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## Musical form and style in Murriny Patha *djanba* songs at Wadeye (Northern Territory, Australia)

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One of the most stunning performances I ever witnessed was a *djanba* ceremony at Peppimenarti near Wadeye in Australia's Northern Territory in 1998. A group of about forty people, wearing colorful clothes and beautifully painted up with traditional designs, processed towards the building in which a ceremony was shortly to take place to confer a bravery award on a young man who had saved his friend from a crocodile attack. The core of the group was a small ensemble of singers, senior men and women accompanying their songs on resonant ironwood clapsticks. As the melodies repeatedly descended and plateaued, separate groups of male and female dancers alternately surged towards the stage and ebbed back to surround the singers, their footfalls timed by the clapsticks. The combination of energy, grace and group synchrony was breathtaking.

Before long I was drawn into an extended engagement with the *djanba* performers and their families, into grappling to learn a little of the notoriously difficult Murriny Patha language,<sup>1</sup> and into a major project to document the songs and their history. This chapter is about the musical form of these *djanba* songs--public dance-songs from Australia's northwest Northern Territory--and how they fit into the musical landscape of traditional Australian Indigenous song styles.

As several commentators have noted (Nettl 1964; Blum 1992), ethnomusicologists characterize musical style to allow comparison—between different genres, different repertoires, or different composers. Two methodological challenges of particular importance to the discipline arise in definition and understanding of style across linguistic and cultural boundaries. These relate to analytical frameworks on the one hand and social meaning on the other. Diversity in musical elements and organizational principles in the selected musical repertoires may mitigate against the development of appropriate common analytical terms and frameworks that can operate across them: many ethnomusicologists prefer to describe the internal logic of particular musical practices and traditions, and are wary of imposing *a priori* categories developed to describe exotic musical cultures. Secondly, in a comparative analysis it may be difficult to do justice to fine-grained differences of social meanings and

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<sup>1</sup> The sound system used in Murriny Patha is set out in Appendix 1. Note that the final 'y' in 'Murriny' is not pronounced as a separate syllable. Rather, it signifies that the preceding 'n' is to be pronounced as a palatal nasal, like the sound in the middle of the English word 'onion', or in the Spanish word 'señor'. In addition to the efforts of our Wadeye collaborators to teach us about the songs and their significance, I have relied on the ongoing assistance of my linguist collaborators Michael Walsh and Joe Blythe, together with the published work of Chester Street (Street 1987).

performance practice, two key concerns of ethnomusicology's 'study of music in culture' (Merriam 1963; Blum 1992).

Nevertheless, musical cultures do not exist in a vacuum. Whether through formal or informal contexts for sharing and displaying music face to face, or through globalized media of music commoditization, musicians are not only aware of the musical traditions of their neighbors or exotic others, but frequently react to them, sometimes intensifying the contrasting elements of their own musical practices in order to mark off their own identity, sometimes drawing inspiration from encounters with novel musical practices to generate innovation within their own traditions. Musical style is as much a social fact as it is an analytical concept. In the case of *djanba*, encounters and exchanges with other musical styles have been of profound importance in its genesis and development.

It goes without saying that we cannot access these social meanings of musical style merely by describing the features of musical style. As Stephanie Ross remarks:

... the significance of any given feature is contextually limned. We cannot correctly interpret it unless we know the options that were available to the artist, the repertoire from which it was selected. ... The work of previous artists, present conventions, available materials and techniques, and the interests and skills of practising artists are all determinants of style. ... [O]ne factor that should shape our account of general style and its temporal evolution is our background knowledge of the context of creation--what was available to each artist at the time. (Ross 2003)

While her observation pertains to critical assessment of general style<sup>2</sup> in the visual arts, it applies equally well to the study of style in Western music, as acknowledged by such critics as Meyer and Levinson (Meyer 1989; Levinson 1990). In ethnomusicology, as in the study of past musical cultures, the knowledge of context required to interpret stylistic features depends on the analyst's understanding of performance practice as well as the circumstances surrounding the creation of the piece of music (Blum 1992).

The stylistics of *djanba* in relation to its context of creation and use will come into focus here through close attention to one song. Its composer shaped the song to conform to the established conventions of the *djanba* genre and to distinguish it from songs belonging to other genres within the community of

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<sup>2</sup> 'General style' is the style of a repertory, an era or a society, as opposed to 'individual style' of an artist or a work

Wadeye, while allowing it to continue to interoperate with these genres in a ceremonial context.

There are numerous relevant ways to compare *djanba* style with that of two related genres, *junba* from the Kimberley region, some hundreds of kilometers to the southwest of Wadeye, and *lirrga*, another dance-song genre from Wadeye. My discussion of *djanba* will draw on recordings, interviews and discussions assembled and annotated by the Murriny Patha Song Project,<sup>3</sup> a collaboration between elders in the Wadeye community and a research team including linguists and ethnomusicologists. For *lirrga* and *junba*, I will rely on two previous projects in which I participated in the 1990s.<sup>4</sup>

The three examples chosen for comparative analysis originated in a common social and musical milieu. A conventional framework of public dance song performances applied and continues to apply across linguistic and cultural boundaries throughout northern Australia. In both ceremonial and informal performance contexts different song genres are frequently performed together, and even where a single song genre is presented, the audience almost always includes members of other groups, who may even have commissioned the performance.

The most fundamental common convention is the organization of the performance around the presentation of a number of song items— stretches of singing with instrumental accompaniment during which dance and other ceremonial action takes place—interspersed with periods of informal discussion or silence. Each song item typically presents a single song topic. Selection and ordering of the items to be performed is the responsibility of the lead singer. Further common conventions apply to the internal structuring of the song items, which will be further discussed below.

These common formal conventions provide a technical framework for the stylistic comparison, thus answering the first of the methodological challenges raised above. The second challenge—establishing and interpreting the social meanings of sung performance—is addressed through description of the social situations in which the songs are performed, together with statements about

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<sup>3</sup> Funded by the Australian Research Council 2004-2008 DP0450131 'Preserving Australia's endangered heritages: Murrinh-patha song at Wadeye', investigators Allan Marett, Michael Walsh, Nicholas Reid and Lysbeth Ford, with co-investigators Linda Barwick and Joe Blythe.

<sup>4</sup> Both funded by the Australian Research Council and undertaken in collaboration with Allan Marett: the ARC Large Grants 'An ethnomusicological study of Lirrga, a genre of Australian Aboriginal song from NW Australia.' (2001-2003), and 'Public performance genres of the northern and eastern Kimberleys' (1997-1999).

style and social meaning of individual songs from knowledgeable performers and composers.

In order to understand the context of creation of the *djanba* song example, we therefore need to understand something of the social history of Wadeye, and the landscape of traditional Australian Indigenous song styles.

### *Social history of djanba*

The Murriny Patha *djanba* song genre was created around 1960 in the community of Port Keats (now known as Wadeye), in Australia's Northern Territory by Robert Dungoi Kolumboort, a man of the Dimirnin clan in whose traditional estate the community is situated. While Robert Kolumboort is credited with initiating the repertory, he died before the mid-1960s, and most of the songs in the present repertory were composed by others, including his two brothers Harry Luke Palada Kolumboort and Lawrence Kolumboort. The latter is the composer and main performer of the *djanba* song that forms the focus of this chapter.

The known *djanba* repertory consists of 106 songs in the Murriny Patha language, one of the healthier Australian languages today, with about 2500 speakers, most living in Wadeye. Most of the songs concern the activities of the Dimirnin clan's ancestors, whose spirits inhabit Kunybinyi,<sup>5</sup> an area near Wadeye.<sup>6</sup> From here they emerge at night to visit their kin and teach them new songs and dances. Many *djanba* songs reproduce the utterances of the ancestors during these song-giving events.

The songs are used to enable seven Murriny Patha speaking clans to participate in circumcision ceremonies and *burnim rag* (mortuary ceremonies performed some months or years after death). The ceremonies all involve reciprocal relations between three larger clan alliance groups, or 'mobs', each of which created for this purpose a new repertory of songs 'in language' (that is, in the patrilineally inherited spoken language of the song composer). *Djanba* was created by and for the Murriny Patha speaking clans, whose

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<sup>5</sup> Since in the Murriny Patha orthography used here (see Appendix 1 and note 1 above) the digraph 'ny' indicates a single palatal nasal phoneme, the 'y' in the middle of the word 'Kunybinyi' is not pronounced as a separate syllable.

<sup>6</sup> A small number of songs composed by members of the neighboring Yek Nangu clan concern that clan's spirit ancestors, known as *tidha*, who perform the same sort of activities as do *djanba*; that is, visiting their clanspeople at night to teach them new songs and dances.

traditional estates include the community of Wadeye itself and areas to the west and south, *lirrga* by clans (speakers of Marri Ngarr and Ngen'giwumirri) whose traditional country lies inland, to the east of Wadeye, and the *walakandha wangga* by clans speaking various small coastal languages to the north of Wadeye (Magati-ge, Marri Tjavin-Marri Ammu, Emmi-Mendhe) (Marett 2005; Furlan 2005).<sup>7</sup> These sister repertoires enable social cohesion between these three broad groupings in Wadeye and celebrate the relevant clan's relations to the country and the totemic beings that inhabit it.

The patrilineal clan (Falkenberg 1962; Stanner 1963 (1989)) has been reported as a primary form of social organization in the Daly region since anthropologists first began working there in the 1930s. By this social system, ownership of land and everything that springs from it—plants and animals as well as cultural products like songs, language and stories—is handed down from father to son. Both sons and daughters identify with their clan country and its stories but only the sons pass on the ownership to their children, while a woman's children carry on their father's clan and its property (Rumsey 1990). In larger communities such as Wadeye, whose current population is about 2000 (Taylor 2004), many different clans now have to co-exist (Furlan 2005; Ivory 2005; McCormack 2006). As Marett says in his account of the genesis of *walakandha wangga* (one of *djanba*'s sister traditions):

From the point of view of social history, the main impetus for the invention of the Walakandha *wangga* was changing circumstances at the Port Keats (Wadeye) mission [in the 1950s] ... [which] brought together in the one place a number of groups who had been in serious dispute in the preceding decades. ... In order to provide a greater degree of social cohesion, the three principal factions decided to develop a ceremonial system whereby the factions were obliged to perform for each other at *burnim-rag*, circumcision ceremonies and other ceremonies such as funerals. At that time, three completely new repertoires of song—*djanba*, the Muyil *lirrga* and the Walakandha *wangga*—were created. Thus, if members of the *djanba*-owning group ... needed ceremony performed for them, they could call on one of the other two groups, either the Walakandha '*wangga* mob,' or the Muyil '*lirrga* mob.' Similarly if members of the *lirrga* mob ...

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<sup>7</sup> Today Murriny Patha is the lingua franca at Wadeye and the first language of everyone under 50. All other languages are now severely endangered, with use limited to people of the grandparent generation, although younger people maintain an affiliation to their ancestral language (Ford and Klesch 2003).

needed ceremony performed, they could call on either the *djanba* mob or the *wangga* mob, and if members of the *wangga* mob ... required ceremony, they could call on either the *djanba* or the *lirrga* mob. (Marett 2007)

In Wadeye, as in many other Australian Aboriginal communities, the community's residence pattern reflects the geographical orientation of the relevant group. Thus, when I first visited Wadeye, families belonging to the *wangga* mob, whose traditional country lies to the north of Wadeye, were clustered in the northern part of the community, while the *lirrga* mob, whose traditional country lies inland, to the east of Wadeye, tended to live on the eastern side of the community. The *djanba* mob, whose traditional country lies to the southwest as well as including Wadeye itself, were clustered on the southern side of town. The three new repertoires created in Wadeye in the early 60s were each inspired by other repertoires that lay in the same direction as their traditional country, though even further afield (see Figure 9.1). The Walakandha *wangga* was modeled on *wangga* repertoires of Wadjiginy and

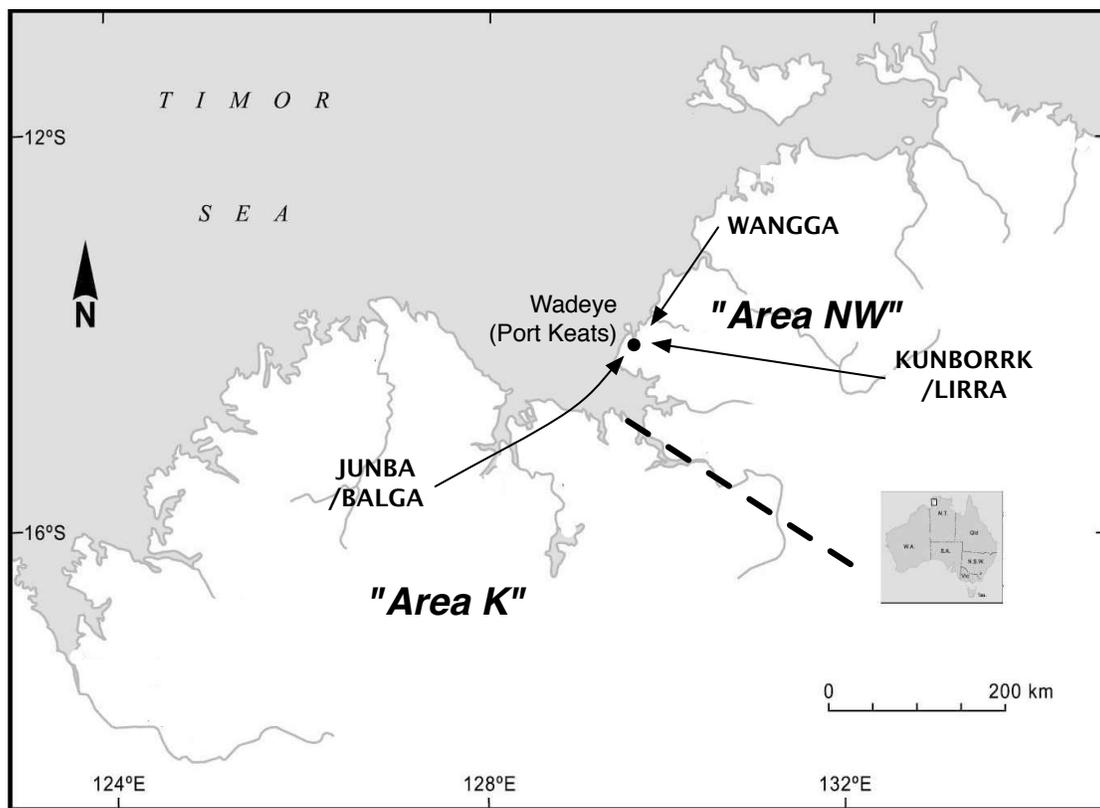


FIGURE 9.1: Map of northwestern Australia, showing the location of Wadeye in relation to the three external musical styles: *wangga*, *kunborrk/lirra* and *junba/balga*. The dotted line indicates the approximate location of the divide between the musical stylistic areas 'Area K' and 'Area NW' defined by Alice Moyle (1974).

Emmi-Mendhe songmen from the community of Belyuen, to the north on the Cox Peninsula (Marett 2007), while the Muyil *lirrga* repertory was based on *kunborrk* songs from the Southern Arnhem Land community of Beswick, far to the east (Barwick 2006; Ford 2006). *Djanba* was inspired by and modeled on Kimberley music. The relationship of *djanba* to Kimberley style music such as *junba* and *balga* has previously been noted by Furlan (Furlan 2005) and by Marett, who states:

The models for [*djanba*] were public Kimberley song genres such as *junba* and *balga*, which had previously been encountered by [Murriny Patha] men working in cattle stations in the Kimberley (Marett, 2005, p. 25).<sup>8</sup>

While there seems little doubt that Murriny Patha composers did indeed consciously reference Kimberley music in creating their new repertory, analysis shows that there was no thorough-going adoption of Kimberley musical conventions. Rather, the Murriny Patha composers adopted certain stylistic elements in preference to others. To understand what these were, and why they were preferred, we need to consider the broad characteristics of Kimberley musical style.

#### *Mapping musical style*

If musical styles are associated with places, it is through human action and interaction in those places. This is not the occasion to pursue an investigation of this dynamic, beyond noting that referring to other places through quotation or nuanced imitation of characteristic features of associated music is one of the resources frequently used by musical creators worldwide, from Turkish references in the music of Mozart and other European composers of the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries (Pirker 2007),<sup>9</sup> to the use of Central African music structure in Herbie Hancock's *Watermelon Man* (Feld 1996).

Following her wide-ranging fieldwork in the 1960s and 70s to record as much as then possible of the public Indigenous music of northern Australia, the ethnomusicologist Alice Moyle proposed a taxonomy of northern Australian musical style (Moyle 1974). Adapting the linguistic/cultural groupings proposed by Capell and used to classify the collections of the Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies (Capell 1963), Moyle analyzed the geographic distribution of particular musical features of traditional Aboriginal music,

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<sup>8</sup> There are also secret song genres that have come into the Wadeye region from the Kimberley region, but these cannot be recorded or discussed.

<sup>9</sup> An example is Mozart's *Violin Concerto in A major* (K. 219).

considering such factors as instrument use, performance practice and musical form, and found that the distribution of musical stylistic features into 'musical regions' broadly corresponded to the linguistic areas identified by Capell. The two areas that are relevant for this paper are Area NW (including the western part of the Top End of the Northern Territory, in which the community of Wadeye is situated) and Area K (the northern-most region of Western Australia, known as the Kimberley) (see Figure 9.1).

The most obvious marker of difference in musical style between the public dance songs of these two regions is the presence or absence of the didjeridu in the sound-making ensemble. The didjeridu<sup>10</sup> is a wooden trumpet, commonly constructed from a tree branch of the ironwood or woolleybutt trees (types of Eucalyptus) hollowed out by termites. The instrument may be further hollowed out, and is then decorated and sealed, with the frequent addition of beeswax to provide a mouthpiece at the proximal end. It is played using circular breathing to provide a continuous drone, embellished by various techniques including humming or the singing of syllables to produce a variety of rhythmic and timbral effects (Jones 1967, 1963). In traditional practice, didjeridu is only ever played by men (Barwick 1996), and indeed only men perform the songs in public, although women may compose songs (which they pass on to their husbands or other close relatives for public performance), and are frequently very knowledgeable about the song texts and their significance. Both men and women participate in dancing, which is an integral part of ceremonial performances but not required in informal contexts. In Area NW, the principal genres of public didjeridu-accompanied songs include *wangga* and *kunborrk* (also known as *lirra* or *lirrga*).

Moyle's definition of the general characteristics of Area NW includes (amongst others that are irrelevant for this discussion) the following elements:

1. Didjeridu-accompanied items of comparatively long duration (one or two minutes);
2. A relatively wide melodic range;
3. Several vocal descents or sections within a single song item;
4. Continuous didjeridu accompaniments which give tonal coherence to the vocal sections of each item;
5. Assistant singers combine unisonally with the leading singer.  
(Moyle 1967)

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<sup>10</sup> The word 'didjeridu' does not occur in any Aboriginal language; it seems to derive from the syllables sung into the instrument (Jones 1967). In Aboriginal English and Kriol the word *bambu* is preferred. Each language has its own word for the instrument: in Marri Ngarr it is *karnbi*, and in Murriny Patha *marluk*.

For area K, she does not provide a comparable list of characteristics, but two may be extracted:

1. The frequent presence of women singers in Area K (which she contrasts with the men-only performance ensemble of Area NW); and
2. The repetition ‘throughout the duration of each song item of the same sequence of songwords’, a structural feature that is shared with song styles from Central and Western desert areas (Moyle 1968).

Moyle (1967) notes that songs originating in Area NW and Area K were not infrequently also performed in the neighboring area, but their exotic origin was well known (see further discussion below). As can be seen from Figure 9.1, although Wadeye lies within Area NW, it is close to Area K. Wadeye was an important staging place on the traditional coastal route for trading or exchange of ceremonial objects between the Kimberley and the rest of northern Australia (Falkenberg 1962). Songs too were part of this exchange.

While various features of *djanba* point to its classification as belonging to Area K, thus supporting statements pointing to Kimberley music as its stylistic model, musical analysis reveals that in musical form it is actually closer to the superficially dissimilar didjeridu-accompanied genres of Area NW. To illustrate this point, I will frame my analysis of one *djanba* song with relation to briefer discussions of two other songs recorded at roughly the same time, one Kimberley *junba* song and one didjeridu-accompanied *lirrga* song (the latter also composed in Wadeye), which exemplify the two structural models to which *djanba* relates.

### *Djanba and Kimberley music*

On first listening, *djanba* does indeed resemble Kimberley music, most notably in its use of a mixed ensemble of men and women, which strongly distinguishes it from the men-only ensemble used for the didjeridu-accompanied songs of Area NW. A Kimberley origin is also suggested by the genre name *djanba* itself, which is shared with that of a Kimberley ritual complex centred on song-giving spirits (Meggitt 1955; Muecke 2005; Rowse 1987; Swain 1993), and there are references in the Murriny Patha *djanba* song texts to Kimberley ritual paraphernalia such as the paperbark headcap referred to in Murriny Patha songs as *kadjawula*.<sup>11</sup>

Despite these features, from a Kimberley perspective Murriny Patha *djanba* is not viewed as Kimberley-style music. In 1976, Kimberley elder Jack

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<sup>11</sup> The everyday Murriny Patha word is *muturu*. The use of special vocabulary in song is a feature of Australian music found across the continent (Koch and Turpin 2008; Dixon 1980; Walsh 2007).

Sullivan, in a conversation with Bruce Shaw about ceremonial traditions of the eastern Kimberley, referred to the popularity of the Murriny Patha *djanba* repertory, commenting:

Now it is everywhere. They made it up out Legune way and Port Keats somewhere, a dance like this didjeridu corroboree but without the didjeridu. (Sullivan 1983)

Clearly, for Sullivan the first point of comparison for Murriny Patha *djanba* is not the native Kimberley genres *junba* and *balga*, but rather the 'didjeridu corroboree'<sup>12</sup>—*wangga* and *lirrga* dance-songs that have been adopted by many Kimberley communities within living memory (Moyle 1968; Marett 2005), traded there as part of the *wurnan* ceremonial exchange (Redmond 2001). A similar analogy was made by Pannikin Manbi, a member of Kununurra's expatriate Murriny Patha community and holder of his own set of *djanba* songs. As Moyle reports:

the *djanba* series ... was said to be new. It had been found at Port Keats by one of the singers, and was described as being 'like *wongga*' (a popular dance-song type in the north-west, accompanied by didjeridu) or 'like Rock-and-Roll.' (Moyle 1977)

The assertions by Kimberley authorities of fundamental similarity between Murriny Patha *djanba* songs and the didjeridu-accompanied genres of Area NW are borne out when one considers the musical form of *djanba*. Analysis will show that in this important respect *djanba* indeed resembles the didjeridu-accompanied dance-songs of the Daly region (and much Rock-and-Roll) far more than it does Kimberley musical styles such as *junba*, however similar the styles may appear in other respects.

### *Three examples*

Let us now turn to the particulars of the three examples to be discussed.

- The *djanba* example, *Djanba 23 (Kunybinyi tjingarru 'Sorry for Kunybinyi')* was composed in Murriny Patha language by songman Lawrence Kolumboort (1939-2006). The performance analyzed here was recorded at Wadeye on 10 April 1997 by Mark Crocombe, for the Wadeye Aboriginal Languages Centre.
- The *junba* example, *Junba 01 (Gurreiga narai binjirri 'Brolga preening')* was composed by Ngarinyin-Miwa songman Scotty Nyalgodi Martin, who now lives near Gibb River in the northern Kimberley. It was recorded by me at Bijili, near Gibb River, on 15 May 1999.

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<sup>12</sup> 'Corroboree' is an Australian English term for an Aboriginal dance song; the word probably derives from a southeastern Australian language (Moyle 1968).

- The *lirrga* example, Lirrga PL08 (*Muli kanybubi* 'Mermaid women') was composed in Marri Ngarr by songman Pius Luckan (d. 1998), a Wadeye resident whose traditional country lies to the east of the community. It was recorded by Allan Marett at Wadeye on 1 October 1998.

The validity of comparing the musical features of these three examples is suggested by certain non-musical (but musically consequential) features that they share. They are composed works of known authorship, sung by an ensemble led by the composer. Each is made up of a small number of translatable text phrases, which repeat regularly within the song item and indeed across different performances. The works are intended to accompany dance and other ceremonial actions in public performances that invoke significant beings or places associated with the composer's ancestors and tied to his social identity.

### *Text*

All Australian music is primarily vocal: there are no Indigenous genres of purely instrumental music (Moyle 1967; Barwick and Marett 2003). Therefore no discussion of musical form can avoid song text, yet understanding and comparison of text is no trivial matter, because of the great linguistic diversity across the continent, and the use of specialized vocabulary and forms in song (Walsh 2007). In order to understand the significance of the text content of these songs we have worked closely with composers, singers and linguists over many years in order to transcribe, translate and understand them. In these examples, the text is regularly repeated, so that it is possible to distil the lexical meaning of the song into two or three phrases. In some cases I reproduce linguistic interlinear glossing (provided by my linguistic collaborators), which follows standard conventions adopted by Australianist linguistics.

In Djanba 23, the text (Figure 9.2) appeals to deceased ancestors to show the composer (and by extension, his patrilineal kin) the location of their residence at Bathuk, a particularly important and sacred focal site (*nguguminggi*) within the Dimirnin clan area Kunybinyi. As is often the case for *djanba* songs, the inspiration stemmed from a real event. Here, Lawrence Kolumboort and other senior men were attempting to visit Bathuk with a number of non-Aboriginal people. The vehicle in which they were travelling got a flat tire, which was interpreted as an action by the ancestors to protect their important spiritual site from outsiders, who are traditionally forbidden to visit the focal clan sites.

The question 'Can you show us where Bathuk is?' can be interpreted in multiple ways. By implication, it is the question asked by the non-Aboriginal people who requested the visit to Bathuk. Lawrence Kolumboort explained to

Djanba 23

**(aa) Kunybinyi Kunybinyi tjingarru -ye**

(ah) place\_name place\_name poor\_thing -Dub

'Poor old Kunybinyi [we can't find it]'

**(aa) Bathuk mani na-ngarru-ngkarda-nu-ngime -ya**

(ah) place\_name be\_able 2pLS.19.Fut-1daucnsibexIO-point\_out-Fut-paucf -Dub

'Can you show us where Bathuk is?'

Abbreviations for the linguistic gloss: -Dub – dubitative particle; 2pLS – second person plural subject; 19 – Murriny Patha verb class 19; -Fut – future tense, 1daucnsibexIO – first person exclusive dual or paucal non-sibling indirect object, -paucf – paucal feminine.]

FIGURE 9.2: Song text of Djanba 23 'Kunybinyi tjingarru'. Text transcription, gloss and translation by Joe Blythe for the Murriny Patha song project.

Allan Marett in 1998 that it was his own wife who had asked him this question (perhaps on behalf of their children), and that later Lawrence himself had a dream in which he was asking the *djanba* ancestors the same question. In any case, the paucal feminine ending '-ngime' (referring to a small group of people including at least one woman) suggests that the party asking to have the site pointed out included one or more women. Traditionally, women too are forbidden to visit the focal clan sites, so the song text may imply that this was one reason for the ancestors' displeasure and the party's failure to find the place.

The text of Junba 01 (Figure 9.3) also refers to culturally crucial information, here belonging to Ngarinyin people from the northern Kimberley. The composer, Scotty Nyalgodi Martin, explained to us that *gurreiga*, the ancestral brolga, first taught Ngarinyin people to dance. The brolga (*Grus rubicunda*) is a large Australian crane with a long beak and elaborate mating ritual behavior including frequent bobbing of the head and dance-like movements. The song's text (Figure 9.3) makes a parallel between the preening actions of the brolga and the bobbing motions of the paperbark headcap *ngadarri* worn by *junba* dancers, which resembles the brolga's long beak.

Junba 01

**gurreiga narai binjirri**

broлга preening

**ngadarri jagud binjirri**

headcap dancing

FIGURE 9.3: Song text of Junba 01 'Gurreiga narai binjirri'. Text transcription and translation by Sally Treloyn and Linda Barwick.

The creative source of Marri Ngarr songs, in the country to the east of Wadeye, is invoked in Lirrga PL08 (Figure 9.4), in which the singer calls out to the song-giving mermaids who appeared to him while he slept by a lily-covered billabong (waterhole) and gave him the song. The water lily and the mermaids are both important totems of the composer's Darrinpirr clan (Falkenberg 1962). The totems and the songs are owned by the composer and his patrilineal kin, and used in ceremonies that emphasize this identity.

#### *Analytical framework*

Studies of musical form in both Western and non-Western musics analyze the temporal sequencing of musical elements. It is held that repetition and contrast of sound elements are fundamental to our perception of sound as 'musical': 'repetition and contrast are the two twin principles of musical form' (Parry 1954). Focusing on such presumed universals of human musical perception—such as repetition, contrast, beat and meter—is therefore one way to meet the challenge of comparing music from different cultures.<sup>13</sup> In studies of song, strophic form, 'in which all stanzas of the text are sung to the same music' (Tilmouth 2008), is commonly distinguished from through-composed forms (Jacobs 1977), in which there is no regular repetition of musical material. A third formal type, cyclic form, refers to music that 'is always continuously reverting rather than progressing in structure, such that it continually approaches its beginning' (Goldsworthy 2005). In ethnomusicology, the

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<sup>13</sup> My thanks to John Roeder (p.c.) for suggesting this wording.

Lirrga PL08

**a muli kanybubi kanybubi**

SW female mermaid mermaid

'Mermaid women, mermaids!'

**wuyi =ga niwiny =ga yi =ngi**

country =FOC 3DU.PRO =FOC FAR.DEIC =now

'Their country is there now'

**kangarkirr bugim +mi kang**

water lily white +face 3SG.S.R.stand

'Where the white-faced waterlily stands'

Abbreviations: SW – song word, FOC – focus marker, 3DU.PRO – 3rd person dual pronoun, FAR.DEIC – deictic meaning 'far', 3SG.S.R – 3rd person singular subject, realis mood.

FIGURE 9.4: Song text of Lirrga PL08 'Muli kanybubi'. Text transcription, gloss and translation by Lysbeth Ford for the Murriny Patha song project.

term is often applied to music based around an ostinato (such as in sub-Saharan African music) or in which different components cycle independently, such as the *raga* of northern India.

In this chapter I adopt the broadest definition of 'strophic', to refer to the regular repetition of the same sung melody within a single item. Unlike strophic songs in many other parts of the world, in these songs the text does not change from one stanza to the next, rather the musical item is made up of a number of repetitions of the same text set to the same melody (a minimum of two stanzas). Although it could be argued that this type of strophic form is a special instance of cyclic form, in that the same text and its accompanying melody is repeated (or 'cycled') several times, I prefer the term 'strophic' because of its emphasis on the binding of text to melody to form a single unit.

In traditional Australian song, all three forms commonly occur: strophic forms are characteristic of didjeridu-accompanied musics of northwestern northern Australia, while cyclic form is fundamental to the organization of the

songlines of central Australia and the Kimberley. Although it will not be discussed here, through-composed form may be found in the didjeridu-accompanied manikay styles of Central and Northeastern Arnhem Land, in which a tripartite form is normal, with improvised elements in the central didjeridu-accompanied section (Knopoff 1992). I will draw on this terminology in the course of my analysis.

Musical notation, like textual transcription and translation, is not used in transmission or performance; these works are orally transmitted. I use standard Western music-notational conventions here, with some special annotations designed to highlight features relevant for my argument. The transformation of sound into visual symbols here should be regarded more as a map designed to highlight salient features (which could always be more faithfully described) than as a normative document.

In all three examples, repeated phrases of text are regularly set to the same rhythm. There are some small discrepancies in rhythmic performance between tokens of the text (for example, a short-long sequence notated as eighth note followed by a quarter note may be performed with varying degrees of precision) but the syllables are always regularly placed in relation to the recurring beat (performed by paired clapsticks, sometimes also with handclapping accompaniment), and the duration of the text phrase is always a whole number of beats as measured by the percussion. The tempo of the beating is quite closely maintained across performances of the same song; tempo, together with the subdivision of the beat by the vocal rhythm, indicates rhythmic mode, an important organizational principle found throughout music from northern Australia. In any one repertory, a small number of tempi are used, each associated with a characteristic vocal rhythm and a different dance style (for *lirrga*, see Barwick 2003 ; for an extended discussion of rhythmic mode in *wangga*, see Marett 2005).

It is less clear whether beats in these songs are grouped metrically. Because this is dance music, the left-right alternation of dancers' feet in synchrony with the clapstick beat may be argued to provide a duple meter, but dancers need not lead with the same foot, and the larger structures of the dance follow the text structure. In the transcriptions, therefore, bar lines simply indicate text phrases.

The melodic dimension of this music lends itself less readily to standard Western notation. Although unison performance is the ideal, pitches and intervals are not absolute: different singers, or the same singer in different renditions, may perform slightly different versions of what is recognizably the same portion of a melody. There is frequent use of glissando and with group singing some smudging of melodic contours, as performers within the ensemble may slightly anticipate, delay or ornament movement to the next pitch. Furthermore, there

tends to be a gradual fall in relative pitch across the course of a sung item (this may amount to as much as a semitone over the course of an item lasting a minute and a half). Nevertheless, in the setting of text to melody, we can identify recurrent pitch contours involving consistent melodic movement between important pitches (especially the octave, fifth and third above the final pitch (in the terminology adopted by Australianists the final is usually called the 'tonic'). For convenience of comparison and discussion in this analysis, I have not attempted to notate small deviations in intonation or relative pitch, and I have transposed the examples to have a common final. I adopt a shorthand notation using C for the final 'tonic', capital letters for notes in the octave above it and lowercase letters for notes in the upper octave (if needed). A summary melodic contour might be notated, for example,

e-c, c-G, A-E, F-C,

indicating a four-section descending melody, the first section covering the pitch area from the tenth to the octave above the tonic, the second section from the octave to the fifth above the tonic, the third section from the sixth to the third above the tonic, and the fourth section from the fourth to the tonic itself. Boundaries of melodic sections are defined by breaths.

The separate treatment of melody and rhythm is required by certain features of Australian music, especially music in central Australian and Kimberley styles, in which the setting of text to melody is highly variable (this will become clearer in the course of the analysis) (Barwick 1989; Turpin 2007; Treloyn 2006). In order to facilitate comparison across genres, I have maintained this approach throughout.

## ANALYSIS

### *Djanba example: Djanba 23*

*Djanba* is exemplified by the song *Kunybinyi tjingarru* ('Sorry for Kunybinyi'), classified as Djanba 23 in the Murriny Patha Song Project's database. As mentioned above, the song was composed by Lawrence Kolumboort (1939-2006) the youngest brother of the initiators and major composers of the Murriny Patha *djanba* repertory, probably some time in the 1970s. The Murriny Patha song database holds recordings of 46 different performances of the song between 1988 and 2002. Most performances were led by the composer, with a few led by his backup singers Felix Bunduck (1938-2008), Kevin Bunduck (1942-1994) and Leo Melpi (1940-).

*Djanba* songs are strophic. Song items consist of between two and six presentations of the song stanza (three is the norm, with longer items occurring only in ceremonial performances). The song stanza presents the two text phrases in the configuration AAAABBAAA. Taking into account the varying number of stanzas per item, the 46 performances of *Djanba* 23 represent a total of 149 instances of this song stanza. In the performance discussed here (song 9 on Wadeye Aboriginal Sound Archive tape 569B), a small mixed-sex singing ensemble of elders, led by the senior songman Lawrence Kolumboort, performed in a documentation session for the Wadeye Aboriginal Languages Centre on 10 April 1997.

In each stanza each text phrase is rhythmicized nearly identically, as given below in Figure 9.5. The anacrusis 'aa' is optional (indicated by bracketing). The core text of the first text phrase (A) covers seven clapstick beats (see discussion below for information on the addition of beats after the core text). When there is more than one syllable per beat, the vocal rhythm produces a triple subdivision. The first syllable of each word is consistently short (notated as an eighth-note), with lengthening at the last syllable, which usually extends over two clapstick beats.

The second text phrase (B) covers eight clapstick beats. Here too an optional anacrusis precedes the core text, and the last syllable is extended over two clapstick beats. The text transcription shows the subdivision of the eight-syllable verb complex into its constituent morphemes (separated by hyphens), and if we examine the rhythmic setting (Figure 9.5) we can see that the one-syllable morphemes are set to a short value (eighth-note) with the two-syllable morphemes being set to short-long. This tendency to highlight linguistic boundaries by shortening at the front (or 'left') and lengthening at the end

Text phrase A

**(aa) Kunybinyi Kunybinyi tjingarru -ye**

(ah) place\_name place\_name poor\_thing -Dub

♪    ♪♪            ♪♪            ♪♪            ♪.

          x x            x            x x            x x

Text phrase B

**(aa) Bathuk mani na-ngarru-ngkarda-nu-ngime -ya**

(ah) place\_name be\_able 2plS.19.Fut-1daucnsibexIO-point\_out-Fut-paucf -Dub

♪    ♪♪            ♪♪            ♪♪            ♪♪            ♪.

          x            x            x x            x            x            x x

FIGURE 9.5: Rhythmic setting of *Djanba* 23 song text (text transcription by Joe Blythe, rhythmic transcription by Linda Barwick).

(or 'right')—which we can see in this example at the level of morpheme, word and phrase—is a prosodic feature of natural speech that is conventionalized in rhythmic settings of text in song throughout Aboriginal Australia, and may serve to increase intelligibility of text (Barwick, Birch, and Evans 2007; Marett 1992; Turpin 2007).

These two text phrases are arranged to form a sung stanza AAAABBAAA in almost every rendition of the text.<sup>14</sup>

Whatever the constitution of the text structure, *Djanba* melodies are always presented in two parts:

- Part 1: an opening performed by men alone, which typically descends over the men's entire melodic range
- Part 2: a second descent, often smaller in melodic range, which can be subdivided into three sections:
  - 2A: a descending section performed only by men
  - 2B: a transitional section continuing the descent, in which the women join in an octave higher as the descent nears the tonic
  - 2C: a final section entirely on the tonic, led by the women an octave above. This part is usually more precise in its rhythm than the preceding parts. The men usually cease singing at some point during this section.

The actual melodic shape and range varies from one *djanba* song to the next, but for a given song text, each rendition of the text is set to its conventional melody in almost exactly the same way: the text stanza with its fixed melody is repeated several times in the course of each song item, and the same song typically recurs several times in the course of a performance. The broad outlines of the melodic contour used for this particular song, *Djanba* 23, are as follows ('MS' stands for 'melodic section'):

Part 1:

MS1, MS1 (Two identical descents B-A-G-A-G-E-D-C)

Part 2:

MS2A: A descent B-A-G-A-G-E, with the women joining in an octave higher part way through (a-g-e-d)

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<sup>14</sup> The sole contrary example was a performance led by the secondary singer while the main singer was otherwise occupied, probably with other aspects of the accompanying ritual. In this instance (AF2001-21-s16) the stanza AABBAAA was presented three times. The main singer LK rejoined the singing ensemble towards the end of this item, and can be heard forcefully leading the correct performance AAAABBAAA in the following item (AF2001-21-s17).

MS2B: Continuation of the descent E-D-C (women and male song leader an octave higher e-d-c)

MS2C: Repetition of the tonic, led by the women on c, with the men on C, dropping out about half way through

Figure 9.6 schematizes the 'melodic layout' (Pritam 1980) of the text phrases of the song against this melodic structure to form the complete stanza (see also the musical transcription of stanza 2, in Figure 9.7). In the recorded musical example, you can hear that the stanza is presented three times to form the complete item, with the only significant deviation being the song leader's lowering of the pitch of the first three syllables of the third stanza ('aa Kuny-bi-') by about a tone and a half to Aflat. This feature functions as a cueing device, signaling to the rest of the ensemble that this will be the last stanza in the item. You may notice that the backup singers maintain the usual pitch (B) of these syllables, resulting in a passing dissonance.

Looking more closely at the fitting of the text lines to the descent (see Figure 9.7), we can see that in each case MS1 divides into B-A-G over the first text phrase, and Bb-A-G-E-D-C<sup>15</sup> over the second phrase, so that each phrase comprises a simple descent within the larger terraced descent, with a rise in pitch at the beginning of the second text phrase. In MS2A, we see a similar pattern, with the first text phrase covering B-A-G and the second Bb-A-G-E, during which the women enter an octave higher.<sup>16</sup> The descent to the tonic note is completed with the return to text phrase A in MS2B, covering the range E-D-C. Unusually, the male song leader Lawrence Kolumboort (LK) joins the women for section 2B and the first phrase of MS2C (usually he sings an octave lower, with the other men). The final section MS2C is performed entirely on the tonic c by the women (and LK) and an octave lower by the men, with the women completing the section, performing the final text phrase alone.

In Figure 9.6 I have indicated by the annotation '+2' that two additional clapstick beats are placed at the end of each rendition of MS1. This is the usual practice, but on occasion, particularly when the item is led by a less experienced singer, the number of additional beats may be 1 or 3. In any event, the addition of the beats here is significant. Structurally, the extra silence articulates

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<sup>15</sup> In different renditions of this song the initial unaccented G may be performed as A or Bb, and because of this instability I omit the pitch from the melodic contour analysis. Here its performance on G, the final pitch of the preceding phrase, serves to stitch together the two halves of the descent.

<sup>16</sup> The transcribed performance is actually unusual in the Djanba 23 corpus: in other performances women join in only at MS2B rather than during MS2A.

MS1	aa Kunybinyi Kunybinyi tjingarruya	(A)
	Kunybinyi Kunybinyi tjingarruye +2	(A)
MS1 (repeat)	Kunybinyi Kunybinyi tjingarruye	(A)
	Kunybinyi Kunybinyi tjingarruye +2	(A)
MS2A	aa Bathuk mani nangarrungkardanungimeya	(B)
	aa Bathuk mani nangarrungkardanungimeya	(B)
MS2B	Kunybinyi Kunybinyi tjingarruye	(A)
MS2C	Kunybinyi Kunybinyi tjingarruye	(A)
	Kunybinyi Kunybinyi tjingarruye -1	(A)

FIGURE 9.6: Layout of the text phrases of one stanza of Djanba 23 across melodic sections.

the section boundary, and in this case balances the durations of MS1 and MS2A (7+9 = 8+8). In the three repetitions of text phrase A performed by the women in MS2B and MS2C, the rhythmic performance is notably more emphatic and the unison more precise than in the men-only renditions of the phrase. The seven-beat setting of A is used for the first two lines sung by the women, but the third is truncated to six beats, with the final syllable shortened to an eighth note, after which the song leader LK cues the start of the next stanza (see Figure 9.7, which transcribes the second stanza of the item).

This song constitutes the only instance of the AAAABBAAA stanzaic text-repetition pattern in the *djanba* corpus of 106 songs. It is just one of a wide variety of stanzaic text-repetition patterns found in the *djanba* repertory, but for any given song text one and only one stanzaic text-repetition pattern is used. The following table (Figure 9.8) summarizes the patterns found, the most common being AABBB.

It is also important to consider how the melody of this song relates to the many different melodies used in the *djanba* corpus. The pitch contour of the melody outlined above for Djanba 23 is unique to that song text, but some of its features, such as the binary division of the song into a first part sung entirely by the men, and a longer second part initiated by the men but finished by the women, are maintained throughout the corpus.

#### *Junba example: Junba 01*

The next musical example, a brolga song from Scotty Nyalgodi Martin's *jadmi junba* repertory, exemplifies structural features typical of Kimberley music.

Turning first to text rhythm, we can see that the two text phrases are set identically, supporting the poetic parallelism that implicitly

Transposition +144 cents  
 ♩ = 140

Kardu nugarn (men)  
 8 aa KunybinyiKunybinyi tjinga - rruye - Kuny-binyiKunybi - nyi tjinga - rruye - - -

Mirn'ga (clapsticks)

3 A Kuny-binyi Kunybinyi tjinga - rruye - Kuny-binyi Kunybi - nyi tjinga - rru - ye - - -

Kardu palngun (women)  
 ♀ nga-rrang - kardanungi-me ya -

♂ B Bahukmani nangarang - karda - nungimeya aa Bahukmani - nangarang - kardanungime - ya aa (LK)

7 A KunybinyiKunybinyi tji-nga - rru ye - KunybinyiKunybinyi tji-ngarru ye - KunybinyiKunybinyi tji-ngaruye

♂ KunybinyiKunybinyi tji-nga - rruye - KunybinyiKunybinyi tji-ngarru-ye - - - - - Aa

FIGURE 9.7: Transcription of stanza 2 of song item WASA569B-s09, sung by Lawrence Kolumboort and others at Wadeye, recorded by Mark Crocombe for Wadeye Aboriginal Languages Centre, 10 April 1997. Transcription by Linda Barwick and Corin Bone.

compares the preening action of the brolga to the bobbing motion of the dancers' paperbark headcaps as they dance.

The rhythmic setting exhibits some similar features to the *djanba* example just discussed, with short durations marking the beginning of significant linguistic units, and progressively longer durations towards the end of the phrase. The beating pattern here is differentiated between the clapsticks played by the lead singer and the handclaps of the rest of the singing ensemble, which proceed at half the rate of the clapsticks. The alternation of clapstick plus handclap (indicated by the symbol '⊗') with clapstick alone (indicated by 'x') yields a duple meter, with each text phrase corresponding to three complete

AAA	2
AAAA	5
AAAAA	2
<i>Ax5, Ax6 in third stanza</i>	5
AAAAAA	4
AAAABB	2
AAAABBB	2
AABB	10
AABBA	2
AABBAA	2
AABBB	10
AABBBB	3
AABCC	12
AABCCC	4
AABCD	5
AABCDD	2
ABABAB	2
ABABABAB	4
ABABABABAB	2
<i>ABABCDCDCD</i>	2
<i>other</i>	25
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>106</b>

FIGURE 9.8: Stanzaic text-repetition patterns in the djanba corpus. Asymmetrical text-repetition patterns (those with unequal repetitions of the text lines) are italicized.

measures of compound duple meter.<sup>17</sup> As will be discussed below, the percussion accompaniment is suspended for a short period within the song item.

Melodically, this *junba* is constructed very differently from the *djanba* example. The melody for this particular rendition of the text has three descents, the first and third being longer and nearly identical, while the second is shorter in both duration and melodic range, and includes different pitches. Consideration of all performances of the text (Treloyn 2006) reveals cyclic form, with optional repeats of a two-descent sequence (long descent plus short descent) for as long as necessary to allow the completion of the danced activity it accompanies. The first long descent is optionally repeated and the item ends with a long descent, to yield the structural pattern (long) ||: long + short :|| + long (Treloyn 2006). The three-descent item discussed here represents the minimal realisation of this melodic form.

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<sup>17</sup> As previously stated, barlines in the musical transcription (Figure 9.11) mark off text phrases.

Text phrase A

**gurreiga narai binjirri**



⊗ x ⊗ x ⊗ x

Text phrase B

**ngadarri jagud binjirri**



⊗ x ⊗ x ⊗ x

FIGURE 9.9: Rhythmic setting of Junba 01 song text (text transcription by Sally Treloyn and Linda Barwick, rhythmic transcription by Sally Treloyn).

Treloyn has published extensive analyses of the underlying melodic structures of this *junba* series (Treloyn 2006, 2007, 2007), which I will summarize here. The composer Scotty Nyalgodi Martin divides the melody into three registers, termed '*arrangun*' (head), '*balaga*' (middle) and '*alya*' (low). There is some overlap between these, but *arrangun* refers to the octave above the tonic (e-c), *balaga* to the pitch area between c-E, and *alya* to the area F-C. The melodic sections within the long descent are identified as follows (based on Treloyn, 2006):

*Large descent (LD)*

MS1 e-c (A) (*arrangun*)

MS2A c-A-G (c), (*balaga*)

MS2B c-G-c-G-F-E (*balaga*)

MS3A A-F-G- F-E E-C – (*balaga-alya*) (women enter an octave higher e-c)

MS3B C/c (*alya - biyo-biyo*)

To facilitate comparison with the *djanba* example, I have subdivided Treloyn's MS3 into two: the main descent (MS3A) and the extended repetition of the tonic (MS3B), which, as in *djanba*, is mainly carried by the women. This section carried by the women is called *biyo-biyo* 'pulling', and explained as pulling the dancers forward towards the singers (Treloyn 2006, 2007).

The small descent lacks the section in *arrangun* 'head' register, and also negotiates the descent differently:

*Small descent (SD)*

MS4A c-A-F (*balaga*)

MS4B A-G-F-E (*balaga*)

MS5A F-E-C (*alya*) (the percussion accompaniment is suspended for this section)

MS5B C/c (*alya- biyo-biyo*) (women)

The setting of the text to this melody for the whole item is set out below in Figure 9.10 (see also the full musical transcription in Figure 9.11).

The long descent (LD), which occurs in first and third positions, matches to the text phrases AABBAABB, with the first half (AABB) performed by the men over the descending part of the melody, and the second half performed as level movement, led by the women on the octave above the tonic (with some decoration with the second above). The shorter second descent is similarly subdivided, with half (here only three rather than four text phrases—AAB) performed over the descending part of the melody, and the second half (BAA) on level movement, again led by the women. It is outside the scope of this discussion to delve further into the intricacies of this musical system, but Treloyn's work shows that the relation of text to melody is not fixed, and that with song texts of different rhythmic duration (about half the repertory) the melody is expanded or contracted to fit: this song text is particularly regular in its construction, having identical rhythm in both phrases, and using the most common meter. In other songs, the text phrases and melodic sections do not necessarily match as neatly as in this example.

The musical form is neither strophic nor through composed, but rather cyclic. There are two interlocking cycles at play: the text unit AABB cycles 3.5 times in the course of a single (two-descent, LD plus SD) melodic cycle. Several other features of this example are also typical of Kimberley music. The rhythmic duration of the text line is strictly maintained (thus constituting what Catherine Ellis calls an 'isorhythm' or 'the regular repetition (with culturally acceptable deviations) of the one [syllabic] rhythmic pattern throughout a musical item irrespective of the melodic contour of that item' (Ellis 1968, 1984)). The rhythmic setting of the text line is fixed ('isoperiodic'): by contrast with the *djanba* example, there are no additional beats inserted. The durations of the descending and level movement (tonic repetition) parts of the melody are balanced. Lastly, the strict alternation of doubled text phrases AABB appears in every song throughout the *junba* repertory

LD	MS1	gurreiga narai binjirri	(A)
	MS2A	gurreiga narai binjirri	(A)
	MS2B	ngadarri jagud binjirri	(B)
	MS3A	ngadarri jagud binjirri	(B)
	MS3B	gurreiga narai binjirri gurreiga narai binjirri ngadarri jagud binjirri ngadarri jagud binjirri	(A) (A) (B) (B)
SD	MS4A	gurreiga narai binjirri	(A)
	MS4B	gurreiga narai binjirri	(A)
	MS5A	ngadarri jagud binjirri	(B)
	MS5B	ngadarri jagud binjirri	(B)
		gurreiga narai binjirri gurreiga narai binjirri	(A) (A)
LD	MS1	gurreiga narai binjirri	(A)
	MS2A	gurreiga narai binjirri	(A)
	MS2B	ngadarri jagud binjirri	(B)
	MS3A	ngadarri jagud binjirri	(B)
	MS3B	gurreiga narai binjirri gurreiga narai binjirri ngadarri jagud binjirri ngadarri jagud binjirri	(A) (A) (B) (B)

FIGURE 9.10: The layout of the text phrases of Junba 01 across melodic sections within the whole item.

(although other texts have one or both phrases of different duration); in other words, there is no variety of text-repetition patterns as found in the *djanba* repertory, although the duration and rhythmic composition of text phrases varies considerably between song texts. Indeed, the AABB text pattern is predominant in all repertories of Kimberley song, and also shared by much central Australian style song.<sup>18</sup> The two forms of the melodic descent defined here recur throughout Scotty Martin's *jadmi junba* corpus: in other

<sup>18</sup> In the case of Central Australian style, the text sequence AABB is strictly maintained throughout the item, not just within the descent, as in Kimberley style. In Central Australian music a descent can start anywhere within the text, while in Kimberley style each descent must begin anew with AABB (Treloyn 2006).

Transposition -195 cents  
♩ = c. 183

Wongay (women)

Burruru (men)

Bondorra (clapsticks)

♀

♂

♂

st.

♀

♂

st.

♀

♂

st.

♀

♂

st.

FIGURE 9.11: Transcription of song item LB1999, I(ii), sung by Scotty Nyalgodi Martin (male leader) and Maisie Jodpa (female leader), at Bijilli near Gibb River, Western Australia, recorded by Linda Barwick for the Kimberley song project, 15 May 1999. Transcription by Sally Treloyn, edited by Linda Barwick.

words, there is little variety in melodic range or contour between items across the repertory, although the number of text phrases set to each descent varies considerably according to the duration of the text phrases in a given song text.

In short, although the *djanba* and *junba* examples use the same sound-making components (a mixed-sex singing ensemble with percussion accompaniment by clapsticks and handclapping) and display a similar division of labor within the singing ensemble (alternation of men's and women's singing through the item, with the men's parts being primarily descending and the women's primarily on level movement), the ways in which the melody is fitted to the song text are quite different, with the *djanba* song displaying strophic form, breaking strict isoperiodicity and also diverging from the doubled AABB text form typical of the Kimberley. Further differences emerge when considering the whole corpus of each song genre: in *djanba* there is a great variety of stanzaic text-repetition patterns, melodic contour and melodic range, while in *junba* a single text-repetition pattern AABB is used throughout, and the same two melodic contours recur across the whole corpus.

*Lirrga example: Lirrga PL08*

The third example, the Muyil *lirrga* song PL08 *Muli Kanybubi* 'Mermaid women', displays musical features typical of public didjeridu-accompanied songs of Area NW (Western Arnhem Land and Daly regions of the northwest Northern Territory). Like *Djanba* 23, this song is clearly strophic in form, with text, rhythm and melody being repeated three times in the course of the item (in other renditions the number of presentations of the stanza varies between two and six). The stanzaic text-repetition pattern is AABC (Figure 9.12).

As in the previous examples, we can see that the text rhythm reinforces linguistic boundaries by short values at the front, and progressively longer values at the end of the phrase and the text itself. The final note is prolonged into the instrumental section (didjeridu and clapsticks) that follows each presentation of the stanza, and its exact duration may vary somewhat (although in this particular performance it is fairly stable).

In *Lirrga* PL08, the three stanzas of text are framed by the drone of the didjeridu, whose fundamental lies an octave lower than the melody's final note. To apply the terminology developed in Marett's work on *wangga* (2005), each stanza constitutes a 'vocal section', while the instrumental introduction, interludes between stanzas and terminating parts of the item constitute 'instrumental sections'. Within the item the following sections can be identified:

IS = Instrumental section (clapsticks and didjeridu on C an octave lower than voice)

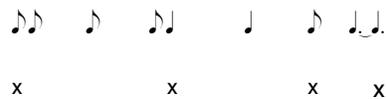
Text phrase A (repeated)

**aa muli kanybubi kanybubi**



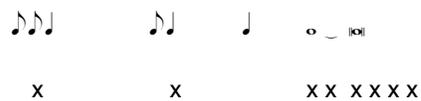
Text phrase B

**wuyi =ga niwiny =ga yi =ngi**



Text phrase C

**kangarkirr bugim +mi kwang**



VS = Vocal section (clapsticks, didjeridu and voice)

MS1 = descent G-D (repeated)

MS2A = descent G-D

MS2B = alternation D-C

FIGURE 9.12: Text rhythm of Lirrga PL08.

The whole item's structure can be diagrammed as in Figure 9.13. See Figure 9.14 for a full transcription of one stanza of this song item.

The AABC text form in this example is just one of a number of stanzaic text-repetition patterns found in the Muyil *lirrga* repertory. Others include AAB, AABB, ABA, ABAB, ABABABC, ABAC, ABC and ABCD (Barwick 2006). As is true of *djanba*, there is very little sharing of melody, even between songs having the same stanzaic repetition pattern: typically each Muyil *lirrga* song text has its own unique associated melody.

This song, from one of the repertories created in the same period and for the same purposes as Murriny Patha *djanba*, thus shares some important characteristics with it. Musical form is strophic, different songs use a variety of different text-repetition patterns within the stanza, and strict isoperiodicity of the text phrase is not maintained, with the final note being of variable duration. Also like *djanba*, melodies across the corpus exhibit a wide variety of melodic contours and melodic ranges.

IS	-	
VS		
MS1	muli kanybubi kanybubi	(A)
MS1	muli kanybubi kanybubi	(A)
MS2A	wuyiga niwinyga yingi	(B)
MS2B	kangarkirr bugimi kwang	(C)
IS	-	
VS		
MS1	muli kanybubi kanybubi	(A)
MS1	muli kanybubi kanybubi	(A)
MS2A	wuyiga niwinyga yingi	(B)
MS2B	kangarkirr bugimi kwang	(C)
IS	-	
VS		
MS1	muli kanybubi kanybubi	(A)
MS1	muli kanybubi kanybubi	(A)
MS2A	wuyiga niwinyga yingi	(B)
MS2B	kangarkirr bugimi kwang	(C)
IS	-	

FIGURE 9.13: Layout of the text of Lirrga PL08 across melodic sections within the song item.

### Conclusion

Let us now turn to synthesizing the results of the preceding analyses with respect to musical form. Figure 9.15 summarizes the relationship of textual and melodic structures in the three items analyzed. The strophic structure of *djanba* and *lirrga* is reflected in the coterminous textual and melodic structures. The *junba* example shows a complex relationship between text and melody, with non-coterminous, independently cycling textual and melodic structures.

Extracting the key features identified from this musical analysis (Figure 9.16), we can see that only in instrumentation and its internal alternations does *djanba* resemble its imputed Kimberley model, *junba*. In other dimensions (the presence or absence of strict isorhythm, the text-repetition pattern,

MS1  
Marri (voice)  
Aa mu - li kany - bu - bi kany - bu - bi

Titir (clapsticks)

Karnbi (didjeridu)  
Didjeridu drone = C#2 + 29 cents

MS1  
V.  
mu - li kany - bu - bi kany - bu - bi

St.

MS2A  
V.  
wu - yi - ga ni - winy - ga yi - ngi

St.

MS2B  
V.  
ka - ngar-kirr bu - gi - mi - - kwang

St.

(Instrumental section)  
V.

St.

Dj.

FIGURE 9.14: Transcription of stanza 1 of song item MarettDT98-12-s24, sung by Pius Luckan, Clement Tchinburur, Johnny Nummar and Benedict Tchinburur (didjeridu) at Wadeye, recorded by Alllan Marett for the Marri Ngarr song project, 3 October 1998. Transcription by Linda Barwick and Corin Bone. The complete item presents three stanzas.

musical form, melodic variety and dance gender), *djanba* is much more similar to its sister repertory, *lirrga*.

Another commonality between *djanba*, *junba* and *lirrga* emerges when we consider the dance. As mentioned above in the discussions of Djanba 23 and Junba 01, the sections of the melody in which the women perform are particularly rhythmically precise. In both *djanba* and *junba* dancing a clear distinction is made between the parts of the melody sung by the men alone (predominantly descending), and sections sung by the women (including the final part of the descent, but mainly consisting of level repetition of the tonic).

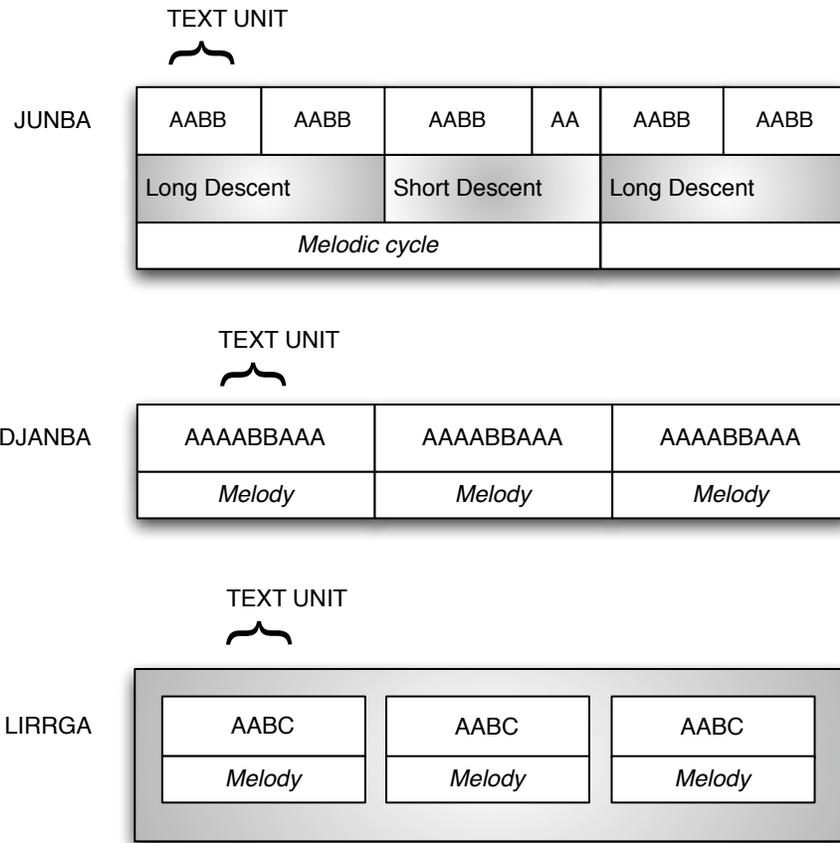


FIGURE 9.15: Comparison of rhythmic and melodic form in Junba 01, Djanba 23 and Lirrga PL08.

During the men's part of the melody, the dancers tend to perform less emphatic movements while staying in one place or retreating, often enacting aspects of the content of the text. During the women's part of the melody, the dancers move forward with exaggerated rhythmic stamping towards the singing ensemble or other focal area in the dance ground (in *djanba burnim rag* ceremonies this will be the hole in the ground in which the belongings of the deceased are burned). As already noted, in *junba* this women's section of the melody is called *biyo-biyo* 'pulling' (Treloyn 2007): it is as if the dancers are animated by and pulled towards the singing ensemble by the voices of the women. I observed a similar effect on my first encounter with *djanba*: in the procession, the rhythmically marked and energetic surging of the dancers towards the stage took place as soon as the women's voices entered the texture,

	<i>Junba</i>	<i>Djanba</i>	<i>Lirrga</i>
<i>Instrumentation</i>	Voice and clapsticks	Voice and clapsticks	Voice, clapsticks and didjeridu
<i>Alternating elements</i>	Men and women	Men and women	Men and didjeridu
<i>Isorhythm</i>	Yes	No	No
<i>Text repetition</i>	Doubled AABB	Varies	Varies
<i>Form</i>	Cyclic	Strophic	Strophic
<i>Melodic variety</i>	No	Yes	Yes
<i>Dance gender</i>	Men only	Men and women	Men and women

FIGURE 9.16: Shared stylistic features between *junba*, *djanba* and *lirrga*.

	<i>-traveling</i>	<i>+traveling</i>
<i>-rhythmic</i>	<i>Djanba</i> descent (men)	<i>Wangga/lirrga</i> Vocal section (men)
<i>+rhythmic</i>	<i>Wangga/lirrga</i> drone (instrumental section)	<i>Djanba</i> drone (women)

FIGURE 9.17: The matching of dance stylistic features (greater or lesser rhythmic emphasis, and presence or absence of travelling movement) to musical form in *djanba* compared to *wangga* and *lirrga* as performed at Wadeye.

while the ebbing back to rejoin the singing group, which advanced at a steady walking pace, took place during the men's section of the melody.

A similar contrast between less structured movement and emphatic rhythmic movement is made in dancing of the didjeridu-accompanied genres *lirrga* and *wangga*, but in this case, it occurs between the men's singing in the vocal sections (the sung stanzas) and the didjeridu in the instrumental section (for *wangga*, see Marett and Page 1995). Structurally, the women's drone in the final section of each *djanba* stanza seems to equate to the didjeridu's drone in the Instrumental sections of *lirrga*. There is one significant difference however: in both *wangga* and *lirrga* dancing, traveling movements by both men and women take place during the descending melody of the vocal section, while the rhythmically marked stamping movements by the men, and vigorous arm movements by the women, are performed more or less on the spot during the instrumental drone sections. The traveling feature of the dance movement is thus reversed in *djanba* compared to *wangga* and *lirrga* (Figure 9.17).

The similarities between *djanba* and *lirrga* that we have identified in this analysis arise from the common context in which the two genres are performed. Musical style is just one of several dimensions in which the song genres are consciously differentiated by their creators: others include dance style, dancers' body design, and text content (use of a particular language, as well as specific references to clan places, ancestors and associated beings). This

'constructive fostering of variegation' (Evans 2010) is a major driver of cultural change in language as well as music. It is especially relevant in the context of Wadeye community and its struggles to embrace cultural difference and establish formal mechanisms for managing it within ceremony.

*Djanba* needs to be different enough from its sister repertoires *wangga* and *lirrga* to allow it to be instantly recognizable from a distance, as the group approaches the ceremonial ground. For this purpose, the use of the sound components of Kimberley music is particularly effective, because the *djanba* group always approaches from the southwesterly direction, the same direction in which the Kimberley lies. At the same time *djanba* needs to be structured similarly to *wangga* and *lirrga* in order to allow the parallel ceremonial actions, of separating the boys from their mothers and bringing them to be circumcised, or containing the negative energy of the deceased by encircling and eventually effacing the hole in which their belongings are burned. And for this purpose, *djanba* composers have maintained similar underlying musical forms and dance practices as *wangga* and *lirrga*.

Because of the geographical isolation of Australia from the rest of Oceania and Southeast Asia, traditional Australian Aboriginal musical styles, like Aboriginal languages, appear not to bear any close genetic relationship to other song styles in the Asia-Pacific region, although (as with language) there is some evidence of borrowed forms from trading contacts with southeast Asian fishermen who visited Australia's northern coasts over several centuries before being banned by the British in the early years of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (Macknight 1976). Various ethnomusicologists, including Trevor Jones, Alice Moyle, and Allan Marett, have mentioned the possibility of Macassan influence on the traditional musical forms of northern Australia, with Marett suggesting that the widespread use of rhythmic mode may be one parallel tying northern Australian music to pan-Asian musical systems (Marett 2005). No doubt European colonization of Australia since 1788 has affected the practice of indigenous musical cultures in many dimensions, many of them devastating. But there is considerable evidence from the time of first European contact that Aboriginal people soon created their own songs on European models.

I believe that Pannikin Manbi's statement likening *djanba* and *wangga* to 'Rock-n-Roll' relates to the use of strophic form common to all three styles. While I would not go so far as to propose direct influence, it is certainly likely that the composition of the first *djanba* songs in the early 1960s took place in environments of contact with modern institutions such as cattle stations, mission settlements and government ration stations where radio, vinyl records and perhaps live performances of popular and folk music in English would have been available, as well as perhaps the most widespread strophic forms of all, Christian hymns (Furlan 2005). Thanks to global mass media, the stylistic

models accessible to Aboriginal composers today are even more varied (I have recently observed that Bollywood films are very popular in northwestern Arnhem Land communities, for example). Nevertheless, the longstanding, geographically referenced, and highly articulated systems linking clans, songs, cultural practices and land in relatively isolated communities such as Wadeye has meant that musicians remain keenly aware of traditional musical style and its uses.

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## APPENDIX 1

### **Orthography adopted by the Murriny Patha Song Project**

Murriny Patha has four vowels for which there is no phonemic length distinction. The four vowels are listed in Figure 9.18.

For the consonants, there are six places of articulation and a voicing contrast for the stops (Figure 9.19). However in nasal-stop clusters the contrast is essentially neutralized. In these environments, rather than choose a particular series, we represent the stops as voiced or voiceless, as we hear them on a word-by-word basis. We recognize that certain speakers' pronunciations of the same word may on occasion differ. To represent the alveolar nasal/voiced velar stop cluster we use an apostrophe /n'g/ so as to avoid confusion with the velar nasal /ng/.

vowels	+front	-front
+high	i	u
-high	e	a

FIGURE 9.18: Murriny Patha vowels

consonants	bilabial	dental	alveolar	retroflex	palatal	velar
voiceless stop	p	th	t	rt	tj	k
voiced stop	b	dh	d	rd	dj	g
nasal	m	nh	n	rn	ny	ng
lateral			l	rl		
flap/trill			rr			
glides	w		r		y	

FIGURE 9.19: Murriny Patha consonants

The above orthography differs from the one in use at the Our Lady of the Sacred Heart school in Wadeye (Street 1987), which has a single laminal series and uses voiceless stops in nasal clusters.

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