to discuss internal issues which Yolnu speak about in the Fellowship meetings.
Sharing

An important part of the Fellowship meetings is the so called "sharing" (gurupanmiri) which takes place after the sermon is delivered.\(^4\) While some of what is shared reflects the themes of the sermons, most of what is shared is more personal. When Yolnu share in the Fellowship they may tell how they have been healed from sickness, relate an unusual "vision-dream" (mahuga) with Christian content, or bring up worries about their family members. One woman said to me: "If you trust in the Lord you can get vision-dream. Next day you can share in church". At other times people share about social problems such as sorcery attacks and kava drinking. Sharing is an important part of a successful Fellowship and it was often encouraged by the pastors.

The word sharing, as it is referred to in church, needs to be viewed in its wider context of meaning. Yolnu have extensive obligations and rights in relation to their kin. Sharing is often spoken of in relation to food, money or possessions. While there is no compulsion to stand up and share a story in church there is a sense in which sharing is viewed as a form of giving just as a person may give a relative some food. In fact the preachers often used food as an analogy in this context by speaking of "giving spiritual gatha[food]".

The people who stand up and share are usually from the small group of Christians who come to Fellowship meetings regularly. In particular it is the female elders who stand up and share. Many of them are middle-aged or elderly and do not read, write or speak much English. Men share too but since there are just a few men who come regularly to church the women's contribution stands out.

On one occasion an elderly woman spoke about feeling lonely, saying:

\(^4\)For instance people may say "we will share later" (sharing limuru dhu ga yalaha), or "we will share as people from one family" (limuru dhu nhakuna sharing waqenyniya nhakuna family).
I am sleeping lonely on the grass ... where is my uncle, mother and grandmother? .....I am like a cockroach [i.e. nobody notices].

On the same day another woman stood up and spoke about the preacher and his family, how hard and lonely their work for the church is, and how people should help them. She said:

He and his wife made a cross this afternoon .... He is working lonely, carrying guitar lonely. He is coming to Fellowship [but], only a few coming .... Not only minister to work here, but we can help minister to work together. Keep tidy, and also clean up, helping wife clean up the place..... Come together as one. We will help pastor and minister. We working their place or anything. We come and we sit here. If we go hunting and get anything we give it to her or him, or money we can give him, the law says. I was there crying for her husband. I came here for crying .... The law said we can look after for minister. Today and tomorrow we are looking for money [collecting donations for his wages].

In sharing people often speak about how they have been healed from sickness as in the story below which an elderly woman shared. She had been so sick that she fell unconscious twice, once at Ramingining and once at "the Tanks".

I went to the hospital twice ..... At the airport at Galiwinku everybody come together they were praying and crying. Because my jaw was sore and I could not talk to them, I was just lying down. Yes. I went with the medical plane .... and then when my grandson (gudumara) went with the ambulance too. [Later when in hospital] Jesus called my name and said "what happened to you" Then I went to sleep and in the morning I woke up and told my daughter. "You know what happened", (I said to my daughter ) someone called my name yesterday. We might go back. I have my shower I walk by myself ..... I am OK, I am feeling well. ..... They [the nurses] took my temperature, I had normal temperature and nurses said to me, "You might go back soon". Now I have forgotten that problem ..... I am feeling well, I think about hunting .... I used to pray and believe in Jesus, that is why I am well, not sick any more and I am here now.

On another occasion a man shared the grief he felt over a child that had died some years ago and related a special dream that he had. In the dream he was crying and telling God he wanted to see his son and hear his voice. Then suddenly the boy appeared in the dream.

21Translation from Liyagalawumirr.
22Translation from Liyagalawumirr.
23Translation from Liyagalawumirr.
telling him not to worry, saying he is in God’s hands now and hugged him. When the man woke up from his dream he had stopped crying and was feeling happy again.

An issue which kept coming back in the stories people were sharing was concern about sorcery (galka) attacks. One evening an elderly man stood up and shared a story about leadership conflicts in the church saying that it does not matter who leads the church, the Bible is still the same. He went on to say that if anyone would point sorcery objects (mangi-mangi gigi) at the people in the Fellowship it would have no effect because the people there are protected by God, suggesting that perhaps that sorcery object would turn back on the pointer instead.

The student pastor often spoke about the evils of sorcery and at one Fellowship shared a particularly passionate plea against the use of sorcery, and as he expressed it, the murder of innocent people. In explaining his comments in the sermon one woman said that people are killed by sorcery in many ways: through something poisonous being put in their kava or tea (nyirabunna), or sometimes something which kills is sent with the rain (warbunna), or, as she expressed it, with anything from God’s creation such as a goanna (lapakara), or stone (gunda) or gravel (miniyir-miniyir). Sometimes people force others to kill with sorcery for things relating to the law (andayinpay) or for “crossing over” or stealing something (guwaf-budapthurra). The pastor emphasised to the listeners the punishment awaiting such actions:

They [who use sorcery] will be standing there on the day of judgement ... God will judge us and burn us in the fire, ... that murderer (mogu) will not enter the kingdom ... God’s people they will enter the Kingdom and the crooked (dhawuhr-dharrpi) will burn in the fire, do not use this [sorcery].

24 For condemnation of sorcery by pastors see also the section on funerals in Chapter 5.
25 D. Zorc, Yolngu-matha Dictionary cites the meaning of guwaf-budapthurra as meaning cross over, make a big mistake in ceremony.
26 Dhawuhr-dharrpi means bad, crooked, evil and is the opposite of dhawuhr-dhumapa which means righteous.
Other social problems which were brought up during sharing sessions was concern for relatives who are "wasting time" by not coming to church and who ruin their health with too much kava. At one Fellowship meeting a female Aboriginal health worker shared her feelings about kava and the harm it is does to people who drink it, affecting the kidneys and brain. In her speech she also criticised people who come to the health centre and complain about sickness all the time. "God", she said, "is our doctor and our healer".

It was rare that people shared about sins they had committed in the past, and even then the focus tended to be on how the person had found God rather than on the sins. Such stories were referred to as testimonies. Among the rare stories in this category were stories told by two pastors about their lives prior to becoming Christian, one pastor saying how he used to drink and gamble, the other saying how he used to just travel from place to place and not care about God. However this style of confessional stories which are otherwise common in evangelical churches are not frequent in the Yolnu church. In the testimonies and sharing Yolnu do not dwell on sins they may have committed, in fact rather the opposite is true, with people frequently asserting their own good will and dispositions.

A Yolnu concept of God

In considering the sermons and sharing sessions, the picture which begins to emerge of a Yolnu perception of God is one where God is first and foremost represented as Father in the Family of God, and as a being who has the power (Garndjarra) to protect Yolnu. However, Yolnu do not have a simplistic understanding of God. Their views vary and they sometimes speculate about the nature of God. Some Yolnu say that "we will find out [about God] when we die". Others spoke of God as present within people, or as being everywhere, but most often, as the material in this chapter and Chapter 5 on the Fellowship meetings shows, God is portrayed as a Father. Yolnu at Ramingining consistently referred to God as Bapa (Father), although occasional dialect variations with
the same meaning were used such as *Godaha Mori*.

Another common reference in prayer was "Father God, our Lord" (*Bipa God, gunapurrugu Garay*).

Elaborating in conversations on his perception of God, and what he means when he speaks of God as Father in the sermons, the student pastor at Ramingining likened God's relationship to people with his own relationship to his little daughter. He said:

> God is working through me. He is caring for me and I am caring for my daughter. God is caring, like our mother and father was caring for us before we grew up.

He continued:

> God is something like this; He is here in this world, but in His hand He got the whole world ... caring for all nation, baby and teenagers, and midlife [middle-aged] and old people. You heard that song? "He got the whole world in his hand" ... He got me and sister in His hand, He got me and brother in His hand, He got the whole world in His hand. So God's love is greater than my love.

In contrast, Bos (1988:277) states that in the 1970s, Yolŋu at Galiwin’ku referred to God with the word *Wagarr*; which is also the word applied to Ancestral beings. Bos also refers to a church meeting where Yolŋu discussed the name *Wagarr* for God and made an adjustment by deciding to add the words *Bipa* or *Gunulu* (both meaning father). Thus according to the people at this meeting God should be referred to as God *Wagarr Bipa* or God *Gunulu Wagarr* (Bos 1988b: 278). On the basis of the word *Wagarr* being used to refer to God, Bos concludes (1988b:283) that Yolŋu at Galiwin’ku perceive God "as belonging to the same order of reality and the same class of Beings" as *Wagarr*.

Although Yolŋu Christians at Ramingining believe that God created the Ancestral beings, who then in turn created the land and the clans, they do not appear to put God in the same category as *Wagarr*. Firstly, they never used the term *Wagarr* to refer to God. Secondly,

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27 *Bipa* is the general term for father whereas *mori* is specific to speakers of dialects belonging to the Yirritja moiety, such as Gupapuyŋu. Another term is *malu* which is used by speakers of Dhuwa moiety dialects such as Djambarrpuyŋu. *Mori* was used far more in Christian contexts than *malu*. 
as next chapter shows, Yolŋu at Ramingining make a crucial distinction between Heaven and Earth. According to this distinction God belongs to Heaven (djiwarra) and the Ancestors belong to the earth (urratja) which indicates a different situation from that described by Bos in which God belongs to the same order and class of reality as the Ancestors. Also as my data shows, God, unlike the Ancestral beings, transcends moieties as well as clans. As one man pointed out at the Ramingining Rally, there is only “one God no matter what tribe, no matter what language”.

Yolŋu Christians generally believe that God was present in Arnhem Land and active in Aboriginal peoples’ lives even before the missionaries arrived, as the claim that it was God who created the Ancestors illustrates.28 Similarly Djiniyini Gondarra writes:

Aboriginal Christians are convinced and believe that the God of the Bible was with us and our people in the dreamtime. He was very active in our history. He has come to us in many different ways and in many different forms to reveal his presence. (1988:6)

A story told by Dick Mewirri, an elderly man at Gattji outstation, also indicates a belief in God’s existence in Arnhem Land prior to the missionaries. In fact Mewirri insisted that the events in the story took place in the days before the missionaries arrived. According to the story his father saw an angel at a place called Mateltjare, located in between what is now Gattji and Bundhatjarri outstations. In the story, the angel gave his father a white hunting-dog.

Yolŋu at Ramingining did not generally perceive God as either Balanda or Yolŋu, which is consistent with the main Yolŋu perception of God’s identity as one which transcends divisions. On occasion, however, people speculated that Jesus was Yolŋu, with Yolŋu in this context meaning coloured, as opposed to Balanda (Europeans). The latter

28This view was common at Ramingining. However, in Chapter 6 I noted that Mawumydjil Gamarirrtja, the ordained minister at Galiwin’ku denied that God was there in the beginning with the Aboriginal people. He believes in contrast that Yolŋu were “in darkness” until the missionaries arrived.
speculations seemed to stem from an uncertainty of how to classify a person of Jewish origin - as Balanda or as Yolgu.

As my discussion of sermons and sharing sessions has shown, Yolgu Christians also perceive God, in contrast to themselves, as powerful and able to protect Yolgu from threats coming from outside the community, the events predicted in the Book of Revelation and even sickness and sorcery. The sermons, as I have shown, often refer to the "suffering" and "persecution" which Yolgu experience. In this context Yolgu emphasise that God will one day judge everyone, and those who have been righteous (dhururr-dhumpa) will be saved and the crooked (dhururr-djarra) will die. In making these frequent references there is a sense in which one perceives a longing for restitution. The injustices and suffering which Yolgu allude to in the sermons will one day be righted and Yolgu who have lived according to God's laws will be rewarded.

Conclusion

This chapter has provided an outline of the content of Yolgu sermons and sharing sessions as well as a discussion of the wider social context in which they take place. I suggested that the frequent use of images and metaphors relating to unity must be viewed in a context where clan and family membership are no longer the only significant relationships, but where other affiliations with communities and a range of organisations for example are of increasing relevance. However, the new alliances which are formed are frequently expressed in terms of metaphors and images relating to the family which traditionally is the central unit for cooperation and interaction.

When discussing Yolgu images and metaphors relating to the end of time, as well as to the Israelites, I concluded that the sermons relate to Yolgu people's relationship to Balanda and the wider Australian community, and reflects the injustice, sense of threat and powerlessness which Yolgu experience in this relationship. The sermons also deal
with problems internal to Arnhem Land, its communities and the Christian congregations such as sorcery, idol worship, kava-drinking, "wasting time" and a perceived increase in materialism. As one can see then, the sermons are in fact powerful commentaries by Yolnu on their contemporary social situation.

This chapter has also discussed how Yolnu perceive God, and I concluded that God as Father, protector and keeper of justice are the key images which Yolnu employ in their sermons. In the following chapter I will continue to discuss how Yolnu perceive God as a healer, as well as discuss the place which Christianity has acquired within Yolnu cosmology.
CHAPTER 8

HEAVEN AND EARTH:
THE HEALING POWERS OF GOD AND THE ANCESTORS

A notable feature of Yolnu Christianity is the emphasis placed on healing. Yolnu themselves recognise that they have a tendency to turn to God in times of illness. One woman said:

Why is it that people only turn to God when they are sick, [and then] pray to be healed?

Others have also observed this tendency. A Balanda church worker visiting Ramingining lamented the fact that when Yolnu feel sick they turn to God but when they recover they forget. The principal of Nungalinya college commented in an article on the number of Aboriginal people who stop in at Nungalinya, the theological College, to ask for prayers if they are in Darwin for hospital treatment (Nichols 1988:12). Furthermore, Keen (1994:283) includes a comment by a Balanda church worker from Galwin'ku who pointed out that in the final phase of the Fellowship, where people perform the laying on of hands, the people who come forward to kneel at the cross are actually seeking healing, whereas outsiders may simply interpret their actions as "praise" or "worship".

Yolnu Christians believe that healing takes place in a number of ways: through special visions and dreams; through prayer and the laying on of hands; by listening to cassettes with Christian music; by reading or handling the Bible or any other means whereby the powers of God are accessed. Interestingly, there are many similarities between Christian healing among Yolnu and healing which draws on the powers of Ancestral beings. In this sense, Christian healing as practised by Yolnu is an example of a process of "internal
conversion" taking place. Yolŋu as I will demonstrate, approach Christian healing very much in the light of pre-existing notions of health, healing and sickness.

Sickness and health in Yolŋu cosmology

Yolŋu Christian healing practices, then, need to be related to other methods of healing among the Yolŋu. For instance, dreams where God or Jesus appear as healers have direct parallels with dreams featuring Ancestral beings. It is only when Christian healing practices are placed within this wider Yolŋu system of beliefs concerning sickness, health and a moral order that they can be fully understood.

In discussing Yolŋu beliefs about illness and health at Yirrkala in Arnhem Land, Reid (1979, 1983) shows that Yolŋu attribute serious illnesses, as well as deaths, to sorcery, stressing the profoundly social nature of health among the Yolŋu:

> If a person commits a breach of a social or ceremonial law, or if he grievously neglects his obligations to other people, he runs the risk of becoming seriously ill or dying. The agents which cause his illness or death are the *galka* sorcerers or spirits. (1979:196)

Beliefs regarding illness and health expressed by people in Ramingining corresponded well with Reid's (1983) descriptions from Yirrkala. As I suggested in a section on funerals in Chapter 5, deaths in Ramingining were almost always attributed to sorcery, although sometimes alternative explanations were offered such as "old age", a specific illness like emphysema or cancer, or even neglect by family members.

Usually when a death occurred more than one explanation circulated in the community. When a Djambarrpuyŋu boy died at Milingimbi people at Ramingining speculated about the cause of his death: a woman said he had been hit on the head and then a sorcerer had removed his heart; an older man suggested that the boy died as a result of a fight with his
girlfriend; and a young man suggested that the boy died either from drinking too much kava or that somebody killed him by sorcery.

People did not speculate openly on why a sorcerer would have attacked a specific person. However, general explanations focused on damaged social relationships with people citing jealousy, arguments over ceremonial matters or punishment for mistakes made in ceremonies as reasons for sorcery. At other times sorcerers were spoken of as people who simply hate their fellow human beings and attack people even if they are completely innocent.

There are many versions of how sorcery is done. People are said to be particularly vulnerable to an attack by sorcerers (galka) if they are walking in the bush by themselves. A sorcerer attacks by cutting the victim's throat with a sharp object. The sorcerer hangs the body upside down in a tree and the blood is drained out. In the past the blood was buried in the ground but nowadays it is believed to be kept in a drum. The body is then taken down. A certain type of sap is used to cover the incision and all that shows is a small scar. The victim wakes up and wanders home, but he or she soon dies. At other times the gut is said to be removed. One can tell if that has taken place because after death the corpse is soft instead of stiff.

An infection that eventually leads to severe illness or death may be attributed to the victim having stepped on something "hot", i.e something placed deliberately to harm by a sorcerer. Variations on sorcery sometimes feature new technology. At one time there was a rumour circulating, which preoccupied a community meeting, that somebody from another community had come to Ramingining to hire a special torch which held a stingray-bone. Such a person would be able to kill others simply by shining the torch with the bone at them. Although the rumour was eventually dismissed, the example speaks to the range of possibilities.
If an illness is caused by sorcery Yolnu say that only a traditional healer (marrngir) is able to cure the person. As one woman at Ramingining said, "only a Yolnu doctor can come and throw that mokoy [spirit]". Reid (1983) describes how a marrngir heals others by massage and by removing objects, which are thought to cause the illness, from their bodies of patients. The marrngir is assisted in his or her healing craft by the power of special stones and by spirit familiars, referred to as djumarkuli, who assists the marrngir by entering the patients body for diagnosis and healing (1983:83, 104-5). According to Read, cool water is often used by the healer in contrast to heat used by the sorcerer (1983:83).

People at Ramingining believe that God can help to prevent sorcery attacks. One woman told how a galka had entered the room where she was sleeping and was about to kill her. Fortunately she woke up in time:

In 1973 I was about to die from galka business at Milingimbi. [I was ] fifteen years old, but if one prays and prays really deeply to God then that galka has no power. God woke me up and I saw that galka.

Whatever the type of illness Yolnu have a range of options in terms of treatment. They can use Aboriginal bush medicines or consult the health centre for Western medication and treatment. They may be healed by Ancestral Spirits or they can seek healing from God. As the data in the following sections of the chapter shows, there are some very strong structural similarities between beliefs about healing by Ancestral Spirits and healing by God. Yet Yolnu themselves, as I found, perceive a major contrast between methods of healing. They say that the healing powers pertaining to the marrngir and Ancestral spirits are from the earth (munathawuy) and that the healing powers pertaining to God are from heaven (djwiwampuy). The powers of heaven and earth, of God and the Ancestors, are both considered to be benevolent and beneficial in contrast to the powers of sorcerers. In searching for a cure Yolnu at Ramingining draw on both heaven and earth interchangeably. Christian Yolnu also use methods of healing which draw on the
powers of Ancestral beings, although Christian Yolnu tend to say that Christians ought to favour Christian methods.

Occasionally the distinction between heaven and earth is blurred. One woman told me that once when she was staying at Nungalinya College in Darwin she felt very sick. A Yolnu maNggi who was present at the college massaged her body. In this instance the woman said she could feel God's presence (not that of Ancestral spirits) working through the maNggi, implying that the power of the maNggi was really from God.¹

Dreams

Yolnu pay attention to a variety of dreams. A dream (mabuga) can bring information about a relative who has just passed away. In such a dream the ghost (mokuy) visits the sleeping person or a specific totem appears in the dream indicating the identity of the deceased.² R.M. & C.H. Berndt (1988b:384) show that dreams can reveal songs, dance steps, particular body-decorations or objects to be used in ceremonies.³

The word mabuga is often translated in Aboriginal English as "vision-dream", meaning a dream with special significance. Such dreams are one way in which Yolnu communicate with Ancestral beings. Similarly Yolnu Christians often report encounters with Jesus or God in dreams. During my time in the field I was given many examples of dreams with Christian content that had led to the healing of an illness. A Ganalbingu man told me:

I believe when I [was] sick here, first time in my life, I dream about Jesus he made me well, came into a dream and made me well, because I am a believer.

¹The visiting Balanda parish educator also suggested that the power of the maNggi was really from God.
²One man stated: "I [may] have dream sugarbag, shark, emu, white cockatoo, black and red cockatoo, then somebody comes with message, then I know my dream was right. If I dream that my wife die maybe [this means] just wife's sister's [death].
³See also Charlesworth (1984:385).
A young Ganalbiju woman related another dream which she had once when her child was sick:

[This is] story about that little girl, Oujran [sub-section name]. When she was born she was very sick with diarrhoea. She went to hospital, and they gave her tube, but her mother and father keep on praying, until the dreams come, dreams about two angels, sitting on one leg and one on head of the child. Angels come and helped that child from sick, that [is] why she goes to Fellowship every time. [In the dream] the angels were blowing trumpet, they didn't speak, just singing and praising. Then that little girl woke up from sick. Every time she had given food to that little girl she had always vomited. When she dreamt about the angels that little girl got better and start to eat well.4

A Balmbi woman related a dream she had while she was in hospital waiting for an operation. A man with long hair and a beard spoke to her and said, "You are going to get well". Later she realised that it was Jesus who had spoken to her in the dream.

In the later stages of my field-work I learnt that similar dreams featuring Ancestral Spirits were common among Yolgu at Ramingining. Few examples of such dreams have been reported in Arnhem Land literature.5 Warner’s (1969) ethnography, which is based on field-work in the 1920s shows that there are instances when dreams can affect a person’s state of health negatively. According to Warner, bad dreams can cause sickness, especially if they are about someone who has died, or of a grave (1969:199). An example from one of his informants illustrates this point:

You have a good friend of yours who is dead a little while ago; you feel very sorry. At night you go to sleep. You dream and he comes to see you. You sing this gunma song they way we do this. You won’t worry any more. You won’t dream any more. But suppose you didn’t have these songs, that spirit would come and make you sick and may kill you. (Warner 1969:411)

In a book by Chaseling (1957:89), who was superintendent of the Methodist mission at Yirkala from 1934, there is some material which suggests that people can be healed through dreams:

4Translation from Ganalbiiju.
5R.M. and C.H. Berndt collected dreams but their material remains unpublished.
Faith-healing depends on an appeal to stars, waterspouts or Ancestors. If a man is wounded or ill he may appeal or 'sing' for help to a water-spout, for this is the only tangible link between earth and the sky. If the appeal is successful, the waterspout sends a beam of light to shine on the sick man, and the light indicates that the waterspout has persuaded the man's ancestors to heal him. *Ancestors later come in a dream and promise restoration, when upon the man wakes up and says; I shall get better.* (1957:89, my emphasis)

The more recent study by Reid (1983) on Yolgu ideas of sickness and health makes no mention of healing taking place through dreams, although she does refer to two instances where people were healed from sickness by accessing the powers of Ancestral spirits (1983:34, 63-64).

Present day Yolgu in Ramingining provided similar descriptions to examples found in Wamer's (1969) ethnography. As in Wamer's example it was stated that a *mokuy* can come in a dream and give something like food or a spear to the sleeping person which will make them sick. A person, someone who was a close friend, may keep coming back again and again after death and try to strangle the friend. It is the purpose of the *wagarr* ceremony, where people are brushed with smouldering leaves, to prevent such visitations.

Yolgu at Ramingining believe that Ancestral beings (*wagarr*) may appear in a dream and heal a sickness. One woman told me how she was cured from an ear infection. During the night the pain in her ears woke her up. She looked around for a packet of Panadol tablets but when she could not find them she laid down again. She dreamt that a small snake from her Dreaming came and massaged her ears. When she woke up she felt much better. Later she received antibiotics from the health centre, but she said it did not matter. She knew she was already cured because of her dream.

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6When I showed Chaseling's statement on dreams to some Yolgu they were somewhat puzzled by it, suggesting that perhaps Chaseling's reference to a star or a water-spout was something clan specific, possibly referring to the Morning Star (*Bagumbir*) in Murrungun and Djambarrpuyu people's mythology. However, they readily agreed with the more general notion of healing through dreams with Ancestral intervention.
Similar examples include a story of a little Gupapyuyu girl who was sick with diarrhoea. One of her relatives dreamt that a buffaloo (detutu), which is a Gupapyuyu Ancestor, came and visited her house. Already the next day the little girl started to get better. A Djambarrpuyu person may have a similar dream about King Brown snake (jarra) or a Marrangu person may dream about little worms (mewiri).

Another possibility of healing which appeared somewhat similar to the dreams, was that an Ancestor, such as a snake, could enter a person's body to heal them when asleep. The main point is that contact with Ancestral power may have a healing effect. Contact with Ancestral power can occur in many ways. In one example which was given to me an Ancestor was literally internalised by mixing clay, believed to be the body-fluids of a particular Ancestor, with water and then drinking it.

As one can see all the examples referred to in this section are very similar whether they refer to God and Jesus or Ancestral beings. In each case the spirits appear in a dream and the next day the person feels better. It seems then, that a particular Yolnu approach to Ancestral religion and healing is being transmitted to a Yolnu interpretation of Christianity.

**Visions**

The content of healing visions which Christians claim to experience is very similar to that of dreams where healing occurs, with the exception that visions are received when the person is awake. Furthermore, visions of God and Jesus have been an integral part of the Christian movement in Arnhem Land since the 1979 Revival. The Yolnu verb *malp'arangal* means to have a vision, which according to Zorc (1986) literally translates as "find", "bring to light" or "meet by chance".7

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7The word can also refer to spirit conception.
During the time I spent in the field many Yolŋu shared their stories of visions with me. Seeing a vision was considered something special, but not extraordinary. Similarly, John Cawte, a clinical psychologist, who writes about Yolŋu dreams speaks of the fairly common occurrence in the Yolŋu of waking hallucinations and visionary experiences...neither they nor we had difficulty in differentiating dreams from visions or hallucinations while awake. (1984:237)

One woman told me about a Christian vision which she had when her youngest boy was very sick with pneumonia. He went first to hospital in Gove and then to Darwin. She spent eight months at the hospital with her son. The doctors, she said, did not give her much hope. One doctor told her that maybe her son would die. But she said to herself, "I am not going to show lack of faith. We are going to pray for him". In the mornings at the hospital she got up and had her shower and sang praise to the Lord and prayed for her boy. One day she heard God's voice and she saw an angel. Shortly after this vision the boy recovered.

A Ganalbingu man told me many stories about miraculous interventions, some which contained references to visions. In this brief story a healing results after seeing a vision:

I was sitting on the bus in Darwin, see cloud with Jesus, went to hospital and I said thank you Lord, and I got well.

Visions, just as dreams, can herald change. For instance at the burial of a Christian leader at Galiwin'ku there was some debate about the funeral arrangements considering his strong Christian commitment. A person at Galiwin'ku had a vision that when the coffin was coming into the community by plane, it was going to be met by the women's church group and all the ministers were going to carry the coffin instead of doing the usual dancing. The details of the vision was not adhered to but the example shows that

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8There are interesting comparisons with Hume's (1989) material from Queensland. Visions appears to have been central to the Christian movement there as well.
visions may legitimise an innovation, similarly to the way Bemdt (1988:384) states that new dance steps or songs may come in a dream to a person.

In another instance a vision, it seems, legitimised a person's position. A lay pastor reported that at a Fellowship meeting somebody had seen a light above his forehead as well as above his wife's forehead. This light, he said, was a sign of the Holy Spirit's presence. The pastor had only recently applied to be accepted for studies at Nungalinya College, something which had yet to be approved by the local congregation. The pastor interpreted the vision of the light as a sign that God was with him and his and wife, and that they should go to Nungalinya to study.

Visions may have a life-changing impact. Two of the pastors in the Milingimbi-Ramingining parish told of visions which, they said, had changed their lives and led them to work for the church. Visions featuring God and Jesus which lead to the healing of a sickness then are just one category within a broader spectrum of visions, dreams and communication with the world of spirits.

Ancestral beings (wagaw) are not just the creators of land and clans in a distant past. Even Yolngu Christians consider them to be continuously present and active in a myriad of ways. Yolngu believe that wagaw are alive and may die if the land where they exist is damaged. Wagaw may come to the rescue of a person in distress, assist a person who is fishing or hunting or they may punish a person for a transgression. They can appear in dreams or show themselves in one way or another. Their power is manifest in paintings, in songs and in ritual.

Other spirit beings which may appear to people when they are either asleep or awake are ghosts (mokuy) and the spirit familiars (djarramnangiy) who assist the Yolngu healer (marnggu). For Yolngu, then, interaction with spirit beings is part of normal experience.
Consequently news of a vision where Jesus has appeared is not as dramatic an event in a Yolŋu congregation as it would be in a Balanda Uniting church congregation.9

Healing with Prayer, Cool Water and the Bible

The dreams and visions which I discussed in the previous sections are not something that Yolŋu can generally ask for. Healing dreams and visions just happen. However, in this section I will discuss other methods in which Yolŋu deliberately ask for healing.

Almost every Fellowship meeting includes a session of laying on of hands accompanied by prayer. The participants gather in the circle and sing hymns which call for the presence of the Holy Spirit, which Yolŋu believe is crucial for healing to take place. As the singing proceeds people come forward to kneel in the circle while the elders lay on hands and pray for them. One pastor commented on this phase:

People can kneel down and heal, all congregation can be witness, not just minister - that is the meaning of standing in circle.

Particularly people who are sick or who have a problem kneel down and let the elders lay on hands. If people are healed they refer to their recovery as a "miracle", a word which Yolŋu Christians frequently use.

Yolŋu say that when the Holy Spirit descends at Fellowship meetings it feels like cool water on the skin which makes people shiver. One woman likened the feeling of the Holy Spirit descending to a cold wind and to something "you feel in your heart". Yet another person suggested that the power from God feels like ice, as it moves through the hand of the elder to the person kneeling down. When the elders have that cold, freezing feeling on the skin they know the Holy Spirit has come and they begin the laying on of hands.

9See also Cawte (1993:21) who comments that men commonly have visions of Ancestral spirits in the Njarra ceremony, but that women are not allowed to speak of such visions.
The healing qualities of coolness have parallels in other forms of Yolŋu healing methods. Chaseling makes a reference to such healing practices:

An appeal may be made to a falling star, or 'larrpan', *which sends a cool mist or fog over the patient to revive him* [my emphasis], or if the star shoots through the sky and leaves a red trail it signifies that an Ancestor is on his way to heal the sufferer. It may happen that a sick man is near his horde's totemic well; if so he jumps into it and asks the mythical Snake to heal him. (1957:89)

More recently Reid (1983:82-83) has discussed coolness as associated with the work of the healer (*marngrīj*) while heat, fire and sun are elements associated with the activities of sorcerers (*galka*). Heat is believed to increase the effectiveness of his or her methods. The *marngrīj* may use cool water for instance to keep special stones in, or throws the object which is extracted from a patient's body into a stream or lagoon. Furthermore, the *marngrīj* avoids hot drinks and alcohol (considered to be a hot substance) in order not to diminish his or her powers.

Similarly to Chaseling's description, people at Ramingining explained that immersing oneself in an Ancestral water-hole has a healing effect. A person may go to a water-hole, sit down in the water and then call out to the Ancestral spirit, referred to as "owner of the place" (*waŋa-wataŋu*), to come and touch or bite the body. 10 Just as Yolŋu Christians report a feeling of coolness when the Holy Spirit descends, when the Ancestor in the water-hole touches the person there is a an experience of coolness. One woman commented on the effectiveness of immersing oneself in a water-hole saying "it's just like tablet". She continued, "We have a drink [from the water-hole] and we get sleep all night and you wake up and say "I am better now". Contact with Ancestral beings, can heal a person, but such contact is not always beneficial. The contact has to take place in the right way. For instance on a return visit to

10 A Yolŋu person may say, "Waga-wataŋu, go, marnji lawuthur garray rumbal."
Ramingining, while being five months pregnant, I was warned not to swim in a specific water-hole, because the spirit in the water may come and hit my stomach and cause a miscarriage.

Yolŋu Christians, like Christians in many cultures, consider prayer to be an essential method for healing. Prayer is used in the Fellowship meetings by the elders when they lay on hands and people also pray quietly for themselves. I was told numerous stories of healing after prayer. What is specific to the Yolŋu context is the extent to which Yolŋu rely on prayer to heal, sometimes to the exclusion of other treatments, as well as the frequency with which they ask God to help resolve practical problems. One woman claimed that a tumour in her chest area had vanished as a result of prayer. Furthermore, it was suggested that hepatitis injections were not necessary, but that God would provide protection. In another instance people kept drinking water from a place which had been deemed unsuitable for consumption, saying that God protects them from falling ill.

Yolŋu do not just pray for healing of illness, but also for assistance in time of need as in the example below in which two Ganalbiŋu men went for a hunting trip:

We went with the boat across other side for fishing then we got up other side and start fishing, going hunting everywhere, around Gupulul area. Afternoon time we come back to Nangalalba but we didn't know that boat was no good with sparkplug, and when I tried to start it, it didn't go. Then that old man start to pray, said "Lord, help us get it going, the engine". But the sparkplug was broken. I turned it two times. I tried to start it and many times but it did not go. Then I had to put my head down and pray to Lord, then it started, [in] just one go, then you know we came back home with broken sparkplug. Then we went home and I believe that time Lord help us from heaven, and what happened was true.

Yolŋu do not pray to Ancestral spirits but can ask for their assistance. Chaseling, the missionary from Yirkala, reports an incident which involved a Yolŋu man called Makarrwala:\(^{12}\)

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\(^{11}\)See also Morphy who states that "...clan members setting out on an avenging expedition following the death of one of their members can call upon the support of certain wangarr beings to give them strength and increase their resolve. In such a case, wangarr powers are being summoned for a destructive purpose. From the perspective of
Makarola [sic] told me that he had been overtaken by darkness when returning with his family after a day's fishing. A strong wind arose and the canoe was blown out to sea, waves half-filled it, and whilst wives and children baled frantically in the darkness, he toiled to keep the dug-out in the wind. Makarola then remembered his totem and called on it for help. He said that in that instant he saw a bright light. Which filled his head, by the light he was assured that they would be brought safely to land, and when that wind abated, the family landed in an exhausted condition. (Chaseling 1957:168)

I showed this passage to one of the pastors at Ramingining and asked him to comment. His interpretation was that it was really God who helped Makarrwala, "and later he [Makarrwala] recognised that God was really caring for them." The pastor continued:

Some people still mistake, they still ask the same totem. God is the totem.

The pastor felt that in cases where Yolgu appeal to Ancestral spirits for food when fishing and hunting the food which they receive is really from God. The "deep meaning is really asking God" he said, but at the same time he suggested that if one wants to be a "full Christian" one can not have both working together.13

Cawte relates similar tales to that of Chaseling of Ancestral beings helping in times of need. Cawte writes about a range of Warramimi spirits of the sea who come to the rescue of people - the spirit of a coral reef helps a man swim to shore and the Ancestral squid transforms itself into a canoe to rescue people at sea (Cawte 1993:21-22).

Another method of healing which Yolgu use is to listen to cassettes with Christian music. In particular if people are going to hospital they may bring cassettes with Christian songs the participants, however, no contradiction may be involved, since they are carrying out a task that is morally sanctioned by their community" (1991:107).

12Makarrwala is a well-known character. I referred to him in Chapter 2 as well. He was a main informant for several researchers, a translator in church services, a "peace-maker" and Yolgu today view him as one of the first and most prominent Christians.

13He said; "Now only some of the time I will use the same totem - but not all the time, God has spoken to me to lead the people, we have been lost, and we have been found. I can't study totem and Christ, if I have two working together it won't work, I want to be a full Christian".

with them. The songs are usually taped from Fellowship meetings or from a local Christian song group. One woman explained that a Christian song or a cassette touches a person's heart and then they feel better. It is not just that they feel happier from listening to the song, she clarified, but Christian songs have the power (ganydjarr) to make people well. Another woman suggested that a Jimmy Swaggart video would be just as effective.

Bibles can be used for healing in a similar way to cassettes. Yolnu perceive Bibles as powerful objects in themselves. One man said:

Bible has power. One man was going [walking] with booklet Bible, by himself in the bush, lay down, night time, "I have a rest here". That fellow was a Christian and he put the Bible on his head - stranger came to kill him and that Bible turned into dog and chased the stranger away. The Bible can turn into sword or weapon or dog if we have trouble, because it is Holy Bible.

The idea of transformation in the example above can be compared with Cawte's (1993:29) reference to the Ancestral squid who can change its shape into a canoe or enter the skeletons of those who have drowned, thereby giving them life.

Some Yolnu believe that contact with the Bible itself will have a healing effect. I was told of a man who was sick and had a Bible put on his head. In another instance a woman described how she read from the Bible for her husband when he was sick and how they were both holding their hands on the Bible in the hope that he would recover. A Gupapuyuyu man told of the time when he was feeling very sick and coughing up blood. He was determined not to go to the health centre but to rely only on God. He said he slept with the Bible under his pillow and eventually recovered. A woman living at an outstation to Ramingining had a chest complaint. The health centre truck arrived to give her a check-up, but the woman said "Why do you come?, I am feeling well because I have this book here", pointing to a Bible story-book she was reading.

The manner in which Yolnu approach the use of cassettes, Bible readings and sometimes the Bible itself then, is somewhat similar to the way in which objects associated with
Ancestral spirits are viewed. Paintings, for instance, depicting Ancestral beings are regarded as powerful in themselves, they are considered to have *mar* or power, emanating from the Ancestors.\(^{14}\) Even though Yolnu use the word *ganydjurr* when they speak about God's power, and not *mar*, it seems that there are definitely some parallels between the way Yolnu perceive the power of either God or the Ancestors to emanate from objects.

**A moral universe**

So far I have written about the emphasis which Yolnu place on healing in their practice of Christianity. In this section I will attempt to map the cognitive links which Yolnu make in regards to sickness and health, to God and the Ancestors.

Yolnu make a strong association between health, well-being, satisfying social relationships and attendance at Fellowship meetings and Ancestral ceremonies. A contrasting link is made between sickness, death, sorcery and immoral behaviour. The emphasis, then, which Yolnu place on peace, unity and healing in their interpretation of Christianity are clearly values and ideas which are interconnected and reflect a Yolnu perception of a moral order.\(^{15}\)

R.M. Bemdt (1979, 1984) argues that in Aboriginal morality, as expressed through dreamtime stories, the dichotomy of "good" and "evil" is inappropriate, and that "good" and "bad" are more appropriate terms. In one of the articles, he produces a diagram (1984:196) representing moral values as expressed in the *dingari*, a "sacred mytho-ritual tradition from the north of the Western Desert", which is reproduced below:

\(^{14}\)See also my discussion of the Fellowship meetings where I refer to the power of the songs and cite Morphy's (1991:102-103) statement about *mar*.

\(^{15}\)Similarly Calley (1955) found that the Bandjalang place great emphasis on healing, although Calley does not offer an explanation as to why this may be the case.
Figure 4. Moral values as expressed in the *dingari*. (R.M. Berndt 1984:196)

The diagram shows that ritual as well as domestic affairs such as hunting and gathering are associated with reciprocity and cooperation. Breaches of the law, on the other hand, are associated with quarrels, injury, murder etc. According to the diagram, then, there is a clear association between physical suffering and immoral behaviour. Even though the diagram is based on Western Desert material, there are some very clear parallels with the cognitive links which Yolgu make.

Comments which Yolgu made showed that they perceive a link between health and well-being on the one hand and participation in Fellowship meetings and Ancestral ceremonies on the other. One of the Yolgu pastors provided, what was for me, a highly illuminating statement when he commented on the fact that for a long time there had been no Fellowship meetings in the evenings:
There has been no Fellowship for a long time .... that is why everybody is getting sick.

At another occasion a Milingimbi man linked church activity with health as well as increased communication between people:

things were different then during the Revival, people would talk to each other, smile, be happy, be healed from sickness. People from different families would talk to each other.

A Ramingining woman provided another example when comparing life on the mission at Milingimbi and life in the new community at Ramingining. She said:

Now [nowadays] people don't talk between families, people get sick and die from small things, not many people in church.

Somewhat similar sentiments are made about Ancestral ceremonies. Yolgu say that attendance at ceremonies can cure minor illnesses such as cold and flu, although it has no apparent impact on major illnesses. Warner also shows that there is a link between one's state of health and participation in ceremonies. However, Warner explains that ceremonies can also be detrimental to a person's health. If ceremonial laws are breached sickness may follow, but as long as a ceremony is carried out properly the effect on the participants is believed to be beneficial. He writes:

All the rituals, particularly the Nara which celebrates the ascendency of the clan totem, are commonly used to purify the group of any uncleanness which might cause sickness and death. The group baptism in the Nara ceremonies is explicitly considered by the Murngin [Yolgu] to be a method of preventing illness and a way of washing away the ritual uncleanness which causes it ... The whole mourning ceremony is consciously an effort to prevent sickness from occurring... (1969:225-226)

Fellowship meetings and ceremonies then are cognitively linked in that they generally prevent sickness and promote health. Furthermore, comments which people made show that Fellowship meetings and ceremonies are both perceived as virtuous activities. A
Yolŋu Christian minister referred to the Gumpipi as a good ceremony. He said it is about peace, and compared the ceremony, as I showed in Chapter 6, with Christian Rallies in that it brings people together. Another statement by a woman expressed sentiments of sacredness and “moral good” associated with both ceremony and church. She said:

That ceremony [is] sacred place, when you come out [of the ceremony] you can’t steal or take from people because that is Holy place same as church.

Furthermore, throughout the chapters of this thesis I have shown how highly Yolŋu value sentiments of “peace”, “unity” and “sharing”. I have also shown in this chapter that Yolŋu link sorcery, sickness and the breaking of laws. The table below illustrates the associations which the majority of Yolŋu make and shows where Christianity fits within a Yolŋu system of moral values.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Good (manyilmak)</th>
<th>Bad (yapkurru)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Participation in Fellowship meetings</td>
<td>Sorcery (galka)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participation in Ancestral ceremonies</td>
<td>Breaking Yolŋu laws</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adherence to social norms</td>
<td>Drinking (alcohol in particular)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peace</td>
<td>Fighting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sharing</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unity between people</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good health</td>
<td>Sickness</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2. Yolŋu concepts of good and bad.

Yolŋu Christians may add gambling (card-playing) and kava-drinking to the list. However, only the most dedicated of the Christians abstain completely from drinking kava and playing cards. Kava-drinking and card-playing are in fact major social activities
in the community. The drinking of alcohol, however, is condemned by the whole community. Alcohol is not sold in Ramingining and it is an offence to bring alcohol to the community. Between 1990-92 there were only occasional incidents when individuals who had visited Darwin brought alcohol with them. The majority of people in Ramingining, especially women, do not drink alcohol at all.

The most important point which the table illustrates is that for the majority of Yolnu people in Ramingining there is no inherent contradiction between participating in the church and participating in ceremonies. Church and ceremony are not opposing domains but complement each other. Both church and ceremonial leaders are advocates of values central to Yolnu thought such as peace, sharing and unity.

Returning, then, to a consideration of Yolnu healing methods, one can perhaps appreciate more deeply why Yolnu Christians place such an emphasis on healing. It is because ultimately Yolnu view good health not just as a physical state, but as a consequence of both Christian and Ancestral law being upheld, and as a consequence of the maintenance of harmonious relationships between people.

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16 Kava is sold on licence in some of the Arnhem Land communities, including Ramingining. Kava was initially introduced in the 1970s by people in the Uniting Church as an alternative to alcohol. In more recent times the health risks have become apparent and Christians now condemn its usage. People usually drink it in the afternoons and evenings. Kava is mixed in a bucket and then people sit in a circle around the bucket, taking turns to receive and drink a small cup-full at a time. Kava has a mild sedative effect and Yolnu say that it brings a feeling of togetherness and that it makes people more talkative. Sometimes kava is consumed to excess in all-night sessions which results in a range of health problems.

17 When revisiting the community in December 1994, the situation appeared to have changed. There were several incidents when men had been drunk in the community within just one month.

18 The table is intended to illustrate the connections that Yolnu make most of the time in daily life. There are obviously exceptions which do not fit my table. I was told that some ceremonial leaders discourage people from going to church, although I never found a person who would admit to this. However, in Chapter 4 I showed that very few of the old men go to church. In all likelihood this is the group who would discourage participation in the church. Another instance which would not fit my table is if sorcery is done as a punishment for a ceremonial transgression. Then, sorcery in fact upholds the law.
Conclusion

In concluding this chapter, then, I have shown that Yolnu Christians place great emphasis on healing, in Fellowship meetings as well as in speaking about their experiences of being healed through dreams, visions or prayer. I have discussed a variety of healing methods, all which appear to have some parallels with healing methods relating to Ancestral Spirits. I have shown that dreams, in particular, are virtually identical in structure regardless of whether it is God or an Ancestor who appears in the dream.

Other similarities between Christian healing practices and healing with the help of Ancestral spirits included a discussion of coolness and heat and similarities in how the concepts are perceived in Christian contexts as well as in contexts where Ancestral powers of beings figure. Furthermore, I have shown that there are some similarities between, on the one hand the way Yolnu perceive objects associated with God such as the Bible, cassettes with Christian songs and Christian videos, and on the other hand the way they perceive objects from which Ancestral power emanates. Overall, then, the material in this chapter has shown that Yolnu approach Christian healing methods very much in the light of healing methods relating to Ancestral power.

Yet inspite of the apparent structural similarities between healing methods to a researcher as myself, Yolnu themselves did not comment on the methods as being similar. From a Yolnu viewpoint, Christian healing methods are fundamentally different from Ancestral healing methods. Christian healing draws on powers from heaven (djirampuy) whereas healing methods associated with the Ancestors are associated with power “from the earth” (munathaway).
Yolŋu people in Arnhem Land have been the subject of extensive Christian influences since the 1920s, but they have not actually converted to Christianity in the sense of relinquishing beliefs and traditions relating to the Ancestral creative beings. Rather, Yolŋu have selectively incorporated Christianity within a wider world view based on the Dreaming.

I have demonstrated that the majority of Yolŋu in Ramingining do not view Christianity as being in conflict or opposition to Ancestral religion. Instead they treat Christianity and Ancestral religion as two co-existing, although largely separate, religious traditions within a wider cosmos. Within this cosmos Yolŋu refer to God and everything to do with Christianity as originating from heaven (djirwaŋpuŋ) and Ancestral beings and associated ceremonies as originating from the earth (munaṯhaŋpuŋ). Yet heaven and earth are linked since Christian Yolŋu claim that God made the Ancestors who in turn created the geographical features of the land, the people and their languages.

The only occasions when both Christian and Ancestral religious practices are incorporated within the one ceremony are at funerals, but even then one cannot say that the funerals demonstrate the formation of a syncretic tradition. Rather the musicians and dancers at the funeral ceremony agree to cease their performances for an evening, or sometimes more, to allow space for a Fellowship meeting. Then at the burial the ordained minister and the performers of Ancestral songs and dances take turns to finish their respective rituals. The only exception referred to in this thesis is the funeral held at
Galiwin'ku for a Yolŋu evangelist. At this funeral, the symbolism was deliberately syncretic.

In a recent book, Swain states that up until the post-war period Aboriginal people in Australia have generally either rejected Christianity completely or accepted Christianity as existing side by side with Ancestral religion (1995:91). However Swain suggests that recent Christian revivals, such as the 1979 Arnhem Land revival, and the revival in the 1980s at Yarrabah in Queensland, now pose a serious threat to the "Two-Laws" situation. He writes:

While none of them [the evangelical Christian movements] would deny the legitimacy of traditional land-based life (and all proclaim the justice of land rights), both Aboriginal and White critics have argued that, insofar as such movements do not specifically contribute to tradition, the new vanguard of revivalists have in effect stepped in as Aboriginal neo-colonists to fulfil the missionaries' dreams...this latest development does not really nurture Two Laws, but rather feeds one while allowing the other to remain relatively undernourished. (1995:101)

He continues:

They [Aboriginal evangelical Christians] claim that the old order was God-given and has its place, even though they have largely ousted it as an arena of religious celebration and now proclaim principles seemingly at odds with it. (ibid)

In contrast to Swain's comments, the data presented in this thesis show that in spite of the 1979 Revival (and more recent revivals described in this thesis), Yolŋu in Ramingining manage to maintain thriving Ancestral ceremonies side by side with an active Christian church.

The key factor which Swain has not allowed for in his analysis, is that in spite of the widespread acceptance of Christianity in Arnhem Land, the church does not involve all Yolŋu to an equal extent. While most Yolŋu in Ramingining claim to be Christians, only about a third of the adult population actually attended church in the two year period of my fieldwork. Among the Yolŋu who did attend church, the majority were women and their
children, while older men who traditionally control much of the secret-sacred domain of Ancestral ceremonies rarely, if ever, attended church.

It was the women who organised all the Action-dancing sessions and were the stewards collecting money for the church. Most of the elders in the church were women. Apart from the male pastors, I have shown that there were only three senior men in Ramingining who attended Fellowship meetings on a regular basis. Rather, men spend more time organising and participating in the "inside" aspects of Ancestral ceremonies, while the women who are not as involved with the "inside" are, as a Yolgu woman expressed it, "free" to attend church.

Another factor which allows church and ceremonies to co-exist at Ramingining, is that they usually take place at different times. When there were Ancestral ceremonies in progress in the community there were usually no Fellowship meetings at the church stage. Thus the church did not place itself in competition with Ancestral religion. Rather, the rhythm of Christian worship in Ramingining resembled the rhythm of Ancestral ceremonies. A period of Fellowship meetings was followed by a period of rest and no meetings. During the time of my fieldwork there were three such periods of heightened interest in the church in Ramingining, referred to as revivals. The revivals took place in response to, or in connection with, special events such as Christmas, a Rally, or the Gulf War. While the Christians did not deliberately plan church activities outside ceremony, the rise and fall in church activity was nevertheless related to the wider rhythm of community life and events.

Swain's comments may be more valid in relation to the situation at Galiwin'ku than in relation to Arnhem Land as a whole. At Galiwin'ku in 1991, there were some Yolgu Christians who claimed that they did not wish to attend certain Ancestral ceremonies, especially the Gunapipi ceremonies, believing them to be evil. For those individuals the church is obviously a dominant force at the expense of Ancestral religion.
Ramingining, however, the situation was different since even the pastor insisted that Christians can attend all Ancestral ceremonies. Thus Christianity is, at least not for the time being, a threat to Ancestral religion in Ramingining. In fact as I have shown in the thesis, beliefs associated with Ancestral religion even inform a Yolŋu approach to Christianity, as for instance in relation to healing and in relation to religious objects such as sacred Ancestral paintings or to Bibles.¹

The wider aim of this thesis has been to examine the content of Yolŋu Christianity and to convey how Yolŋu experience it. In so doing I have drawn on the theoretical approach developed by Turner and Bruner in their (1986) volume *The Anthropology of Experience* which provides a way to analyse experience through a range of "expressions". I have followed their approach by analysing historical narratives, ritual, sermons and healing practices as different types of expressions. Each expression has revealed different aspects of how Yolŋu experience Christianity.

In the historical chapters I have shown how Christianity became associated with images of "peace" and "unity" between clans, and how the concept of community, and community life-style, became linked with Christianity. In my analysis of ritual I have discussed Fellowship meetings and Rallies and shown that Yolŋu Christianity is distinctly participatory in nature with a strong emphasis placed on lively physical engagement, in particular through Action-dancing, dramatisations and other responses required from the congregation during meetings. A discussion of the sermons revealed that they are not only articulations of Yolŋu theology, but are also vibrant commentaries by Yolŋu on their social and political situation within the wider Australian community. Finally the chapter on healing has revealed how Yolŋu Christianity fits within a wider "moral universe" and show that the reason Yolŋu place such strong emphasis on healing in the church is to be found in the links which they make between health, unity, and adherence

¹ I summarise the ways in which Ancestral religion inform Yolŋu Christianity in a discussion of the forces of internal conversion on p. 244-245.
to social norms on the one hand and sickness, conflict and breaking of laws on the other. Thus good health is, from a Yolŋu point of view, an expression not just of physical well-being but also of harmonious relationships between people and a life-style where the laws pertaining both to God and the Ancestors are upheld. Overall, some issues such as social justice and unity constantly resurface in a range of expressions which my discussion below will summarise.

A contemporary social movement

On the basis of data presented in this thesis I have suggested that the wish for greater power and social justice within Australian society, as well as an emerging sense of unity among Arnhem Land Yolŋu, are the key issues which Yolŋu address in the church, beyond the immediately religious concerns of faith and salvation.

In the thesis I have shown that social justice emerged as an issue in the church in the early 1970s at a time when the self-determination policy was implemented. At this time the Methodist mission ceased its control over the Arnhem Land missions and church workers became employed by Aboriginal councils as advisors instead. It was a time when the church had to re-evaluate its role in the Aboriginal communities since the new government's aim was "retention of cultural identity" rather than assimilation. During this time Nungalinya College was also established and some Yolŋu began to receive theological education.

Since its inception Nungalinya College has had as its policy the empowerment of Aboriginal people through education in community management and the development of Aboriginal theology. The college's policies are resonated in the strong emphasis which Djiniyni Gondarra, the leading Yolŋu theologian places on social justice. For Gondarra, "God is God of justice" (1986:22).
I have also explained that one reason for the establishment of the Uniting Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress in 1982 was to provide a forum where Aboriginal Christians could address issues which were of particular concern and relevance to them. The UAICC endeavours to engage itself in "Holistic ministry" which means that "evangelism must reach past the purely spiritual" and address issues such as discrimination, dispossession of land, oppression and poverty (Delphin-Stanford & Brown 1994:8).

The Yolngu sermons are another context in which I have discussed the issue of social justice in the thesis. I have shown that Biblical images and metaphors often provide the language for the sense of oppression and injustice which Yolngu experience in their relationship to Balanda Australians. In the sermons Yolngu speak of themselves as God's chosen people and compare themselves with the Israelites, and their own struggles with the trials which the Israelites experienced as slaves in Egypt and on their journey through the desert.

Furthermore, the emphasis on the Book of Revelation by the preachers in the church gives an impression of a sense of threat to Yolngu existence. The preachers refer to themselves and the congregation as powerless in the face of events predicted in the Book of Revelation and call on God and the Holy Spirit for strength. They speak of the end of time, the return of Christ and the "day of judgement" when real justice will be delivered.

At other times Yolngu expressed in conversation their concern over issues of racism and self-determination. When Yolngu in Ramingining speak of racism they refer both to a general sense of racism against Aboriginal people in Australia, but also more specifically to feelings of inequality in their everyday dealings with Balanda staff in the community. Furthermore, as the comments by Dhulumbirk in Chapter 7 indicated, self-determination and real control over community resources is still a major issue, with a feeling among Yolngu that Balanda staff often have too much control over community resources and their management.
However, when Yolŋu call for "justice and peace" in their sermons they are not just referring to their relationship with the Balanda world, but they are also referring to conflicts within the Yolŋu community between family groups. In particular people expressed their concern over arguments between family groups in the community and the perceived consequences of sorcery attacks resulting in the death and ill health of innocent people.

Another important issue in the church, I have argued, is unity. Each chapter of the thesis refers in some way to the theme of unity. As mentioned above, the historical chapters draw attention to the process of "making peace" between clans. Then in Chapter 4 I demonstrated that a wish for greater unity among Aboriginal Christians around Australia was one of the reasons behind the formation of the Uniting Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress. This call for unity is also reflected in the theological work of Djiniyini Gondarra.

In Chapter 5 and Chapter 6 I have shown how Yolŋu express the theme of unity through the rituals of Fellowship meetings and Rallies. In Fellowship meetings the preachers constantly use the metaphor of "family" to describe the unity of the congregation. Other ways in which the participants in the church express unity is through the song-texts and the physical actions accompanying them such as standing in a circle or shaking hands. The variety of languages used in the songs is another way in which the participants demonstrate a sense of inclusiveness between the groups present at the Fellowship meetings.

In the following chapter I discussed the importance of the Rallies as Arnhem Land gatherings, comparing the Rallies with "regional ceremonies" as discussed by Keen (1994:267). Keen argues that regional ceremonies allow people to co-operate within the same frame-work of ceremonial structure but at the same time allow individual groups to
express their own distinctiveness. He also suggests that the 1979 Christian Revival could be viewed in a similar context. As my analysis of the Christian Rallies shows, such a comparison is highly appropriate. Even Yolnu themselves draw comparisons between regional ceremonies and the Rallies.

The sermons delivered at both ordinary Fellowship meetings and Rallies reveal a similar preoccupation with unity. I have shown that when Yolnu speak about unity it applies to a range of contexts: a) unity of clans at the old mission stations, b) the unity of the congregation and the community, c) the unity of Arnhem Land Aboriginal people, d) unity between Balanda and Yolnu and e) the unity of humanity. The first three options then refer to unity among Yolnu people and is the issue which received the most emphasis in the church, followed by calls for unity among Balanda and Yolnu. The final aspect of unity which I have discussed in this thesis was in relation to Yolnu concepts of sickness, health and healing.

The forces of religious change: internal and external conversion

Throughout the thesis I have employed Barker's (1993) concepts of "internal" and "external" conversion, and his notion that they can be simultaneous processes. Similarly to Barker's (1993) analysis, the word "conversion" has been used in the sense of referring to a process or an influence, not as a completed fact. As my thesis has shown Yolnu Christianity is clearly shaped by forces of internal as well as external conversion.

When I have written about external conversion in the thesis I have referred to the outside influences which have shaped Yolnu Christianity such as mission and government policy. In the early chapters of the thesis I demonstrated how both government and missionaries aimed for pacification of Yolnu people in Arnhem Land and that as a consequence Yolnu have come to associate Christianity with values of peace and unity. Furthermore the long-term effect of the assimilation policy on a Yolnu perception of Christianity was that
notions of "community", as well as Balanda forms of work, became associated with Christianity.

The subsequent self-determination policy was of great importance in the kind of Christianity which has developed since the 1970s. In many ways this policy provided the climate in which the 1979 Revival could place since it promoted the empowerment of Yolnu people who were now in a position to control their communities, as well as become ministers themselves.

Another factor of external conversion which has been discussed in the thesis dates back to the time around the 1979 Revival when Dan Armstrong toured Arnhem Land together with a Yolnu evangelist. As Bos (1988a) reports this crusade was clearly influential on the style of worship which developed. Interestingly then, the form of worship which exists in Arnhem Land now owes little to the Methodist mission style of worship which meant sitting in neat rows inside the church. Rather it is the occasional "camp services" which the Methodists sometimes held in the evenings and the evangelistic crusade which have provided the external influences on the form of worship which exists today.

The process of external conversion continues in the present as seen for instance in the attempts by the Uniting Church, through a visiting parish educator to make Yolnu conform to Uniting Church guidelines about management and decision-making processes in the church. Many meetings were held between Yolnu and the parish educator where fund-raising methods and responsibilities towards payment of the minister were discussed. All these meetings involved a process of information and suggestions encouraging Yolnu to act in accordance with Uniting Church expectations.

When speaking of internal conversion I have referred to the influence of indigenous culture and religion in shaping Yolnu Christianity. In several chapters of the thesis I have demonstrated that taken-for-granted attitudes towards religion transfers from the
Ancestral to the Christian domain. In Chapter 4 I have shown that participation rates at Fellowship meetings fluctuate a great deal and that much of church activity centered around a series of Revivals taking place in response to specific events. In this sense, I concluded that the Yolnu pattern of worship is similar to Ancestral ceremonies in that a period of intense activity is followed by a period of rest. Another example of internal conversion is Djiniyini Gondarra's attempts to develop an Aboriginal theology by finding parallels between Yolnu Ancestral law (modern) and the customs and traditions of the Israelites. For instance he compares the way Yolnu approach sacred sites with the way the Israelites approach the tablets of stone with the Ten Commandments.

When discussing the Fellowship meetings I explored the wide range of similarities between these meetings and Ancestral ceremonies. In particular I drew attention to the emphasis which music, dance, and to some extent dramatisations receive, and how that is related to an emphasis on music, dance and dramatisation in the performance of Ancestral ceremonies. I then moved on to a discussion of the Rallies where I established another point of similarity with ceremony. Rallies, like great Arnhem Land gatherings, can be compared with regional ceremonies such as the Gunapipi. In this context Yolnu themselves perceive a similarity between the way people gather together at a Rally and the way they gather together at a Gunapipi ceremony. However, Rallies are obviously different in other ways. While the regional ceremonies provide opportunity for the cooperation of clans and moiety, the Rallies feature a much wider range of groups represented. At Rallies, song and dance groups sometimes represent clans, but at other times they represent congregations, communities, an educational institution or an Aboriginal organisation. In this sense the Rallies incorporate and address themselves to a new level of social structure which has emerged in the last few decades.2 Finally in Chapter 8 I have shown how Yolnu beliefs regarding healing, visions, dreams and religious objects in relation to the Ancestral realm, are reflected in Yolnu Christianity.

2 In using the concept different "levels of social organization" I am following Barker (1993:223) who applies the concept to a discussion of the relationship between village and mission station among the Maisin.
In considering then the wide range of contexts in which Yolgu Christianity is influenced and shaped by Ancestral religion, one must conclude that although Christianity is a faith which was initially introduced by Methodist missionaries, clearly a process of incorporation and indigenization has taken place.
APPENDIX 1.

Court Records relating to the spearing of Mr. Robertson (CRS A 431 51/1397).\(^1\)

The court records are slightly frayed at the edges which means that on the photocopy included here, occasionally a few of the words in the right hand margin are missing.

\(^1\) The court records are slightly frayed at the edges which means that on the photocopy included here, occasionally a few of the words in the right hand margin are missing.
Reasons given when passing sentence in The King V Erranungen (alias Chalbar), Markarney and Dowarra.

On 13th February 1927, a Sunday morning, at the Millingimbi Mission to Aborigines, Crocodile Islands, the morning service was being held. There were about 350 natives engaged in the service which was being conducted by the Superintendent (the Rev. T. T. Webb) and at his side was the lay missioner (Mr. Robertson).

By what was evidently a preconcerted plan the three accused made an attack upon the white missionaries. The three accused were in "war paint", that is, they had their heads, faces and bodies smeared or coated in the well known style with white clay. They were armed with large, dangerous spears and with womeras. These spears at short range are capable of inflicting fatal wounds on any man who may be speared with them. The three accused divided their forces and advanced to attack on either side of a building at the rear of which the open air service was being held. Erranungen came up on one side and Markarney and Dowarra on the other side. Erranungen threw a spear at Mr. Webb with such force that it went through a galvanised iron building up to its haft. This spear narrowly missed Mr. Webb who avoided it. A little later Erranungen threw first one spear and then another at Mr. Robertson. The missionaries took prompt measures of defence and a rifle was obtained by Mr. Robertson and two shot guns were given to loyal natives by Mr. Webb. The first spear thrown by Erranungen at Mr. Robertson was thrown at almost the same instant as Mr. Robertson fired the rifle at Erranungen. The adversaries were close to each other. Mr. Robertson was wounded on the left hand and forearm and on the right side of the lower chest. All of these wounds were inflicted by the one spear at one throw of the spear. The attacking natives were then driven off and during pursuit two of accused received slight gunshot wounds.

There was no provocation which would amount to a defence law. The accused Erranungen was the attacker and anything done Mr. Robertson, or the loyal natives of the mission station, was in self-defence or in lawful defence of the missionaries.
I had therefore no hesitation in finding Erranungen guilty of wounding James Alexander Robertson with intent to murder him. The wounding is a felony punishable under Section 21 of "The Criminal Law Consolidation Act, 1876" by imprisonment for life or for any term not less than three years. Hard labor may be ordered. The Judge may in addition to imprisonment order the prisoner to be whipped.

The defence as regards Markarney and Dowarra was twofold. First the identity of accused with the attacking natives was questioned. Then it was contended that Markarney and Dowarra were not guilty because there was no common intent and they did not actually throw any spear. I was referred by Mr. Barratt to cases mentioned in News Digest Vol. 4 Column 1124. I was also referred by him to Russell on Crimes 6th. Edition Vol. III page 284. These cases can all be distinguished from the present one on the facts. When announcing the verdict of guilty against Markarney and Dowarra I dealt with the evidence of identification of each accused and shewed why it satisfied me. As to the guilt of Markarney and Dowarra I then pointed out that the attack was a carefully planned one and that the attackers divided forces the better to carry out their purpose. That if Markarney and Dowarra did not actually throw their spears they were armed with spears similar to the ones used by Erranungen and they held them fitted to the womera in the position of readiness for throwing and pointed at the persons attacked.

All three accused were before the Court on one information. At the request of Mr. Barratt, Erranungen was tried first and the other two accused were then tried together. The evidence-in-chief for the Crown was practically the same at each trial. It has not been the practice here to try accused who are jointly indicted by separate trials. I think that where there is trial by a Judge and jury it might be better to try prisoners separately as was done in this instance. Each trial then has a different set of jurors. But where the whole proceedings are, as here, before a Judge sitting alone I think the Judge can be relied upon, if there be but one trial, to carefully examine the evidence as regards each accused.
Upon the trial of Erranungen the witnesses for the Crown were cross-examined at some length as to the disciplinary methods used at the Millingimbi Mission Station since it was opened.

The results of the cross-examination should not be passed upon with other than great care. It must first of all be remembered that the Court was not entering upon a general investigation of the punishments meted out for breaches of discipline by the Superintendents and others. The matter only arose as a side issue upon the trial for attempted murder. The enquiry so made and the facts elicited cannot therefore be regarded as exhaustive or as conclusive. If the disciplinary methods employed by the Rev. Mr. Watson as Superintendent are to be fairly examined then Mr. Watson should be heard in support of his actions. It would be a case of hearing one side and not the other, if one did less than that.

My judicial experience convinces me that there are always two sides to every question. I must carefully guard my remarks from being construed as a condemnation of Mr. Watson and his methods.

It will be apparent to every one that some system of discipline must be employed on a mission station such as Millingimbi. Aborigines in a wild condition have to be controlled and the good order of the Mission Station must be secured. The missionaries have not the ready assistance of police officers and law courts right on the spot to which recourse can be had. Certain moderate disciplinary powers must therefore be exercised and it is a question of fact (to be enquired into most thoroughly) whether any given mode of enforcing discipline is justified. The mission cannot allow its work to be destroyed, if not prevented, by the action of a few recalcitrant natives who habitually cause trouble when the great majority of the natives at the mission are satisfied with their treatment and well behaved.

Having said so much I now approach the facts brought out by Mr. Barratt on the cross-examination of the witnesses for the prosecution. I am in duty bound to consider these facts most closely. They were before me in Erranungen's case and not in the second trial.
But it can only be for the benefit of Markarney and Dowarra if I consider all three sentences in the light of what was proved at the first trial regarding the disciplinary practices at the mission.

In fairness to Mr. Webb, the present superintendent, I quote here almost all that he said in his evidence in regard to discipline at the Mission since he took charge.

"Mission punishment methods employed are for more serious offences banishment from the station for a given period. For minor offences the withholding of rations for a given period. No other form of punishment. I cannot say about before I was in charge. I speak of the last twelve months. I cannot at the moment recall any other form of punishment. I have never seen corporal punishment inflicted. If both Mr. Robertson and I are present I, as Superintendent, would administer the punishment. If for any reason I may be absent Mr. Robertson would act in my place. We are the only two male white members of the mission. The Badu members or teachers would have no authority to inflict punishment on the natives. Mr. Robertson has been at the Mission Station some three years. I have not had any complaint from the aborigines as to being struck or hit by Mr. Robertson. I could not say if Mr. Robertson possesses a stockwhip. I have never seen Mr. Robertson or anyone else use a whip, in my term, or any other thing such as a stick or rope. I have heard that, in the past, I cannot say when, that something of that sort has been done by Mr. Robertson. It depends entirely upon circumstances whether I would stand that sort of conduct. Until circumstances arise it is impossible for me to say whether I would judge such action justified. I am speaking from memory. The little knowledge I have of such things has been given me by Mr. Robertson himself. Mr. Robertson admitted that in the past he had inflicted corporal punishment on boys at the station. I have never heard that Mr. Robertson struck accused with some sort of weapon. I have never heard of a shotgun being used on aborigines prior to my time. Never heard that Mr. Watson used any firearm. I had heard of Mr. Robertson strik
ing other natives not accused. He has never struck them during my term. It is possible, but highly improbable for him to strike a native during my term. Mr. Robertson is not now in charge of the Station and matters of discipline devolve upon me. That sort of thing could not go on without my knowledge."

Mr. Robertson when cross-examined on this subject said:-

"I have been at Millingimbi three years. Prior to that time I had had no experience of aborigines. The Superintendent then when I first went there was the Revd. Watson. In Mr. Watson's time while I was there the system was warnings for a considerable time, then expulsion from the Island, and, if necessary, chastisement. If that proved of no effect we always found it necessary to chastise them in some way. Sometimes as in Mr. Watson's time part of the procedure was chastisement. A gun was never at any time used. I have never heard of a gun being used. I have heard of Bullmock. He is at Goulbourn Island and not at Millingimbi. He was never chastised. He was not ever shot at as far as I know............ On one occasion I found it necessary to inflict corporal punishment. It was after two years of annoyance from a certain native. I had often spoken to him about his conduct. He could understand English but to make it more clear to him I used our chief interpreter so that there would be no mistake what I meant. He continued on the same lines. I had to expel him from the Island for one month. He promised me that when he came back he would mend his ways. Then I told him that if he still continued to make trouble I would have to whip him which I did. The mission possesses a stockwhip. We keep horses out there. I keep it in my house, that is why Mr. Webb might not have seen it. The stockwhip has never been used while Mr. Webb has been there................. It has not been used at all in the last 12 months. About 30th. September 1925 it was used on Larry."

Without quoting further evidence, there was another when Mr. Robertson admits he may have struck Manaly, or when ordering them to leave the Island. But it was or a flogging.
I gather from the examination of the other witnesses for the Crown, the Badu native teacher, Kapiu, and aboriginals Andrew and Ryolo, that some corporal punishment has been from time to time inflicted by the Badu teachers. I am not altogether satisfied that corporal punishment entirely ceased upon the assumption of control by Mr. Webb. If there was any since Mr. Webb became Superintendent it can only have been of a mild character and infrequent because it had not come to his notice and no complaints of such treatment have been made to him. The natives generally must be taken to know that Mr. Webb's methods are punishment by banishment from the Station and by cutting off rations. There would almost certainly have been complaints which would have reached Mr. Webb's ears if corporal punishment had continued in the last 12 months.

There was no evidence in these trials to justify the Rev. Mr. Jennison's telegram to the Administrator in which he refers to Mr. Watson's provocative action in shooting at natives at Willingimbi. I am not concerned with any illfeeling or controversy which may exist between the Rev. Mr. Watson and the Revd. Mr. Jennison each of whom has been a former Superintendent of the Mission.

To get down to the effect upon these sentences of the evidence as to corporal punishment. The chastisement of the three accused was not suggested. The facts shew whipping of other natives but not of the three accused. When measuring punishment for the felonies now before me I feel that the chastisement of certain natives was being avenged on February 13th last. It is well known in the history of this country that some white men whose treatment of natives had been unimpeachable have been attacked because other white men had ill treated the same tribe of natives. To the native mind the evidence of chastisement then while it does not justify the attack greatly lessens the degree of wickedness of the attacking natives.

I have further noted that the accused have been in custody one kind or another since 14th February and that the sentences ordered by me will start from the 1st day of the May 1927.
The safety of the missionaries and other residents of the bush must be protected by the Court. In fixing the term of a sentence I must consider

(1) The punishment which the particular accused merits and
(2) The effect of the punishment in deterring others from commission of similar crimes.

In view of all the circumstances the sentence of each accused will be three years imprisonment with hard labor.

It must not be assumed that I would have imposed less than three years if there had been no minimum term mentioned in the 21st section of "The Criminal Law Consolidation Act, 1876". I consider the three years necessary as a deterrent to other natives in the locality of Millingimbi Mission Station and to other natives of the Northern Territory generally.

D.A. ROBERTS J.
June 11th, 1927.
APPENDIX 2.

Fellowship Songs

About half of the songs are in English. Other songs are performed by the congregation but in English and are then repeated in one or more Yolks dialects. A few of the songs are only in Yolks languages. Although I have not provided translations of these songs, the texts have been included with the intention that they may be a resource to other researchers.

The songs in this Appendix include the songs which have been incorporated in the text in Chapter 6 and Chapter 5. English songs have been added with songs in Yolks languages and as they are added to the Fellowship meetings. The Appendix begins with a selection of the high-hearted and happy songs from the first phase of the Fellowship meetings, followed by a selection of the songs performed during the opening and closing phases.

Acknowledgment: Copyrights and permissions have been asked where known.

I am grateful to a number of people in particular Shirley Myraar from Yolksmita Association for transcription and translation of most of the songs with me. Others who have helped are Power Tainoa who gave me a book of songs from World Fellowship of Miniwhai who also provided together with the Literature Production Centre (songs in the number 20, 21, 22, and 23). There are some songs different in spelling and presentation from Mantill’s version. Linda Walkman provided me with a photocopy of the lyrics for Yolksmita. I would also like to thank Roy Madman and Wendy Lunderman. Several of the English versions of the songs are available from the book called "World Sing Book One: Songs of Peace. The following songs in this Appendix are included in that book: 1, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26. I am also grateful to Margaret Milner and Brenda Wagner at the Literature Production Centre at Otautahi. They have worked through the Appendix and assisted with spelling, filled in missing lines here and there and provided some of the details concerning copyright and compositions. They also gave me the text in the Yolks version of songs number 14, 15, and 20, as well as the text to songs number 22 and 23. Any mistakes or omissions are of course my own responsibility.
FELLOWSHIP SONGS

The songs included in this Appendix were frequently performed at Ramingining Fellowship meetings. Many of the same songs were performed at Galiwin'ku and Milingimbi as well, but the selection presented here is intended to be representative of the songs from Ramingining.

About half of the songs are in English. Other songs are performed by the congregation first in English and are then repeated in one or more Yolŋu dialects. A few of the songs exist only in Yolŋu languages. Although I have not provided translations of these songs the texts have still been included with the intention that they may be a resource to other researchers.

The songs in this Appendix exclude the songs which have been incorporated in the text in Chapter 5 and Chapter 6. English songs have been mixed with songs in Yolŋu languages just as they are mixed in the Fellowship meetings. The Appendix begins with a selection of the light-hearted and happy songs from the first phase of the Fellowship meetings, followed by a selection of the songs performed during the opening and closing phases. Details concerning composers and copyright have been added where known.

I am grateful to a number of people in particular Shirley Myuku from Yathalamarra outstation who transcribed and translated most of the songs with me. Others who have helped are Franca Tamisari who gave me a booklet of songs from Easter Fellowship at Milingimbi which she produced together with the Literature Production Centre (songs in this list nr. 6, 7, 9 and 26). There are some minor differences in spelling and presentation from Tamisari's versions. Linda Wulamara provided me with a pamphlet with the texts in Gupapuygu for the Christmas songs. I would also like to thank Fay Matjara and Wendy Bandhaminy. Several of the English versions of the songs are available from a booklet titled Scripture in Song, Book One, Songs of Praise. The following songs in this Appendix are printed in this booklet: 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 34, 37 and 38. I am also grateful to Margaret Miller and Sandra Wangarr at the Djambarrpuyku Bible Translation Centre at Galiwin'ku. They have checked through the Appendix, offered assistance with spelling, filled in missing lines here and there and provided some of the details concerning copyright and composers. They also gave me the text to the Yolŋu version of songs number 14, 18, and 39, as well as the texts to songs number 22 and 30. Any mistakes or omissions are of course my own responsibility.
Songs performed in phase one:

1. DAY BY DAY

Day by day I walk a little closer to my Lord
Day by day, day by day, ba ba ba ba

repeat
Where He leads me, where He leads me
I will follow, I will follow

repeat
Day by day I walk a little closer to my Lord
Day by day, day by day, ba ba ba ba.

repeat

Where He leads me, where He leads me
I will follow, I will follow

repeat
Day by day I walk a little closer to my Lord
Day by day, day by day, ba ba ba ba.

2. THEY THAT WAIT UPON THE LORD

They that wait upon the Lord
shall renew that strength.
They shall run and not be weary
They shall walk and not faint
Help us Lord, help us Lord in thy way

3. WHEN I REMEMBER THAT HE DIED FOR ME

When I remember that He died for me
I'll never go back any more, any more
When I remember that He died for me
I'll never go back any more

No, no, never, never, ha, ha, [shaking head as singing]
I'll never go back any more
No, no, never, never, ha, ha, ha
I never go back any more.

(repeat both verses)

2Composed by Dale Jackson. Copyright Scripture in Song 1975.
4. HAPPY, HAPPY, HAPPY

Happy, happy, happy
Happy in the Lord
Praise God I am born again
Trusting in His word
I want you to know
How happy I am
For I am happy, happy, happy in the Lord

5. DJESUY NHUNA NHAJALA

humming

Djesu nhuna nharala
yaka nhe dhu dharrpanmirri
Bili nyi nhuna nharala
Bili Bapanydja lakaranhamina;
Bili nyi lakaranhamena
amanydja dhuwala jarrunhamirri
Yaka nhe dhu barrarirri

Garray Djesu, Garray Djesu,
Garray Djesu, Garray Djesu
Nhathili nhuna nharala

Garray Djesu, Garray Djesu
Garray Djesu, Garray Djesu
Nhathili nhuna nharala

Nhaku nhe diltji gurrupamirra
Dharrana nhe wothima nhe
Yuwalktja nhe dhukarr morala
Bili Bapanydja lakaranhamina
Nhanydja dhuwala jarrunhamirri
Yaka nhe dhu dharrpanmirri

Garray Djesu, Garray Djesu
Garray Djesu, Garray Djesu
Nhathili nhuna nharala

Garray Djesu, Garray Djesu
Garray Djesu, Garray Djesu
Nhathili nhuna nharala

3Composed by Peter Walarri.
6. GARRAY NHE DJESU NAMAKURRU

Garrray nhe Djesu namakurru
Mirithirri yaku dunurr
Bungawa guyi garakku
Nyinydjja marumak djagarmirri
Nininyu walpakunhamirri
Yaku guyi marrkapmirri

Djesu limurrungu jundu
Nayi guli djayunynda
Bukmak limurrungu wargugu
Bukmak djarrpi malanha

Bungawa guyi bukmakku
Dhamanhayyu nininyu
Nyipip yuwalk wara bokmanayyu
Go limurru marralyuna
Nhanyuwuy yama Djesuwu
Ga gurupammiri nhanukalanha

Djesu limurrungu jundu
Nayi guli djayunynda
Bukmak limurrungu wargugu
Bukmak djarrpi malanha

7. WASTED YEARS

Wawa, yapa marrkapmir mala
Romnydja duhuwal mirithirr dal
Bayuy limurr gi dharagnmirr dhiaiy wamija
Bayuy limurr gi nhauju dharajul
Garaynya Godku gathu miritju
Bili limurruj duhuwal rauju yalari ga garrphinawuy

Waltjan gurrkalun nunha qupar nhaltjarr limurr mogal
Garaynya
Nunhli limurr nhinan rommur yatjiur bukumunhaqur
God ka waithun limurrung
Nayi ka waithun limurruj
Bili guyi limurrunga marrjamathirr

Romnydja duhuwal mirithirr dal
Ga limurr ka marriji bala rali
Bili limurr ka duhuwal gumar-bilyun romdhu yatjurruy
Djesuny ka wara limurrungal
Nayurur dhiaj-bala
Go limurr rauju gurrupammirr Djesuwal

(Chorus

and then once again repeat the last two lines of the chorus)

4Composed by Mawunydiil and Nimanydja. According to Miller and Wangarr at the Djambarrpuyu Bible Translation Centre at Galiwin’ku, the verse beginning “Djesu limurrungu jundu” corresponds with the hymn “What a friend we have in Jesus”. The other verses are written by the the Yolŋu composers.
8. ALLELUIA, ALLELUIA

Alleluia, Alleluia
Alleluia, Alleluia

Njuni dhu waŋa bilyurru limurrungu bukmakku
Limurrunyda dhu marrji djwarrlijinna
Limurrro dhu dharrni nhanokala
Ommurrnngura bapawala

Alleluia, Alleluia
Alleluia, Alleluia

Nayi dhu mala djarryun limurrunha
Bukmaknhja Yolgunha
Ga waŋa jakarraq
Waŋa ga dhinganamirri

Alleluia, Alleluia
Alleluia, Alleluia

Limurrunyda dhiyala banydji
Rom wanganydhirri
Ga marrama ganya bapanha
Nayaqulllinha

Alleluia, Alleluia
Alleluia, Alleluia

---------

9. DJESU GARRAY

humming

Djesu Garray
Marrkamar прог нимбелеçe
Djesu Garray
Marrkamar прог нимбеле çe
Marrkapmamar Garray
Marrkapmamar Garray
Garray limurruç

repeat
10. GOD NHUNU MORI

God nhunum Mori gulyudayquirrel Garay (Warramiri)\(^5\)
God nhunum Mori marrkapmi
Nyatha rarrapiliny miritjalma barrkuwal Garay
Garay Mori Marrkapmi

Alleluia Ganydjarrmir
Alleluia Ganydjarrmir
Mori nhunu Ganydjarmi

Nanapun djaru nhuru yothu Garay
Lungthuma rarnabiliny Garay
Maŋku Jurryuwan walŋami Garay
Garay Mori Marrkapmi

11. I HAVE A SAVIOUR TONIGHT

I have a Saviour tonight
He keeps and guides me all the way
He gives me peace
and everlasting love
He is my everloving Jesus and my friend

I know he died for me
Carrying his cross on Calvary
Died He to win and conquer death sin
He is my everloving Jesus and my friend

Nyarraku walŋakunhamirr (Gupapuygu)
Yakuŋydja ɲayiku Djesu
Gulyudayquirrel walŋa ɲarraku
Nyayi ɲuli djaga ɲarraku yuwalkumanha

Nyayi ɲarraku bujakina
Gulanŋydja nhangu walŋa
Marr ga ɲayi ɲuli ɲamanha walŋakuma
Nyayi ɲuli djaga ɲarraku yuwalkumanha

\(^5\) Yolŋu at Ramingining who taught me this song stated that the dialect is Wangurri. However, the words appear to closely follow a Warramiri version provided by Miller and Wanguir. Both Warramiri and Wanguri are languages spoken at Galiwin'ku. There are no Warramiri or Wanguri people living at Ramingining although songs are occasionally performed in these dialects at Ramingining Fellowship meetings.
12. TO GET A TOUCH FROM THE LORD

To get a touch from the Lord is so real
To get a touch from the Lord is so real
If you draw nigh to him
He will draw nigh to you
To get a touch from the Lord is so real
Hallelujah, hallelujah
Jesus is coming again

13. HE IS MY EVERYTHING

He is my everything
He is my all
He is my everything
Both great and small
He gave his life for me
Made everything new
He is my everything
Now how about you
Like honey in the rock
Sweet honey in the rock
For he tastes like honey in the rock
O taste and see that the Lord is good
For he tastes like honey in the rock

(repeat)

\(^6\)Composed by Sally Ellis.
14. THIS IS THE DAY

This is the day, this is the day
That the Lord hath made
We will rejoice, we will rejoice
And be glad in it, and be glad in it
This is the day that the Lord hath made
We will rejoice and be glad in it
This is the day, this is the day
That the Lord hath made

Dhuwalana walu, dhuwalana walu
Nunhi Garraywugu nunhi Garraywugu
Limuru yuurru goy-djulri
Limuru yuurru goy-djulqthiririna
Limuru yuurru djulqthiririna
Dhuwalana walu nunhi Garraywugu
Limuru yuurru goy-djulqthiririna
Dhuwalana walu, dhuwalana walu
Nunhi Garraywugu

15. THERE'S A RIVER OF LIFE

There's a river of life flowing out from me
Makes the lame to walk and the blind to see
Opens prison doors, sets the captives free
There's a river of life flowing out from me

16. CALL UNTO ME

Call unto me and I will answer thee
And show thee great and mighty things
Which thou knowest not

7 Composed by Les Garrett.
8 Composed by L. Casebolt.
17. THY LOVING KINDNESS

Thy loving kindness is better than life
My lips shall praise thee
Thus will I bless thee
Thy loving kindness is better than life

I will lift my hands up unto thy name
My lips shall praise thee
Thus will I bless thee
Thy loving kindness is better than life

18. GOD IS SO GOOD

God is so good
He's so good to me
He took my sin
He's so good to me
Now I am free
He's so good to me

God is so good
He took my sin
Now I am free
He's so good to me

God nhenydja manymak
(Nhenydj manymak njarraku)

(Gupapuygu)

19.


This song was also performed in a Djinaq language in addition to the English and Gupapuygu versions although the text is not included here.
19. A MERRY HEART

A merry heart doeth like a medicine
Like a medicine is a merry heart
A broken spirit drieth the bones, but
A merry heart is they joy of the Lord

20. I LIFT MY VOICE

I lift my voice in praise unto thy name
I lift my hands you're everyday the same
Come fill me now, Lord Jesus let it be
And now my lips sing new found praise to thy name

Singing Alleluia, Alleluia
Praise and worship to thy name

(repeat)

21. MAGNIFY THE LORD

Oh, magnify the Lord
For He is worthy to be praised
Oh, magnify the Lord
For He is worthy to be praised

Hosanna blessed be the rock
Jesus is the rock of my salvation
Hosanna blessed be thy rock
Jesus is the rock of my salvation

(repeat)

22. HOLY SPIRIT IN THIS LAND

Holy Spirit in this land
Reach out and touch me while you can
From the high, high mountain to the deep, deep valley
The Holy Spirit in this land

Dhuyu Birrimbir dhuvala murathaŋur
Garŋ gaŋ yakathulu napurun
Dhiyali garrwar djiiwarŋur ga dhiyala murathaŋur
Dhuyu Birrimbir dhuval murathaŋur

(Gupapuyŋu)
23. I AM GLAD I AM A CHRISTIAN

I am glad I am a Christian
I am trusting the Lord
I am reading my Bible
Believing his word
The past is forgiven
From sin I am free
And there's a mansion in heaven
Just waiting in for me

24. IT'S GOOD TO BE FREE

It's good to be free, so good to be free
No chains of bondage can hold me down
It's good to be living in the victory
I am praising Jesus I'm glory bound

25. LOVE IS THE KEY

Love is the key
In everything we do
Jesus is the source of it all
(repeat)

26. NARRANYDJA DHUWALA YATJKURRU MIRITHIRRI
Opening songs and closing songs:

Note that while opening and closing songs are used interchangeably there are some differences between them. The opening is usually brief with between one to three songs performed. The song "We are gathering together unto him" is used very often for the opening.

During the closing phase of the Fellowship there is a stronger emphasis on songs which call on the presence of the Holy Spirit such as "Come Holy Spirit I need you", "Sweep over my soul", "Let me touch Jesus". The song "Father make us one" is also sung more often during the closing phase. The closing phase can be lengthy and continues as long as people come forward to kneel down and be prayed for in the circle.

27. WE ARE GATHERING TOGETHER

We are gathering together unto Him
We are gathering together unto Him
Unto Him shall the gathering of the people be
We are gathering together unto Him

repeat

28. GOD BAPA

God Bapa, God Bapa
Garray Djesu, Garray Djesu
Dhuyu Birrimbirr, Dhuyu Birrimbirr
Nhuma lurrkun, wanganyuŋa

God the Father, God the Father
Lord Jesus, Lord Jesus
God the Spirit, God the Spirit
You in all, three in one

Godma Mori, Godma Mori
Garrayma Djesu, Garrayma Djesu
Dhuyu Birrimbirr, Dhuyu Birrimbirr
Nhunam lurrkun, wanganyuŋa

11 Composed by Rrurambu and Nyiwula.
29. COME HOLY SPIRIT I NEED YOU

Come Holy Spirit I need you
Come sweet Spirit I pray
Come in thy strength and thy power
Come in thy old gentle ways

Thank you Holy Spirit for coming
Thank you sweet Spirit for presence
Thank you for your strength and your power
Thank You for your old gentle ways

Mangarran Dhuyu Birrimbirr rayam djal nhungu
Mangarran Dhuyu Birrimbirr rayam nganghtarwan
Mangarran nhungul waljamirr ganydjaryu
Mangarran nhungul yalundayu baṭjwarryu

Buku-wurran Dhuyu Birrimbirr nhunum dhyniyan
Buku-wurran Dhuyu Birrimbirr nhunum djinalan
Buku-wurran waljamirr ganydjaryu
Buku-wurran yalundawu baṭjiwarrwu

30. EMMANUEL

Emmanuel, Emmanuel
His name is Lord
Emmanuel
God with us, reveal in us
His name is called
Emmanuel

repeat

31. JESUS JUST THE MENTION OF YOUR NAME

Jesus just the mention of your name
the flowers grow, the desert blooms again
Like a fire in winter's cold, like pure and precious gold
Jesus just the mention of your name

(repeat )

13 Composed by Jeff Buchan.
32. I KNOW THE LORD WILL MAKE A WAY FOR ME

I know the Lord will make a way for me
I know the Lord will make a way for me
If I live a holy life
forget the wrong and do the right
I know the Lord will make a way for me

I trust the Lord will make a way for me
I trust the Lord will make a way for me
If I live a holy life
forget the wrong and do the right
I trust the Lord will make a way for me

33. LET ME TOUCH JESUS

Let me touch you, let me touch Jesus
So that others may know and be blessed
Oh to be his hands extended
Reaching out to the oppressed

(repeat, and then once again the first two lines)

34. SWEEP OVER MY SOUL

Sweep over my soul, sweep over my soul,
Sweet Spirit sweep over my soul
My rest is complete as I sit at his feet
Sweet Spirit sweep over my soul

\[\text{Composed by Harry D. Clarke.}\]
35. MAJESTY

Majesty, worship His Majesty
Unto Jesus be all glory, honour and praise
Majesty, kingdom authority
Flow from his crown unto his own
His anthem raise
So exalt, lift up on high the name of Jesus
Magnify, come glorify Christ Jesus the King

Majesty, worship his Majesty
Jesus who died, now glorified
King of all Kings

Majesty, worship His Majesty
Unto Jesus be all glory, honour and praise
Majesty, kingdom authority
Flow from his crown unto his own
His anthem raise
So exalt, lift up on high the name of Jesus
Magnify, come glorify Christ Jesus the King

36. HAVE FAITH IN GOD

Have faith in God, have faith in my Lord
Have faith in God for the answer
Just have faith in God
repeat

37. HE'S THE SAVIOUR OF MY SOUL

He's the saviour of my soul
Jesus, Jesus
He's the saviour of my soul
He's the saviour of my soul
Jesus, Jesus, Jesus, Jesus
He's the saviour of my soul
He's the saviour of my soul

---

16 Composed by Kathryn Kuhlman. Copyright: 1965 The Kuhlman foundation.
38. COME O LORD

Come O Lord and overflow us with your love
Come O Lord and overflow us with your love
For we bring our hearts like vessels
To the everflowing stream
Come O Lord and overflow us with your love

39. DJESUNYDJA WAṈANA BITJARRA

Djesuny'dja wâ'ana bitjarra
(Gupapuygu)
Go marrji namakala tiboja
Guwatjmulu nûnya Garaynha
Marra yi nhuna Jaymanama

Chorus:
Go limurru malthan Garaywuna
Bili nûni mînpi Djîwarrpuyny'dja

Yaka nhe gaaquny'dja dhal'yurru
Lapmaragu nhangu Djesuwa
Bon djipthurru nhanukala Garaywala
Ga njuthurru nûnya ganydjarnwuna

---

18 Composed by Milindirri.
Some Christmas hymns in Gupapuyng:

40. MARY'S BOY CHILD

Nurugi waluy Christmasmirirynha
Nunjhi Betlehem warjiya
Dimuru yothu Marywa
Nunjhi dhawal-guyarana

Chorus:
Naku dhawumirinydja
Ga bitjan yingathirrinya
Garnay burana murathaparana
Marr dhu yolgu waliyathirri

Yolgu walala liyamultuna
Ga wokthurrri dijarri llili
Bili Djesu burana dhiyala
Marr dhu limuru waliyathirri

Nunjhi wayin-djagamirri munhawu
Gana dilinjiura nhinana
Nunjhi dhawu-ganhamirri Godkuju
Walalangala dhunarrana

Yakana nhuma yurrri barrarini
Nayi bitjarra warana
Nhulalangu Walpakunhamirri
Bili dhawal-guyarana

chorus

41. SILENT NIGHT

Warra bukmak wapurarriyina
Yolgu ga wayin warramirrorna
Mary ga Joseph nunhi bunburura
ninana
Youthuwa dhuyuwa manda gana djaka
Youthu yakunydja Djesu
Godkuju yangunhara

Dhunupu Godkuju dhawumiri bunana
Wayin-djagamirriy bagayala nhajala
Yurruma manikay walala gakula
Dijwarppuy yolgu gana mar-yingathina
Youthu Djesunydja dhuwala
Godkuju yangunhara

Godkuju mundhurr youthu Djesu
Dhiyala burana yolguwa bukmakku
Marr yurrupurru bumingilihira gama
Romjuru yatjuru walmanhamamama
Marrkap youthunydja Djesu
Godkuju yangunhara
42. IN A STABLE

Ga  qunhili djinaga bunbugura
  Njunhi warakan mala gana  gorrana
Ga  yolju mangja marrijiina qunhawala
  Bili waranydja manangu bayjuna

Ga  qunhili Djesu dambu-dhumarrana
Ga  nyalkulili Marynydja yorrkuwalu
Ga  wayindhu malangu nhaqalanydja
  Yothu Djesu gana  gorrana mulmuqurra

Ga Djesu gorra djal nhuju mahthurarawa
Go, biyaku bili nhini garrakala
Ga  birimbir nhokuwu gurrupuluna
Marr yakara  narra yurru dhingamanydja

43. O COME ALL YE FAITHFUL

Go, go wala lola yolju mar-yuwalkthinyamirri
Go, nhuma Bethlehemilli wanguquna
Go  nya nyhuu: Gar ray bayalamirriwa

Chorus:
  Go limyuru buku-gal'yun
  Go limyuru buku-gal'yun
  Go buku-gal'yun Djesuwa
  Gar ray gajinydja

  Godtja warpar yuwalk bamanpuy badayla nininyu
Yuru  nayo nyiljmarranhima yothukunhama
  Gathi mirriju Bapawa, Godkuju walkur-marranhawuy

Chorus

Liyamulu bukmak djiwarrpuy mala yolju
  Nhuma dhawumirri Godku mar-yingathi
Marrkap Gar ray Godtja, wokthuru dhangu mirrithi

Chorus

Napiuru nhuju Djesu mirithina marqanathina
  Yolju mala nhuquwuy yurru marq-gal'yunyidja
Bapawuju dharuk rumbalkunhaminara

Chorus
44. WHILE SHEPHERDS WATCHED THEIR FLOCKS

Nunhi wayin-djaga mirinydja
Gara diltiqura nhinana
Nunhi dhawumirri Godkugunydyja
Walalaggala dhurarrana

Nhuma baynu balanu barrarinydja
Nayi bitjarra waquna
Bili djulgithinyamiri dhawunydyja
Narra nhurnalangu garagal

Bili nunhili Davidkala warjya
Dhuwal-guyarana gathura
Garray nhurnalangu wawungunhara
Nunhi Davidkuwu mala-bunhara

Ga nhuma yurru maljmarama
Nunhi djiwarn'wuy yothunha
Nayi wangiwa bugbugura
Nunhi mulnunyura jarra ga

Ga wadutja yana bunana
Maypa dhawumirrinydja
Ga buku-gal'yurruna Garraywala
Ga bitjarra liyamara

Limurru Godnha buku-gumpana
Ga wokthun mirithinina
Ga yolnu mala dhiyala
Yurru nhina marjya
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