

DISCUSSION

Paper

13/99

DREAMTIME WISDOM – MODERN TIME VISION
The Aboriginal Acculturation of Popular Music
in Arnhem Land, Australia

Aaron Corn

Aust
DU
391
.D57
1999
vol 13



Macquarie University
Library

From the
Joan McIlrath
Collection Trust

100000101

AUST
DU
391
.D57
1999
vol 13

DREAMTIME WISDOM – MODERN TIME VISION

The Aboriginal Acculturation of
Popular Music in Arnhem Land, Australia

Aaron David Samuel Corn

North Australia Research Unit
DISCUSSION PAPER NO. 13/1999

First published in Australia in 1999 by the North Australia Research Unit, Research School of Pacific and Asian Studies, The Australian National University. The views expressed in this publication are those of the author and not necessarily those of the North Australia Research Unit, The Australian National University.

© A. Corn 1999

This book is copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study, research, criticism or review, as permitted under the Copyright Act, no part of this publication may be reproduced by any process whatsoever without the written permission of the author.

NATIONAL LIBRARY OF AUSTRALIA
CATALOGUING-IN-PUBLICATION ENTRY:

Corn, Aaron David Samuel

Dreamtime Wisdom—Modern Time Vision: The Aboriginal Acculturation of Popular Music in Arnhem Land, Australia

ISBN 0 7315 3383 6
ISSN 1327-4791

1. Acculturation – Northern Territory – Arnhem Land. 2. Aborigines, Australian – Northern Territory – Arnhem Land – Music. 3. Popular music – Northern Territory – Arnhem Land.
- I. Australian National University. North Australia Research Unit.
- II. Title. (Series: discussion paper (Australian National University. North Australia Research Unit); no. 13).

Published by:

NORTH AUSTRALIA RESEARCH UNIT
THE AUSTRALIAN NATIONAL UNIVERSITY
PO BOX 41321 CASUARINA NT 0811
TEL (08) 8922 0066 FAX (08) 8922 0055
EMAIL publish.NARU@anu.edu.au

Printed in Darwin by:
NTUniprint

North Australia Research Unit The Australian National University

The North Australia Research Unit's (NARU) is directly accountable to the Director of the Research School of Pacific and Asian Studies at The Australian National University.

The location of the North Australia Research Unit in Darwin made it something of a frontier research post for more than two decades. Opened in the early 1970s, the variety of scholars over the years, and even today, is a reflection of the interdisciplinary nature of the research carried out at the Unit.

A large portion of that research has focused on the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples of Australia and, in that context, on the social, cultural, political, economic and development issues which are part of northern Australia. The range of research projects which are underway at any particular time depend very much on the priorities of the individuals who locate themselves at NARU. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander issues are of continuing importance in northern Australia and, consequently, to NARU. The reasons for this would be obvious to anyone who visits northern Australia – outside of Darwin, indigenous people comprise the majority of the population in the north.

In addition to NARU's traditional research there is also now a very strong focus on governance and development in northern Australia, and in regions further north, particularly east Asia. Scholarly interest in this regional relationship has been substantial, adding considerably to the depth and breadth of NARU's cross-disciplinary role with the ANU.

As an integral part of the ANU, and RSPAS, the Unit offers scholars from Australia and around the world a unique opportunity to conduct research in one of the most remote academic outposts in Australia – perhaps, the world. NARU has excellent resources and site facilities, including a social science library which boasts a comprehensive collection of material on northern Australia and which is networked into the ANU library system in Canberra. The library and other facilities are reserved for NARU academics, visiting fellows, and students and demand is relatively high during the 'Dry' season. Enquiries are welcome and should be directed to either the Unit Director or the Administrator.

Guidelines for Contributors to the Discussion Paper Series

Papers should not exceed ten thousand words. Footnotes rather than endnotes are preferable. The styling method of this paper can be used as a guide. Authors are requested to send three copies of their paper and one copy on disk; please include an abstract and short profile of the author.

Enquiries

Publications

North Australia Research Unit

PO Box 41321

Casuarina, NT 0811

Ph: 08 8922 0066

Fax: 08 8922 0055

Email: publish.NARU@anu.edu.au

<http://www.anu.edu.au/naru/Welcome.htm>

Acknowledgements

This paper is based on a seminar presented at the North Australia Research Unit. I gratefully acknowledge the support and assistance extended to me by Dr Christine Fletcher (Director), Dr Deborah Rose (Senior Fellow) and the staff of the North Australia Research Unit during my 1996–99 field research. I also wish to thank the Queen Elizabeth II Silver Jubilee Trust for Young Australians, and the Faculty of Music, The University of Melbourne, for their generous contributions towards funding my research. There are many people in Darwin, Katherine and Arnhem Land to whom I am indebted. Without their cooperation, commitment and inspiration, this paper would not have been possible.

My sincerest thanks to the people of Ngukurr, Galiwin'ku and Milingimbi and, in particular, to those musicians whose creative endeavours are the subject of this paper. Special thanks to Derek Wurramara, Keith Rogers, Dan Thompson, Maureen Thompson and Glen Blitner in Ngukurr, Hubert Rami and Tim Wurramara in Numbulwar, Bruce Français in Katherine, Michael Hohnen (NTU) and Tony Joyce in Darwin, and Frank Djirrimbilwuy Garawirtja, Joe Neparrŋa Gumbula, Manuel Nulupani Dhurrkay, Jeffrey Gurrumul Yunupirju and the Dhamarrandji family in Galiwin'ku, and Keith Lapulŋ Dhamarrandji in Milingimbi for their willingness to share with me their resources, knowledge and friendship. Many thanks also to Sandra Wängarr Dhamarrandji, Lorraine Yurranydjil Dhurrkay and Margaret Miller of the Djambarrpuyŋu Bible Translation Project in Galiwin'ku for dedicating their time, patience and formidable skills to translating the songs of local composers into English.

Abstract

The paper discusses Aboriginal musicians and the proliferation of electric guitar bands and introduced forms of popular music in eastern Arnhem Land. It challenges perceptions of this cross-cultural phenomenon that are informed solely by practices, aesthetics and values conventionally associated with Western popular music, and takes direction from the locally-contextualised meanings with which musicians in Arnhem Land imbue their own musical creativity. In particular, the ways in which introduced forms of popular musical expression have been acculturated within Aboriginal communities to accord with local systems of social organisation and belief are explicated. Groups of musicians from southeastern and northeastern Arnhem Land are discussed throughout this paper with the music of *Broken English* from Ngukurr and the *Dharrwar Band* from Galiwin'ku receiving particular attention. This study not only describes socio-musical processes but, in addition, offers a means by which ethnocentric perceptions of, and responses to, cultural change on the part of local peoples in Arnhem Land may be better understood.

DREAMTIME WISDOM – MODERN TIME VISION

The Aboriginal Acculturation of Popular Music in Arnhem Land, Australia

Aaron David Samuel Corn *

We in *Soft Sands* started when we first got together back in the early 1970s. It was the end of 1969–1970 and we've been going ever since. . .

My [early] experience with listening to music was through shortwave radio. There was no other radio communication but the transistor radio. It might have been a Philips or an AWA, or a Sony or something. The only way we could pick up music and news was on a shortwave radio, and we could listen to a lot of music. My favourite program was listening to country and western, and it influenced me a lot. [We also] picked up a lot of American stations and Asian stations and, in particular, I listened to the Indonesian and Filipino stations. Filipinos have a lot of music and lyrics that I've always loved, and I've always enjoyed it (Djirrimbilpilwuy 1997).

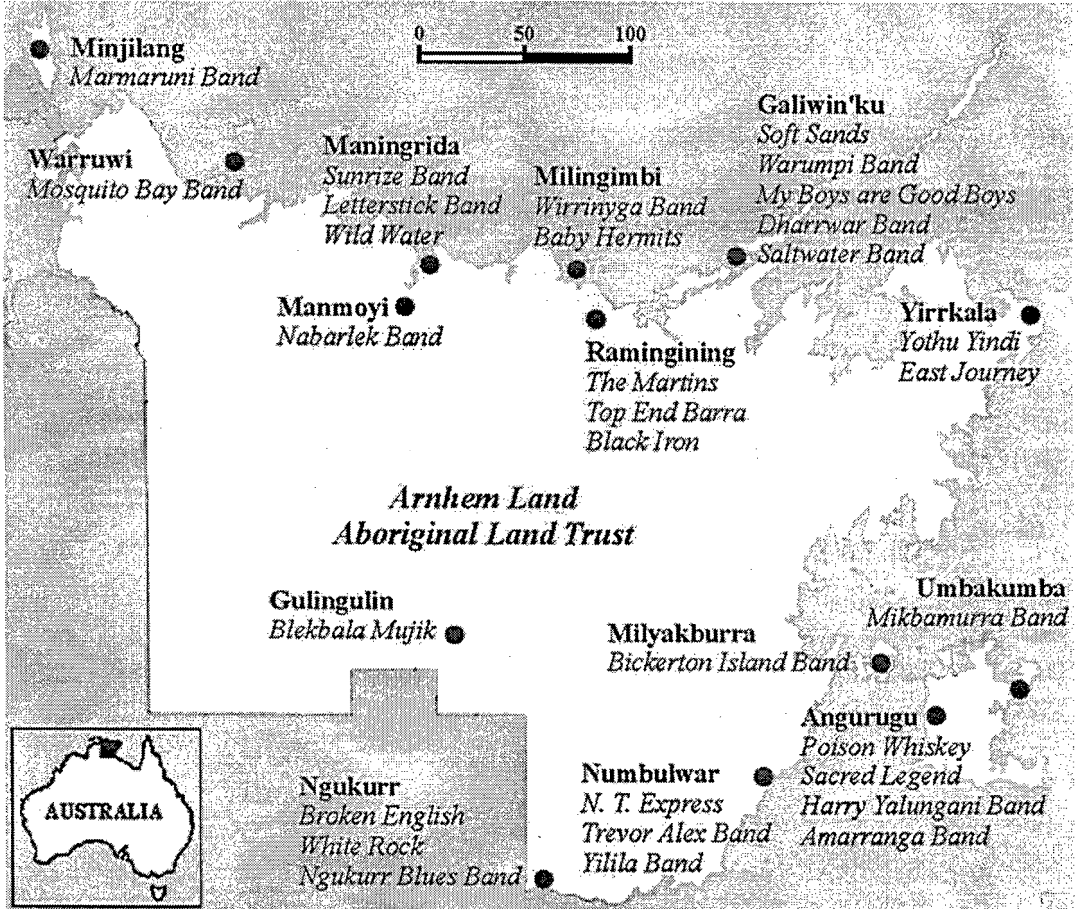
These are the words of Frank Djirrimbilpilwuy Garawirtja (1997) – a Birrkili Gupapuyŋu man from Galiwin'ku who is the foundation Director of the Top End Aboriginal Bush Broadcasting Association (TEABBA) and a founding member of a local country and gospel band called *Soft Sands*.¹ Ever since the introduction of radio and communications technologies into Arnhem Land, local people such as Djirrimbilpilwuy have listened with avid interest to the sounds of cultures other than

* Aaron Corn is currently completing a PhD in Ethnomusicology through the Faculty of Music, The University of Melbourne.

¹ This paper focuses on groups of musicians from eastern Arnhem Land. Aboriginal peoples in Arnhem Land's northeast refer to themselves as Yolŋu. Initially, individual Yolŋu bore only a single given name (for example, Djirrimbilpilwuy of the Birrkili Gupapuyŋu clan). Nowadays, individuals commonly possess three names – an English given name, a Yolŋu given name and a surname (hence, Frank Djirrimbilpilwuy Garawirtja) – although some Yolŋu will regularly use only two of these. As some bands to be discussed in this paper contain members of families who share a common surname, for ease of citation individual Yolŋu will be referred to by their Yolŋu given (middle) names.

their own. This burgeoning interest in 'new' and 'exotic' forms of musical expression such as country, gospel, rock 'n' roll, heavy metal, reggae and blues has led to the formation of dozens of local guitar bands over the past three decades, and the provenance of bands currently active in Aboriginal communities across Arnhem Land is illustrated in Figure 1.

Figure 1. Provenance of bands active in eastern Arnhem Land.²



² All but two of the bands identified above were formed, and are still based, in the communities under which they are listed. Although based outside Arnhem Land, *Wild Water* and the *Warumpi Band* have been listed under Maningrida and Galiwin'ku respectively as, in both instances, their primary songwriters' familial and ceremonial ties to these communities are reflected in their songwriting.

The music of the bands identified in Figure 1 is little heard outside Arnhem Land. Nevertheless, their songs have become an integral facet of cultural life in local Aboriginal communities with longer-standing bands such as *Soft Sands* and *Broken English* having attained legendary status throughout the region. Since the early 1980s, some bands from Arnhem Land have received widespread media exposure and recording opportunities through organisations such as the Central Australian Aboriginal Media Association (CAAMA) and the Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC).³ However, of these bands, only *Blekbala Mujik*, the *Sunrise Band* and the *Warumpi Band* have approached the international success of Arnhem Land's best-known band *Yothu Yindi*.

Although guitar bands in Arnhem Land play in musical styles that have been regionally introduced through Western media such as radio, television and commercial recordings, Arnhem Land remains to a large extent geographically and culturally isolated from the mainstream of Australian culture. As such, musicians in Arnhem Land have adopted the styles, forms and instrumentation of popular music in the West which, through their recontextualised local uses, have been acculturated to accommodate local Aboriginal concepts, values and beliefs concerning family, country and spirituality.

For example, 'Live or Die' is a song that was originally composed by Dan Thompson in 1975 and first recorded for commercial release on the *Meinmuk* album (*My Boys are Good Boys* et al. 1997: [16]) in 1996.⁴ Thompson is a Ngandi man from Ngukurr in southeastern Arnhem Land who has been a singer and songwriter since 1964 when he and other local men formed the *Yugul Band*. In 1981, Thompson began singing and writing songs with his current band *Broken English* and, in Figure 2, is pictured with fellow *Broken English* singer and songwriter Keith Rogers.

Thompson's 1975 opus, 'Live or Die' (see Appendix 2 for a short transcription with lyrics), has been composed in the driving blues-rock style that distinguishes many of the original songs played by *Broken English*. Furthermore, this particular style of music also characterises the songs of younger bands from southeastern Arnhem Land including *NT Express* and the *Travelix Band* from Numbulwar, *Poison Whiskey* and *Sacred Legend* from Angurugu, the *Bickerton Island Band* from Milyakburra and *White Rock* from Ngukurr. However, even though it is readily apparent that hard

³ A list of known recordings which feature the music of these artists is provided in Appendix 1.

⁴ *Meinmuk* (*My Boys are Good Boys* et al. 1997) was recently produced by Triple J, a nationally-broadcast ABC radio station, in Darwin. The recording of this album took place at the Maningrida Town Hall in September 1996 and attracted many previously-unrecorded bands and artists from across Arnhem Land.

blues-rock is a style that has been adopted by numerous bands in communities across southeastern Arnhem Land, how are strangers to the culture of this area to interpret their songs or approach an understanding of this music as it is locally situated?

Figure 2. Keith Rogers (*left*) and Dan Thompson (*right*) of *Broken English* collecting water beside the Roper Highway between Numbulwar and Ngukurr, 16 September 1997



On first hearing, there would appear to be nothing remarkable about ‘Live or Die’ (Thompson 1975). It is sung by Dan Thompson in English, and performed with the other members of *Broken English* on standard rock instruments including electric guitars, electric bass guitar and drum kit. Furthermore, ‘Live and Die’ (Thompson 1975) exhibits no stylistic features or instrumentation (such as the use of didjeridu and clapsticks, or digitally-sampled incipits of traditional song) that might be readily identified by mainstream audiences as forms of Aboriginal expression. This sets Thompson’s song in stark contrast against the music of *Yothu Yindi* (1989, 1992,

1993 and 1995) which, since the late 1980s, has been heralded as a syncretic mixture of traditional Aboriginal song-genres and Western popular styles.⁵

The lyrics of ‘Live or Die’ (Thompson 1975) recount a tale of complicated love and a relationship on the brink of collapse in which the social commentaries that mainstream audiences commonly identify with the work of urban Aboriginal songwriters such as Kev Carmody (Kelly and Carmody 1993: [12]) and Archie Roach (1990: [6]) are absent. When read at the surface level, ‘Live or Die’ (Thompson 1975) would seem to be little more than a rock song about jilted love. Both stylistically and thematically, it holds little that a semiotician could construe as signifying traditional Aboriginal practices or pan-Aboriginality in a broader socio-political or historical sense.

Herein lies one of the key problems in formulating an understanding of contemporary music from Arnhem Land from the perspective of the cultural outsider. To focus the analysis of songs by bands from Arnhem Land solely upon the analyst’s location of ‘known’ signifiers of Aboriginality – even when such signifiers are present and detectable – is to risk overlooking a complex of socio-cultural processes that cannot be heard on the surface yet describe the unique local conditions under which such songs are composed, played and heard, and the very means by which the elements of musical style are osmosed in Aboriginal communities. Moreover, musicians in Arnhem Land enjoy a creative freedom that can be misinterpreted in uninformed attempts to identify characteristically ‘Aboriginal’ forms of musical expression.

The terms of reference by which musical styles and genres are conventionally categorised in Western discourse also confuse attempts to understand electric guitar bands and their music as they are locally contextualised in Arnhem Land. For example, ‘Live or Die’ (Thompson 1975) could be categorised as ‘popular music’ or ‘contemporary Aboriginal rock’ in what would be reasonable attempts to differentiate it from songs in ‘traditional’ genres. Even so, it is important to recognise that terms such as ‘popular,’ ‘traditional’ and ‘contemporary’ are steeped in the aesthetics of, and cultural assumptions surrounding, Western musical discourse. As such, they convey less than accurate meanings when applied to music outside the cultural contexts of the West.

For example, ‘traditional’ songs in the *kunborrk* and *manikay* genres currently constitute an integral part of ceremonial life throughout Arnhem Land and, as such, are undeniably ‘contemporary’ in their usage (Garde 1997a). Allan Marett’s (1994: 67–8) research reveals that ‘traditional’ songs of the *wangga* genre constitute a form

⁵ See Stubington and Dunbar-Hall (1994: 243–59).

of 'popular' musical expression within the context of 'contemporary' Aboriginal cultures in northern Australia. The albums of *Yothu Yindi* (1989, 1992, 1993 and 1996) feature a mixture of 'traditional' Yolŋu genres and 'contemporary' Western styles amongst which, as it has been suggested by Stubington and Dunbar-Hall (1994: 243–59), songs such as 'Treaty' (Mandawuy et al. 1992a) contain formal musical elements derived from both music-cultures.⁶ Although the invention of new terms to replace 'popular,' 'traditional' and 'contemporary' would most likely introduce even greater confusion into the discourse, it is important to recognise that this existing nomenclature is imperfect and that its unqualified usage is better avoided.

The existing discourse that surrounds the adoption of introduced music by Aboriginal musicians owes much to the methodological approaches of cultural studies, and focuses largely upon the musical signification of Aboriginality and meaning. There is a small yet significant body of work that addresses the creative output of *Yothu Yindi* and includes 'Yothu Yindi's 'Treaty': *Ganma* in Music' by Stubington and Dunbar-Hall (1994: 243–59), Neuenfeldt's 'Yothu Yindi and *Ganma*: The Cultural Transposition of Aboriginal Agenda Through Metaphor and Music' (1993b: 1–11), and articles on the 'Treaty' music-videos (Mandawuy et al. 1992b and 1992c) by Philip Hayward (1993: 33–41) and Lisa Nicol (1993: 23–31).

A number of studies have attempted to compare the means by which Aboriginality is expressed in songs by Aboriginal songwriters from across Australia and these include *Our Place, Our Music* (1989) edited by Marcus Breen, articles on Aboriginality and popular music by John Castles (1992: 25–39) and Chris Lawe Davies (1993: 249–65), and Dunbar-Hall's *Music and Meaning: The Aboriginal Rock Album* (1997: 38–47). There has also been a lively debate concerning contemporary uses of the didjeridu by Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal musicians alike centred around the work of sociologist Karl Neuenfeldt (1993a: 60–77, 1994: 87–104 and 1997: 107–22) and this discourse is furthered in *The Didjeridu: From Arnhem Land to Internet* (Neuenfeldt, ed. 1997).

However, with the exception of Steven Knopoff's research into contemporary uses of the didjeridu in 'traditional' and 'popular' Yolŋu song genres (1997: 39–67), there has been a dearth of first-hand ethnomusicological inquiry into the usage of introduced forms of musical expression amongst musicians in Arnhem Land. It must also be emphasised that virtually all of the aforementioned studies have limited

⁶ The literal translation of Yolŋu is 'person' or 'human.' Morphy (1984: 5) identifies over sixty inter-related Yolŋu clans each of which speaks their own patrillect. Together, these clan patrillects constitute what Keen (1994: 77) identifies as seven discrete languages that are collectively called Yolŋu-Matha (literally, 'people's speech'). Languages throughout Arnhem Land employ different orthographies to accommodate the spelling of phonemes that do not exist in English. This paper has adopted the Yolŋu-Matha alphabet (see Zorc 1996: I–2) for the spelling of Yolŋu-Matha words.

themselves to the analysis of songs on readily-available commercial recordings. As alluded to earlier in the preceding discussion of 'Live or Die' (Thompson 1975), this approach alone is unsuitable for the consideration of music by bands in Arnhem Land. Firstly, this is because the full repertoires of the majority of these bands remain largely unrecorded, and secondly, because to focus analyses of this body of music solely on what is audible is to risk misinterpreting the locally-contextualised creative processes at work in its production.

As already established, a song such as 'Live or Die' (Thompson 1975) bares no external signifiers of Aboriginality that would render it easily read by the cultural outsider. So how is this music to be understood from the outsider's perspective? Does 'Live or Die' (Thompson 1975) conform to the aesthetics and ideological tropes of Western rock? Does Thompson himself aspire to these as a musician? Does the song's non-usage of identifiably Aboriginal narratives, languages or musical idioms denote a degree of cultural loss on Thompson's part or in the community from which he comes? To put it plainly, how can a piece of music that sounds so much like a three-minute rock song be anything but?

To elicit answers to such questions is an attempt to understand how globally-disseminated styles of popular music as diverse as rock, blues, reggae, country and gospel are locally situated in Aboriginal communities in Arnhem Land and understood by the people who live in them.⁷ In this endeavour, it is necessary for foreign listeners to suspend their own cultural assumptions concerning the functions of, and practices associated with, popular music within the cultural and subcultural contexts of the West and, instead, focus on localised conceptualisations of introduced musical styles and practices as they are expressed by songwriters, musicians and audiences in Arnhem Land itself.

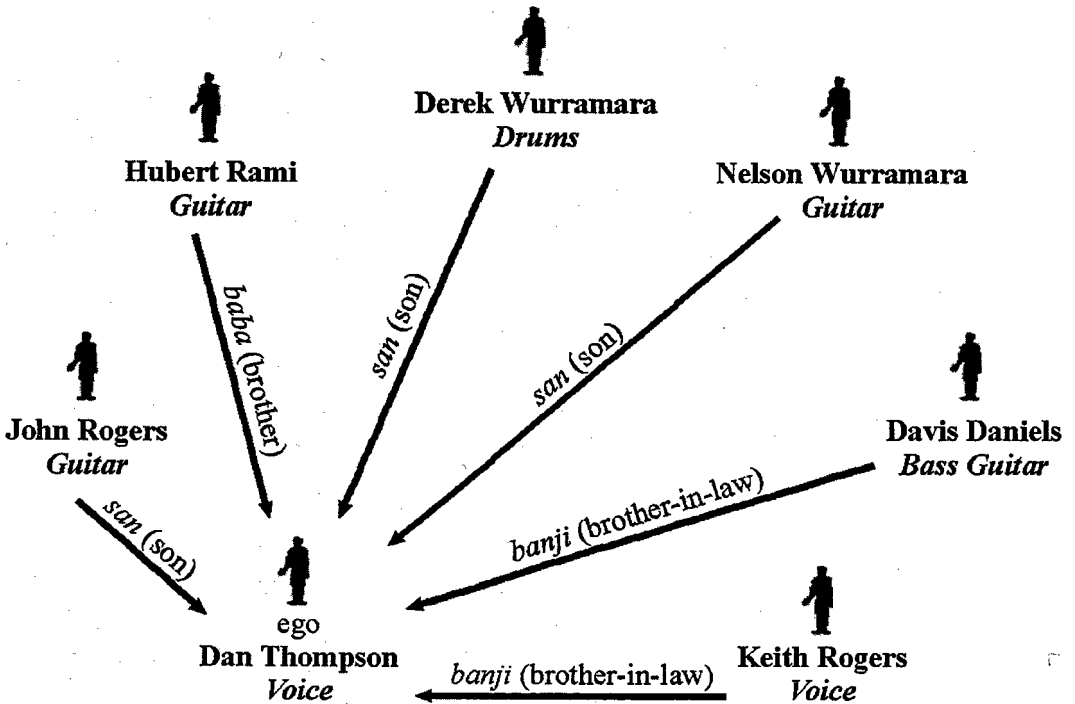
The Western ear hears 'Live or Die' (Thompson 1975), recognises it as a three-minute rock song, and links it to a complex of values and assumptions regularly associated with Western rock. However, in Ngukurr and throughout southeastern Arnhem Land, Dan Thompson's band, *Broken English*, is a cultural institution that has endured for three decades and whose style of hard bluesy rock has influenced a host of younger bands throughout the region. Although undeniably an introduced style, local musicians now think of hard rock as a southeast Arnhem Land style or, indeed, as *their* style (Thompson 1996). Even Ngukurr's newest band, a gospel band called *White Rock* which performs throughout the week at local Christian fellowship

⁷ Although musical styles such as rock, blues, reggae and some forms of gospel are an integrated part of the global dissemination of the Western popular culture, it should be acknowledged that these styles also hold historical and stylistic roots in the African diaspora.

meetings, plays in a hard rock style that can be traced directly to the influence of *Broken English*.

One of the keys to understanding this process of osmosis is to examine the organising principles of band membership. As in other aspects of Aboriginal society, the membership of *Broken English* is structured around extended family or kinship networks. Figure 3 illustrates the close familial relationships held between Dan Thompson and the other members of *Broken English*.

Figure 3. Kin relations in the membership of *Broken English*.⁸



⁸ The spatial layout of this diagram emulates the band members' stage positions as they have appeared in performance (*Broken English* 1996). The spellings of kinship terms in this diagram conform to standard Kriol orthography as used in Ngukurr.

It is also important to point out here that the membership of *Broken English*, along with the membership of virtually every other guitar band in Arnhem Land, is comprised entirely of males, and that this reflects the traditionally divergent roles of males and females in ceremonial and secular life throughout the region.

The members of *Broken English*, each of whom are related to one another, are similarly related to members of other bands from Ngukurr, Numbulwar, Angurugu and Milyakburra and, in many cases, taught these younger musicians to play guitar or drums as children. Due to these relationships, band membership in southeastern Arnhem Land tends to be rather fluid with at least two generations of local musicians having learnt virtually all of the original songs performed by bands from this area. Although each band has a stable nucleus of core members, should one of them be unable to rehearse or perform, it is common practice for relatives from other bands to fill in. Evidence of this was experienced during a jam session with *White Rock* in Ngukurr (14 September 1997) when the young musicians of this band and I covered over a dozen original songs composed by their elders in *Broken English*.

Within this localised context, hard bluesy rock takes on a complex of associated historical meanings that, although not entirely divorced from the common tropes of its mainstream Western articulation, have become inextricably linked with traditional modes of social organisation and personal identification in southeast Arnhem Land. In a documentary aired on ABC radio stations Triple J and Radio National in August 1997, Dan Thompson (1996) explains in his own words his personal relationship to his music, its distinctive style and the song 'Live or Die' (Thompson 1975).

Hi, I'm Danny Thompson. I come from Ngukurr which is 380 kilometres south [east-east of Katherine in the] southeast of Arnhem Land and that's where I come from, and I'm a member of the band *Broken English*. *Broken English* is totally a guitar band. When we've had blokes with didgeridus come over and jam with us, it sounded all right, but to the boys [in the band] with experience, they felt that they would rather play just like a normal band.

I was sitting down at my place – at my camp one time. I was mucking around with a couple of milk tins (you know, jamming). [I] picked out a beat on the tins, and one night I went over to the Vic Hotel and saw the band play – some of the local boys.

Well 'Live or Die' was based on a true experience. A friend of mine – I won't call his name but [just] keep it to myself – he nearly committed suicide. You know, he wanted to strangle himself because he had

problems. You know, he was playing in a band and he was married at the time, and things didn't work out too well for him and late one night I came home. I found him strangling himself with a guitar lead, you know, but I got in there just in time to talk him out of it and I wrote the song 'Live or Die' based on this friend – a good friend of mine.

Ever since I started playing, I've never looked back. I feel that music is something special [with which] to express yourself to people, probably, throughout the world (Thompson 1996).

Dreamtime Wisdom, Modern Time Vision, my chosen title for this paper, is the name of an album released in 1995 by the *Wirrinyga Band* from Milingimbi. The album's eponymous song was composed in 1995 by Keith Lapuluj Dhamarrandji – a Yolŋu man of the Dhamarrarwanja Djambarrpuyŋu clan – and proclaims that 'the people of Dreamtime . . . are living in a land of Dreamtime cosmology [and] living in a world of modern technology.' As Lapuluj explains,

Dreamtime Wisdom – Moderntime Vision ... is like that ashes ... at an old site where you and your old people had once let a campfire burn in that area for ... some time ... Our knowledge is encountered in the form of the ashes that had been burnt and buried in a fireplace. When you pick up a charcoal that had been left there from the old people, there is a bit of knowledge that is hidden in those charcoals and buried, and this is like opening a filing cabinet through our knowledge. It's a Yolŋu knowledge that is buried in the ashes. So ... 'Dreamtime Wisdom – Moderntime Vision' is like a scope. A scope that you look into, in the big picture, that brings the reality. The formation of the reality in your life, suiting today's modern society, and the knowledge that had been told in stories. You still have to hold onto that . . . because that is very important [and holds] a vital role in Yolŋu man's knowledge (Lapuluj 1999).

In many ways, this ideology of cross-cultural simultaneity aptly describes the proliferation of guitar bands across Arnhem Land. Even though these bands and their music are undeniably a result of Western cultural contact and are highly derivative of global-disseminated styles of popular music, it is simplistic to assume that these musical practices have themselves eroded the traditional importance or observation of local beliefs and values.

It is evident from Dan Thompson's (1996) opinions that, for him, playing with a rock band is a matter of personal choice. When asked if it had ever been suggested to him that he would lose his culture as a result of playing this music (17 September 1997),

without hesitation Thompson replied, ‘All the time, but I’ve got both cultures now’. It is the view of many musicians such as Thompson that the musical styles and technologies that have been introduced into Arnhem Land through Western contact have not necessarily displaced traditional practices and values, but have themselves been acculturated to work within established local structures of belief and social organisation. Henceforth, it is only through an understanding of the ways in which introduced musical styles and music technologies – and, indeed, the very institution of the rock band – have become subordinate to Aboriginal social structures and cosmologies in communities across Arnhem Land, that the ethnocentrism of local bands and their music can be appreciated.

Like bands in Ngukurr, the Yolŋu bands of Galiwin’ku on Elcho Island – *Soft Sands*, the Dharrwar Band, *My Boys are Good Boys* and the Saltwater Band – are also organised in accordance with local kinship networks. Membership in each of these bands is structured around the *yothu–yindi* relationship which constitutes a defining principle of Yolŋu social organisation and describes the cross-moiety affiliations between child (*yothu*) and mother (*yindi*), and their respective clans, languages, homelands and sacra.⁹ Amongst bands in Galiwin’ku, musical collaborations commonly coalesce around the *yothu–yindi* affiliation that exists between a woman’s children (*waku*) and her brothers (their uncles or *ŋapipi*).

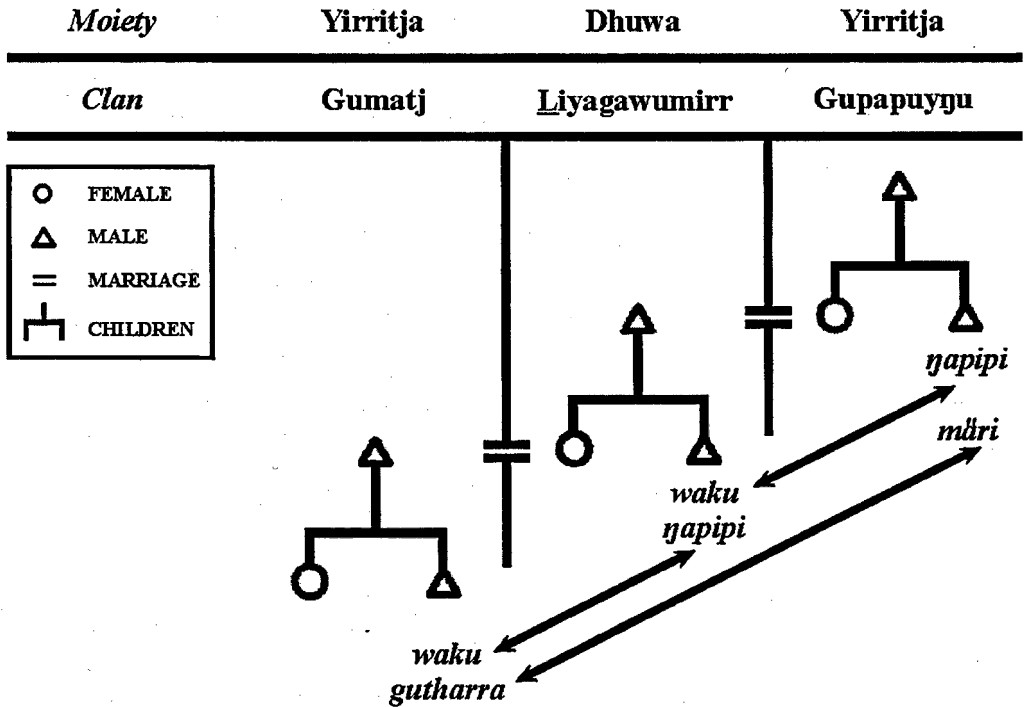
For example, the membership of *Soft Sands* consists primarily of Gupapuyŋu men of the Yirritja moiety and Liyagawumirr men of the Dhuwa moiety. Each of the band’s Gupapuyŋu members call each other *wāwa* (brother) as do the band’s Liyagawumirr brothers. As illustrated in Figure 4, the Yirritja-moiety Gupapuyŋu members of *Soft Sands* call their sisters’ Dhuwa-moiety Liyagawumirr children *waku* (nephews) and, in turn, the band’s Liyagawumirr members call their Gupapuyŋu uncles *ŋapipi* (mothers’ brothers). The membership in *Soft Sands* of men from both moieties is an organisational trait found in bands throughout Arnhem Land.

Soft Sands also has a single Yirritja-moiety Gumatj member who, as also illustrated in Figure 4, is in a *waku–ŋapipi* (nephew–mothers’ brother) relationship with the band’s Liyagawumirr members, and in a *gutharra–māri* (matrilineal grandson–maternal grandfather) relationship with its Gupapuyŋu members.

⁹ Yolŋu hold that all things, whether they be clans, people, places, animals, ancestors, natural phenomena, objects or songs, belong to either the Yirritja or Dhuwa moiety. At a fundamental level, this principle governs aspects of Yolŋu social organization including marriage, heredity, affiliations with country, ceremonial obligations and rights to esoteric knowledge. Yolŋu marriage is exogamous (for example, a Yirritja man must marry a Dhuwa and visa versa). As members of their fathers’ clan, children are the same moiety as their fathers and the opposite moiety of their mothers (for example, a Yirritja man and a Dhuwa woman would produce Yirritja children). Detailed information on Yolŋu kinship systems is available in Cooke (1996: 65-85) and definitions of corresponding kinship terms can be found in Zorc (1996: passim).

Musical styles played by bands in Galiwin'ku differ from group to group. Elcho Island's oldest surviving band, *Soft Sands* has been active for three decades and plays a mixed repertoire of country, gospel and rock. *My Boys are Good Boys* and the *Saltwater Band* play original songs in their own distinctive styles of reggae and rock and, for the first twenty-seven years of its existence, the *Dharrwar Band* covered Top Forty hits of the day. However, late in 1997, senior musicians of this band began to compose original songs.¹⁰

Figure 4. Cross-moiety affiliations in the membership of *Soft Sands*



¹⁰ Some bands in Arnhem Land possess an alternative name in a local language. *Soft Sands*' Yolŋu-Matha name, *Yandhala Munatha*, describes the sandy ground of the Birkili Gupapuyngu clan's homeland of Lungutja on Hardy Island in the west of Arnhem Bay. Similarly, Dharrwar is a site located northeast of Galiwin'ku on Elcho Island that is named for 'the head of the shark' in Wutjara Djambarrpuyngu cosmology. The *Saltwater Band*'s Yolŋu-Matha name is *Gapu Damurrurŋ* which can be translated as 'saltwater,' and this is also the meaning of Wild Water's Burarra name *Bugula gun-Bachirra*.

Despite their adoption of Western styles, bands in Galiwin'ku frequently lyricise original songs in Yolŋu–Matha. For example, the elder songwriting members of the *Dharrwar Band* are men of the Wutjara Djambarrpuyŋu clan and, like Lapuluŋ of Milingimbi's *Wirrinyga Band*, compose predominately in their own Djambarrpuyŋu patrilect. Likewise, *My Boys are Good Boys* – a new band formed by George Djilayŋa Burarrwaŋa of the *Warumpi Band* with his Burarrwaŋa Gumatj clansmen in 1996 – sings chiefly in the Gumatj patrilect.

The two primary songwriters of the *Saltwater Band* are Manuel Nuŋupani Dhurrkay and Jeffrey Gurrumul Yunupiŋu. As illustrated in Figure 5, these men respectively belong to the Wangurri and Gumatj clans but are both matrilineally descended from the Gälpu clan.¹¹ In other words, although they belong to different patri-clans, Nuŋupani and Gurrumul are both *yothu* to the same *yindi*. They share the same *ŋändipulu* (mother clan) and, as such, are both *waku* (women's children) of the Gälpu clan.¹²

Nuŋupani sings primarily in Djambarrpuyŋu which is the most widely-spoken patrilect on Elcho Island and Gurrumul, who is a brother of Mandawuy Yunupiŋu and a former member of the *Yothu Yindi* band, sings almost exclusively in Gumatj. Both patrilects are dialects of the Yolŋu language known as *Dhuwala-Dhuwalmirri* and are mutually intelligible.

On 30 August 1997, the *Dharrwar Band* made an amateur recording of a newly-written original song called 'Rulyapa' (Gutiwa and Wuŋawuŋa 1997a). This song (see Appendix 3 for a short transcription with Djambarrpuyŋu lyrics and their English translation) was composed by Jeffrey Wuŋawuŋa Dhamarrandji and Bruce Gutiwa Dhamarrandji of the Wutjara Djambarrpuyŋu clan who, along with their brother Keith Djiniyini Dhamarrandji, forms the *Dharrwar Band's* core membership. Djambarrpuyŋu is a Dhuwa-moiety clan and Rulyapa is the collective name for tracts of the Arafura Sea that are traditionally owned by Dhuwa peoples.¹³ In 1994, Djiniyini (the *Dharrwar Band's* guitarist and manager) served as a member of the Manbuyŋa ga Rulyapa Steering Committee which sought to establish a joint marine

¹¹ Nuŋupani's mother is Gurrumul's mother's *gathu* (brother's daughter).

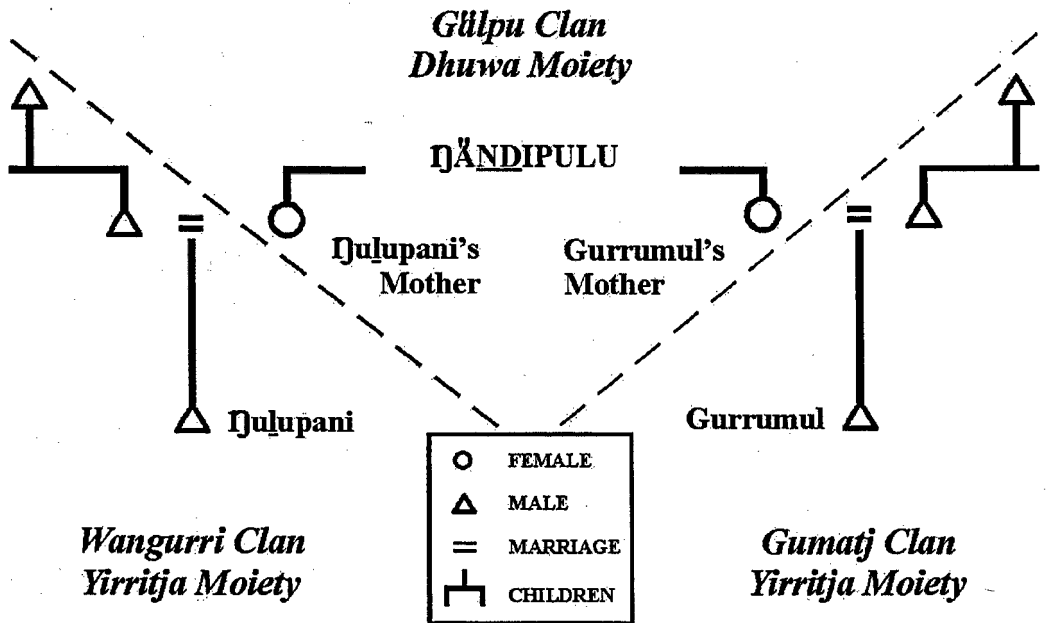
¹² The members of the *Baby Hermits* from Milingimbi are Gaykamaŋu Gupapuyŋu men whose *ŋändipulu* (mother clan) is Wayinbarrara Djambarrpuyŋu. *Gomu*, the hermit crab, is cosmologically associated with the Wayinbarrara Djambarrpuyŋu clan and it is for this reason the *Baby Hermits* are alternatively known as the *Gomu Band*.

¹³ Tracts of the Arafura Sea traditionally owned by Yirritja peoples are collectively called Manbuyŋa.

protection strategy for the Arafura Sea with the Commonwealth and Northern Territory governments.¹⁴ On the Northern Land Council's web-site, Djiniyini and Yumbulul (1994) explain the importance of the Arafura Sea to Yolŋu.

The Arafura Sea or as Yolŋu call it, Manbuyŋa ga Rulyapa, dominates our lives. More of our totems come from the sea than from the land. Sacred sites, although they have been underwater for thousands of years now, are still sung about. Our ceremonial dances are about the sea and many of our creation spirits began in the sea (Djiniyini and Yumbulul 1994).

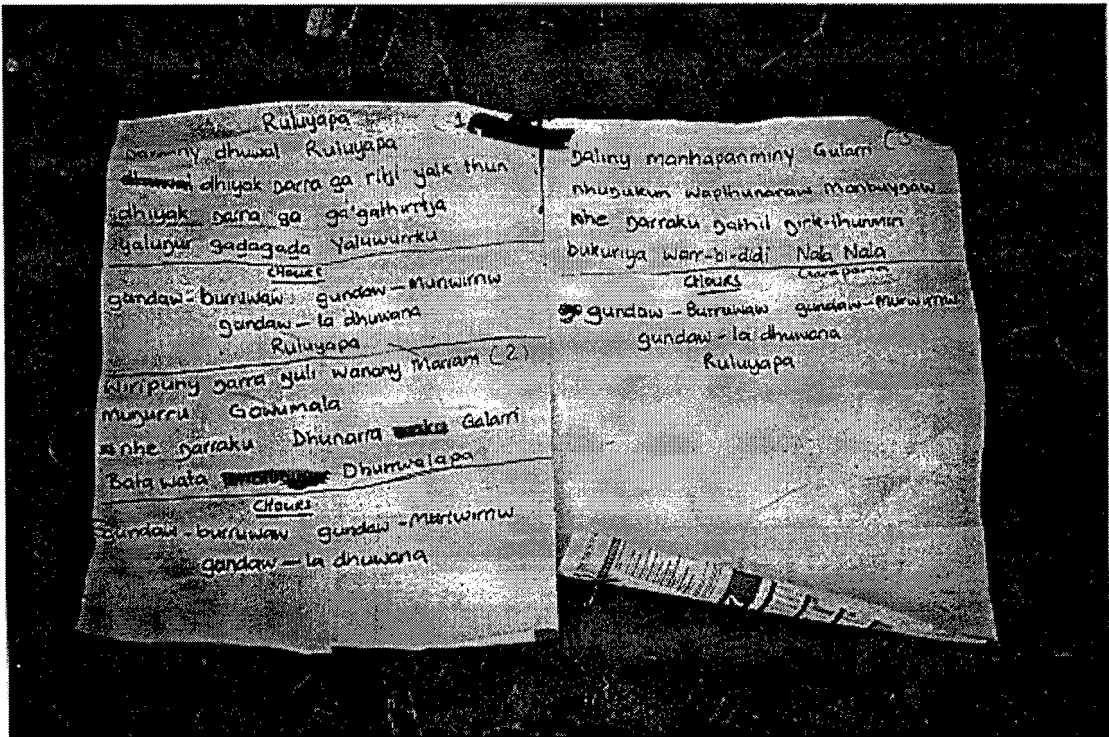
Figure 5. Njulupani and Gurrumul's affiliation through a common ŋändipulu (mother clan)



¹⁴ The marine protection strategy that was devised for Manbuyŋa ga Rulyapa as a result of the committee's deliberations can be read on the Northern Land Council's web-site (Galiwin'ku Community 1994).

The *Dharrwar Band's* initial recording of 'Rulyapa' (Gutiwa and Wuławuła 1997a) on 30 August 1997 was conducted on the front porch of Djiniyini's Galiwin'ku home using a home stereo unit equipped with two *karaoke*-style microphone inputs. The recording itself features a chordal accompaniment played on acoustic guitar and Yamaha PSR-320 electronic keyboard in one-touch auto-chord mode over which the amassed members of the *Dharrwar* and *Saltwater Bands* sing in two-part harmony. Gutiwa of the *Dharrwar Band* and Gurrumul of the *Saltwater Band* sing the song's melody throughout with the *Dharrwar Band's* Wuławuła and Andrew Minyinjū Garawirtja and the Galiwin'ku *Saltwater Band's* Njūlupani harmonising its choruses. To aid his singers in their task of performing this new song correctly, Wuławuła wrote the lyrics of 'Rulyapa' (Gutiwa and Wuławuła 1997a) on two large sheets of A2-sized paper which lay on the ground, as pictured in Figure 6, so that all assembled could read them. By nightfall, over a dozen copies of the song had been distributed to participating musicians and interested onlookers, and within a day were heard playing on tape decks throughout Galiwin'ku.

Figure 6. The Djambarrpuyŋu lyrics of 'Rulyapa' (Gutiwa and Wuławuła 1997a) as written on song-sheets by Jeffrey Wuławuła Dhamarrandji in Galiwin'ku, 30 August 1997.



Like Thompson's 'Live or Die' (1975), to the Western ear 'Rulyapa' (Gutiwa and Wuławuła 1997a) is indistinguishable in style or form from a generic three-minute rock song. However, unlike 'Live or Die' (Thompson 1975) the lyrics and thematic content of 'Rulyapa' (Gutiwa and Wuławuła 1997a) are a complete mystery to listeners who do not understand Djambarrpuyŋu. As its title suggests, 'Rulyapa' (Gutiwa and Wuławuła 1997a) is about tracts of the Arafura Sea owned by clans of the Dhuwa moiety and on the homemade recording of the song the sound of waves crashing upon the shore, as emulated by the Yamaha PSR-320 electronic keyboard, features prominently after each chorus repetition.

The English translation of 'Rulyapa' (Wängarr, Yurranydjil and Miller 1998) provided in Appendix 3 reveals that the song's lyrics name and identify relationships that exist between Rulyapa's coastal waters, sacred off-shore rock formations that jut from these waters, Elcho Island's river system, and the tidal estuary where these rivers and Rulyapa meet. The song also links these Dhuwa sites to Manbuyŋa (Yirritja tracts of the Arafura Sea) and the sacred rock formations that jut from its waters. The lyrics of 'Rulyapa' (Gutiwa and Wuławuła 1997a) not only describe an estuarial system which encompasses the sea, rivers and tides, but situate these natural phenomena and geographical features within a cosmology of cross-moiety and intra-moiety relationships that draw upon and reflect sacred beliefs and practices. Indeed, songs such as 'Rulyapa' (Gutiwa and Wuławuła 1997a) are drawn from *manikay* song series and are similar in function to songs of the traditional *manikay* genre in that they pay respect to one's family, country and ancestors.

Although 'Rulyapa' (Gutiwa and Wuławuła 1997a) was composed to be enjoyed and understood by a general listenership, on a ceremonial level, the sites and cosmological relationships identified in this song also embody secret sacred meanings and knowledge to which authorised access can only be gained through birthright and initiation. Ceremonial authority constitutes an important part of Yolŋu song-composition to the extent that a song such as 'Rulyapa' (Gutiwa and Wuławuła 1997a) could not have been written by someone without an appropriate understanding of its cosmological significance and the assent of those who are similarly authorised. In an interview given in Galiwin'ku late in 1997, Gutuwa and Wuławuła (1997b) discuss their authority to compose songs with lyrics drawn from Wutjara Djambarrpuyŋu cosmology and their elders' responses to this endeavour.

Gutiwa[Old people] have said, 'Well, you guys [in the *Dharrwar Band*] are singing the right songs. You are the right person to sing that song because you own that song. You own that totem. You own those identities. You own this land. You own this sea and you've got every

right to sing that song,' and [then] they give us more ideas. So me and Jeffrey [Wuławuła], we just sit down and write some more songs.

Wuławuła

Sometimes some Yirritja old people come around because in 'Rulyapa' we name *Manbuyña* [which] represents the Yirritja moiety.... Old people didn't want these songs to be brought up before but now we are telling them [that] we are proud of ourselves and for the land that we are singing, and that there is something here for us that we can show the world.

Gutiwa

For example, I'm named after Djambuwal, see? That's my name – Djambuwal. Djambuwal is a big, very thick, dark cloud [also a tornado or waterspout]. See, I start the rain. I start the Bulwunu [east wind season in March–April].¹⁵ I start the Rulyapa. I start everything because I'm Djambuwal. I'm a leader. I sing songs in my tribe. I lead them. I sing in my own language with clapsticks and didjeridu. That's why I'm called Djambuwal – because I start everything . . . I was taught in many ways. I've learned in a cultural [Yolŋu] way and in *balanda* [white] ways. See, I like to write songs. I give Jeffrey [Wuławuła] a hand and we write songs. (Gutiwa and Wuławuła 1997b).

'Rulyapa' (Gutiwa and Wuławuła 1997a) is much more than an exercise in diversionary entertainment. It evokes cosmological images of place and ancestors that hold great personal and spiritual significance for local Yolŋu audiences. Although stylistically imitative of rock, 'Rulyapa' (Gutiwa and Wuławuła 1997a) is better described as a creative extension of Yolŋu beliefs and values, that are conventionally expressed through traditional genres of song, dance and painting, into a recently-introduced medium. As such, this song and the event of its initial recording provide a striking example of how introduced technologies and musical influences have been used by Aboriginal songwriters to promote their own cultural traditions and to proudly encourage a continuing respect for country and ancestors in communities across Arnhem Land.

¹⁵ In September 1997, Wuławuła also composed a song about Bulwunu, the east wind, which each year brings rain that begins the wild fruit season.

Songs such as 'Live or Die' (Thompson 1975) and 'Rulyapa' (Gutiwa and Wulawula 1997a) hold great meaning for Aboriginal audiences in Arnhem Land. However, as these meanings are seldom located in musical style or accord with Western conceptualisations popular music, they remain largely inconspicuous to foreign listeners. Therefore, to facilitate an informed insight into the music of bands in Arnhem Land it is necessary to move beyond analyses that rely too heavily upon the interpretation of musical elements within the theoretical constructs of Western discourse and, in the disciplinary tradition of ethnomusicology, take direction from the locally-contextualised meanings with which Aboriginal musicians imbue their own musical creativity within the simultaneous contexts of the contemporary world and the ever-present Dreaming.

Appendix 1

List of Recordings Featuring Musicians from Arnhem Land

GULINGULIN

Blekbala Mujik

- 1990 *Nitmiluk!* Prod. Colin Simpson. CAAMA Music, 209.
- 1990 *Midnait Mujik.* CAAMA Music, 213.
- 1993 *Come-n-Dance: Mujik from Blek Bala to You Fellas!!* Prod. Peter Miller and Alan Murphy. CAAMA Music, 226.
- 1995 *Blekbala Mujik.* Prod. Ian Faith, Apaak Jupurrula [aka Peter Miller] and Alan Murphy. CAAMA Music, 244.
- 1995 Music-video. 'Come-n-Dance.' *Land Rights Views*, No. 6 Northern Land Council.

NGUKURR

Broken English

- 1975 'Live or Die.' By Dan Thompson. (*My Boys are Good Boys* et al. 1997: 16)
- 1985 'Out of Control.' By Keith Rogers and Freddie Harrison. (*My Boys are Good Boys* et al. 1997: 8)
- 1990 'Arnhem Land.' By Steve Nagle and John Rogers. (*Blekbala Mujik* et al. 1991: 6)

NUMBULWAR

NT Express

- 1990 'Yaki Yaki.' By David Murrungun. (*Blekbala Mujik et al.* 1990: [8])
- 1991 'Lonesome One.' By David Murrungun and Hubert Rami. (*Blekbala Mujik et al.* 1991: [5])

ANGURUGU

Poison Whiskey

- 1993 Music-video. 'Crusin' on Tonight.' *Land Rights Views*, No. 5. Northern Land Council.
- 1994 'Streets of No Return.' By Joaz Wurramara. (*My Boys are Good Boys et al.* 1997: [11])

Sacred Legend

- 1995 'Speak No Evil.' By Raymond Manggura. (*My Boys are Good Boys et al.* 1997: [9])

Harry Yalungani

- 1996 'Mamarika.' (*My Boys are Good Boys et al.* 1997: [2])
- 1996 'Peace' (*My Boys are Good Boys et al.* 1997: [13])

Leonard Amagula (Amarranga Band)

- 1994 'Home Sweet Home (Amarranga).' By Leonard Amagula and Luke Lalara. (*My Boys are Good Boys et al.* 1997: [15])

MILYAKBURRA

Bickerton Island Band

- 1996 'Milyakburra Arumunanja.' By Allan Wurramara. (*My Boys are Good Boys* et al. 1997: [10])

YIRRKALA

Yothu Yindi

- 1989 *Homeland Movement*. Prod. Leszek Karski. Mushroom, D19520.
- 1992 *Tribal Voice*. Prod. Mark Moffatt. Mushroom, TVD9101.
- 1993 *Diti Murru: The Videos*. Prod. Stephen M. Johnson and Axolotol. Mushroom, V81305.
- 1994 *Freedom*. Prod. Ian Faith, Robert Musso, Bill Laswell and Lamar Lowder. Mushroom, TVD93380.
- 1995 Music-Video. 'Timeless Land.' *Land Rights Views*, No. 4. Northern Land Council.
- 1995 *Birrkuta: Wild Honey*. Prod. Lamar Lowder and Andrew Farriss. Mushroom, TVD93461.

GALIWIN'KU

My Boys are Good Boys

- 1996 'Guyularri.' By George Djilayŋa Burarrwaŋa, Bruce Layilayi Burarrwaŋa, W. Manyjarri and John Yirryirŋu. (*My Boys are Good Boys* et al. 1997: [1])
- 1996 'Djutarra.' By George Djilayŋa Burarrwaŋa, Bruce Layilayi Burarrwaŋa, Bobby Wakana and Peter Datjin Burarrwaŋa. (*My Boys are Good Boys* et al. 1997: [14] and Yovich et al. 1997: [6])
- 1996 'Marrayilyil.' By George Djilayŋa Burarrwaŋa, Peter Datjin Burarrwaŋa, Joe Neparrŋa Gumbula, Yirrnŋa and Bruce Layilayi Burarrwaŋa. (Yovich et al. 1997: [12])

Warumpi Band

- 1983 *Warumpi Band*. CAAMA Music.
- 1987 *Go Bush!* Festival, 38707.
- 1988 *Big Name, No Blankets*. Festival, 38935.
- 1996 *To Much Humbug*. Prod. Mark Ovenden. CAAMA Music, 260.

Soft Sands

- 1985 *Soft Sands*. Imparja.
- 1990 'Land Our Mother.' By Frank Djirrimbilpilwuy Garawirrtja and Joe Neparrŋa Gumbula. (*Blekbala Mujik* et al. 1990: [5])
- 1997 'Promised Land.' By Harry Bäriya Garrawurra. (*My Boys are Good Boys* et al. 1997: [20])

Saltwater Band

- 1996 'Our Lady [sic Wulkuman].' By Manuel Njulupani Dhurrkay, Frank Guŋmalwa Wunurŋmurra, Joshua Munguŋa Dhurrkay, Adrian Garawirrtja, Kelvin Gondarra and Marcus Dhurrkay. (*My Boys are Good Boys* et al. 1997: [7])
- 1997 'Saltwater (Galiwin'ku Song).' By Manuel Njulupani Dhurrkay, Frank Guŋmalwa Wunurŋmurra, Joshua Munguŋa Dhurrkay, Adrian Garawirrtja, Kelvin Gondarra and Marcus Dhurrkay. (*My Boys are Good Boys* et al. 1997: [19])
- 1999 *Saltwater Band—Gapu Damurruŋ'*. Prod. Craig Pilkington. Skinny Fish.

MILINGIMBI

Wirrinyga Band

- 1990 *Dreamtime Shadow*. CAAMA Music, 215.
- 1995 *Dreamtime Wisdom, Modern Time Vision*. Prod. Shane Howard.
CAAMA Music, 248.

MANINGRIDA

Sunrize Band

- 1989 *Sunset to Rize!* Australia Council for the Arts.
- 1993 *Lunggurrma*. Prod. Chris Thompson. ABC Music, 518 832-4.
- 1994 Music-video. 'Land Rights.' *Land Rights Views*, No. 4.
Northern Land Council.
- 1994 Music-video. 'Lem Bana Mani Mani.' *Land Rights Views*, No. 4.
Northern Land Council.
- 1995 *Demurru Hits: Maningrida Soundtracks*. Prod. Allen Murphy.
Maningrida Media. [2], [4], [5], [8], [11], [12] and [14]
- 1996 'Baru (Crocodile).' Trad. Warra Warra, arr. Ben Pascoe.
Womadelaide '95. ABC Music, 4836182. [1]

Letterstick Band

- 1995 *Demurru Hits: Maningrida Soundtracks*. Prod. Allen Murphy.
Maningrida Media. [3], [6], [9] and [10]
- 1996 'Bartpa.' By Colin Maxwell. (*My Boys are Good Boys* et al. 1997: [3])

- 1996 'Love is Like a Dream.' By Tim Wilson. (*My Boys are Good Boys*
et al. 1997: [6])
- 1996 'Yi-Rrana.' By David Maxwell and Terrence Wilson. (*My Boys are Good Boys*
et al. 1997: [17])

Wild Water

- 1997 *Bartpa*. Northern Territory Government Arts and Cultural Affairs.
- 1998 Music-video. 'Difrent Colours.' *Land Rights Views*, No. 7. Northern Land Council.

Appendix 2

Lyrics and Short Transcription of 'Live or Die' (Thompson 1975)¹⁸

'Live or Die' (Thompson 1975)

He was goin' home at a half past four
Didn't know where he was goin'
He told his mum at home on the telephone
Says he won't be comin'

He's gonna live, he's gonna die
He's gonna live, live or die
He's gonna live, who's gonna die
He's gonna live, live or die

You can see her comin', she's comin' down the road
You could see her carryin' such a heavy load
There's somethin' 'bout you baby, I just can't see
I'm tryin' to tell you baby, you'll make a fool here out o' me

We're gonna live, we're gonna die
We're gonna live, live or die
We're gonna live, we're gonna die
We're gonna live, live or die

Here she comes, she's drivin' down the road
You can see her carryin' such a great big load
Somethin' about this woman knocks me right off my feet
Stop your dirty lyin', you're makin' a fool out o' me

We're gonna live, we're gonna die
We're gonna live, live or die
We're gonna live, we're gonna die
We're gonna live, live or die

¹⁸ The Recording of 'Live or Die' (Thompson 1975) that features on the *Meinmuk* album (*My Boys are Good Boys* et al. 1997: [16]) was played during the original presentation of this paper. The short transcription that follows is a rough notational representation of this version of song. Other versions with minor lyrical and melodic variations are recorded in the author's collection

Live or Die

Dan Thompson (1975)

Transcribed by Aaron Corn


♩ = 120

Lead Voice 

sempre 8vb


Guitar 


Bass Guitar 



He was com-in' home At a half past four


Bm Bm Bm E Bm






Did-n't know where he was go-in'


Bm Bm Bm E Bm





He told his mum at home on the te-le-phone

Bm Bm Bm E Bm



Says he won't be com- in'

Bm Bm Bm E Bm

He's go- nna live He's go- nna die

Bm Bm Bm E Bm

He's go- nna live Live or die

Bm Bm Bm E Bm

He's go- nna live He's go- nna die

Bm Bm Bm E Bm

He's go- nna live Live or die

Bm Bm Bm E Bm

System 1: Vocal line and guitar accompaniment. Lyrics: "You can see her com-in'". Chords: Bm, Bm, Bm, E, Bm, Bm, Bm.

System 2: Vocal line and guitar accompaniment. Lyrics: "She's com-in' down the road". Chords: Bm, E, Bm, Bm, Bm.

System 3: Vocal line and guitar accompaniment. Lyrics: "You could see her car-ry- in'". Chords: Bm, E, Bm, Bm, Bm.

System 4: Vocal line and guitar accompaniment. Lyrics: "such a hea- vy load" and "There's". Chords: Bm, E, Bm, Bm, Bm, Bm, E, Bm.

System 5: Vocal line and guitar accompaniment. Lyrics: "some-thin'bout you ba- by" and "I just can't see". Chords: Bm, Bm, Bm, E, Bm.

I'm try-in' to tell you ba- by

Bm Bm Bm E Bm Bm Bm

you'll make a fool here out o' me

Bm E Bm Bm Bm

We're go- nna live

Bm E Bm Bm Bm

We're go- nna die We're go- nna live

Bm E Bm Bm Bm

Live or die We're go- nna live

Bm E Bm Bm Bm

We're go- nna die We're go- nna live

Bm E Bm Bm Bm

Live or die

Bm E Bm Bm Bm Bm E Bm

Here she comes she's driv-in' down the

Bm Bm Bm E Bm Bm Bm Bm E Bm

road You can see her car- ry- in'

Bm Bm Bm E Bm Bm Bm

such a hea- vy load

Bm E Bm Bm Bm Bm E Bm

Some-thin' a- bout this wo- man knocks me right off my feet

Bm Bm Bm E Bm

Bm Bm Bm E Bm

Stop your dir- ty ly- in' You're mak- in' a fool out o' me

Bm Bm Bm E Bm

We're go- nna live

Bm Bm Bm E Bm Bm Bm

We're go- nna die We're go- nna live

Bm E Bm Bm Bm

Live or die We're go- nna live
Bm E Bm Bm Bm

We're go- nna die We're go- nna live
Bm E Bm Bm Bm

Live or die
Bm E Bm Bm Bm Bm E Bm

Bm Bm Bm E Bm Bm Bm Bm E Bm Bm Δ 9
rit.

Appendix 3

Lyrics and Short Transcription of 'Rulapa' (Gutiwa and Wulawula 1997a)¹⁹

Lyrics translated by Sandra Wängarr Dhamarraṅḅji, Lorrain Yurranydjil Dhurrkay and Margrēt Miller.

Njarrany dhuwal Rulyapa
Dhiyak ṅarra ga ritji-yalkthun
Dhiyak ṅarra ga gaṅgathirr
Yalṅuny Gadakada Yaluwurrku

Gundaw – Burruwaw
Gundaw – Muruwirriw
Gundaw – Lathuwana
 Rulyapa

Wiripuny ṅarra ṅuli wana[ny]
Mrram Muṅurra Gawumala
Nhe ṅarraku dhunarraṅ Guḷarri
Batawata Dhurralapa

Gundaw – Burruwaw
Gundaw – Muruwirriw
Gundaw – Lathuwana
 Rulyapa

Naliny manapanmin Guḷarri
Njurukun wathunaraw Manbuyṅa
Nhe ṅarraku ṅathil [ṅirrk-thunmin]
nyarkthunmirr
Bukuriya Warrpididi Garapana

Gundaw – Burruwaw
Gundaw – Muruwirriw
Gundaw – Lathuwana
 Rulyapa

I am Rulyapa
 I am displaying my characteristics
 With these characteristics I am preparing
 Gadakada Yaluwurrku [Rulyapa's waters]

The rock [named] Burruwa
 The rock [named] Muruwirri
 The rock [named] Lathuwana
 Rulyapa

Also I have branches (of rivers)
 Luring Gawumala [branches' names]
 You, Guḷarri [rivers' mouth], swell for me
 Batawata and Dhurralapa [rivers' names]

The rock [named] Burruwa
 The rock [named] Muruwirri
 The rock [named] Lathuwana
 Rulyapa

You, Guḷarri, and I [Rulyapa] come together
 So that we may call to Manbuyṅa
 You [Manbuyṅa] are already striking (getting
 ready) for me
 At Bukuriya, Warrpididi and Garapana [rocks in
 Manbuyṅa]

The rock [named] Burruwa
 The rock [named] Muruwirri
 The rock [named] Lathuwana
 Rulyapa

¹⁹ The original presentation of this paper featured a field video of this song being recorded by the *Dharrwar Band* in Galiwin'ku on 30 August 1997. The short transcription has been taken from the audio tape that was recorded that day.

Rulyapa

Gutiwa and Wulawuła (1997a)

Transcribed by Aaron Corn

♩ = 120

Bm

Chorus *sempre 8vb*

Lead Voices *sempre 8vb*

Bm

ŋa-r-rany dhu-wal Rul-ya-

F# **A**

pa Dhi-yak ŋa-rra ga ri-tji- yalk-

Bm **Bm**

thun Dhi-yak ŋa-rra ga

F#

ga-j-ga- thi- rr

A Bm

Yal-ju- ny Ga-da- ka-da Ya-lu- wurr-ku

G A

Gun- daw Bu- ru-

Bm

waw

G A

Gun- daw Mu- ru- wi-

The musical score consists of four systems, each with two staves. The key signature is one sharp (F#), and the time signature is 4/4. The lyrics are written in a non-Latin script, with syllables grouped together. Chord markings are placed above the staves.

System 1: Chord Bm. Lyrics: riw riw.

System 2: Chords G and A. Lyrics: Gun- daw La- thu- wa- Gun- daw La- thu- wa-

System 3: Chords Bm, A, and NC. Lyrics: na e- Rul- ya- na Rul- ya-

System 4: Chord Bm. Lyrics: pa pa.

2. Wiripuny garru nuli wana (ny)
Märram Mujurra Gawumala
Nhe garraku dhunarraḡ Guḡarri
Baḡawaḡa Dhurraḡapa
3. ḡaliny manapanmin Guḡarri
ḡurukun wāthunaraw Manbuḡḡaw
Nhe garraku ḡathil (ḡirrk-thunmin) nyarkthunmirr
Bukuriya Warrpiḡiḡi Garapana

References

- Blekbala Mujik et al, 1990. *Sing Loud, Play Strong*. CAAMA Music, 206.
- Blekbala Mujik et al, 1991. *Croc Rock*. Prod. Tony Joyce. Arafura Records, DEX 270 CDE.
- Breen M, ed. 1989. *Our Place, Our Music: Aboriginal Music*. Australian Popular Music in Perspective, 2. Aboriginal Studies Press, Canberra, ACT.
- Broken English*, 1996. 'Battle of the Bands, Barunga Cultural and Sports Festival.' Video-recorded by Aaron Corn. Barunga, Northern Territory, 22 September.
- Castles J, 1992. 'Tjungaringanyi: Aboriginal Rock.' *From Pop to Punk to Postmodernism: Popular Music and Australian Culture from the 1960s to the 1990s*. Australian Cultural Studies, Allen, Sydney, NSW, pp 25–39.
- Cooke M, 1996. 'Yolŋu Kinship: A Mathematics without Numbers.' *Aboriginal Languages in Contemporary Contexts: Yolŋu-Matha at Galiwin'ku*. Ed. Michael Cooke. Batchelor College, Batchelor, Northern Territory, pp 65–85.
- Djiniyini Dhamarrandji K, & Yumbulul T, 1994. 'Manbuyŋa ga Rulyapa.' <www.ozemail.com.au/~nlc95/Mgr.htm>, Northern Land Council, Darwin, Northern Territory.
- Djirrimbilpilwuy Garawirtja F, 1997. Interviewed by Aaron Corn. Milingimbi, Northern Territory, 16 November.
- Dunbar-Hall P, 1997. 'Music and Meaning: The Aboriginal Rock Album.' *Australian Aboriginal Studies* (1), 38–47.
- Galiwin'ku Community, 1994. 'An Indigenous Marine Protection Strategy for Manbuyŋa ga Rulyapa.' <www.ozemail.com.au/~nlc95/Mgrstrategy.htm>, Northern Land Council, Darwin, Northern Territory, November.
- Garde M, 1997a. 'Arnhem Land Music.' <www.peg.apc.org/~bawinanga/music>, Bawinanga Aboriginal Corporation, Maningrida, Northern Territory, 16 April.
- Garde M, 1997b. 'The Didjeridu in Maningrida.' www.peg.apc.org/~bawinanga/didjeridu1.html>, Bawinanga Aboriginal Corporation, Maningrida, Northern Territory, 10 October.

- Gutiwa Dhamarrandji B & Wuławuła Dhamarrandji J, 1997a. 'Rulyapa.' Perf. *Dharrwar Band*. Galiwin'ku, Northern Territory, 30 August.
- Gutiwa Dhamarrandji, B & J Wuławuła Dhamarrandji, 1997b. Interviewed by Aaron Corn. Galiwin'ku, Northern Territory, 5 November.
- Hayward P, 1993. 'Safe, Exotic and Somewhere Else: Yothu Yindi, 'Treaty' and the Mediation of Aboriginality.' *Perfect Beat: The Pacific Journal of Research into Contemporary Music and Popular Culture*, 1 (2): 33–41.
- Kelly P, & Carmody K, 1993. 'From Little Things Big Things Grow.' *Bloodlines*. Prod. Kev Carmody and Andrew O'Phee. Festival, D30954. [12].
- Knopoff S, 1997. 'Accompanying the Dreaming: Determinants of Didjeridu Style in Traditional and Popular Yolŋu Song' (Neuenfeldt, ed. 1997: 39–67).
- Lapulŋ Dhamarrandji K, 1995. 'Dreamtime Wisdom, Modern Time Vision.' *Dreamtime Wisdom, Modern Time Vision*. Perf. Wirrinyga Band. Prod. Shane Howard. CAAMA Music, 248.
- Lapulŋ Dhamarrandji K, 1999. Interviewed by Aaron Corn. Milingimbi, Northern Territory, 2 July.
- Lawe Davies C, 1993. 'Aboriginal Rock Music: Space and Place.' *Rock and Popular Music: Politics, Policies, Institutions*. Ed. Tony Bennett et al. London: Routledge. 249–65.
- Mandawuy Yunupinju, et al. 1992a. 'Treaty.' (Yothu Yindi 1992: [2])
- Mandawuy Yunupinju, 1992b. 'Treaty.' Prod. Stephen M Johnson. *Diti Murru: The Videos*. Perf. Yothu Yindi. Mushroom, V81305. [1]
- Mandawuy Yunupinju, 1992c. 'Treaty: Filthy Lucre Mix.' Prod. Stephen M. Johnson. *Diti Murru: The Videos*. Perf. Yothu Yindi. Mushroom, V81305. [4]
- Marett A, 1994. 'Wangga: Socially Powerful Songs?' *The World of Music*, 36 (1): 67–81.
- Morphy, H, 1984. *Journey to the Crocodile's Nest: An Accompanying Monograph to the Film Madarrpa Funeral at Gurka'wuy*. AIAS New Series, No. 44. AIAS, Canberra, ACT.
- Morphy H, *My Boys Are Good Boys* et al. 1997. *Meinmuk: Music from the Top End*. Prod. Chris Thompson. ABC Music, 7243 8 33193 2 9.

- Neuenfeldt K, 1993a. 'The Didjeridu and the Overdub: Technologising and Transposing Aural Images of Aboriginality.' *Perfect Beat: The Pacific Journal of Research into Contemporary Music and Popular Culture*, 1 (2): 60.
- Neuenfeldt K, 1993b. 'Yothu Yindi and *Ganma*: The Cultural Transposition of Aboriginal Agenda Through Metaphor and Music.' *Journal of Australian Studies*, 38: 1–11.
- Neuenfeldt K, 1994. 'The Essentialistic, the Exotic, the Equivocal and the Absurd: The Cultural Production and Use of the Didjeridu in World Music.' *Perfect Beat: The Pacific Journal of Research into Contemporary Music and Popular Culture*, 2 (1): 87–104.
- Neuenfeldt K, 1997. 'The Didjeridu in the Desert: The Social Relations of an Ethnographic Object Entangled in Culture and Commerce.' (Neuenfeldt, ed. 1997: 107–22)
- Neuenfeldt K, ed. 1997. *The Didjeridu: From Arnhem Land to Internet*. Libbey, Sydney NSW.
- Nicol L, 1993. 'Culture, Custom and Collaboration: The Production of Yothu Yindi's 'Treaty' Videos.' *Perfect Beat: The Pacific Journal of Research into Contemporary Music and Popular Culture*, 1 (2): 23–31.
- Roach A, 1990. 'Took the Children Away.' *Charcoal Lane*. Mushroom, D30386. Prod. Paul Kelly and Steve Connolly. [6].
- Stubington J, & Dunbar-Hall P, 1994. 'Yothu Yindi's 'Treaty': *Ganma* in Music.' *Popular Music*, 13 (3): 243–59.
- Thompson D, 1975. 'Live or Die.' Perf. Broken English. (*My Boys are Good Boys* et al. 1997: [16]).
- Thompson D, 1996. Interviewed by Tony Collins. ABC Radio, Maningrida, Northern Territory.
- Thompson D, 1997. Interviewed by Aaron Corn. Roper Bar Crossing, Northern Territory, 17 September.
- Wängarr Dhamarrandji S, Yurranydjil Dhurrkay L, & Miller M, trans. 1998. 'Rulyapa.' (Gutiwa and Wuławuła 1997a)
- Yovich U, et al. 1997. *Songlines: Acoustic Sounds from Black Australia*. Prod. Rachel Perkins. ABC Music, 7243 8 57848 2 8.
- Yothu Yindi, 1989. *Homeland Movement*. Prod. Leszek Karski. Mushroom, D19520.

- Yothu Yindi, 1992. *Tribal Voice*. Prod. Mark Moffatt. Mushroom, TVD91017.
- Yothu Yindi, 1993. *Freedom*. Prod. Ian Faith, Robert Musso, Bill Laswell and Lamar Lowder. Mushroom, TVD93380.
- Yothu Yindi, 1996. *Birrkuta: Wild Honey*. Prod. Lamar Lowder and Andrew Farriss. Mushroom, TVD93461.
- Zorc R, 1996. *Yolŋu-Matha Dictionary*. Batchelor College, Batchelor, Northern Territory.

North Australia Research Unit Discussion Paper Series

- No 13/1999 Aaron CORN, *Dreamtime Wisdom, Modern Time Vision: The Aboriginal Acculturation of Popular Music in Arnhem Land, Australia*, 40pp. ISBN 0 7315 3383 6
- No 12/1998 Patrick DODSON, *Will the Circle be Unbroken? Cycles of Survival for Indigenous Australians*, 14pp. ISBN 0 7315 4615 6
- No 11/1998 Grant TAMBLING, *A Social Policy Research Agenda to take the Territory, and the Nation, into the 21st Century—Establishing an Appropriate Framework*.
and
Cliff WALSH, *What is Good Social Policy?* 30pp. ISBN 0 7315 4613 X
- No 10/1998 RJ (Bob) SEARLE, *Indigenous Population and the Distribution of Financial Assistance Grants*, 27pp. ISBN 0 7315 4600 8
- No 9/1998 Tony BARNES, *Statistics and Data Collection Concerning Indigenous Australians*, 22pp. ISBN 0 7315 2894 8
- No 8/1998 RJ MAY, *Nugget, Pike, et al. The Role of the Reserve Bank of Australia in Papua New Guinea's Decolonisation*, 38pp. ISBN 0 7315 2892 1
- No 7/1997 Michael WALSH, *Cross Cultural Communication Problems in Aboriginal Australia*, 23pp. ISBN 0 7315 2874 3
- No 6/1997 Harry ALLEN, *Autonomy, Mutuality, Hierarchy: Pervasive Qualities in Aboriginal Economic Life*, 32pp. ISBN 0 7315 2548 5
- No 5/1996 Nonie SHARP, *Reimagining Sea Space in History and Contemporary Life: Pulling up Some Old Anchors*, 31pp. ISBN 0 7315 2532 9
- No 4/1996 Christine FLETCHER, *Trapped in Civil Society: Aborigines and Federalism in Australia*, 25pp. ISBN 0 7315 2529 9
- No 3/1996 Sean SEXTON, *Aboriginal Land Rights, the Law, and Empowerment: The Failure of Economic Theory as a Critique of Land Rights*, 20pp. ISBN 0 7315 2494 2
- No 2/1996 Deborah Bird ROSE, *Indigenous Customary Law and the Courts: Post-modern Ethics and Legal Pluralism*, 30pp. ISBN 0 7315 2493 4
- No 1/1996 Michael DODSON, *Assimilation versus Self-Determination: No Contest*, 13pp. ISBN 0 7315 2496 9