

REPORT OF OBSERVATION

YILPARA COMMUNITY AND BLUE MUD BAY

**FROM OCTOBER 2000-NOVEMBER 2001
AND JUNE-DECEMBER 2002**

MARCUS BARBER

APRIL 2004

IMPORTANT NOTE IN RELATION TO DECEASED PERSONS VIII

NOTE ON ORTHOGRAPHY..... IX

SECTION 1: INTRODUCTORY STATEMENT 1

1.1 INTRODUCTION.....	1
1.2 FORMAL QUALIFICATIONS	1
1.3 PUBLICATIONS.....	1
1.4 RELEVANT EXPERIENCE.....	1
1.4.1 MARINE SCIENCE.....	1
1.4.2 SOCIAL STUDIES	2
1.5 DEVELOPMENT OF PHD RESEARCH.....	2
1.6 FIELDWORK BACKGROUND.....	5
1.7 THESIS OUTLINE	7
1.8 THE BASIS OF THIS REPORT	8
1.9 THE SCOPE OF THIS REPORT.....	9

**SECTION 2: HUNTING AND FISHING SURVEY OF YILPARA, OCTOBER 2000-
NOVEMBER 2001, JUNE 2002-DECEMBER 2002..... 10**

2.1 INTRODUCTION.....	10
2.2 METHODOLOGY	11
2.2.1 PARTICIPANT OBSERVATION AND VEHICLES	13
2.3 RESULTS.....	14
2.3.1 LOCATION OF FOOD RESOURCES.....	15
2.3.2 ACCESS TO FOOD RESOURCES	15
2.3.3 VEHICLES.....	15
2.3.4 HUNTING RANGE	16
2.3.5 SEASONAL HUNTING RANGE.....	16
2.3.6 ENCOUNTERS WITH INDEPENDENT HUNTERS.....	17
2.3.7 HUNTING DURING 2002 FIELDWORK.....	18
2.3.8 COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT IN HUNTING.....	18
2.4 SUMMARY	18

SECTION 3: HABITATS AND SEASONS 20

3.1 INTRODUCTION..... 20
3.2 ECOLOGICAL ZONES..... 20
3.3 DHIYUWINING: RESOURCE HABITATS 20
3.4 WINDS 22
3.5 SEASONS..... 22
3.6 SUMMARY 24

SECTION 4: OBTAINING FOOD RESOURCES- HUNTING, GATHERING AND FISHING TECHNIQUES..... 25

4.1 HANDLINE FISHING 25
4.1.1 BOAT FISHING..... 26
4.1.2 COOKING FISH 27
4.2 CRABS AND BAIT 28
4.3 MIYAPUNU: TURTLE AND DUGONG HUNTING 29
4.3.1 MIYAPUNU 29
4.3.2 HUNTING..... 30
4.3.3 DUGONG HUNTING VARIATIONS 32
4.3.4 TURTLE BUTCHERY 34
4.3.5 DUGONG BUTCHERY..... 37
4.4 SHARK AND STINGRAY HUNTING 38
4.5 FISH SPEARING 42
4.6 NIGHT FISHING..... 43
4.7 MAYPAL: OYSTERS AND OTHER SHELLFISH 44
4.7.1 OYSTERS 44
4.7.2 SHELLFISH FROM THE MANGROVES 45
4.7.3 OTHER SHELLFISH 46
4.8 FRESHWATER FISHING 47
4.9 YAMS..... 48
4.10 MAMMALS, BIRDS, AND REPTILES..... 48
4.11 FRUITS AND BERRIES 49
4.11.1 MUNDUYUTJ 50
4.11.2 OTHER FRUITS AND BERRIES..... 50
4.11.3 BUSH HONEY 51
4.12 SUMMARY 51

SECTION 5: THE DISTRIBUTION OF FOOD RESOURCES 52

5.1 INTRODUCTION..... 52

5.1.1 FOOD DISTRIBUTION PARAMETERS 52

5.1.2 KINSHIP AND HOUSEHOLDS 53

5.2 TURTLE AND DUGONG DISTRIBUTION 54

5.2.1 HUNTING LABOUR AND INITIAL DISTRIBUTION 55

5.2.2 FURTHER DISTRIBUTION: SENIORITY 56

5.2.3 FURTHER DISTRIBUTION: OWNERSHIP OF COUNTRY 58

5.2.4 FURTHER DISTRIBUTION: PROXIMITY TO THE RESOURCES 58

5.2.5 FURTHER DISTRIBUTION: SUPPLY OF TECHNOLOGY 59

5.2.6 FURTHER DISTRIBUTION: INTERACTION OF FACTORS 60

5.2.7 DISTRIBUTION WITHIN THE HOUSEHOLD..... 61

5.2.8 SUMMARY 61

5.3 DISTRIBUTION OF OTHER FOOD RESOURCES 62

5.3.1 INTRODUCTION 62

5.3.2 DIVERSITY OF LABOUR..... 62

5.3.3 HUNTING PARTY COMPOSITION 64

5.3.4 WIDER DISTRIBUTION..... 66

5.3.5 PROHIBITIONS ON DISTRIBUTION 66

5.3.6 GURRUTU 67

5.3.7 SUMMARY 67

SECTION 6: NON-FOOD RESOURCES..... 69

6.1 INTRODUCTION..... 69

6.2 FIREWOOD 69

6.2.1 LANAPU 69

6.3 ART AND CRAFT 70

6.3.1 LARAKITJ: HOLLOW LOGS..... 70

6.3.2 NUWAYAK: BARKS 71

6.3.3 YIDAKI: DIDGERIDU 71

6.3.4 HARDWOOD AND SOFTWOOD CARVINGS 71

6.3.5 JEWELLERY 72

6.4 RESOURCES FOR CEREMONIAL ACTIVITIES 72

6.4.1 GAPAN: CLAY 72

6.4.2 OCHRE..... 72

6.4.3 BILMA: CLAPSTICKS	73
6.4.4 FUNERAL SHEDS	73
6.4.5 SHADES AND SHELTERS	73
6.4.6 OTHER CEREMONIAL RESOURCES	73
6.5 MEDICINES.....	74
6.5.1 STINGRAYS, STINGERS, SNAKEBITES	74
6.5.2 COLDS AND INFLUENZA.....	75
6.5.3 OTHER MEDICINES.....	75
6.6 SPEAR AND HARPOON MATERIALS.....	75
6.6.1 SPEAR AND HARPOON SHAFTS	75
6.6.2 SPEAR BARBS AND BLADES.....	76
6.6.3 SPEARHEAD FIXING TECHNIQUES.....	77
6.6.4 SPEAR THROWERS	77
6.7 BOOMERANGS.....	77
6.8 ROPES, LINES AND VINES	77
6.9 COOKING MATERIALS	78
6.10 HUNTING AND CAMPING SHELTERS	78
6.11 ANTBED	79
<u>SECTION 7: RESOURCE USE AT OTHER COMMUNITIES.....</u>	<u>80</u>
7.1 INTRODUCTION.....	80
7.2 DJARRAKPI	80
7.3 BARRARATJPI	81
7.4 WANDAWUY.....	81
7.5 RURRANGALLA.....	81
7.6 GANGAN	82
7.7 DHURUPITJPI	82
7.8 BÄLMA	82
<u>SECTION 8: FURTHER OBSERVATIONS OF ACTIVITIES ON LAND AND SEA</u>	
<u>COUNTRY.....</u>	<u>83</u>
8.1 INTRODUCTION.....	83
8.2 YOLNGU VISITORS: BOAT TRAVEL TO AND FROM YILPARA.....	83
8.3 FIRES AND THE BURNING OF COUNTRY.....	84
8.3.1 FIRES AND FUNERAL PROHIBITIONS.....	84

8.4 THE CLOSURE OF COUNTRY AND CEREMONIAL PROHIBITIONS	85
8.5 NON-YOLNGU PRESENCE AND USE OF COUNTRY	86
8.5.1 NON-YOLNGU VISITORS TO DULUWUY CRABBERS CAMP	87
8.5.2 RESPONSIBILITIES TO NON-YOLNGU VISITORS	88
8.6 VISITATION AND MAINTENANCE OF SACRED SITES	88
8.6.1 NGULMI NGULMI	88
8.6.2 LULUMU	89
8.6.3 YILPARA- YINGAPUNGAU	89
8.6.4 YATHIKPA	90
8.6.5 GARRANGALI	90
8.7 SKILLS TRANSFER AND THE CONTINUITY OF KNOWLEDGE	91
8.7.1 HUNTING	91
8.7.2 KNOWLEDGE OF COUNTRY	92
8.7.3 CEREMONIES	93
8.8 SUMMARY OF OBSERVATIONS OF ACTIVITIES IN THE INTERTIDAL ZONE	94
8.8.1 LINE FISHING	94
8.8.2 SPEAR FISHING	94
8.8.3 MANGROVE CRABS AND MANGROVE SHELLFISH	94
8.8.4 MUDFLAT SHELLFISH	95
8.8.5 OYSTERS	95
8.8.6 BAIT	95
8.8.7 MIYAPUNU HUNTING.....	95
8.8.8 DRIVING.....	96
8.8.9 SWIMMING	96
8.8.10 CEREMONY	96
<u>SECTION 9: OBSERVATIONS OF CEREMONIES</u>	<u>97</u>
9.1 INTRODUCTION.....	97
9.3 FUNERAL AT GAPUWIYAK, MARCH 2001	108
9.4 YITHUWA MADARRPA BABY’S FUNERAL, AUGUST 2001	115
9.5 FUNERAL OF GROOTE ISLAND MAN, SEPTEMBER 2001.....	118
9.6 DHAPI (CIRCUMCISION) AT YILPARA, SEPTEMBER 2001	122
9.7 RURRANGALLA FUNERAL OF [DULA NGURRUWUTHUN], OCTOBER 2001	130
9.8 GARINDJIRRA MARAWILI’S FUNERAL JUNE-JULY 2002.....	131
9.9 GUPA DJAPU FUNERAL OF [MILIRIPIN MUNUNGGURR], AUGUST 2002.....	142
9.10 FUNERAL OF [BAKULANGAY MARAWILI], AUGUST/SEPTEMBER 2002	147

APPENDICES

Appendix 1:	Observed Hunting Trips, Oct 2000-Nov 2001
Appendix 2:	Yilpara Vehicles, Oct 2000-Nov 2001
Appendix 3:	Independent Hunters Encountered, Oct 2000-Nov 2001
Appendix 4:	Hunting Trips Observed in Blue Mud Bay, June-Dec 2002
Appendix 5:	Clan Identities of Hunters in Appendices 1, 3, and 4
Appendix 6:	Fish Species Caught at Yilpara
Appendix 7:	Boat Visitors and Boat Travel to and from Yilpara
Appendix 8:	Observations of Ceremonial Events and Travel
Appendix 9:	Terms of Reference
Appendix 10:	Curriculum Vitae for Marcus Barber

MAPS ATTACHED TO REPORT

Map 1:	Blue Mud Bay
Map 2:	Food Resources Used by Yilpara Residents
Map 3:	Roads marked on Standard Maps
Map 4:	Bush Roads used by Yolngu Hunters
Map 5:	Observed Hunting Trips, Oct 2000-Nov 2001
Map 6:	Wet Season Hunting Trips
Map 7:	Dry Season Hunting Trips
Map 8:	Independent Hunters Encountered, Oct 2000-Nov 2001
Map 9:	Hunting Trips Observed, June-Dec 2002
Map 10:	Locations of Dhiyuwining Areas
Map 11:	Locations of Homeland Centres

IMPORTANT NOTE IN RELATION TO DECEASED PERSONS

Note: This report contains the names of seven persons recently deceased. These names should not be spoken aloud in the presence of Yolngu people without their permission. Where they appear, these names are enclosed in square brackets.

The seven persons concerned are:

[Bakulangay Marawili]

[Garindjirra Marawili]

[Watjinbuy Marawili]

[Dula Ngurruwuthun]

[Gambali Ngurruwuthun]

[Miliripin Mununggurr]

[Mayawuluk Wirrpanda]

NOTE ON ORTHOGRAPHY

This report contains Yolngu words, which are written according to established conventions for transcribing Yolngu. This is the reason for some underlined (retroflex) consonants and for the use of the non-English ‘ä’ symbol in the report, which represents the longer ‘a’ sound used in some Yolngu words. The only deviation from standard Yolngu transcription is the use of ‘ng’. This may be found written as an ‘n’ with a tail in other Yolngu font publications.

Section 1: Introductory Statement

1.1 Introduction

The section below contains specific details of my qualifications and experience and the nature of the research on which this report of observation is based. My full Curriculum Vitae is attached as Appendix 9. The section below includes an account of the development of my PhD research program, some background to the fieldwork undertaken for that program, and an outline of the PhD that I intend to produce from it.

1.2 Formal Qualifications

B.A. University of Melbourne, 1996

B.Sc (Hons) University of Melbourne, 1999

Currently PhD candidate, School of Archaeology and Anthropology, Australian National University

1.3 Publications

Barber, M. C. and Jenkins, G. P. Differential effects of food and temperature lead to decoupling of short-term otolith and somatic growth rates in juvenile King George Whiting *Sillaginodes punctata*, *Journal of Fish Biology* (2001) 58: 1320- 1330

1.4 Relevant Experience

1.4.1 Marine Science

I have had a long-term interest in marine science and the marine environment. I pursued undergraduate subjects in marine studies, including marine zoology, marine botany, marine ecology, marine geography, marine chemistry, conservation biology, animal ecology, environmental science, meteorology, and statistics and experimental

design. I completed these subjects with a first class average. In 1995 I spent an exchange semester studying marine science in Germany at the University of Rostock. My Honours thesis from the University of Melbourne contained both field and laboratory components and detailed work in fish ecology. Aspects of this research have been published in an international fish biology journal (see publications) and I presented key results at the Australian Marine Science Association National Conference, 1999. Subsequently I was engaged as a marine researcher through the University of Melbourne, working at the Victorian Institute of Marine Science in Queenscliff, Victoria. I managed the conduct of field sampling programs on boats and onshore, and conducted laboratory research. I am a current member of the Australian Marine Science Association.

1.4.2 Social Studies

I pursued social studies at an undergraduate level. Courses pursued included critical social theory, sociology, gender studies, philosophy of science, and history, all with a high first class average. At commencement of my PhD, I began a 9 month program in Aboriginal anthropology. This included an intensive weekly reading program designed by Dr Nicolas Peterson, as well as participation in undergraduate courses in traditional Aboriginal societies and in the history and theory of anthropology. I am a current member of the Australian Anthropological Society.

1.5 Development of PhD Research

After completing Honours at the University of Melbourne I became interested in pursuing questions about the relationship between human communities and the oceans, and I had a range of skills that I could bring to bear to investigate this topic. After some months of searching for an appropriate base for this work, I located the PhD project I am currently completing on the coastal Yolngu of Blue Mud Bay. I am supervised by Dr Nicolas Peterson and Professor Howard Morphy at the Australian National University.

My PhD project has developed into its current form through extensive reading and fieldwork. This reading began with a detailed study of the important relevant literature from Arnhem Land, including the following major works:

Warner, W. L., A Black Civilisation: A Social Study of an Australian Tribe, Harper and Brothers Publishers, New York, 1937

Thomson, D. F., Economic Structure and the Ceremonial Exchange Cycle in Arnhem Land, Macmillan, Melbourne, 1949

Berndt, R. M., Djanggal, F. W. Cheshire, Melbourne, 1952

Meehan, B., Shell Bed to Shell Midden, AIATSIS, Canberra, 1982

Morphy, H., Journey to the Crocodile's Nest, AIATSIS, Canberra, 1984

Davis, S., Aboriginal Claims to Coastal Waters in North-Eastern Arnhem Land, Northern Australia, Senri Ethnological Studies, no 17, Maritime Institutions in the Western Pacific, Edited by Kenneth Ruddle and Tomoya Akimichi, Tokyo, 1984

Donald Thomson's Mammals and Fishes of Northern Australia, Edited by J Dixon and L. Huxley, Nelson Publishing, Melbourne, 1985

Williams, N. The Yolngu and their Land, AIATSIS, Canberra, 1986

Altman, J. C., Hunter-Gatherers Today, AIATSIS, Canberra, 1987

Morphy, H., Ancestral Connections: Art and an Aboriginal System of Knowledge, University of Chicago Press, London, 1991

Keen, I., Knowledge and Secrecy in an Aboriginal Religion, Oxford University Press, London 1994

Saltwater: Yirrkala Bark Paintings of Sea country, Buku-Larrnggay Mulka Centre in Association with Jennifer Isaacs Publishing, Sydney, 1999

I also undertook extensive reading in Customary Marine Tenure from across the region including:

Johannes, R. E. Words of the Lagoon; Fishing and Marine Lore in the Palau District of Micronesia, University of California Press, London, 1991

Johannes, R. E., and MacFarlane, J. W., Traditional Fishing in the Torres Strait, CSIRO publishing, Hobart, 1991

Hviding, E. Guardians of the Marovo Lagoon, University of Hawaii Press, Honolulu, 1996

Peterson N. and Rigsby, B. Customary Marine Tenure in Australia, Oceania Monograph, University of Sydney, 1998

Sharp, N., Saltwater People: Waves of Memory, Allen and Unwin, Sydney 2002

These works contributed to the development of the fieldwork plan for Blue Mud Bay fieldwork conducted between 2000 and 2002, a plan devised in consultation with my supervisors. In August 2000, this plan was presented in a seminar to the School of Archaeology and Anthropology at ANU for critical evaluation and feedback. The first phase, a resource use survey, utilised my existing knowledge of the coastal environment and skills in systematic data collection. During this survey I was able to improve my understanding of Yolngu people, social life, and the local geography. This understanding was then basis of the second fieldwork phase, which deprioritised current resource use in favour of conversations about broader questions, including Yolngu connections to land and sea country, Blue Mud Bay history, personal naming, ceremonial knowledge, and the ownership of country.

This PhD research forms one component of what has become known as the Blue Mud Bay project. This is a SPIRT (Strategic Partnerships in Research and Training) grant funded through the Australia Research Council, with the Northern Land Council as an industry partner. My research program was designed to make use of my existing skills in marine resource research and the fact that I would be in a position to provide an account of the current situation in Blue Mud Bay based on long-term fieldwork. This would provide complementary knowledge to that either already held or newly generated by other members of the project. In the past, Professor Morphy has provided detailed accounts of the Yolngu kinship system, artistic expression, and ceremonial life. Frances Morphy has similarly described Yolngu languages and the regional language system. Thus these domains were not the focus of my research, although their accounts of such domains underpinned my understanding of Blue Mud Bay life. Similarly, it was expected that the current resource use research would complement the work of the archaeological researchers (Dr Anne Clark and Patrick Faulkner) on the SPIRT grant. However after the initial consideration of roles in the

overall project, my PhD research was pursued entirely independently, the research itself generating new questions and considerations for further study and analysis.

In summary, the research objectives at the commencement of fieldwork were:

1. To provide a detailed account of contemporary resource use in Blue Mud Bay over a full seasonal cycle.
2. To describe how hunting and fishing resources are distributed
3. To document the nature and extent of marine tenure in Blue Mud Bay
4. To explore the history of residence, journeying, and resource use in Blue Mud Bay
5. To explore the way in which water is important in Yolngu understandings of the physical environment, and what symbolic role it plays in Yolngu ceremonial life
6. To integrate this information with the existing literature on Yolngu peoples
7. To examine how life in Blue Mud Bay might provide a critique of existing anthropological representations of indigenous marine space
8. To examine how an understanding of Blue Mud Bay waters and marine space in indigenous terms might suggest ways in which non-indigenous society can reconceptualise coastal environments, coastal life, and coastal ownership

1.6 Fieldwork Background

I lived at Yilpara homeland centre between October 2000 and November 2001, and between June 2002 and December 2002. I lived in a tent beside the house owned by Nuwandjali Marawili throughout those periods. I was adopted by Djambawa Marawili as a brother shortly after my arrival and given an Aboriginal name, Getkit (seabird, tern). Adoption by a particular person is the normal way in which people from outside are drawn into Yolngu society. Through this adoption, other people in the community were able to establish their appropriate kinship relationship to me and thereby the way in which they should relate to me. I had greater connection to and reciprocal responsibilities towards the person who adopted me and to his immediate family, but I actively tried to build relations with other members of the community who were more distantly related. In the first 13 months I focussed on resource use, going out with Yolngu hunters and fishers on trips to surrounding areas as often as possible, and in

total, this meant over 180 trips during the first fieldwork period. These trips were made with hunters and fishers from every household at Yilpara, and I developed good relationships with members from every household.

In polite Yolngu society, it is normal to learn one's kinship relationship to another person before finding out their name (their name has important Ancestral connections and may not be revealed for some time). It was essential for my resource use research that I learn people's names as rapidly as possible, in order to identify them clearly in my survey. This meant that I placed great emphasis on learning people's names, in addition to their kinship status. The bulk of Yilpara residents are Yithuwa Madarrpa clan families, and so many people fall into particular kinship categories, and other more distant categories are rare. I rapidly attained knowledge of the names and kinship categories of Yilpara residents sufficient to conduct the resource use survey effectively. This knowledge of people and kinship was built upon and deepened during the second fieldwork period.

Conversations during fieldwork were usually conducted in English. Many senior Yilpara residents have a good level of everyday English, sufficient for communicating about issues related to hunting, fishing, and stories of life on country. A number of people, particularly senior people, have a level of English considerably higher than this. For this reason my knowledge of the Yolngu language developed with an emphasis on words related to the study objectives; fish species, animal and plant species, place names, person names, kin terms, seasons, weather, ecological zones, hunting and fishing equipment, ceremony names, and other nouns directly related to the study. I do not speak Yolngu fluently, but late in the second period my language skills and my general knowledge of the country and people had improved to the point where I was able to conduct more detailed oral history work with older people who had limited English, focussing on hunting, fishing, travel and life on the coast. These oral histories were conducted in a mixture of English and Yolngu.

The Yilpara and broader Blue Mud Bay communities were interested in participating in the research. They are keen hunters and fishers, and wished to show me that knowledge whilst obtaining food for themselves and their families. The community have been actively engaging the outside world in questions of sea rights and sea

ownership over an extended period (the 1999 Saltwater art collection being one example), and saw my research as another component of that ongoing engagement. As a result I was able to commence the survey almost immediately upon entering the community. The knowledge that they were imparting to me, particularly during the first research period, was knowledge of a public nature relating to everyday activities, and was freely given. One emphasis of the research was precisely to focus on the knowledge and skills held by members across the community, including women and young people. Knowledge appropriate to initiated men was occasionally imparted to me by those authorised to do so, but it was not made a focus for research until the second period of fieldwork.

After the initial 13 months of research, I returned to Canberra to collate this research and develop further research priorities. I presented a seminar in May 2002 at the School of Archaeology and Anthropology at ANU, outlining existing results and my further research program. Appropriate elements of this program were implemented during fieldwork between June and December 2002. During this period there were a number of deaths within the Blue Mud Bay community and several extended funeral periods. This affected the amount of research that could be undertaken in some areas (including further resource use work). However considerable further work was done on the body of knowledge relating to the ceremonial sphere. Outcomes of this second period of research included oral history material, data on personal names and their meanings, ceremonial knowledge, and direct conversations about resource distribution, the ownership of country, and sea tenure. Additional resource work on specific resources (such as turtles) was a further aspect, as was the correction and extension of material collected in the first research period.

1.7 Thesis Outline

In its current form, my thesis describes aspects of coastal life and coastal ownership in Blue Mud Bay, emphasising how land and sea domains are integrated in both everyday experience and the way that ownership of country is expressed. This incorporates the sea focus I carried into the project, but also expands upon it in a way that is more appropriate to the lives and the perspectives of Blue Mud Bay residents. A key component of this view is a sensitivity to and understanding of the coastal

water cycle. This cycle integrates the coastal environment through the change and movement of water; clouds form in the sea, move over the land and then drop rain, which flows into the rivers. The rivers flow back into the coastal bays and then out to sea, where the water forms clouds again. This cycle is sung in Yolngu ceremonial songs, represented in paintings, and is one of the major ways in which Yolngu people express their sense of the integration of land and sea. It provides an important ethnographic example that undercuts some of the current assumptions made in debates about customary marine tenure, most particularly about the division between land and sea. Currently, planned topics for thesis chapters include contemporary hunting and fishing, resource use, resource distribution, hunting skill acquisition and ecological knowledge, historical resource use and journeys, personal naming, ceremonial knowledge, and ownership and tenure.

At the time of writing this report (April 2004), I have completed the early chapters of my thesis. To date, key results from the resource use survey have been communicated in a presentation at the Australian Anthropological Association National Conference in October 2003. A more detailed analysis of relevant aspects of the fieldwork was produced for the Final Report of the SPIRT project in October 2003. A number of elements of the report presented here are also found in this Final Report

1.8 The Basis of this Report

Information contained in this report comes from four sources:

1. Direct observations
2. Statements from Yolngu informants
3. My expertise and training as a marine scientist
4. The anthropological literature about Yolngu people

Where it is not directly attributed, all the information comes from one of the first three sources listed above, and predominantly from the first two. Many observations combine both of the first two sources, as Yolngu informants augmented my direct observations by further explaining what I was witnessing. Some principal informants during the research are as follows:

Djambawa Marawili
[Mayawuluk Wirrpanda]
Wäka Mununggurr
Gumbaniya Marawili
Dhuka Wirrpanda
Mulawalnga Marawili
Malumin Marawili
Menga Mununggurr
Bandipandi Wunungmurra

Nuwandjali Marawili
Muluymuluy Wirrpanda
[Bakulangay Marawili]
Ngulpurr Marawili
Gawirrin Gumana
Bangawuy Wanambi
Wuyal Wirrpanda
Wanyipi Marika
Dhupilawuy Marika

1.9 The Scope of this Report

This report is an account of hunting and other activities based at Yilpara homeland. There are a number of other communities around the shores of Blue Mud Bay that were only observed for short periods during the course of the fieldwork. Therefore the maps and other sections of this report describe the observed activity that was generated from Yilpara. This directly observed activity is a subset of total Yilpara activity, as not all activity could be feasibly observed. Similarly, the total activity generated at Yilpara is a subset of total activity in northern Blue Mud Bay as a whole, because hunting and other activities occur at other communities. It is important that this aspect be taken into account when examining the maps, figures, and descriptions that follow. They provide a representative sample of the activities undertaken in the claim area, but describe far less than the total amount of activity undertaken during the observation period.

This report is written according to the terms of reference supplied by the Northern Land Council (see Appendix 8)

Section 2: Hunting and Fishing Survey of Yilpara, October 2000- November 2001, June 2002-December 2002

2.1 Introduction

Yilpara lies on a peninsula in the north of Blue Mud Bay (see Map 1). The homeland centre has an average population of approximately 100 people and is the largest community of those on or near the shores of Blue Mud Bay. Other centres in the area include GanGan, Barraratjpi, Djarrakpi, Dhurupitjpi, and further inland, Wandawuy and Rurrangalla. Except for Wandawuy, all of these communities were visited at some point during the fieldwork (see Section 7), but only for shorter periods. This study is a description of hunting activity based at Yilpara during the fieldwork, rather than a survey of all the activities being undertaken in the claim area.

The core of the Yilpara community is the Yithuwa Madarrpa clan, on whose country the homeland centre is built, but due to marriage, kinship ties, and other residence factors, a diverse range of Yolngu clans are represented amongst the regular residents. In 2002, Yilpara had approximately 13 main dwellings, houses which were occupied by senior Yithuwa Madarrpa men and/or their wives and descendants. One house was occupied by a senior Gupa Djapu man whose mother was a Yithuwa Madarrpa. During the research, a white storekeeper took over the management of the Yilpara store and began residing at Yilpara approximately 60-70% of the time. No other non-Yolngu people permanently reside there.

In Yolngu English, the word 'hunting' covers a number of activities (such as fishing with a handline, digging for crabs, collecting shellfish and other activities not covered by the standard English definition). For brevity, this report follows the Yolngu convention, so when written here, 'hunting' refers to the broad array of hunting and resource gathering activities Yolngu undertake on the surrounding country. The definition does not include non-food resources. These will be dealt with in a separate section of the report.

The objectives of the resource use survey at Yilpara were as follows:

1. To accurately depict the hunting range of Yilpara residents over the course of a 12 month seasonal cycle
2. To accurately depict the nature of resource use at particular locations over time
3. To assess the extent of hunting and fishing activity over time and space
4. To examine how different groups and individuals in the community might use different areas of the hunting range
5. To examine how seasonal factors affect hunting range and resource use
6. To gather information about the Blue Mud Bay physical environment that is of particular relevance to its residents
7. To gather information about hunting skills, ecological knowledge, and other factors relevant to hunting success
8. To gather information about resource distribution
9. To use daily hunting and shared activity as a way of building relationships with Yilpara residents
10. To allow conversations about life in Blue Mud Bay to occur in the spaces and places where that life is lived out
11. To use the situations and opportunities provided by daily hunting and shared experience to begin exploration of the more complex questions addressed later in the research

2.2 Methodology

The research methodology had to meet a diverse array of objectives. In terms of estimating total resource use in the community, the most effective strategy would have been to systematically survey the catch of Yilpara residents on their return from daily hunting. However this would not have adequately met a number of other objectives, such as gathering information about the physical environment, documenting ecological knowledge, assessing hunting skills, and building relationships with people. In Yolngu social interactions, direct questions about food (particularly quantities) are understood as a request to share the food with the questioner. With such long-term fieldwork planned, good community relations were of great importance in devising an appropriate methodology, and this was an important consideration when structuring the hunting survey. The need to meet

multiple objectives, combined with the need to develop a sensitive, long-term methodology, meant that quantifying the total resource use across the community was not an objective of the research.

However, the survey objectives state the need to generate a systematic account of the nature of resource use activities, their frequency, and the range of country over which they occur. These objectives were compatible with other objectives, such as documenting hunting skills, collecting environmental information, and building relationships with others through shared activity. Both types of objectives could be addressed through a participant observation survey of individual hunting trips, with the trips over time collated to create a representative account of hunting range, hunting activities, and hunting frequency. Range and frequency were accurately documented via systematic collection of Global Positioning System (GPS) points at each relevant stop on each hunting trip. The Global Positioning System is a series of satellites that send out constant signals of their time and location. These signals are received by a hand held device approximately the size of a mobile telephone, which uses the transmitted information to calculate its position on the earth's surface, expressing that position through map coordinates. The system is very accurate, easily able to record movements over the earth's surface of less than 100 metres, and this level of detail is far more than is required to accurately present maps at the scale presented in this report.

On every trip, notes were made of the following data:

1. The locations visited on the trip (obtained using a GPS)
2. The names of the individuals present on the trip
3. The type of resources collected from each location
4. The person or group who collected the resources
5. The equipment used to obtain the resources
6. An estimate of the amount of resources obtained (where possible/practicable)
7. The uses made of resources from those locations
8. The duration of the stay at any one location
9. Significant movement within any one named location

10. Ecological and environmental information about the area, including seasonal changes
11. Encounters with other hunters who had travelled to a location independently

The core data for each trip of the list above (GPS location, location name, people present, types of resources, amounts of resources) can be found in the spreadsheets of Appendix 1.

2.2.1 Participant Observation and Vehicles

One aspect of this methodology that needs to be discussed at the outset is access to vehicles. 4WD vehicles and boats were a critical factor in the observed hunting, which predominantly involved day trips from the homeland centre to the surrounding areas. The majority of the hunting trips reported here involved the use of a 4WD vehicle supplied as part of the Blue Mud Bay SPIRT project. This vehicle played an important role in maintaining good reciprocal relations, a critical aspect of long-term participant observation research in Aboriginal communities. However the presence and use of the vehicle also required that the vehicle's impact on the research be assessed.

As has already been stated, the focus of the survey was on the hunting range and nature of resource use, rather than on the total amounts of resources collected across the community. In focussing on these two objectives, the critical one is the hunting range, as once hunters can access a particular environment they are likely to exploit all of the useful resources available at that location. The actual hunting range for the participant observation hunting trips could be obtained from a collation of the GPS points from those trips. However in assessing the accuracy of this range, and therefore the relative impact of the research vehicle on hunting range over the year, it was necessary to search for physical evidence of previous hunting activity, and activity occurring independently of the research vehicle.

Evidence in the landscape for previous hunting activity exists in the form of the road and track network across the Yilpara peninsula. These tracks are largely made and kept clear by the passing of vehicles and by regular burning of the country. In many

areas, lack of use of tracks leads to deterioration and rapid overgrowth of the track. Much of this track network is not evident on commercial maps of the area, which show the major road only. In order to produce an accurate version of the actual road network being used, all visible tracks across the peninsula were mapped using a GPS and a car odometer to take readings every 500m. These readings were then used to produce an accurate, up-to-date map of the track network, to evaluate vehicle passage in recent history. The peninsula is in a remote area of Aboriginal-controlled land, and such vehicles are almost exclusively those operated by local Aboriginal people and their visiting relatives. The track network therefore represents indigenous presence on the country, and presence is directly related to resource use.

In order to assess the relative importance of the research vehicle on the overall community vehicle cohort, regular notes were taken about the presence and working status of other vehicles in the community. Similar notes were taken about boats, although boats in the community were owned and operated by Aboriginal people, for there was no research vessel. Mapping the road network to assess physical evidence for previous resource use, and noting the presence and condition of vehicles during fieldwork, were two ways in which impact of the research vehicle on local hunting practices was assessed. A third means of assessment was to record observations of Yolngu travelling independently, and collate these observations to produce a map of the hunting range of these independent hunters. This range could then be compared with that of the research vehicle.

2.3 Results

This section contains the formal results of the resource use survey in terms of hunting range and frequency. Appendix 1 contains the data from the participant observation trips which is summarised in the maps below. More detailed reporting and explanation of hunting skills, ecological knowledge, and related matters follows in the subsequent sections of this report. Most hunting trips lasted between a few hours and a day, although at certain times of the year Yolngu were observed camping out overnight in hunting and fishing areas. During the main body of the survey (Oct 2000-Nov 2001) data from 180 trips were recorded as a participant observer.

2.3.1 Location of Food Resources

In order to understand the summary maps of hunting range properly, it is necessary to first describe where particular resources can be found. From the hunting trips, it is possible to construct a map of the locations where particular resources are commonly exploited by Yilpara residents (Map 2). It is very important to note that this is not a complete account of resources exploited from those areas, as residents from other nearby homeland centre communities are likely to also use the same areas, but may extract different resources from those locations. Yilpara people may also extract multiple resources from the same site. However this map shows in general terms what resources are important to Yilpara people from the respective areas.

2.3.2 Access to Food Resources

Map 3 shows the roads marked on the standard commercial maps of the area, roads which cover a limited range. Map 4 shows the Aboriginal-made vehicle tracks present on the Yilpara peninsula that were mapped during fieldwork. A comparison of Map 4 with the resources in Map 2 shows that the tracks made and maintained by Yolngu vehicles lead directly to the sites of key resources.

The map of Aboriginal roads indicates the presence of Yolngu vehicles on a significant proportion of the peninsula, with an emphasis on the coastal margin. Many tracks run along the beach, and at such times, there are usually two tracks. One permanently visible track is above the high tide line, whilst the second track runs along on the intertidal hard sand at lower tides and is erased with every high tide. Like the tracks through the bush, the beach tracks above high tide also disappear or become overgrown if they are unused for an extended period.

2.3.3 Vehicles

A list of vehicles present at Yilpara during the survey period appears in Appendix 2. 12 other vehicles unrelated to the research were either permanently based at Yilpara or present for extended periods. On occasions it was possible for the number of

vehicles present to exceed this number on a single day, usually during peak ceremony times.

2.3.4 Hunting Range

Map 5 shows the total number of GPS points obtained on hunting trips over the course of the initial 13 month survey. By comparing the location of the points with the resources shown on Map 2, some key areas of activity are clear:

1. Turtle and dugong hunting in Grindall Bay (Yathikpa), turtle hunting at Round Hill Island (Gunyuru) and turtle hunting and oyster gathering at Woodah Island (Wangurrarikpa).
2. Linefishing for parrotfish, yam digging, and spearing for mullet and stingray along the southern part of the Yilpara peninsula (Yarrinya, Point Blane).
3. Mudcrab hunting in the mangroves and line fishing in boats off the reefs near Yilpara on the eastern side.
4. Hunting for stingray and fishing for trevally in the bays directly north and northeast of Yilpara.
5. Shooting waterbirds in the marshes and riverflats northeast of Grindall Bay.
6. Fishing for freshwater fish at the waterhole (Mangatjipa) at the far north of the map.

Hunting range in map 5 correlates strongly with the track network in Map 4. This suggests that the existing track network is a reliable guide to resource use activity prior to the commencement of the resource survey.

2.3.5 Seasonal Hunting Range

Map 6 and Map 7 show the hunting ranges during the wet season and dry season respectively. The ranges in the two seasons are similar, despite the more difficult weather conditions in the wet season. Yolngu hunting and presence on country was not severely impacted by the onset of the wet season, and this is due to a number of factors:

1. alternative wet season routes on land to avoid flooded rivers

2. travel to sites during the periods between significant rainfall events (these periods can be weeks)
3. extensive knowledge of the movements of weather and storms, and of the places offering boat shelter. This means that boat travel was not restricted by location, only by the need to avoid temporary weather patterns
4. Particular animals (such as parrotfish) are 'in season' during the wetter months in particular habitats. Coastal and marine resource use was intensified during the wet season, and the bulk of resource use at Yilpara was coastal regardless of season because of the location of the community
5. Significant numbers of Yolngu from Nhulunbuy and other homeland centres came to visit relatives during the school holidays over Christmas and January, further increasing hunting activity during the wetter months.

The main variation in hunting range between dry and wet seasons was the use of the freshwater fishing hole at Mangatjipa, and a reduced emphasis on shooting birds on the floodplain northwest of Yilpara. Mangatjipa is cut off during the wet season, and the flooded plain makes birds harder to shoot during the wet. On the sea, hunting range from Yilpara was similar between wet and dry seasons. Further discussion of Yolngu seasons follows in a subsequent section of this report.

2.3.6 Encounters with Independent Hunters

Separate records were kept of encounters with hunters who travelled independently of the research vehicle. These encounters are noted in Appendix 3. Although not all encounters were recorded with a GPS point, a note was made of the name of the place where the encounter occurred. A general location can be identified from this name and a representative GPS point created. Combined with those for which a GPS was recorded, these locations form the basis of Map 8. Map 8 is therefore a guide to where encounters with other Yolngu occurred during the course of the survey. Encounters on the water are rare, but the researcher was travelling in boats owned and used by Yolngu people. Sea travel therefore represents a separate category, where trips were made independently with the researcher on board. The hunting range of encountered vehicles corresponds closely with the hunting range of the research vehicle, providing

further evidence that the hunting range described here is accurate for the survey period.

2.3.7 Hunting during 2002 Fieldwork

During the second fieldwork period in 2002, resource use was not made a priority for research. However a number of hunting trips were made, focussing on turtle hunts and on unfamiliar resources or locations, but also including many trips of a more general nature. Data for these trips appears in Appendix 4. An examination of the hunting locations for this more restricted period (Map 9) provides further evidence that the hunting range for Yilpara residents obtained during the main study in 2000-2001 is accurate.

2.3.8 Community Involvement in Hunting

Yilpara generally had a population of between 80 and 120 people during the fieldwork. The full list of individuals participating in the 2000-2001 survey is part of Appendix 1. Over 180 individuals participated in a hunting trip in which the researcher was present. No accurate figure can be provided for the number of people who were encountered or observed hunting independently, as in many circumstances it was not possible to note more than a few people travelling in another loaded vehicle. It should be noted that in terms of independent travellers, it is likely that a much greater number of trips were made which the researcher did not encounter or observe, than are reported here.

2.4 Summary

Yilpara hunters were observed using a wide variety of resources from across the northern part of Blue Mud Bay. The resource use survey conducted between Oct 2000 and November 2001 describes a range for this hunting activity. The bush track network, encounters with independent hunters, and data from subsequent fieldwork provide evidence that this range is accurate. The presence of a significant number of Yolngu-owned vehicles indicates the capacity for Yolngu hunters to access the

surrounding environment, and a substantial number of observations of independent travel on land and sea were recorded during the survey. With the exception of two land sites inaccessible by road, hunting range was not substantially affected by the onset of the wet season. Similarly, with the exception of three invalid or elderly people, all Yilpara residents participated in at least one hunting trip during the survey period, and most undertook many. The data described here is a minimum for activity in the area, as the total amount of hunting activity for the Yilpara community was significantly larger than that observed by the researcher. Finally it should also be stated again that this represents an account of activity based at Yilpara. There are a number of other nearby communities that also hunt in the claim area and its immediate surrounds. A brief discussion of these other communities appears in Section 7.

Section 3: Habitats and Seasons

3.1 Introduction

The following section contains observations and information related to how Yolngu people conceptualise ecological zones and food resource habitats. It also outlines the seasons over a calendar year in Blue Mud Bay. This information is relevant to the hunting survey outlined above, and to the observations of hunting and fishing techniques discussed in Section 4.

3.2 Ecological Zones

Yolngu hunters were often observed referring to particular areas of country using words that correlate with identifiable ecological zones in English. These terms describe physical characteristics and/or environmental categories. Some of these basic terms include:

Rangi- beach, sand. Coastal or beach areas as distinct from inland ones.

Gunda- rock, stone, reef. The word can refer to a shoreline reef or an underwater rock.

Batpa- turtle and dugong feeding habitat, undersea rocky reef or seagrass beds.

Gathul- mangrove trees, mangrove area

Dholu- mud, muddy area

Monuk gapu- saltwater, sea, ocean

Raypiny gapu- freshwater

Mayang- river

Mangutji- waterhole, billabong

Ninydjiya- floodplain

Retja-jungle

Diltji- bush or inland areas (as distinct from coastal or beach zones).

3.3 Dhiyuwining: Resource habitats

The map shown previously in the resource use survey section shows the resources generally exploited from particular habitat areas in the Yilpara area (Map 2). Again it

should be noted that this map is a guide only, as resources such as highly mobile fish species can obviously be found across a wide range. Nevertheless there are some defined habitats where people expect to obtain particular resources, and others resources such as freshwater fish and shellfish can be highly localised.

Map 2 was generated from direct observations of Yolngu hunting activities. However it also reflects a Yolngu conception of country and resource use, that of Dhiyuwining. This term refers to locations where particular resources are reliably available, year after year, often during a specific season. In Yolngu speech, the location can be a reference to the resource itself at that location. A powerful ancestral story associated with an area further enhances the richness of it as a Dhiyuwining place. Some examples of Dhiyuwining areas are listed below (note locations in English found on Map 10). These areas were supplied as examples by Djambawa Marawili in a conversation about Dhiyuwining:

Stingrays- Yilpara

Turtles- Yathikpa (Grindall Bay), Gunyuru (Round Hill Island), Wangurrarikpa (Woodah Island)

Parrotfish- Djarrakpi (Cape Shield), Gurritjinya (eastern side of Blane Peninsula)

Turtle eggs- Djarrakpi (Cape Shield), Wangurrarikpa (Woodah Island)

Honey- Wangurrarikpa (Woodah Island), Rurrangalla (inland homeland centre)

Yams and nuts- Wapiyarrkpa (Nicol Island)

Dhiyuwining is a way in which hunting areas with rich resources are expressed in Yolngu speech and thinking, as distinct from the ecological zones described above. The term therefore encompasses more than the English word 'habitat' as it refers to areas of particularly rich hunting resources. It further incorporates the seasonality of resources, as dhiyuwining refers to not just an area but the time of year that that area provides the resources. Finally, Dhiyuwining areas are often sites of ancestral activity.

3.4 Winds

Yolngu seasons are heavily interwoven with winds from particular directions. Information on winds and seasons was obtained throughout the survey, and was checked and systematised in formal conversations with Ngulpurr Marawili and Djambawa Marawili. There are four main winds:

Lungurrma- North wind. Yirritja moiety

Dhimmuru/Bulunu- East wind. Dhuwa moiety

Mädirriny-South wind. Yirritja moiety.

Barra- West wind, Dhuwa moiety.

These four major wind directions are complemented by local winds named in particular places. Many of these names come from songs and there are multiple names for the winds. One example of a localized wind was bununu (also called yalyal or galena). This is Dhuwa moiety, a light breeze found at inland Dhuwa places like Dhurupitjpi. A second example is gaypirrayn (also called madayalyal or mapulany). This is a Yirritja wind found at important inland areas such as GanGan, Baykutji, and Wayawu.

The words for calm are also localized and can be different at different places. Calm at Dhuwa areas such as Ngandharkpuy is called mit'mit'. Calm weather at the Yirritja area of Yathikpa is called marawuwu, wapurrarr, or gunbilk. This specificity of language when referring to the physical environment was also noted in other domains, such as states and locations of water, but these will not be discussed here.

3.5 Seasons

The four major winds frame and partly define Yolngu seasons, but the list below also contains other indicators of seasons beyond those of the winds. Of particular note is the way that plants indicate when particular marine resources are ready to be exploited. The words for these seasons are used in areas other than Blue Mud Bay, but the timing of the seasons can vary in different parts of Arnhem Land, as can the local

phenomena that signify the change of season. The timing of the seasons and the phenomena described here apply to the Blue Mud Bay region. They were obtained from direct observation, and conversations with Djambawa Marawili and Ngulpurr Marawili.

Dhuludur (October). The first rains come, and there is distant thunder and lightning

Lunggurra (October-December) The seas are calm and there is some new growth from the first rains, brought by barra, the west wind. The bush berries munduytj and bundjungu are ready, indicating that the parrotfish is also becoming fat. Flowering plants that signify that the livers of the maranydjalk (shark and stingray) are ready. These include balwurr (the red flowering Kurrajong), warrkarr (white sand lily), and a creeper, wurluymung.

Wolma (December)- Lightning becomes much more prevalent, particularly in the evening after the afternoon clouds have built up. At first the lightning is silent, and the thunder is heard after a few weeks. The weather is hot and the mosquitoes come out. Barra, the west wind, bring rains during this time. This is nguykal (kingfish) season, where the kingfish travels from freshwater at Wayawu river northwest of Yilpara and down the rivers, passing out to sea towards Djarrakpi. People spear nguykal off the rocks at Djarrakpi.

Bulunu (January-March)- High wind season, and high tides during the full moon. There is lush growth from the rains, but the bush foods are not yet ready. Yellow flowers show that the freshwater baypinnga (saratoga) are carrying eggs. Black berries appear on a palm tree at this time, signifying that the emus are fat. White flowers on the paperbark also signify this time. There are still some munduytj (bush fruit of the early wet) to be found, as well as other bush fruits such as bundjungu.

Midawarr (March-April)- The season just after the wet when bush foods are ripe, animals are fat, seafoods are plentiful, and the wind blows more softly from the east (dhimurru). It is a good time to hunt turtle and dugong. The wattle tree flower which grows at this time tells Yolngu that it is the right time for mekawu (oysters), seagull eggs, and turtle eggs. The wind dhimurru/bulunu is associated with white berries

(called bulunu) and sometimes the rains come when they are ripe. Soft yams (namukaliya) are ready to eat at this time.

Dharra/Gadayka (May-August) -Cold weather and rough seas with plenty of yams and bush food. *Wadut* is the name of the strong wind in this season, which flattens the grass, and the morning is sometimes foggy, caused by the bushfires lit in the dry grass. It is the time when all of the animals go into their holes, and Yolngu set bushfires (*wurrk*) to burn off the undergrowth, making the holes easier to locate

Rarranhdharr (September-October)-the late dry season when it is hot, freshwater is becoming scarce, and some bush animals are getting thin. Freshwater fish and tortoises become concentrated in the deeper pools, and become the focus for hunting effort. In the past, coastal Yolngu tended to head inland during this season, and built fish traps (*buyku*) across the narrow creeks, taking advantage of the low water flow. These traps were not observed being built during the fieldwork. *Rakay* (lily roots) and freshwater tortoises (*minhala*) can be found in the drying up mud. The stringybark blossoms signal wild honey, geese, *balkpalk* nuts, and *darrangul* (orange-red flowered bush with a nut inside) are ready.

3.6 Summary

Yolngu possess a detailed ecological knowledge of their local environment which enables them to hunt effectively. Ecological zones, winds and seasons comprise parts of this knowledge, directing Yolngu hunters towards particular resources, and connecting different sets of resources together. *Dhiyuwining*, which incorporates habitat, season, and hunting resources into one concept, is an important way in which such knowledge is encapsulated and expressed. Further discussion of such knowledge will appear in the next section, which outlines hunting and fishing techniques.

Section 4: Obtaining Food Resources- Hunting, Gathering and Fishing Techniques

The Yilpara residents were observed using a wide range of marine and terrestrial resources and employing a diverse array of hunting skills to obtain them effectively. The following section describes these resources, the categories of people who collected them, and how they were collected and processed into food. A hunting trip often involved people obtaining several of the resources described below, either by delegating particular tasks to certain people, or by individuals employing some combination of hunting methods over the course of a trip. This must be borne in mind when discussing each of the resources in turn.

4.1 Handline Fishing

Handline fishing from the beach or shore reef was the most frequent form of hunting observed and was the only hunting activity regularly performed by both genders and all ages. Adult Yilpara residents have an excellent understanding of fish behaviour and of the effect of tides, seasons, and local weather conditions on likely fishing success. Whilst fish are highly mobile, certain species are known to be associated with certain habitats. Appendix 5 shows some of the main species caught by Yilpara residents. The key target species for Yolngu fishing off rocky reefs on the southern part of the Yilpara peninsula was Yambirrku (Blue tusk fish or parrotfish, *Choerodon schoenleinii*). Also caught frequently off these reefs was Wamungu (*Lethrinus laticandis*) and Nyirrkada (Estuarine Rock Cod, *Epinephelus cooides*). On the northern coast above Yilpara another fish, Darrapa (trevally, *Gnathanodon speciosus*) was more commonly caught. The target species when fishing in the muddy, sheltered areas in the upper bays near river estuaries was Mithurrungu (Catfish species, *Arius spp*) and Makani (Queenfish, *Scomberoides commersonianus*). Balin (Barramundi, *Lates calcarifer*) were caught in both muddy and rocky areas, and were a prized catch in both environments. Some fish (such as Yambirrku) are known to taste better at certain times of the year as their flesh and livers (djukurr) become fat. Fishing effort was directed towards these species during these periods.

Participant observation revealed that in addition to a detailed knowledge of the environment and animal behaviour, handline fishing requires considerable physical skill. There is no rod to cast the line out and so Yolngu fishers whirled a length of line above their heads, then let it go at precisely the right moment of rotation so that it flew out into the water. Exact timing was required to cast the line a reasonable distance. The difference between an effective cast and a poor one is fine, but has a huge effect on fishing success, as larger fish are more prevalent further out. Clearing a hook that has become snagged on a rock or sensing a fish nibbling on the bait requires soft, sensitive hands, and knowing the exact moment to pull the line when a fish bites is also extremely difficult, particularly for the prized parrotfish. Pulling in a large fish with a handline requires tough hands (to endure the line friction), arm strength and an understanding of when the line is in danger of breaking and should be allowed to run free. When the fish are biting, the speed with which a hook can be tied, baited and recast after a successful catch can make a substantial difference to the final outcome of the fishing effort. Yolngu children as young as 4 or 5 were observed fishing, having mastered the basic technique, and a high level of skill was observed in children of early teenage years. Without exception, all able-bodied community members observed who were over this age displayed a very high level of line fishing skill.

4.1.1 Boat Fishing

Fishing from the shore was the most common form of handline fishing, but fishing also occurred from boats. Boat fishing trips were generally of two types. The first and more common type targeted Yambirru (parrotfish) and involved motoring or rowing a few hundred metres offshore to fish off the outer fringing reef. This type of fishing was observed on 11/03/01 and 5/05/01, to name two examples. A second type targeted darrapa (trevally) and this took place further north in Myaloola bay, but also involved staying within a few hundred metres of the shore. A float has been positioned by Yilpara residents at a particular spot a few hundred metres offshore from where schools of trevally are present at certain tide times. Boat fishing trips of five fishers near this float produced several hauls of over 50 darrapa (trevally) in less than two hours, and two such trips witnessed were on 6/04/01 and 7/04/01. Boat

fishing trips were made along the coast north of this place and also produced substantial numbers of darrapa and other fishes (for example, on 4/5/01).

On 26/02/01, on an unusually low tide, Yolngu fishers (men and women) decided to fish off the outer reef without a boat. They waded and then swam approximately 200m offshore and stood up to their chests in water, fishing for parrotfish for over an hour. This type of fishing was only observed once, but was a familiar technique to other Yolngu (Ngulpurr Marawili, [Mayawuluk Wirrpanda]) who had not witnessed this instance but were asked about it

4.1.2 Cooking Fish

Fish were rarely gutted, but sometimes the liver of particular species (such as Yambirru (parrotfish), and Wamungu (emperors) were cut out and cooked separately, or eaten raw. The bulk of fish were cooked simply by throwing them whole and unscaled directly onto the coals of an open fire, but there were other methods. When time permits, Yambirru or Balin (barramundi) can be cooked slowly and gently by building a rock platform on the hot side of the fire (where the wind is blowing the heat and flames). The fish is stood upright on the platform base, leaning up against the side of the platform. It roasts slowly as the flames and heat are blown towards it by the wind. This method of cooking is known as nyal nyal watan or litan marrama, and was observed on 12/02/01, under the direction of [Bakulangay Marawili]. Fish can be cooked quickly by slicing them along the length of the spine, opening out the fish flesh into two halves connected near the tail. The split fish is then put scale-side down on the coals. This method is called Galurr mith'un.¹ Another way of cooking is to build the fire on a bed of shells or rocks and cook the fish on the hot shells once the fire has burned down to ash (observed 17/05/01). Fish (particularly catfish) were also observed being boiled whole in large pots on a number of occasions.

¹ [Bakulangay Marawili], 12/02/01

4.2 Crabs and Bait

Djinydjalma (Mud Crabs, *Scylla serrata*) were an important source of food as well as being the favoured bait for handline fishing. Crabs were preferred for bait because the prized Yambirru fish will not take other kinds of bait, whilst other edible fish were observed taking crabs as often as other bait types. Djinydjalma were most often collected from the dense stands of mangroves along stretches of the coast, where they were either buried in burrows or hidden between the mangrove roots. Locating and digging out burrows in the mangroves is hard work, and the crabs must be handled with care as their claws are large and strong enough to inflict a nasty wound that is potentially dangerous in a remote tropical environment. The whole crab can be eaten but the most common (and most efficient) means of using a mud crab was to cook and eat the claws, then break up the rest of the crab into individual leg segments to use as bait. The claws hold the bulk of the meat and the crab body can be used to catch several fish on a good day.

Other types of smaller crabs are gathered for bait purposes. An important bait crab is the sand crab gatjini. This crab digs a deep burrow above the high tide mark. It must be dug out, and skill and patience are required to follow the long, winding, continually collapsing burrow whilst digging rapidly to prevent the crab escaping. Older people who find walking on the reefs or in the mangroves more difficult often prefer to dig for sand crabs, despite the hard work it entails. These crabs can also be collected at night by torchlight as they were observed coming out of their holes to feed. The sand crab has a soft shell, making it attractive to crab-eating parrotfish. Another type of small (5-10cm) mangrove crab is called ginybirrk (*Sesarma spp*) and people collect these when the larger ones mud crabs cannot be found. On the rocky reefs, a slightly larger blue crab called yalku is collected for bait, often once the mangrove crab bait supply has been depleted by a few hours fishing. Another small crab (guwarrmu) is also collected off the reefs for bait. A rarely used crab is gomu (small hermit crabs). People know small hermit crabs can be found at the base of trees growing on the dunes but were only observed using them when other alternatives had been exhausted (for example on 10/08/02). Hermit crabs aren't favoured because of their small size and the processing time needed to get them out of their shell. Larger hermit crabs (ngukaliya) found on rocky reefs were sometimes used, but again the

amount of processing time meant that they were not favoured. Crabs were preferred as bait for all reef fishing where catching Yambirruku (parrot fish) was a possibility. In other fishing environments (such as freshwater billabongs and muddy marine environments), or when the crabs are exhausted, people will use pieces of fish flesh from fish already caught, or they will use shellfish (see Section 3.7).

4.3 Miyapunu: Turtle and dugong hunting

4.3.1 Miyapunu

Turtles, dugongs and dolphins are grouped under the collective Yolngu term of miyapunu.² This grouping is sensible because the areas where the animals are found and the hunting techniques used to catch them are similar, so when a boat departs on a hunt, the hunters do not know which animal they will come across first. However there are a wide range of more specific names within the word miyapunu, reflecting the importance of these animals to the life of Yolngu people. The species identified by Western science are identified by specific Yolngu names, but there is further differentiation within species, and species are ascribed to moieties:

Dhalwatpu- Green turtle (*Chelonia mydas*)-Dhuwa moiety. Walangu or burruqa is a juvenile green, and gardaku dhalwatpu is a young male. Burrugu, wayapa, or marrpan Dhalwatpu are names for big green turtles. Greens were by far the most common turtles caught at Yilpara, as they both feed and nest in the area.

Guwarrtji- Hawksbill Turtle (*Eretmochelys imbricata*)- Yirritja moiety.

Muduthu- Olive Ridley Turtle (*Lepidochelys olivacea*)- Yirritja moiety.

Ngarrriwa- Flatback Turtle (*Chelonia depressa*)- Dhuwa moiety.

Garun- Loggerhead Turtle (*Caretta caretta*)- Yirritja moiety.

Warrnumbili- Leatherback Turtle (*Dermochelys coriacea*)- Dhuwa moiety.

Dugongs (djununguyangu) are only one species, but Yolngu differentiate them by age. Yutuyutu is a young dugong, differentiated into gunmul, a boy, and wirtkurl, a

² Information in this section provided by [Bakulangay Marawili], Djambawa Marawili, Wäka Mununggurr, Dhukaḷ Wirrpanda, Nuwandjali Marawili, Ngulpurr Marawili, or by direct observation

girl dugong. This is further differentiated to *dulnaywanangu* which refers to a young but independent dugong that is feeding by itself but has not reproduced. *Maytgeru* is the word for a female that is reproducing. *Djunungguyangu* is the word for all dugongs, but more specifically refers to the adult animal. Dolphins are known as *Yindjapana* or *Bukuyolngu*, and are Dhuwa moiety. No dolphins were caught during the survey period.

4.3.2 Hunting

Hunting for *miyapunu* was undertaken almost exclusively by men and boys, and it was the activity that took *Yilpara* hunters out onto open water most often. Far more turtles were caught at *Yilpara* than dugongs, and so the section below describes the processes involved in a turtle hunt, then follows with a discussion of the variations for dugong hunting. The most common turtle caught at *Yilpara* was the green turtle, *dhalwatpu*. Loggerhead and leatherback turtles are rare at *Yilpara*, but the others besides green turtles are occasionally seen and captured. Dugongs are relatively common, but harder to catch, and so fewer were caught during the survey period.

There are three roles on a turtle hunting boat. The *djambatj* (harpooner) stands at the front, the *goli'mi* or *dhudingu* (captain) drives the boat, and often one person in the middle (*napugangu*) takes care of ropes and floats, and assists in getting the harpooned turtle on board. The word for harpooner, *djambatj*, literally means 'skilled in hunting' and can be used to describe a good hunter in other contexts. On a small 3 person dinghy this last person might sometimes be omitted, whilst on a larger 6 person boat there may be two or three people assisting the captain and harpooner.

Turtles feed on seagrass in muddy areas near estuaries, and also on seaweeds in rocky reef areas. Turtles feed mostly during the ebbing tide and are found more easily then, although they can be caught at any time. Fatter, better-conditioned turtles generally came from muddy seagrass areas, and smaller ones were found further out around the island rocky reefs. The boat cruised with the engine in idle over the seagrass beds or reefs that lay at a water depth of between 1 and 3 m. All 3 men in the boat searched the surrounding water for the shape of a turtle, and the harpooner stood on the front of the boat, holding the harpoon ready to strike. The harpoon consisted of a long wooden

pole with a sharpened, detachable metal spike at the front end. This spike was fashioned from a large nail or other equivalently sized piece of scrap metal, using a file or a stone to sharpen the point. It was attached to a rope and float that marked the turtle's position in the water after it had been struck. Sometimes turtles were identified when they surfaced to breathe, but mostly they were located underwater. Seeing the turtle underwater required great vision and experience, and even after 13 months, I was unable to either spot turtles underwater or follow the underwater movements of turtles already located. Once a turtle was sighted the boat sped closer. The turtle tried to evade and the chase began.

Chasing an evading turtle without pitching the harpooner overboard required great skill from the boat driver, for whilst the turtle usually could not outrun the boat, it could change direction much faster and more frequently. The harpooner stood on the prow and had only a rope tied to the prow to hold onto for balance, which was of little use in combatting sideways motion and no use at all if the boat slowed down, pitching him forwards. He had to simultaneously maintain his own balance whilst using a large 8-10ft pole to hit a barely visible fast-moving target from an equally fast-moving and unstable platform. The strike had to be hard enough to drive the nail through the shell, and occasionally hunters leapt from the boat and struck in mid-air if the turtle was just out of range. For every strike, the harpooner had to judge how deep the turtle was and therefore how much the diffraction of the water was distorting its position. Sometimes a strike was impossible as the turtle evaded the boat and headed to deep water without coming within range. The chase was often extremely frenetic and it was usually less than 30 seconds before the turtle either escaped or was harpooned. Although 2 or 3 harpooners dominated turtle hunting at Yilpara, there were at least 9 regular residents who reported they had successfully acting as harpooners (Djambawa Marawili, Wäka Mununggurr, Bakulangay Marawili, Gumbaniya Marawili, Wulu Marawili, Napunnda Marawili, Batja Marawili, Malumin Marawili, Burrak Marawili) and there was a large group of at least 15-20 skilled boat drivers. Observations indicated that most Yolngu males aged from teenagers upwards were able to follow the underwater movements of the turtle, and had some knowledge of how to manage the floats and ropes, even if they did not have the skill to drive the boat.

Managing these ropes and floats was important as once the initial strike was made, the rope and float must be cast out immediately. Usually the turtle took off fast after a strike and if the rope or float caught on a part of the boat as it fled, the nail was pulled out of the turtle shell, and the animal was lost. If the rope was clear, the animal was allowed to flee and the hunters organised themselves for a second strike, knowing they could relocate it. After a successful first strike, the harpooner put a new nail with a second rope and float onto the harpoon. This second strike ensured that the animal would not be lost if the first nail came out. Sometimes the initial strike was good enough that the float rope could be pulled on quite hard to bring the turtle to the surface. At other times the rope could only be held very gently and the hunters had to wait for the turtle to come to the surface to breathe before striking again. When the turtle surfaced, the harpooner drove the second nail in as hard as possible, and this second rope was then used to haul the animal alongside the boat.

Getting a turtle that can be over a metre in length and weigh over 100kg into the boat required muscle, timing, and technique. It was usually a job for 3 people, with ropes being secured around the front flippers and the animal brought up to and then over the edge by its front flippers. Turtles were still alive and often barely injured, as the nail only penetrated an inch or two in most cases. Once in the boat it could be left alone, and very often Yilpara hunters would try for and get two turtles in one hunt.

4.3.3 Dugong Hunting Variations

Dugongs are much faster and larger than turtles, can hear underwater extremely well, and do not have a hard shell, so there were some important variations in the hunting process for dugongs. The harpoon nail was not a single sharp point but instead had three prongs fastened together, all splayed slightly outwards. This is so that it both penetrated and then gripped the softer hide of the dugong. Nevertheless the rope could not be pulled on too hard, and so generally dugongs were hunted by continually pursuing the float after the initial strike until the animal was completely exhausted. The boat was brought alongside, the animal was tied with ropes, and one or more people gripped the tail and stood up, balancing whilst holding the animal upside down with its head under the water. The dugong was usually too exhausted to escape, and

drowned. It was then tied alongside or behind the boat and towed back to shore. The speed and evasion skills of the dugong, the softness of its hide compared to turtle shell, the difficulties of chasing a float for long periods, and the lower dugong numbers in the Yilpara area meant that only 6 dugongs were caught over the 13 months fieldwork. This compares with approximately 50 turtles. Dugongs were found only in the muddy, sheltered seagrass (gamata) habitats, not in the rocky reef areas around the islands where turtles also feed on seaweeds and algae (djewul). Therefore, in a number of key reef hunting locations such as Woodah Island (Wangurrarikpa), Round Hill Island (Gunyuru), and around the Yilpara homeland centre itself, Yolngu hunters knew that they were only likely to see turtles. Batpa is the generic name for habitats on which either animal can be found (ie reef and seagrass bed). Dugongs were present in lower numbers all year round, whereas turtles moved offshore during the breeding and egg-laying season. Turtle hunting activity diminished during this period.

One distinctive form of dugong hunting observed at Yilpara was night dugong hunting.³ This was done by boat on a moonless night, with the hunters chasing a float that had been harpooned into a dugong at twilight. The seawater of the Yilpara area phosphoresces when it is disturbed at night by the passage of the dugong and boat. During the hunt, the phosphorescence from the wake of both the dugong and boat were clearly evident from the shore over 100m away. Whilst not a common form of hunting with modern boats, it was one of the main ways of catching dugongs in canoes. The hunters would approach by stealth, as dugongs can hear very well but cannot see (they shut their eyes under water). In modern night hunting, the men only use the engine after the first strike, as the noise disturbs the dugongs. Night hunting remains a well-known method and was successful in catching a dugong on the second of the two nights it was attempted at Yilpara during the fieldwork.

Using aluminium dinghys and outboards to hunt is clearly a departure from hunting in a bark or dugout canoe. Hunting with a canoe was stealth hunting rather than pursuit hunting; as the canoe hunters would paddle quietly into a seagrass or reef area and

³ Information supplied by [Bakulangay Marawili] and by direct observation of a night dugong hunt (16/05/01)

wait for a turtle or dugong to surface, then try to stalk it until the harpooner had an opportunity to strike. This kind of hunting required great patience, stealth, and paddling endurance.⁴ Hunters in engine-powered boats can cover much greater distances more easily, but the harpooner still has a difficult task striking a fleeing turtle from a fast-moving boat that cannot approach by stealth. Mulawalnga Marawili reported on 13/07/01 that a group of men successfully hunted a turtle by stealth using an engineless aluminium dinghy directly offshore from Yilpara. They used this method because no engine was available.

4.3.4 Turtle Butchery

A standard procedure for butchering turtles was observed during fieldwork, and butchered animal was divided up into named parts which were shared out according to protocols about who should receive meat.⁵ This distribution is discussed in Section 5. The butchery process itself is described below, and the methodology is carefully followed at Yilpara with only a few minor variations. Observations of butchery at other Yolngu homeland centres showed some variations, but with many similar characteristics.

Turtles were removed from the boat and dragged up the beach by several men or a 4WD vehicle. They were stunned or killed by striking the head with an axe, and then turned over onto their backs by three or four people. Dry grass and twigs were placed around the head and on top of the undershell. These were lit and allowed to burn rapidly for a minute or two. This initial fire made butchery easier. After it has burned out, the turtle was turned so that its head faced inland, as butchering a turtle facing this way was believed to assist in maintaining good turtle populations. The key processes of the butchery were performed by a senior man with the requisite knowledge. He sat cross-legged at the head of the turtle, facing out to sea. He was usually assisted by at least one other person, and more often by several younger men,

⁴ [Bakulangay Marawili], Djambawa Marawili

⁵ Information described in this section is derived from observations of many turtle butcheries, and discussions with key informants whilst they were occurring. These informants included Djambawa Marawili, [Bakulangay Marawili], Wāka Munungurr, Nuwandjali Marawili, Ngulpurr Marawili, and Dhukal Wirrpanda

who performed additional cutting and hold body parts steady as they are cut through. These younger men watched and learnt the methodology whilst they assisted. Women were not normally directly involved in cutting the turtle, but they did perform related tasks such as washing intestines or taking meat away to be cooked.

The cuts of meat described below do not always relate directly to specific English terms for organs or muscles. The cuts conformed to a requirement to share the meat in particular ways. Where possible, a guide to the area being referred to is included in the description below.

The senior man cut around the turtle neck with a large knife, then began to twist the turtle's neck around to break it. This often required the assistance of others as the head and neck was thick and heavy. When the neck had been broken, the head (mulkurr, liya, or mayarr) was cut away and removed. Next the butcher freed the oesophagus (bopu) from the surrounding tissue and began to pull out the thick intestines (ngukthan). These were up to 10cm in diameter and were filled with digested seagrass and seaweed. Depending on the condition of the animal, the intestines were also be covered by strands of yellow fat (malayukpa or djukurr). There were many meters of intestines which filled the upper part of the dorsal shell. Once the butcher had pulled the bulk of the intestine out, he cut it and gave the freed portion to one of his assistants, who dragged it down to the waters edge, slit it open, and began to wash it out. The first part of the intestine was called lirra, the middle part was marmuru. The remainder was called burriyalyal.

Meanwhile other assistants had been collecting wood and building up a substantial fire. Rocks of 5-10cm diameter were thrown on the fire to heat up. A hole was dug in the sand and the turtle was stood up with its back end in the hole and sand supporting the sides to stop it falling over. When the rocks were sufficiently hot, assistants picked them up with a spear and dropped them into the cavity where the intestines were. Djilka, a particular kind of leaves, were stuffed in with the hot rocks. These add flavour to the meat.

The carcass was left upright for 10-20 minutes and during this period people often ate pieces of the intestine that had been washed out and cooked on the ashes of the fire.

After about 20-30 minutes, the turtle was tipped onto its back once more and the next phase of the butchery began. The senior butcher sharpened a knife and began to cut through the tissue connected to the ventral shell (gumurr ngaraka). A younger assistant pulled up hard on the shell to expose the connecting tissue. After cutting the tissue at the front of the animal, the senior butcher and his assistants cut the ventral shell itself, following a line about 2-3cm in from the outer edge and curving around the flippers. The front flippers are called galurr'ngu, and the back flippers are called ganybi. The back part of the animal, near the rear flippers on both sides, is called ngamon. Gumurr is the name of the central chest muscle area towards the neck exposed after the shell is removed. Bana is the muscle that lies above the back flippers on the overturned turtle, and is the same name as the fork of a tree, reflecting its orientation to the flippers.

Once the ventral shell was off, the meat and flipper muscles were exposed. The butchery proceeded more rapidly, with only the gall bladder (milkuminy) and urine bladder (dulng) discarded. In order, cuts of meat removed included dirridirri (the meat of the pectoral muscles), thanarr (flipper muscles) and bulngu (meat underneath the flipper joint). Names for internal organs include dhoduk (heart), ngalthiri (liver), and burrwutj (lung). The large flipper muscles (thanarr) are cut out, and the hot rocks and leaves were exposed at the base of the upturned dorsal shell. It was at this point that unlaidd turtle eggs (i'ku) were also exposed in pregnant females. The rocks and leaves were tossed away, and the 'soup' of blood and animal juices that collected at the bottom of the shell was salvaged and put in cups and boiling pots. Finally the sheet of green fat (ngamon or malamala) attached to the inside of the dorsal shell was scraped and cut away. These were up to 2cm thick, depending on the condition of the animal. Yolngu butchers generally judged the condition of a turtle by the thickness of this fat and the strands of yellow fat around the intestines. Both have more specific names but can be called by the generic name for fat, djukurr.

The various cuts of meat were collected on the ventral shell ready for cooking. The hot stones had merely seared the pieces closest to the intestinal cavity, and whilst the second stage of the butchery occurred, other assistants had built up a large fire and thrown the rocks back onto it. When this fire had burned down to very hot rocks, sand and ash, fresh djilka leaves were thrown onto the embers and the meat put on top of

them. The cuts of meat were arranged roughly the way they are in the live animal, and then the big dorsal shell was placed on top of the meat and ashes. The gaps at the sides were sealed up with piles of sand to create a big turtle shell oven. The meat was then slow roasted in the oven for about an hour, after which time it was shared out (Section 5).

Turtles were sometimes kept alive for a few days after being caught. However if a turtle had been out of the water for more than a day, the butchery process was altered. It proceeded normally until the ventral shell was cut off and the meat was cut out, but then each piece of meat was washed and the 'soup' of blood and meat juices collected in the upturned dorsal shell was discarded. These juices would give people a stomach ache if they were consumed. The meat was still be eaten, provided it was washed first. Wurung was a known sickness of flatback and hawksbill turtles. The meat is thick in the diseased areas and the wrong colour, with a green and black tinge. People avoid eating the meat of sick turtles.

4.3.5 Dugong Butchery

Dugong butcheries were simpler than turtle butchery as there was no precooking, and although the skin (barrwan) is 2-3cm thick, it was far easier to cut through than turtle shell. Smaller dugongs were favoured over larger ones, both because of the ease of hunting and the fact that the meat from larger ones is sometimes tough. Again there was a set procedure which produced set cuts of meat for distribution (Section 5). The ventral side (bulun) was cut first, allowing the intestines and other internal organs to be removed from the ribcage. The intestines were washed out and eaten in the same way as for turtles. Other organs can be eaten, although the lungs (burrwitj) and stomach were generally discarded. Once the ventral side was completely cut, the dugong was rolled over and the meat from the dorsal side was removed. The head (mulkurr) was cut off and the meat was removed from it. An axe was used to break the ribcage (binda) into smaller pieces. When the animal had been completely cut up it was left in the sun for an hour or two to cure. Meat that has been dried in this way did not need to be cooked until the following day. The tail section of a dugong

(gurrukalla or bila) will keep uncooked for up to 2 months if it is kept in the skin.⁶ It used to be carried around and used as an emergency food source. After being dried in the sun, the meat was placed on a cooking fire of ashes, hot rocks and sand similar to the turtle. A large piece of thick dugong skin was thrown over it and the edges sealed with sand to make a dugong skin oven. The skin became soft and edible when roasted, and used to be eaten once the meat was finished. The skin was not observed being eaten. The meat was cooked for at least 1 hour, and usually for longer. Dugong meat was highly prized, as it is layered by thin veins of pure white fat that add greatly to the richness and flavour. Dugong fat has the same generic name as turtle fat, djukurr.

4.4 Shark and Stingray hunting⁷

Sharks and stingrays are grouped by Yolngu under the collective term maranydjalk. This grouping is mirrored by Western science, which groups them as the cartilaginous fishes (fish which have soft bone structures made of cartilage rather than calcified bones). The Yolngu term incorporates this similarity but also relates to the fact that the two types of animals are caught in the same manner and processed into food using the same complex process. Hunting for Maranydjalk was done by men armed with a spear (gara) and spear thrower (galpu). They walked along the shoreline or through shallow water (up to 1 metre) searching for either small sharks (mana) or small rays. Although rays were found in sandy areas, they were most often found hiding in the thin, dense strips of mangroves that grow along the shoreline in more sheltered areas. Sharks were found in the seawater in the 20-30m zone beyond these stands of mangroves, and also cruising the shallow, sandy areas in between the mangrove stands.

Spearers had to be careful when walking through the water. Stingrays are camouflaged and lie motionless on the bottom, and so it is easy to step on one by

⁶ Djambawa Marawili, 21/06/01

⁷ The follow section contains information derived from my marine science training, participant observation and from numerous informants, including some younger people who regularly undertake this form of hunting. Key informants in this section were Wäka Mununggurr, Dhupilawuy Marika, Malumin Marawili, Djambawa Marawili, Mulawalnga Marawili, Wurrandan Marawili, and Wulukuwuluku Marawili

accident and receive a puncture wound from the poisonous spine. Maranydjalk season also coincides with the early and mid-stinger season, where the transparent, deadly jellyfish are in the water in much greater numbers. Hunters had to simultaneously look at the water 10m in front of them to locate prey, and at the water at their feet so that they did not step on something dangerous.⁸ There is also a risk of shark bite from the small (40-100cm) sharks found in these shallow areas. Sharks swim extremely fast and are dangerous when wounded by a glancing spear blow. Good vision and an accurate throwing arm were both very important for Maranydjalk hunting, particularly given that the water around the mangroves was often murky. Hunters avoided hunting in places where murky water made the bottom completely invisible.

Heavily camouflaged, motionless stingrays are only visible via the curve of the tail, a thin line in the sand. This tail was extremely difficult for me to see, even when the general location of the ray was pointed out. Rays generally rely on camouflage and so did not try to evade capture unless directly disturbed, but care was taken when spearing them as the poison spine on the tail can inflict a serious wound. A yellow striped beach cockroach is one good bush medicine for stingray wounds. The back end is crushed up and put into the spear wound. A further technique is to use hot sand or fresh leaves heated over the fire and then placed on the wound. This was observed being used on 9/11/00. It is important to identify the type of ray before striking, because different rays must be speared in different places.⁹ One ray (Gurritjpi) has a hard structure in the region between and behind its eyes, and so must be speared off to one side if the spear is to penetrate. Other rays are best speared behind the eyes.

Once speared, the shark or ray was stunned or killed immediately by hitting it hard with the wooden spear thrower (galpu). The stingray barb (dimirr) was removed, either by chopping the whole tail off with a knife, or by the spearer holding the tail with his teeth and sliding his spear prong up under the barb, breaking it off. These stingray barbs were sometimes collected for use as spear prongs for ceremonial spears. Stingrays were carried by putting a finger in each of the two holes under the eye sockets. If the spearer caught several rays, he would either leave them on the

⁸ Dhupilawuy Marika

⁹ Dhupilawuy Marika

beach or hang them on a mangrove tree to be picked up on the return journey. If there was no return journey, then maranydjalk were threaded on a stray piece of fishing line or a stick and trailed behind as the hunter walked along.

The most important thing about maranydjalk for hunters once they were speared was the state of the animals' liver (djukurr). Maranydjalk is 'in season' during the wet season buildup and the rainy months that follow, as during this time the bulk of them have whitish-pink livers which are considered fat and tasty. A number of flowering plants were identified that signify that the livers of the maranydjalk are ready. These include balwurr (the red flowering Kurrajong), waarrkarr (white sand lily), and a creeper, wurluymung.¹⁰ Even when these are in season, some maranydjalk (particularly larger ones) have black livers. Black livers, or livers halfway between pink and black, are a sign that the animal is not 'fat', and the flesh of these animals was tough and rubbery if they were cooked. The flesh of pink-livered animals remained soft when cooked. Historically, people only ate the flesh of black-livered animals if there was no alternative food available,¹¹ although livers halfway between pink and black can be cooked and eaten separately.

To check the liver, Yolngu made an incision with a knife or sharp shell at the appropriate place on the underside of the ray or on one side of the shark. Stingray livers were also exposed without an implement by first searing the outside skin for a few seconds on a fire, then pushing hard on the animal along the line of the head and tail. When this pressure was applied in exactly the right orientation, the liver burst through the skin and popped out, even though the rest of the stingray carcass was unaffected. Smaller sharks and rays were more likely to have pink livers than larger ones, and the closer it was to the dry season, the less likely it was that any ray or shark caught will have a pink liver.

Maranydjalk with black livers were usually discarded, but, depending on the success of the hunt, maranydjalk with livers that were halfway between pink and black were sometimes kept. The liver itself from these animals was not used, but the flesh of such

¹⁰ Ngulpurr Marawili, Djambawa Marawili

¹¹ [Bakulangay Marawili]

animals was sometimes mixed in with the flesh of those animals with pink livers. Maranydjalk were only ever prepared in one way. In the first stage, the livers were removed raw and the gall bladder (milkuminy) was taken off the liver. The rest of the guts were taken out and the rest of the animal was placed into a pot of water on the fire to be boiled. Where possible people used freshwater, but seawater was substituted when not enough freshwater was available. In the past the flesh was cooked by covering the carcass in the ashes, or by wrapping it in big flat leaves or bark and placing it in the ashes.¹² Boiling was the favoured method during the observation period. After the flesh was boiled, the water was poured off and the pot and carcasses were taken down to the shallows. In the next stage, the skin was peeled off the flesh and the soft, cooked flesh was pushed off the cartilaginous bones and collected in the pot. The skin and cartilage were discarded. This was quite a long process if there were a number of smaller animals, and small stingrays in particular required a lot of processing for the amount of meat obtained. Freshwater (or saltwater) was then mixed into the broken up flesh to make a 'slurry' of water and small flesh pieces. The water was strained out of this slurry, either by pushing the mixture through a sieve or flyscreen, or by taking handfuls of it and squeezing the water out by hand. This mixture is called dara.¹³ In the final stage, the raw liver (which has a soft and buttery texture) was broken up and minced through the strained, cooked flesh. This mixture was then broken up and formed into small balls of flesh and liver for distribution. These are known as mala or mulkun.¹⁴

When very large rays are speared, the liver is divided into sections.¹⁵ It has two lobes, and the central part where they join is called mangutji. One section of each lobe is called nganarr, the other is Rudurudu. Yolngu present when a large ray is speared will sometimes call out which part of the liver they want to be allocated to them. This type of sectioning was not observed during the fieldwork, as no large ray with an edible liver was caught.

¹² [Bakulangay Marawili]

¹³ Djambawa Marawili

¹⁴ Djambawa Marawili

¹⁵ Djambawa Marawili

Although the hunting was generally done by men, women knew how to prepare maranydjalk. They occasionally caught sharks whilst line fishing, and took the opportunity to kill rays when they came across them whilst looking for bait in the mangroves. Maranydjalk were only observed being prepared in the manner described above.

4.5 Fish Spearing¹⁶

Men and teenage boys speared other kinds of fish with their spears as well as Maranydjalk. Along the sandy, shallow areas in between the mangroves, there are often the v-shaped swirls which show the presence of schools of wäkuṅ (mullet, *Valamugil bichanarii*). Wäkuṅ cannot be caught by line, only speared, as they are detritus feeders. Barramundi and mud crabs were found in amongst the mangroves, and in the rockier areas Yambirrku (parrotfish) were speared. Other species caught on the line were speared opportunistically when they appeared. The spearers made the most of whatever crossed their path.

Unlike stingrays and crabs, it was rare that the spearer got close enough to fish and sharks to thrust the spear at close range. Instead the spearer usually threw his spear from well away from the target, making a successful strike much more difficult. Spear hunting was hard physical labour at times, involving long hot walks in the heat of the sun, enduring the wet season humidity and/or the glare off the water. The spearers had to be constantly alert, watching two or three areas of water at once, and they would lift the spear and spear thrower to the ready position many times in an hour, responding to possible sightings. When a genuine opportunity arose, the strike had to be a balance of timing, direction, and power, and numerous attempts by even skilled practitioners were unsuccessful. One of the most important things for the hunters to judge was the distortion caused by the water depth. The arm strength, vision, and judgement skills required for successful spear hunting required much practice from an early age. Boys as young as four five years old were observed throwing long sticks at

¹⁶ Fish spearing is undertaken by all able-bodied men and boys. This section is derived from marine science training, direct observation, and information from informants, who were often younger men.

targets on land, and slightly older boys used specially made small fish spears in the shallows.

Towards the end of the dry season, a large fish species, dhinimbu (Spanish mackerel *Scomberomorous commerson*) was speared off the beaches near the Yilpara homeland centre.¹⁷ This fish was not observed being speared or caught throughout the year, and was much larger than those generally speared during the rest of the year. Spearing these fish required a powerful and accurate strike, as they are capable of taking off with the spear embedded in them if the strike hits them in a non-fatal place.

4.6 Night Fishing¹⁸

A variant of spear fishing observed was night fishing. On moonless nights, wākun (mullet), crabs, and some other fish species were speared in the shallows by torchlight. The torches were traditionally made of bark,¹⁹ but battery torches were used on the observed trips. The fish were attracted towards the light and were speared by thrusting rather than throwing. This was a highly effective means of fishing when there were mullet in the area, as hunters speared 10 or more 30cm fish in less than an hour. It is difficult to hunt in this manner except on dark, moonless nights, because when the moon is out the fish are able to see the silhouette of the hunter behind the torch. Once a fish was speared, the hunter killed it instantly by putting a finger in each gill slit and pulling the head upwards, breaking the spine of the fish. It was then threaded on a piece of line and trailed behind as the hunter continued hunting.

The major risk of this type of fishing is shark attack. Blood from the dead fish and the thrashing in the water of injured fish attracted the sharks, which were hard to see outside the single beam area of the torch. One way to minimise the risk of attack was for the hunters to drag the butt end of their spears through the sand as they entered the

Key informants for this section were Dhupilawuy Marika, Mulawalnga Marawili, Wulukuwuluku Marawili, Wurrandan Marawili, Bawanha Marawili, Djiwinbin 2 Marawili

¹⁷ Information supplied by direct observation and Mowalan Marika, who speared the fish

¹⁸ Information from this section supplied by direct observation and by Mulawalnga Marawili, Wulukuwuluku Marawili, Wurrandan Marawili, Bawanha Marawili, and Ngulpurr Marawili

¹⁹ Ngulpurr Marawili

water, and again periodically during the hunt. The scraping noise was believed to deter the sharks, but even when this tactic was employed, hunters avoided going into the water deeper than mid-thigh level when spearing at night, and they generally did not walk far along the beach, as the mullet were in groups if they were present at all. Fish other than wakun and mud crabs (djinydjalma) were occasionally speared by night when they were encountered, but the goal of night fishing was wäkun. Line fishing can also be done successfully by night, but this was not observed during the course of the fieldwork.²⁰

4.7 Maypal: Oysters and other Shellfish²¹

Maypal is used as a generic word for shellfish, but also includes items such as crabs and other things that are ‘gathered’ rather than ‘hunted’. Relative to line fishing, spearing, and turtle and dugong hunting, the level of shellfish exploitation at Yilpara was relatively low during the fieldwork periods.

4.7.1 Oysters

The most regularly exploited shellfish resource was rock oysters. These are divided into two kinds. Oysters which grow on reef in rocky and sandy areas are called mekawu, and oysters which grow on reef in muddier areas are called ngiriwany. Oysters were usually collected by women, but many children and a number of men were observed gathering oysters. The collection method was the same for both types of oysters, although the areas they were found are different. The oysters are small (only 3-4cm across) and are exposed on the rocks at low tide. The women walked over the rocks and tapped at a particular place on the oyster shell with a piece of metal (usually a file or a small hammer). Striking the oyster at this point broke it open without leaving shell fragments embedded in the grey flesh underneath. This point is very hard to identify for an inexperienced person. The soft flesh was then picked out

²⁰ Ngulpurr Marawili

²¹ Information on shellfish supplied by direct observation and by Muluymuluy Wirrpanda, [Mayawuluk Wirrpanda], Bangawuy Wanambi, Muypirri Marawili, Liyawaḍay Wirrpanda, Mulkun Wirrpanda, Giyama Wunungmurra and Minitja Marawili

by hand and either eaten raw by the women as they worked, or put into a container to be shared with others later.

Whilst collecting oysters was hard work for the relatively small volume of food it returns, the food itself is very rich and the supply very consistent, as the amount of oysters obtained directly related to the amount of time spent collecting. Towards the end of a trip, the women sometimes broke off a chunk of rock containing a number of oysters and carried back to their camp. This chunk was thrown on the fire whole, and then the cooked oysters were dug out of it in the shade of the camp. Clearly this was not a strategy that was used for the whole load, as the weight of the rock and shell would have been a burden. Oyster gathering was often done whilst other Yolngu performed different hunting activities, such as line fishing, spearing, or turtle hunting. It provided a guaranteed food source if these other activities were unsuccessful. Oysters cannot be used as bait, as the flesh is too soft to stay on the line.

4.7.2 Shellfish from the Mangroves

Certain shellfish were found in the mangroves. Dhan'pala (Mud mussel, *Polymesoda erosa*) is a big, rounded bivalve with a powerful and at times salty flavour. Dhan'pala were collected whenever they were found in the mangrove mud as they are a popular food. The mangroves close around Yilpara did not contain many dhan'pala during the survey period, and this may have been either a natural phenomenon or due to the frequent visits of Yolngu looking for bait, or a combination of the two. During 2002, more dense concentrations of Dhan'pala were located at the more distant mangrove sites north of Yathikpa (Grindall Bay). These were visited frequently during the late dry season of 2002, when they were easily accessible by vehicle due to the poor wet season. The second shellfish occasionally collected from the mangroves was buyn'bu (lesser longbum, *Terebralia palustris*). It was mostly used for bait, but also sometimes eaten (for example on 23/09/01, 6/11/02). There are other shellfish in the mangroves, which were collected in the past²² but were not observed being used.

²² Mulkun Wirrpanda, Muluymuluy Wirrpanda

4.7.3 Other Shellfish

There are two particular beach/intertidal mud areas on the Yilpara peninsula where it was reported by numerous informants²³ that other kinds of shellfish were collected until recently. These areas were Yathikpa in Grindall Bay and Lumatjpi/Dharupi in Myaloola Bay. Only one trip to each of these sites was witnessed during the fieldwork, and neither of these trips was successful. This was commented on as unusual, but was not totally unexpected.²⁴ The absence of shellfish was attributed to a cyclone which wiped out the shell beds a few years ago. Shellfish that Yolngu would normally expect to get from these sites include some found commonly in the shell middens (such as warrapal, *Anadara granosa*). Knowledge of these types of shellfish was not explored to a great degree, although the archaeological research has clearly indicated that detailed knowledge of these shellfish is still held by adult women. The lack of shellfish gathering is surprising given some of the previous documentation of indigenous sea usage in north Australia.²⁵ However Meehan also reported that a cyclone destroyed the shellfish beds at her field site late in her observation period.²⁶

The decrease in shellfish exploitation also relates to the impact of store foods. Shellfish gathering produces a reliable return but is hard, dirty, and sometimes wet work. Store bought foods now provide a stable base food supply, allowing women to concentrate on activities such as line fishing, which are less reliable than shellfish gathering but more pleasant, and can provide much higher returns on a good day. Improvements in fishing technology (nylon lines and steel barbed hooks) have also increased the chances of bringing in a good catch with a line, making it yet more attractive when compared to digging for shellfish. The reasons for the observed lack of shellfish gathering may be a combination of these types of factors, or may simply have been a chance circumstance during the period of fieldwork undertaken. If either of the two attempts to gather shellfish at the intertidal or subtidal beach sites had

²³ [Mayawuluk Wirrpanda], Muluymuluy Wirrpanda, Yalmakany Marawili, Gurrundul 2 Marawili, Mulkun Wirrpanda

²⁴ Muluymuluy Wirrpanda, Yalmakany Marawili

²⁵ Meehan, B, *Shell Bed to Shell Midden*, AIATSIS, Canberra, 1982

²⁶ *ibid.* pg 162

succeeded, this may have sparked a series of shellfish gathering trips in succeeding weeks. Significant knowledge of shellfish and the areas where they can be collected still exists amongst those observed gathering shellfish and providing information about them.

4.8 Freshwater Fishing²⁷

Freshwater fishing at Yilpara during the research was usually done at a large billabong called Mangatjipa, about 25km north of the homeland centre, or at a river site called Wayawu, a further 10km distant. Handline fishing was the predominant²⁸ method used for billabong fishing, and several kinds of freshwater species were caught there. The two generally eaten were baypinnga (saratoga, *Scleropages jardinii*) and balin (barramundi, *Lates calcarifer*), whilst others such as dhunum (sleepy cod, *oxyeleotris lineolatus*) and matbuna (*Hephaestus fuliginosus*) were usually used for bait. Bait was also collected from saltwater mangroves near Yilpara before undertaking a fishing trip to Mangatjipa, in order to catch the first few fish, which were then subsequently used as bait for the remainder of the fishing trip. Other types of foods observed being gathered at Mangatjipa were freshwater mussels (djarrwit) and freshwater crayfish (dakawa). Care had to be taken when collecting these from the billabong shallows, as crocodiles inhabit the Mangatjipa billabong. Mangatjipa was the focus of fishing effort throughout the research reported here, but Dr Clarke and Mr. Faulkner reported that prior to my arrival the Wayawu billabong was the focus of the fishing effort. The switch had occurred after this first freshwater site had produced a number of low returns. Mangatjipa billabong produced spectacular fishing results during the first few visits in 2000, results which were not repeated when it became accessible again after the 2000-2001 wet season. Reasons for this are unclear, although it may relate to the very heavy wet season in early 2000. Nevertheless, returns from the billabong were consistent and freshwater fishing was an important component of hunting trips during the dry season, when the two sites were accessible by road.

²⁷ Information for this section was derived from direct observation and from informants. Key informants were Muluymuluy Wirrpanda, Nuwandjali Marawili, [Mayawuluk Wirrpanda], Mulkun Wirrpanda, Dhuranggal Wanambi, and Muypirri Marawili

4.9 Yams²⁹

Yam digging was generally done by mature women, whilst others were line fishing. Although there are 'bush' yams found near the freshwater billabong at Mangatjipa, yams were almost exclusively collected during fieldwork from the low, dense jungle behind the dunes on the southern part of the Yilpara peninsula. These yams (manmunga) are located by spotting a tiny strand of vine trailing down through the dense undergrowth from the branches above. At the base of this tiny strand grows the yam, which reached maximum observed lengths of 30-40cm. Seeing the yam vine is extremely difficult and digging is hard work. The diggers preferred to have 3-4 hours to dig for yams in order to obtain a reasonable amount. Yam digging is generally combined with fishing for Yambirrku, as both are found in the same area.

4.10 Mammals, Birds, and Reptiles³⁰

There was usually one shotgun at Yilpara during fieldwork, and occasionally other guns were present for a time. The main type of rifle hunting trip was for waterbirds, either at the billabong behind the homeland centre or more usually the large floodplain 15km north of the homeland centre. The favoured target was magpie geese (gurrarmarrtji), but other birds such as brolga (dangultji), jabiru, herons, and ducks (dirriny dirriny) were shot when the opportunity arose. The trips to the floodplain were frequent during the early and middle dry season, and this was by far the most common use of the gun. Kangaroos and wallabies (dum dum) were rarely made the object of a hunting trip, but were shot when the opportunity arose. Flying foxes (matjurr) arrived for a period during the dry season and were shot out of the trees by

²⁸ On 16/10/02 Djiwinbin Marawili was observed using his spear to hunt for fish at Mangatjipa

²⁹ Information for this section derived from direct observation and informants. Key informants were Muluymuluy Wirrpanda, Mulkun Wirrpanda, Bangawuy Wanambi, Giyama Wunungmurra, Bulnyinda Wanambi

³⁰ Information from direct observation and from informants. Key informants were Djambawa Marawili, Wäka Mununggurr, Dhukaḷ Wirrpanda, Mulawalnga Marawili

rifle or with rubber-thonged slingshots. These slingshots were also used by the teenage boys to hunt small birds.³¹

Large goannas (djarrka) were speared and eaten when they are located, but this was relatively rare. Freshwater tortoises (Minhala) approximately 20cm long are found in billabongs or dug under the mud during the wet season and could also be eaten, but again they were not commonly located. On 6/5/01 Djewinbin 2 Marawili attempted to kill a small crocodile (Baru) seen in the river mouth at Gurrinjinya, but this attempt was unsuccessful. [Bakulangay] and Gumbaniya Marawili related stories of catching crocodiles from the breeding ground above the river delta, tying them up, and carrying them back to the camp to be eaten. This has not occurred in more recent times.

Wild pigs were rare on the Yilpara peninsula and only one was shot during the research period. It was not eaten as there were suspicions about the quality of the meat. Buffalo (gathapanga) are more common but were not hunted at Yilpara, partly because there was no rifle capable of killing one. Gawirrin Gumana reported that younger men at GanGan had successfully killed buffalo using axes and ropes. Both of these species are damaging the local landscape significantly and their numbers appear to be increasing. Cane toads also appeared in the area for the first time in 2001. These introduced species will cause a deterioration in land quality which is likely to further increase the dependence of Yilpara residents on marine resources.

4.11 Fruits and Berries³²

An extensive knowledge of nuts, berries, and fruits was demonstrated by some informants during the fieldwork. Most of these berries and fruits were not identified in formal botanical terms, but notes were taken about the names of different food items and their basic appearance. They did not form a major part of the diet during the fieldwork, with the exception of munduyutj when it is in season. However fruits and

³¹ Wulukuwuluku Marawili, Dhukpirri Marawili, Wurrandan Marawili

³² Information from direct observation and informants. Key informants were Muluymuluy Wirrpanda, Mulawalnga Marawili, Dhupilawuy Marika, [Mayawuluk Wirrpanda]

berries are exploited when they are found on trips or travel being undertaken for other reasons.

4.11.1 Munduyutj

The Billy Goat plum, *Terminalia ferdinandia*. This is a green fruit that appeared on the tree at the onset of the wet season. It is a highly prized fruit and Yolngu usually stopped to pick them whenever they were observed. The flowers of this plant signify the onset of the parrotfish season. Examples of munduyutj gathering were observed on the following dates: 9/12/00, 12/12/00, 13/12/00, 16/12/00, and 8/11/01.

4.11.2 Other Fruits and Berries

Considerable knowledge of other fruits and berries available was demonstrated during fieldwork. Many were not observed or formally identified, but their names were recorded. A basic list of these includes:

Wungapu/balurr- *Pouteria serica*. Black, olive shaped fruit found in coastal areas.

Gunga- *Pandanus spiralis*, pandanus nut

Borpurr- red berries

Djillka- red nuts from this plant are edible

Burru burru- white berry on vine

Darangalk- seed pods which are yellow when ripe

Murtjumun- green berries which grown brown when ripe

Muta muta- brown, furred fruit

Wundan- black fruit

Damang- tiny red fruit which is black when ripe

Wak'naning- black fruit

Dangapa- small yellow fruit with bitter skin

Other names of fruits listed by informants but not observed include wanguru, bal^lkpalk, murrngga, dilminyini, lidawarr, gumbu, larrani, and dalpi.

4.11.3 Bush Honey³³

Bush honey is found in hollow trees. There are particular areas, such as Rurrangalla and Mangatjipa, which are known to be good sites for locating bush honey and where searches for honey were observed (5/09/01, 23/10/01). Locating honey is a highly skilled occupation, as it is necessary to see bees flying into the small holes in hollow trees where the hive is located. These holes can be 15 meters or more off the ground. There are three types of honey:

1. Barngitj. This is found at the bottom of trees or in ant houses, and is found in bush coastal areas like Yarrinya. It does not yield as much as the other kinds of honey.
2. Gaamu, which is made by biting bees. This occurs at the top of trees in areas like Mangatjipa and Dharupi.
3. Yarrpany or Dhulkitjpuuy- also found at the top of hollow trees.

4.12 Summary

The Yolngu residents of Yilpara demonstrated an extensive knowledge of marine resources, including a wide variety of fish, crabs, sharks, stingrays, turtles, dugongs, oysters and other shellfish. These resources were exploited frequently and to a greater degree than the available land resources. However land resources were still important, and include yams, freshwater fish, waterbirds, mammals, reptiles, fruits, and honey. All able-bodied Yilpara residents undertook some form of resource gathering regularly using the techniques outlined above. The following section describes some observations of how the resources they gathered were distributed.

³³ Information for this section derived from direct observations and informants. Key informants were Ngulpur Marawili, Gambali #2 (Frank) Wunungmurra, Buyutja Murrunyina

Section 5: The Distribution of Food Resources

5.1 Introduction

The size of the Yilpara community and the geographic spread (13 houses spread at least 50m apart across an area of over 5 hectares) meant that it was difficult to produce a descriptive survey of food resource distribution similar to that produced for food resource gathering. The distribution that was observed was that which occurred whilst people were out hunting, or which occurred when people were dropped off at different households at the end of a hunt, not that which occurred once they were in their houses. Rather than asking people for direct normative statements about distribution rules, distribution was first observed in practice as often as possible without the research becoming intrusive, and the description below is based on those observations. During the second fieldwork period, further observations were made in conjunction with more formal conversations with Yolngu informants about distribution processes.³⁴ These conversations confirmed and further developed aspects of the observation of food distribution.

5.1.1 Food Distribution Parameters

The distribution process guided the sharing of resources in an unpredictable environment, where people were often moving around between different communities (leading to big fluctuations in the population of particular households) and where individual hunters were not guaranteed success every time they went out to hunt (and so sometimes need to rely on the success of others to obtain food). The distribution process contained a degree of flexibility and pragmatism to adjust for this variability, but this does not mean that it was random or disorganised. Rather, guided by some key parameters, it operated in complex ways to reach an appropriate outcome in a given situation. These key parameters had a greater or lesser degree of importance depending on the particular circumstances at hand, although some, such as kinship,

³⁴ Key informants in direct discussions about distribution were Djambawa Marawili, Nuwandjali Marawili, [Bakulangay Marawili] and Wäka Mununggurr

were involved in some way in almost every distributive decision. A basic list of these key parameters includes:

1. Who laboured to collect and/or process the resources.
2. Who was physically present or nearby when the resources were shared out.
3. The kinship connections between the giver and receiver of resources.
4. The seniority and authority of the people involved in the exchange.
5. The clan ownership status of the country on which the resources were obtained.
6. Who supplied the transport or technology (cars, boats, fuel, spears, harpoons, fishing lines, hooks, etc) that allowed the resources to be collected.
7. Whether the resources were restricted to certain categories of people because of a particular prohibition (eg ceremonial activities).

The reasons why a particular distribution occurred in a particular way were often heavily interlinked and were rarely stated explicitly, so pinpointing the exact rationale for any one observation is difficult. Indeed such is the potential for interaction and overlap between the parameters in the list outlined above, it is possible that different interpretations could be given for the same observed distribution outcome (for example, the supplier of the hunting boat, an owner of the country, and the turtle harpooner could all be one and the same person). However public disagreements about distributions were extremely rare at Yilpara, indicating a significant collective understanding of what was appropriate in the prevailing circumstances.

5.1.2 Kinship and Households

Before moving to an actual description of observed distribution, it is also important to briefly outline the nature of the Yilpara community. It is the home of the Yithuwa Maḍarrpa clan, and in 2000-2001 consisted of 13 regularly occupied houses. These houses contained either a senior Yithuwa Maḍarrpa man and his family, or the overflow of extended kin and relatives from a senior Yithuwa Maḍarrpa man. This means that, for the purposes of distributing resources, the overflow of extended kin occupying a second house could be grouped in with the house of the senior man himself. Thus two or even three houses become one 'household', centred on a senior man and his wife. In this way, the 13 houses became 8 households of closely related

kin (extended, multi-generational families), and it is these households that were an important focus for food distribution. There are some variations to this picture, for in one household the senior Yithuwa Maḍarrpa men had died recently,³⁵ but his kin still lived in a cluster of houses. In another case the senior householder (Wäka Mununggurr) was not a Yithuwa Maḍarrpa but the son of a Yithuwa Maḍarrpa woman and therefore a senior waku or djungayi³⁶ of Yithuwa Maḍarrpa country. [Bakulangay Marawili], another senior Yithuwa Maḍarrpa man, died during the fieldwork. His extended family remained living in the two houses they had lived in whilst he was alive.

Overarching this model of ‘households’ as a site for distribution, is the fact that one man, Wakuthi Marawili, is a generation older than anyone else at the homeland centre and has been a Yithuwa Maḍarrpa leader since the 1950s. His sons compose a substantial proportion of the current leadership group, and the other senior men acknowledge his authority over them. In English, this ultimate authority was expressed by informants statements such as “we are still under Wakuthi” about a whole range of issues.³⁷ His nominal role in distribution reflected this senior status. Despite this, an understanding of the ‘household’ as assembled around a senior man and as occupying between one and three actual houses is an important starting point for understanding both the composition of hunting parties and the subsequent distribution of resources observed during fieldwork.

5.2 Turtle and Dugong Distribution

Observations of turtle and dugong hunts provided the best examples of the distribution process in practice. This is because they were undertaken with only a handful of people in the boat (5 or less), but provided the community with substantial quantities of meat (50+ kg) all at once. This made the distribution process sizeable,

³⁵ [Watjinbuy Marawili]

³⁶ Refer to Anthropologist’s Report (3.44-48) for a full explanation of these terms

³⁷ Djambawa Marawili, [Bakulangay Marawili]

and easier to observe. Such observation, combined with discussions with informants³⁸ revealed a number of factors to be important in determining the ultimate distribution.

5.2.1 Hunting Labour and Initial Distribution

The key labourers in a hunt were the djambatj (harpooner), the boat captain (goli'mi), the 'middle' man responsible for lines and ropes (napugangu), and the butcher(s) whose work began once the animal has been brought on shore. There was a carefully followed methodology to miyapunu butchery, and this methodology produced certain cuts of meat. Some of these cuts were shared out amongst the workers according to a widely known protocol, in order to repay them for their labour.

The person considered responsible for sharing the meat out was the captain of the boat (goli'mi). Traditionally, this man made the crucial decision about where the hunters should travel to hunt, and was often a more senior person than the harpooner (a role requiring a degree of athleticism). In the past this was also the person who did the bulk of the work paddling the canoe. If the captain was a younger man (more common in modern outboard motor hunting), he often actively passed on responsibility for ensuring a correct distribution to an older member of the hunting party. At Yilpara this was often the harpooner.

In the case of a turtle, the initial protocol which helped the captain guide the distribution was:

1. The djambatj (harpooner) received the head (mayarr), the gumurr (ventral shell meat) and the liver (ngalthiri) in order of priority. Depending on need, he might also get the lungs (burrwutj) the back flipper section (ganybi) and the stomach (gulun).
2. The goli'mi (the boat driver or main oarsman) received the galu'ngurr (front flipper section) and lirra (intestines).
3. The napungangu- the third man in the boat (assisting with the ropes, etc) received the bana (meat underneath back flippers) and sometimes the burrwutj (lungs).

³⁸ Djambawa Marawili, [Bakulangay Marawili], Ngulpurr Marawili, Nuwandjali Marawili, Dhukal Wirrpanda, Wäka Mununggurr

This did not exhaust the cuts of meat produced by the butchery process, but provided a basis for beginning the distribution. This protocol also has a pragmatic component in that it quickly feeds the men who may have been labouring on the hunt for several hours. Most of the cuts listed above, (head, liver, flippers, stomach, intestines, lungs, ventral shell meat, etc) are cuts that do not have to be roasted in the turtle shell oven, but are cooked quickly on an open fire during the initial butchery process. They are what the hunters and butchers use to ease their own hunger whilst undertaking the time and labour intensive process of butchery and cooking.

Labour can be used as a further justification for distribution. Butchering the turtle is a major task, and knowledgeable men volunteered for this as a way of justifying a greater share of the meat to bring to their households. Or they shared this task, if all needed a portion of the catch. Butchery tasks were shared between a number of senior men on 21/06/01, 2/08/01, and 24/07/02 to name some examples. The hunters usually recognised the likely demands for meat on the shore and attempted to meet them. It was common for Yilpara hunters (Djambawa Marawili in particular) to attempt to catch a further adult turtle after securing one, as a way of meeting the distribution needs of the whole community. Altering the amount of labour they contributed to a turtle hunt or butchery was one way in which senior men adjusted the share of meat they received to a level appropriate to their likely demands from dependent kin.

5.2.2 Further Distribution: Seniority

The captain (goli'mi) is responsible for the further distribution of meat. Here the protocols for distribution are not as clearcut as the initial allocation to the hunters. The role of deciding on a fair distribution was fulfilled at the butchery site by a senior man, or by a number of senior men. If the captain was a young person, he usually passed on this role to the senior man present. A number of senior men were observed taking responsibility for the distribution of turtle or dugong meat. These included Djambawa Marawili, Gumbaniya Marawili, Wäka Mununggurr, [Bakulangay Marawili], Dhukaḷ Wirrpanda, Wuyal Wirrpanda, Wanyipi Marika, Nuwandjali Marawili, Ngulpurr Marawili, Bandipandi Wunungmurra and Baluka Maymuru.

This protocol of senior men taking responsibility for distribution was extended further at Yilpara. All meat from turtle hunts is understood to go to Wakuthi Marawili as the clan elder, and from him out to the respective families of the homeland centre. This did not occur literally, as Wakuthi is an elderly blind invalid, but this was stated as the philosophy underpinning distribution, and was the mode of distribution in the past.³⁹ Observed distribution therefore occurred under conventions established when Wakuthi was an active participant in such processes, distributing meat to the different Yithuwa Maḍarrpa families. [Bakulangay Marawili] stated on 10/08/01 that his father, Mundukul Marawili, performed a similar role when he was alive, as people brought their catch to him for fair distribution.

The convention of seniority was enacted further when large amounts of meat were sent from one community to the other. On 13/08/01, Baluka Maymuru at Djarrakpi sent a live turtle to Yilpara in lieu of attending a ceremony. Rather than send it to the community as a whole, he sent it to one senior man, [Bakulangay Marawili]. On this basis [Bakulangay] took the meat that would have ordinarily gone to the harpooner and shared it with his own extended family. He then ensured an equitable distribution of the rest across the community so that, in his own words, 'everyone would get a taste'. Similarly, meat that was sent to GanGan community from Yilpara (for example on 26/11/00) was usually sent to the senior clan leader there, Gawirrin Gumana. It was his responsibility to ensure an equitable distribution within his own community.

Another example of seniority entailing distribution responsibilities occurred on 16/06/01. A dugong caught in the bait net of a professional crabber in the area was offered to the Yolngu. As it had not been harpooned, the ordinary distribution protocol could not be easily applied. However the dugong had come from Duluwuy near Yathikpa. Senior Yolngu present at the butchery⁴⁰ stated that dugong from this area technically belonged entirely to the senior waku of the Yithuwa Maḍarrpa and they had sole responsibility for determining how it should be shared. Wäka Mununggurr, as the senior waku present, had this responsibility on that day, and saw that some portion of the meat was distributed to each household.

³⁹ Djambawa Marawili

⁴⁰ Dhukaḷ Wirrpanda, [Bakulangay Marawili], Djambawa Marawili, Wäka Mununggurr

5.2.3 Further Distribution: Ownership of Country

There were some direct observations made of the relationship between the ownership of country and the distribution of resources. Owning the country on which a turtle was caught provided a strong basis for claiming meat from it. Whilst driving with me on the beach near the Djarrakpi homeland centre on 16/09/01, a senior Djarrakpi landowner, Baluka Maymuru, noted the tracks of a vehicle belonging to a visitor (Wulanybuma Wunungmurra). He also noted a groove between the car tracks, which was made by an upturned turtle being dragged behind the car. They had located a turtle coming up the beach to lay its eggs, and had towed it back to near their camp at Barraratjpi to butcher it. Baluka asked me to follow the tracks to where the turtle was being butchered and received a substantial portion of turtle meat, in recognition that the animal had been taken on his country by a visitor.

Similarly, Yithuwa Madarrpa people regularly claimed meat from turtles and dugongs caught at Yathikpa when they had not participated in the hunt. Yathikpa is important Yithuwa Madarrpa territory, and so their claim was a strong one, and this claim was particularly strong when the hunter was not from the owning clan. For example, Wanyipi Marika of the Rirratjingu clan caught, butchered, and distributed a dugong on 7/10/02. The butchery and distribution was observed, and the bulk of the meat went to Yithuwa Madarrpa people as the dugong was caught at Yathikpa. A similarly wide distribution was observed when Wanyipi hunted and butchered turtles at Yathikpa on 25/05/01. Most of the people present at the butchery were members of the owning clan, the Yithuwa Madarrpa.

5.2.4 Further Distribution: Proximity to the Resources

The above example of Baluka Maymuru claiming turtle meat at Barraratjpi makes clear a further aspect of distribution. It was not only that recognised clan owners existed that was important in the distribution, but also the fact that one or more of those clan owners was physically present to claim a share of the resources. A person who has a justifiable claim to some meat (on the basis of some connection to the hunters or to the country where the animal was caught) exercises that claim simply by

their physical presence at the distribution. In the oblique manner of polite Yolngu social relations, an owner does not make the claim verbally, it is understood to have been made by them being present or turning up. He or she might well have received some meat anyway if they were nearby (such as the two close homeland centres of Barraratjpi and Djarrakpi in this example), but they would receive substantially more by being present at the butchery, preventing others (with lesser but still legitimate claims) to claim meat ahead of them.

Physical presence and proximity to resources form part of a broader, pragmatic component of distribution. In an area where both refrigeration and transport are only sporadically available and where kin are numerous, the feasibility of distributing meat to particular people was an important factor mediating distribution based on kinship and the ownership of country. A relative at the butchery site was more likely to receive meat than equivalent kin at the homeland centre, and kin at the homeland centre were more likely to receive meat than kin who were in Nhulunbuy or away visiting another homeland centre. Whether these more distant people had their latent rights to meat activated depended on whether delivering meat to them was practical in terms of transport, and whether the meat supply was exhausted by those kin making legitimate claims closer to the butchery event. It should be emphasised that meat was still being distributed to kin, but pragmatic elements determine which of the total set of kin receive meat in any given case, and this is an accepted component of the distribution process.

5.2.5 Further Distribution: Supply of Technology

Having transport available diminished the importance of proximity as a factor, enabling kinship links and ownership to be recognised across greater distances. In the case of turtle hunting, boats formed both the means of getting the resource, and also of distributing it widely. The following table shows turtle being transported to kin across the shores of Blue Mud Bay by boat. In some cases distributing the turtle was the objective of the journey, in other cases it was a consequence of taking advantage of that mode of transport to hunt successfully during the journey:

Table 1: Distribution of Turtle by Boat

Date	Boat From	Boat To	Resources
25/12/00	Groote Island	Yilpara	Small green turtle
13/05/01	Bickerton Island	Yilpara	Green turtle caught off Woodah Is
13/08/01	Djarrakpi/Barraratjpi	Yilpara	Large turtle and turtle eggs
23/09/01	Barraratjpi	Yilpara	Turtle meat butchered at Barraratjpi

Boats highlight the general issue of the supply of technology. In modern homeland hunting some of the technology required is different (cars, boats, fuel, oil, etc) and some is modified or unchanged (spears, harpoons, fishing lines, hooks, etc). Having access to these items is essential to hunting success, and so the person supplying them has a strong claim to some share of that success. However the influence of the supply of technology on kinship-based distribution does not flow all one way. The most likely way for a hunter who does not possess a car to obtain one is to borrow it, and the person most likely to lend him or her a car is someone the hunter has a strong kinship connection to. The availability of technology therefore interacts with other factors outlined previously, such as kinship and seniority. Borrowing or using a necessary piece of technology entails an obligation to share the proceeds with the owner of that technology, therefore influencing subsequent distribution.

5.2.6 Further Distribution: Interaction of Factors

Distribution events can involve a number of the above factors operating simultaneously. This is highlighted by a full description of an example discussed previously, and the important factor follows each observation in brackets. On 13/08/02, Baluka Maymuru captured a turtle at Djarrakpi, which required access to either a boat and/or a car (technology). Baluka decided to send this turtle to Yilpara, in lieu of his obligation to attend a ceremony there (kinship). He directed that the turtle go to [Bakulangay Marawili], a Yithuwa Madarrpa elder leading the ceremony, for appropriate distribution (seniority and kinship). The turtle was transported using a boat belonging to Bickerton Islanders, who were also attending the ceremony (technology, kinship). Two cans of petrol were bought from the Yilpara shop and sent back to Baluka on the Bickerton boat, as thanks and to give him the capacity to hunt

more turtle, as petrol is not available at his small community (technology, kinship). This event demonstrates how the factors outlined above can intersect and interact in driving a particular distribution.

5.2.7 Distribution within the Household

Once the turtle meat reached the household (directly or indirectly brought by the head of the household), a level of distribution occurred within that space. This was the aspect of distribution that was the most difficult to observe. However the same factors were likely to be important, but on a household scale; the actual kin relations amongst the household members, the seniority of particular people in the household, whether they were involved in collecting the meat or in contributing other important household labour, and so on. Again the protocols were likely to be implicit rather than explicit in nature, for the senior man was not necessarily in the situation of saying no to direct requests from kin, rather the members of his household usually recognised what they were entitled to based on the meat available and acted accordingly. The microsocial level within the household reflected many of the characteristics of distribution on a wider scale.

5.2.8 Summary

The distribution of turtle and dugong meat provided a detailed example of the way that the food distribution process occurs. It was driven by kinship relations, but the actual distribution outcome was a consequence of complex interactions between kinship, seniority, labour, the ownership of country, physical proximity to the butchery, the feasibility of distributing meat to particular people, ritual or other prohibitions, and the supply of technology. This is not an exhaustive list of all the possible influences, but does provide a basic picture of how the process worked in practice. Observation confirmed a collective understanding of both who had the authority to make decisions, and of the set of guiding parameters used to negotiate an appropriate distribution outcome for the prevailing circumstances. The process was not random and disorganised, which might have led to conflict, nor was it rigid and inflexible, which might have led to resources being wasted.

5.3 Distribution of Other Food Resources

5.3.1 Introduction

The distribution of other resources showed similar characteristics to that outlined for turtle and dugong above. However other kinds of resources were usually collected in smaller amounts by a much wider group of people than occurred with turtle hunting. Turtle hunting was restricted to men, and approximately 8-10 men at Yilpara had the skill and knowledge to act as either harpooner or butcher. A further 15-20 men and boys had the driving skill to act as boat captain. Boat availability was a further limitation, as there was rarely more than one boat present and working at any one time.

This limited field of turtle hunters contrasted sharply with linefishing, for every able-bodied member of the community (including children 6 years old and younger) went line fishing regularly. Similarly, boys as young as 8 used spears to get fish, crabs, and rays. Thus these items were collected much more frequently by a much wider variety of people, but in smaller amounts on any one occasion. This in turn led to distribution processes which were guided by the same parameters but, compared to turtle distribution, were more diffuse, smaller in scale, less complex, and less likely to extend beyond the immediate hunting group. However despite these differences, many characteristics of turtle distribution were observed in some form in the distribution of other kinds of resources. Certain aspects were emphasised, others diminished, but the processes were similar.

5.3.2 Diversity of Labour

Labour played an important role in the distribution of foods other than turtle. A number of types of foods were often collected simultaneously on a hunting or fishing trip, and whilst this occurred with turtle hunts, a successful turtle hunt usually dwarfed the results of the other activity (often catfish fishing) in distribution terms. However in relation to linefishing, this aspect of complementary activity took on much greater significance. Some common combinations of activities undertaken by hunting parties include yam digging with parrotfish fishing, oysters with catfish

fishing, linefishing with fish spearing, and linefishing with maranydjalk (shark and ray) spearing. There was a gender aspect to these combinations. Yams and oysters were usually collected by women, spearing was done by men and older boys, linefishing was done by everyone.

Like turtle hunting, the distribution of the results of a fishing trip could be partly explained in terms of a return for labour, but here it was labour split across a number of hunting activities rather than across a number of tasks relating to the same hunting activity. Diversifying and sharing labour not only justified distributing resources more widely amongst the party, it simultaneously spread the risk of overall hunting failure. If fish spearing did not yield results on a particular day, then hopefully the line fishers they traveled with were successful. This spreading of risk was also found amongst individuals engaging in the same activity. For example, on 5/09/01, a large group went fishing at Mangatjipa, including Ngulpurr Marawili and his family. Four of the fishers got 29 fish between them, the other 3 fishers only got 7 fish. The resulting distribution reflected the kinship demands of those present and the total catch, rather than the actual number of fish each person had caught. On 19/12/00, a group of five young men went looking for maranydjalk. Four of the men got nothing, whilst the fifth, Mulawalnga Marawili, speared 3 stingrays. He shared this catch equally with the other men. The emphasis of distribution was on labour contributed, but unlike turtle hunters, the members of other kinds of hunting trips do not all equally fail or succeed, and this slightly shifted the emphasis of labour as a justification for a particular distribution.

The labour associated with turtle butchery had a further analogy with maranydjalk (shark and ray) spearing. Maranydjalk, like turtle, were hunted by men and had to go through a complex and relatively time-consuming preparation process before they could be eaten (see 4.4). This allowed for the possibility of extending the distribution in the same manner as a turtle butchery, through shared labour. Someone who was not on the hunt could earn the right to a share of the maranydjalk by undertaking the time-consuming work of cooking and processing it. It is worth noting here that women knew and participated in the preparation process for maranydjalk, even though they did not normally spear them. However a more major difference from turtle butchery involved how much meat there was to share around. If only one or two small rays

were caught, then there was not much scope for a person to undertake the processing work and thereby gain a share, as once divided the meat was barely a mouthful. Nevertheless this still occurred in certain circumstances, as maranydjalk was usually divided into small balls corresponding to the number of people participating in the trip (for example on 19/12/00, 19/01/01, 27/02/01).

Maranydjalk preparation was one clear example of labour that is separate to the hunt itself, but there are others. For Yambirrkku (parrotfish), the person who cut and cooked the fish must give the head part and gills to the person who caught it.⁴¹ Cooking the fish, collecting bait for fishing, collecting wood for the fire, and minding children are just some of the additional tasks which, along with undertaking complementary hunting activities, can justify a distribution which reflects the amount of labour people have done on a hunting trip.

5.3.3 Hunting Party Composition

Spreading labour across a hunting party was used to justify the pooling and subsequent distribution of resources that the party collects. Yet it does not explain how those people came to be hunting together in the first place. Kinship and household residence were important in outlining the parameters of a particular distribution, but the exact roles they played were slightly different. Fishing parties were generally only composed of the members of one or two households, for there was less pressure to widen them to include representatives from other households. This was because, unlike miyapunu hunting (which demands specialised knowledge, skills, and technology), linefishing and related activities were accessible to a broad cross-section of the community. A linefishing party knew that others at the homeland centre could have been (and usually were) out fishing elsewhere to supply their own households, even if it was just from the reefs within walking distance of Yilpara. Furthermore, a fishing party was highly unlikely to catch an amount of fish equivalent to the weight of a turtle, so there was far less need to plan the composition of the party for the wide distribution such an amount would require. Thus fishing groups were frequently composed of the members of one or two households of closely connected

⁴¹ [Bakulangay Marawili]

kin and their direct in-laws. A distribution based on labour within the group was also going to be a distribution recognising close kinship ties.

When a fishing trip was successful enough to produce a large excess, then the distribution did extend to include the homeland centre as a whole. There were several occasions during the fieldwork where the amount of resources obtained from a fishing trip approached the amount obtained from a turtle hunt. These included boat fishing trips for trevally, fishing at the freshwater billabong early in the dry season, fishing trips where turtle eggs were located, and one or two very successful night spearing trips which landed 30 or more mullet (see Appendix 1 for dates). On these occasions, fish and eggs were distributed through the homeland centre in a way that mirrored that of turtle; each household received an allocation of the resources remaining once the hunters and their households had taken their share. However these times of great excess were infrequent. More often the situation was that 5-10 items (fish, crabs, etc) were brought back, and these would be absorbed into the households of the hunters and shared amongst their close kin who did not go hunting. If there was excess, a fish or two might be sent to Wakuthi Marawili or senior men in other households who had not fished that day, in recognition of both the kinship relation between the households and the seniority of that person.

Hunting parties which engaged in just one type of hunting were more likely to spread their success across a number of households, and this was a result of the slightly different makeup that such parties often had. They were frequently one-gender groups, as the men went spearing for maranydjalk and mullet, or the women went linefishing or looking for oysters. As these parties were limited and defined along a trajectory other than that of the household, they more often contained representatives from a number of households. The 'young boys' from three or four households might head out together with their spears, or the adult women looking after their children might head out to share this task as they fish. The outcome was that more households were represented in the party, and this meant that any resources over and above the party's own requirements were more likely to be spread across households, even when the excess they collected was relatively small.

5.3.4 Wider Distribution

Although they are usually distributed in smaller amounts than miyapunu, fish and other items can still be sent to kin over long distances. Yilpara is a large community, generally receiving at least one light plane visit per day and up to ten or more visits on a busy day. Cars are less frequent, but still common. Yilpara residents took advantage of these transport opportunities, sending bags of fish or crabs collected that day to relatives in Nhulunbuy, Gapuwiyak, and to other inland homeland centres. The resources were directed to a known relative and those carrying them respected this. In a similar way to turtle, the distribution outcome was dependent on the interaction between kinship and the practicalities of distributing meat to particular people. The table below lists some examples of foods other than turtle that were sent to other communities.

Table 2: Food Resources sent beyond Yilpara

Date	Resource	Sent By	Sent To
21/10/00	6 mullet	Malumin Marawili	Family at Yirrkala
12/12/00	Mundayutj (bush fruit)	Bangawuy Wanambi	Boliny Wanambi at Yirrkala
17/02/01	Emu	[Gambali Ngurruwuthun] at Rurrangalla	Wakuthi Marawili at Yilpara
21/07/01	Fish	Muypirri Marawili	Mulawalnga Marawili at Nhulunbuy
21/07/01	Fish	Muluymuluy Marawili	Gurrundul Marawili at Nhulunbuy
21/07/01	Fish	Gawarratj Mununggurr	Family at Nhulunbuy
26/10/01	Parrotfish, emperor	Wanyipi Marika	Family at a Rurrangalla funeral
7/10/02	Mud crabs	Nuwandjali Marawili	GanGan community

5.3.5 Prohibitions on Distribution

Distribution was at times affected by ritual prohibition. On 30/10/01, a group of boys went boat fishing, and had a highly successful catch. However the fish they caught could only be eaten by initiated men. This was because some of the boys on the boat had been through an important secret mens' ceremony at Rurrangalla for the first time. The name for these new initiates is Galngamurritj. They had to undergo a

purification ceremony called batun before others could eat freely of their catch.⁴² [Bakulangay Marawili] stated on 3/12/00 that Yilpara itself is sited near the Yingapungapu (burial ground) country. In the past, an area where stingrays were caught (Gandang) was considered sacred and only the senior men could eat stingrays caught in that area. This rule still existed when the Yilpara homeland centre began to be established, but was lifted by Blue Mud Bay elders prior to people settling there. In both cases, distribution was affected by ceremonial or ritual prohibitions.

5.3.6 Gurrutu

Gurrutu, the system of kinship relations and ownership of country, is not discussed directly here.⁴³ However it is a critical to the observations of distribution, because behind such distributions was the permission for the hunters to hunt on that country in the first place. This depended on the strength of the kinship ties and social relations between the hunters and the owners of the land/sea country they were hunting on. Furthermore, the hunters access to hunting country in remote areas like Blue Mud Bay relied on them being able to stay at one of the nearby homeland centres, which in turn meant that kinship ties to the homeland centre owners were equally, if not more important. Thus the distribution of resources was influenced by the ownership of country, but the initial permission to hunt on country and to even reside at a nearby homeland centre were both prerequisites for that distribution.

5.3.7 Summary

The distribution of resources collected in smaller volumes than miyapunu still showed many of the same characteristics. The emphasis of certain parameters was shifted, but kinship, labour, seniority and the practicalities of distribution were still important determinants of what group of people were collecting the resources and what group could or did receive them. No serious arguments about the allocation of resources were witnessed during the fieldwork, despite the very large volumes of resources collected and the diverse array of circumstances under which they were distributed.

⁴² Nuwandjali Marawili

⁴³ Refer to Anthropologist's Report (9.9-21) for an extended discussion of gurrutu.

Observations suggest that the distribution system was an effective set of well-understood parameters, which guided people as they negotiated appropriate solutions to the challenges posed by daily hunting in a remote area.

Section 6: Non-Food Resources

6.1 Introduction

During fieldwork I observed the use of a wide array of non-food resources gathered from the surrounding country. A number of non-food resources were extremely important to the economic, social, and cultural life of the Yilpara community. Key non-food resources are described below.

6.2 Firewood

Firewood was the most important non-food resource collected by Blue Mud Bay people. There was no mains electricity or gas available, and so almost all cooking was done on open fires using wood from the surrounding country. Firewood collection occurred daily whilst out on hunting trips, and around the Yilpara community itself. Stringybark eucalypts were often collected, but a wide range of tree species were observed being used during the dry season.

6.2.1 Lanapu

In the wet season a specific resource was targeted. This was lanapu, a resinous cypress tree that burns when wet. It was generally collected on vehicle trips from areas along the road to Yilpara, the road to Yarrinya, and the road to Dharupi. Lanapu requires knowledge to cut safely, as the dead wood shatters easily and limbs can fall down when chopping upright dead trees. Yolngu were observed angling the blade of the axe when chopping and they did not chop too hard, in order to minimise the risk of falling limbs. Use of lanapu in the wet season was so common that it was not noted every time it was used, but searches for lanapu or lanapu usage were noted on the days listed below. The wood is actively saved for the wetter months, and so between July and late November, no recordings were made of lanapu usage. Where it was recorded, the person collecting the resource is also included:

Table 3: Observed Lanapu Usage

Date	Person	Location
30/11/00	Djambawa Marawili	Yilpara road
30-01-01	Not noted	Yilpara road
01-04-01	Gawarratj Mununggurr, Muypirri Marawili	Yarrinya road
16-04-01	Ngambulili Marawili	Yilpara road
17-04-01	Djambawa Marawili	Yilpara
17-04-01	Djambawa Marawili	Garrangarri track
18-04-01	Muluymuluy Wirrpanda	Yilpara road
02-05-01	Muluymuluy Wirrpanda	Yilpara road
13-07-01	Fieldnote: Country drying out, lanapu no longer specifically targeted	
24-07-01	Gawarratj Mununggurr	Yilpara road
26-07-01	Muluymuluy Wirrpanda	Yarrinya road

6.3 Art and Craft

Blue Mud Bay residents used wood for a diverse array of purposes. They were important in ceremonial proceedings (discussed separately below), and in the production of various types of artworks for sale. Sale of art and craft was a critical facet of the economic life of the Yilpara community during the period of observation, and a key source of non-government income.

6.3.1 Larakitj: Hollow Logs

Hollow logs are cut from stringybark trees *gadayka* that have been eaten out by ants or termites. Yolngu artists can tell how hollow a tree is from the sound it makes when it is struck, and large hollow trees are the most favoured. A number of areas around Yilpara are favoured sites for locating hollow logs. These include Yathikpa, Dharupi, and Garangarri, and hollow logs were collected from all of these sites during the observation period.

After being cut, the logs were returned to the community where they were stripped of bark, sanded smooth, and sawed at the edges where the axe had cut unevenly. Logs were then painted with clan designs. Hollow logs were cut, or seen in the process of production where cutting was not observed, on the following days: 31/10/00, 2/12/00/19/12/00, 31/01/01, 18/06/01, and 25/09/01.

6.3.2 Nuwayak: Barks

Bark paintings were produced from the bark of the stringybark tree Gadayka. Straight trees were favoured. The tree was chopped around the circumference at the bottom and top of the straight section, then sliced down the middle on one side. The axe was then used to gently lever the bark section away from the wood underneath. Bark can only be removed in this way during the wetter months, or from trees growing in wet areas. Barks were commonly collected from areas adjacent to roads, and were collected from a diverse array of sites across the Yilpara peninsula. Favoured sites include those for hollow logs (Yathikpa, Dharupi, Garrangali road). Barks were cut, or seen in production where cutting was not observed, on the following days: 26/12/00, 27/12/00, 28/01/01, 29/01/01, 30/01/01, 17/04/01, 24/04/01, 4/06/01, 5/06/01, 17/06/01, 19/06/01, 13/08/02.

6.3.3 Yidaki: Didgeridu

Yidaki (didgeridus) were cut from younger hollow stringybark trees. They were stripped of bark, cleaned out, and painted before being used ceremonially or sold to the art centre at Yirrkala. Yidaki were cut, or seen in production where cutting was not observed, on the following days: 30/01/01, 24/04/01, and 14/05/01.

6.3.4 Hardwood and Softwood Carvings

Carvings of birds, fish, and other Ancestral creatures were also produced by Yolngu artists. These are often made from softwoods, but softwood carvings were not commonly observed at Yilpara. Two large ones were noted on 1/10/01, produced by Galuma Maymuru. A softwood log waiting to be carved was observed at the home of Gawirrin Gumana at GanGan on 19/11/01. Djambawa Marawili, a senior Blue Mud Bay leader, began carving hardwoods for sale to the art centre during the fieldwork, something that he stated he had not done before. Hardwoods were cut, or seen in production where cutting was not observed, on the following days: 17/04/01, 23/04/01, 28/05/01, 25/6/01

6.3.5 Jewellery

On 27/08/02 and again on 3/09/2002 Bulnyinda Wanambi was observed constructing necklaces from small marine snails gathered from Dhuwultuwul, a mangrove and beach site near Yilpara. They were boiled and the meat removed with a pin or fishhook, and strung on a light fishing line. These necklaces were sold to the arts centre at Yirrkala.

6.4 Resources for Ceremonial Activities

A number of resources were observed in use during ceremonial activities.

Observations of the ceremonial activities themselves are described in more detail in Section 9 below. This section discusses material resources used in ceremony. The yidaki, discussed in the previous section, played a vital role in all Yolngu ceremonies witnessed, and hollow logs were also observed in use in Yolngu ceremony.

6.4.1 Gapan: Clay

Clays, particularly red and white clays, were used extensively during ceremonies, and were put to some purpose at every ceremony witnessed. Clay was daubed on the bodies of ceremony participants, and on objects used in the ceremony, such as cars and houses. Clay is an important item for sharing and exchange, as it is only available at particular sites. One of these sites, called Bapuwili, is close to the GanGan homeland was visited on 17/11/2002 (refer to site map). GanGan residents collected two large buckets of clay from there for ceremonial purposes. This had been a known site for collecting clay dating back to the 'bush time' prior to the mission period. Clay is also available on Woodah Island, at a place called Bambukurru. On 1/11/03, [Mayawuluk Wirrpanda] reported the location and exploitation of this clay deposit at Bambukurru on Woodah Island when she only had one child (45+ years ago).

6.4.2 Ochre

Ochre is the basis of the paints used in Yolngu ceremony, and in the handcrafts described above. No observations were made of ochre gathering during the research,

but it was witnessed being used extensively. Flat stones to grind ochre were sometimes collected when they were noticed in rocky areas on beaches. Djambawa Marawili collected one of these rocks on the beach on the Garraparra peninsula on 5/08/02. Such a rock was observed being used as part of a ceremony on 3/09/01.

6.4.3 Bilma: Clapsticks

Clapsticks (Bilma) were used in all the ceremonies witnessed. They are usually made from hardwoods such as maypiny and boyutj, sourced from the surrounding countryside. Observations of clapstick wood being cut, or clapsticks being made, occurred on the 6/09/01, 1/10/01, and 13/08/02.

6.4.4 Funeral Sheds

In the Yolngu funerals witnessed, a funeral shed was used to house the coffin whilst the ceremony was taking place. Saplings and small trees, often stringybark trees, were used to construct the frame of this shed. The materials used to create the walls and roof of the shed varied depending on the nature of the funeral. Funeral sheds observed at Yilpara were constructed of stringbark branches and leaves, and on one occasion, pieces of paperbark were used to line the inside. A funeral shed observed at Rurrangalla in November 2001 had walls and a roof constructed of paperbark.

6.4.5 Shades and Shelters

The Yolngu ceremonies witnessed lasted several days. Shades of similar construction to funeral sheds (but without walls) were constructed from local and store bought materials for many of these ceremonies. They were usually made of a sapling frame, with branches, paperbark, or tarpaulins for the roof. These were used throughout the ceremony as shade for the singers and for those watching the ceremony.

6.4.6 Other Ceremonial Resources

There were a number of other ceremonial resources that were observed being used during the fieldwork. Freshly shredded stringybark was used on a number of

occasions, including 3/11/01 and 21/09/01. Branches and leaves of the djilka plant used to cook the turtle were also used in a smoking ceremony of purification at the end of each funeral.

Parrots and other bird feathers are used to create ceremonial armbands. Djambawa Marawili went hunting for parrots on 19/11/00 and 28/11/00 in order to obtain feathers for this purpose. Armbands made of feathers were observed in use at circumcision ceremonies at Gapuwiyak during February 2001 and at Yilpara during September 2001.

6.5 Medicines

Older Aboriginal people demonstrated a detailed knowledge of medicines and medical treatments that could be obtained from the surrounding countryside. No detailed studies of medical knowledge were undertaken, but some medicines were noted during the fieldwork period.

6.5.1 Stingrays, Stingers, Snakebites

On 9/11/00 a Yithuwa Madarrpa man, Mulawalnga Marawili, was stung by a stingray spine. The hunters with him immediately lit a small fire, and collected green djilka leaves. These were held over the fire and then placed hot over the wound. Later Mulawalnga held his hand directly over a hot fire. Stingray poisons are based on a protein, which denatures when heat is applied,⁴⁴ and such a heat treatment can also be used by Yolngu on stinger stings.⁴⁵ A yellow striped cockroach beetle found on the beaches was also identified as being good medicine for stingray wounds.⁴⁶ The back end is crushed up and put in the sting. This cockroach is also used to treat snake bites.

⁴⁴ Allen, G. Marine Fishes of Tropical Australia and Southeast Asia, Museum of Western Australia, 1999

⁴⁵ Ngulpurr Marawili

⁴⁶ Wäka Mununggurr

6.5.2 Colds and Influenza

On 3/11/02, Muluymuluy Wirrpanda collected the leaves of a particular gum tree called walan. The leaves were boiled to make a medicine to treat her grandchild, who was ill with influenza. [Mayawuluk Wirrpanda] reported that a flu medicine can be made by putting green ants in boiling water and drinking it.

On 17/08/02 a number of women from Yilpara made a journey to collect bush medicine. This medicine was to treat [Bakulangay Marawili], who was suffering from bronchial problems caused by advanced lung cancer. They gathered a fruit from a tree growing on the coastal dunes that they called burrukpili. This fruit was boiled and the water given to the dying man.

6.5.3 Other Medicines

On 29/10/02, and again on 1/11/02, [Mayawuluk Wirrpanda] described a white flowered plant that has leaves which are used as a bandage for serious wounds. The leaf is cooked, the outer skin is taken off, and it is then placed on the wound. She used this type of bandage during the bush era on serious spear wounds sustained by her father. A red and black seed found around Yilpara is used to treat minor eye infections.⁴⁷

6.6 Spear and Harpoon Materials

6.6.1 Spear and Harpoon Shafts

Spear shafts are made from the straight trunks of light saplings and softwoods growing on the coast. The shafts have remained unchanged since the pre-mission period⁴⁸ and were observed being collected on several occasions at a number of locations.

⁴⁷ Ngulpurr Marawili

⁴⁸ Djambawa Marawili

Table 4: Cutting and Preparation of Spear Shafts

Date	Person	Location
13/11/00	Dhupilawuy Marika	Dharupi
2/08/01	Gawarratj Mununggurr	Yarrinya
26/09/01	Muluymuluy Marawili	Lumatjpi
27/09/01	Djambawa Marawili	Dharupi
10/08/02	Wäka Mununggurr, Djambawa Marawili	Dipiwuy, near Garraparra
11/08/02	Djambawa Marawili	Wangurrarikpa (Woodah I.)
17/10/02	Dhupilawuy Marika, Nuwandjali Marawili	Yilpara
7/11/02	Wäka Mununggurr, Nuwandjali Marawili	Dharupi

Harpoon shafts were cut from young stringybark trees. Unlike spear shafts, harpoons are selected from heavier eucalypt hardwood, as they need some weight and strength to be able to strike through the shell. The cutting and/or preparation of new harpoons was observed on the 14/01/01 and 20/01/01.

6.6.2 Spear Barbs and Blades

Several types of spear barbs were identified as being used traditionally. One barb used the spines of large stingrays. These are still used ceremonially, and were observed being collected on 11/12/00, and 19/12/00 by Dhupilawuy Marika and Ngambulili Marawili for ceremonial spears. A second kind of barb is carved from the hardwood maypiny.⁴⁹ A third type used stone called guyarra, a type of stone that comes from Matarrawatj, an inland site in the southern part of Blue Mud Bay.⁵⁰ These stones were used for axes as well. Fish spear prongs were made of a hardwood called dhurritji.⁵¹ They were carved and tied together with a bush rope made from vines. In the mission period, people used to make shovel spear heads by hammering flat the curved metal at the top of drums found on the beach.⁵² Modern spears were observed being made from metal in the same shapes. Fish spears are made using spikes sharpened from the

⁴⁹ Nuwandjali Marawili, [Mayawuluk Wirrpanda]

⁵⁰ Malumin Marawili

⁵¹ Malumin Marawili

⁵² Gumbaniya Marawili, Malumin Marawili

metal used to reinforce concrete, and ceremonial shovel spear blades are made from scrap sheet metal.

6.6.3 Spearhead Fixing Techniques

As well as being the source of spearpoints, hardwoods such as maypiny or boyutj were also the source of the glue that was used to fix spearheads in the past.⁵³ The root (galayngu) was dug up, heated on the fire, and then the sap was collected and used as a fixative. A red flowered plant, Balwurr, has a vine which was used to tie the spearhead in place. Spear makers observed at Yilpara used modern putty and copper electrical wiring to fix spearheads in place using the same technique (glue reinforced with coiled wire strapping).

6.6.4 Spear Throwers

Spear throwers (galpus) were used extensively by hunters at Yilpara. They increased the power and accuracy of the throw, and were also used to stun injured animals. They were constructed of local hardwoods, and sometimes carved and painted for ceremonies. Galpus were extensively used in dancing.

6.7 Boomerangs

No observations of boomerangs being used as a hunting tool were made during fieldwork. A number of senior men own boomerangs, or sets of boomerangs, that are used for ceremonial purposes. No observations were made of such boomerangs being constructed.

6.8 Ropes, lines and vines

Modern ropes and fishing lines were used for both harpoons and fishing lines. Knowledge of the types of bush vines used previously still exists. On 11/1/02, [Mayawuluk Wirrpanda] recalled seeing her husband Wakuthi Marawili making a

⁵³ Nuwandjali Marawili, [Mayawuluk Wirrpanda]

fishing line from bush vines in her youth. [Bakulangay Marawili] stated on 16/01/01 that turtle hunting ropes can be made from vines from the big tree at Garrangarri.

6.9 Cooking Materials

A number of natural products were used in cooking and eating. Djilka, the leaves used in the turtle cooking process, have already been discussed. Stones were also an integral part of the observed cooking processes for turtles. They were often reused as turtles were predominantly cut in particular locations (such as Yathikpa) and the stones were left in the firepit.

Stones were also be used to cook fish. A stone platform was built and used to slow roast a Yambirrku next to the fire on 12/02/01. On another occasion (17/05/01), a bed of shells was made and the fire built on top. Fish and crabs were cooked on the heated shells and ash when the fire had burned down.

Leaves and fronds were used for several purposes. Fronds from the Mauraki (casuarina) tree which grows at the high tide mark were used as ‘plates’ to rest cooked fish on when eating on the beach. Big broad leaves are also used for cooking, particularly for cooking damper on hot coals without a frying pan. Two plants often used in this way are called warrparr and walaritj.⁵⁴ Dugong skins and turtle shells are both used to create sealed ovens over the firepit in the cooking process for those animals. Inland, paperbark is used to construct similarly structured ovens for cooking freshwater fish. Such paperbark ovens were observed in use on most trips to Mangatjipa and Wayawu (see Appendix 1).

6.10 Hunting and Camping Shelters

Rough shades were sometimes constructed whilst engaged in hunting activities, particularly in locations where people camped overnight in the dry season. Table 5 shows where such shades were observed.

⁵⁴ Wulukuwuluku Marawili, Wurrandan Marawili

Table 5: Hunting Shelters

Date	Location	Constructed By
25/05/01	<u>D</u> uluwuy	Wanyipi Marika
15/07/02	Ngandharkpuy	Unknown
11/08/02	Gulalingba (Cool Yal You Ma Island), off Woodah Island	Unknown

Accommodation at the community was predominantly in houses and tents. At ceremony times, some additional shelters were constructed from sapling frames and tarpaulins to house the temporary residents. No notes were taken about the construction of shelters whilst out camping.

6.11 Antbed

Mosquitoes are extremely prevalent during the wet season at Yilpara. They can be warded off by the smoke from burning antbed material. On two occasions (17/12/00, and 18/12/00), antbeds at Yarrinya were broken up and the material extracted was taken back to Yilpara for this purpose.

Section 7: Resource Use at Other Communities

7.1 Introduction

Much of the data about Yilpara presented here is relevant to the activities of Yolngu in the wider Blue Mud Bay area (Map 11). Some direct observations from other homeland centres were made whilst on broad-scale site mapping trips during September and October 2001, and during visits in November 2002. These homeland centres were not systematically surveyed for resource use, but it is possible to make some comments about the nature of resource use in these communities on the basis of both observed and reported evidence.

7.2 Djarrakpi

A smaller homeland centre of four houses on the easternmost peninsula in the north of Blue Mud Bay. This is the home of the Manggalili clan, and was permanently occupied during fieldwork by a senior member of that clan (Baluka Maymuru) and his immediate family. Other clan members and relatives visited regularly.⁵⁵ The Djarrakpi population is extremely dependent on the coast and sea for obtaining food, and in fact is more dependent on the sea than the Yilpara community. Djarrakpi has no shop supplying store food, fewer waterbirds, and no permanent freshwater fishing hole equivalent to the Mangatjipa billabong in the vicinity. The thin, narrow peninsula the homeland centre is on also provides less land area for hunting animals like kangaroos and emus, although these animals are still exploited.

In contrast to the land, the marine and coastal resources near Djarrakpi are rich and varied, including sharks and rays, turtles, turtle eggs, catfish, barramundi, crabs, parrotfish, and various kinds of shellfish. In 2001 Baluka Maymuru had a boat with a small motor, used for offshore fishing and turtle hunting. He also owned a 4WD vehicle during the observation period. Djarrakpi residents undertook some form of hunting on all four days the researchers spent in the community.

7.3 Barraratjpi

A homeland centre of approximately 5 houses, approximately 10km up the road from Djarrakpi. Barraratjpi is also a Manggalili clan homeland centre, although it is on Marrakulu land. There were Gurrumurru Dhalwangu people living there when the researcher briefly visited in 2001. During this period, Wulanybuma Wunungmurra located a nesting turtle on a beach, which he dragged back to near the community in order to butcher it.

7.4 Wandawuy

Wandawuy was not visited during the fieldwork, but there were a significant number of visitors to Yilpara from this homeland centre, as there are marriage links between the two. It is home to members of the Gupa Djapu clan, and Wandawuy residents have access to the beach via a walking track, which comes out near Marrpanbuy.⁵⁶ They hunt stingray, shark and fish along the coastline there. There is no boat at Wandawuy, nor is there vehicle access to the beach.⁵⁷

7.5 Rurrangalla

An inland homeland of approximately 5 houses, visited briefly numerous times during the fieldwork. It is the home of the Munyuku clan, whose territory includes the southern part of the Yilpara peninsula and associated reefs (Yarrinya). Rurrangalla residents often hunt and fish inland, although tyre tracks from Rurrangalla vehicles were identified several times on the hunting tracks around Yilpara and on the Yarrinya peninsula. On 21/01/01, Rurrangalla residents travelled down to Yilpara/Yathikpa to share in the proceeds of a turtle hunt during the wet season. They also regularly visited Yilpara to buy goods from the store.

⁵⁵ Baluka Maymuru

⁵⁶ Gumbaniya Marawili, Nuwandjali Marawili

⁵⁷ Menga Mununggurr

7.6 GanGan

A large inland homeland centre on a river, home of members of the Gumana and Wunungmurra (Gurrumurru) Dhalwangu clan. There are usually vehicles at GanGan and the beach and peninsula on the western side of Grindall Bay can be accessed from the homeland centre by a vehicle track. This track can be cut off during the late wet season, but GanGan residents estimate that they go down to the coast once a week when it is possible to do so. Oysters and fish are the main focus for saltwater hunting efforts. A number of coastal hunting and fishing sites accessed by GanGan residents were visited during fieldwork. Gawirrin Gumana stated that at one time he owned a boat that was kept on the beach near Garraparra, but it was stolen.

7.7 Dhurupitjpi

A homeland centre close to GanGan, and also on a river. Home of members of the Dhudi Djapu clan, a number of whom spent significant parts of the research period living at Yilpara. Dhurupitjpi residents have access to the same coastal areas as the residents of GanGan, and regularly visit the coast of Grindall Bay.⁵⁸

7.8 Bälma

A small homeland centre of approximately five houses lying inland in central Blue Mud Bay. The main household is based around a middle-aged Wunungmurra Dhalwangu clan man, Bandipandi, and his immediate family. He has a 5 person boat and motor which is kept on the Blue Mud Bay coast east of the homeland centre. He regularly uses the boat for turtle and dugong hunting, for transport, and for monitoring the activities of the professional crabbers working in the area.⁵⁹ Bälma residents visited Yilpara by boat on 21/01/01.

⁵⁸ Wuyal Wirrpanda, Dhuka Wirrpanda, Galuma Maymuru

⁵⁹ Bandipandi Wunungmurra

Section 8: Further Observations of Activities on Land and Sea Country

8.1 Introduction

This section contains observations of additional activities undertaken by Blue Mud Bay residents in the surrounding countryside, noted as being of interest under the terms of reference of this report. It includes observations of boat travel and boat visitors, of the burning of country, of the closure of country because of deaths and funerals, of interactions with non-Yolngu outsiders, and of the visitation and maintenance of sites of significance.

8.2 Yolngu Visitors: Boat travel to and from Yilpara

Yolngu visitors to Yilpara came by car, aeroplane, boat, and occasionally on foot. Car and aeroplane arrivals were at times very frequent, and on a busy day as many as ten or more planes landed at the Yilpara airstrip. Arrivals by plane and car were therefore not noted on a regular basis. Arrivals by boat were less frequent, but still common. Observed boat arrivals or departures were from people travelling to and from Yilpara, Djarrakpi, Barraratjpi, Bälma, Bickerton Island, Groote Island, and Numbulwar.

Boat visits, like car and aeroplane visits, often involved the exchange of food and other resources with related kin. Turtles and turtle meat was one common form of exchange, and these exchanges were part of the wider distribution system, discussed in Section 5. Appendix 6 shows boats that were observed arriving at or departing from fieldwork during the course of the research. It does not include boat trips made by boats that permanently reside at Yilpara, nor is it a complete list, as some arrivals and departures were not observed or noted. It represents a minimum for such activity.

8.3 Fires and the Burning of Country

The burning of country took place for a number of interrelated purposes (for example; ease and safety of hunting, good forest management, or the lifting of funeral restrictions). This summary of observations first describes those undertaken as part of regular daily activities, not related to the lifting of ritual prohibitions. Burning of the bush as part of daily activity was an extremely common event, and was not always noted, so the dates below represent a minimum of activity. The name of the person lighting the fire is included where it was noted.

Table 6: Burning of Country

Date	Location	Person
26/10/00	Duluwuy, Yarrinya road	Djambawa Marawili and others
28/10/00	Mangatjipa	Muluymuluy Wirrpanda and others
8/11/00	Nganagawuy road,	Malumin Marawili
9/11/00	Balana/Ngandharkpuy road	Malumin Marawili
26/03/01	Yilpara road,	Guypungura Marawili
4/06/01	Yathikpa	Narrulwuy Marawili
4/06/01	Yarrinya road, Dhuwultuwul, Ngarri	Unknown
24/07/01	Yilpara road	Djambawa Marawili
25/07/01	Road to big balkpalk tree	Djambawa Marawili and others
2/08/01	Multiple fires observed	Unknown
5/09/01	Mangatjipa	Unknown
27/09/01	Bulku/Guninyguniny	Djambawa Marawili
29/09/01	Garrangari track, Dilmitjpi track	Unknown
19/10/01	Yarrinya	Unknown
10/08/02	Dipiwuy, Garraparra	Waka Mununggurr
1/09/02	Gunyuru	Djambawa Marawili
26/09/02	Yilpara road burning	Unknown
30/09/02	Mangatjipa	Unknown

8.3.1 Fires and Funeral Prohibitions

On 27/08/02, Nuwandjali Marawili was observed burning the Lumatjpi area to open it following the funeral of [Miliripin Mununggurr], Gumbaniya Marawili's wife. Three other observations were made of country that had been very recently burned after a funeral: Yarrinya (19/10/01), on the Yilpara road (26/08/02), and at Mangatjipa (30/09/02).

8.4 The Closure of Country and Ceremonial Prohibitions

Areas of country were closed off following the death of a person closely connected to that country. Notes were taken of closed areas of country, or of particular bans related to funerals, on the days in Table 7 below. The duration of these bans varied according to the person involved and the prevailing circumstances, but most bans for entering particular areas lasted more than one week, and sometimes much longer in the case of the death of an important person.

Table 7: Closure of Country

Date	Prohibition/Area	Reason for Prohibition or Closure of Country
23/09/2001	Mangatjipa	[Dula Ngurruwuthun]'s funeral at Rurrangalla
26/09/2001	Yathikpa	[Dula Ngurruwuthun]'s funeral at Rurrangalla
26/09/2001	Yarrinya	[Dula Ngurruwuthun]'s funeral at Rurrangalla
26/09/2001	Wayawu	[Dula Ngurruwuthun]'s funeral at Rurrangalla
26/09/2001	Dharupi, Yilpara	Only places open for hunting during funeral
19/10/2001	Yarrinya	Burned after being closed off for funeral
30/10/2001	Mangatjipa	Burned area after being closed off for funeral
30/10/2001	Yilpara	Boys newly initiated into secret parts of a funeral ceremony caught fish which women could not eat
6/11/2001	Yarrinya	[Dula Ngurruwuthun]'s funeral at Rurrangalla
6/11/2001	Yathikpa	[Dula Ngurruwuthun]'s funeral at Rurrangalla
6/11/2001	Mangatjipa	[Dula Ngurruwuthun]'s funeral at Rurrangalla
6/11/2001	Wayawu	[Dula Ngurruwuthun]'s funeral at Rurrangalla
16/07/2002	Mangatjipa	[Garindjirra Marawili]'s death
17/07/2002	Birany Birany	[Garindjirra Marawili]'s death
17/07/2002	Rurrangalla	[Garindjirra Marawili]'s death
26/08/2002	Yathikpa	[Miliripin Mununggurr]'s death
27/08/2002	Ditjpalwuy	[Miliripin Mununggurr]'s death
10/09/2002	Dugong, parrotfish ban	[Bakulangay Marawili]'s funeral
12/09/2002	Yilpara road closed	[Bakulangay Marawili]'s funeral
13/09/2002	Yilpara road closed	[Bakulangay Marawili]'s funeral
1/10/2002	Yathikpa	[Bakulangay Marawili]'s funeral
1/10/2002	Dhalwangu areas	[Bakulangay Marawili]'s funeral
3/11/2002	Yathikpa	Closed to women because of [Bakulangay Marawili]'s death

8.5 Non-Yolngu Presence and Use of Country

Yilpara residents demonstrated a consistent response to the presence of non-Yolngu people in Blue Mud Bay. This response was that these people were expected to obtain permission from the relevant owners of land or sea country before their arrival, if at all possible, or as soon as they arrived in the area, if it was not. Non-Yolngu presence on land and sea country included crabbers and their employees, barramundi boats, visits by the police, customs officials, telecommunications contractors, and the army.

The following observations were made of responses towards non-Yolngu present in Blue Mud Bay during the fieldwork.

On 01/09/2001, Wäka Mununggurr was leading a turtle hunt south of Yathikpa in Grindall Bay. He saw an unknown boat in the distance, and immediately diverted from the hunt to investigate it. It was a large barramundi boat, the Wakea. Wäka spoke to a crewman on the boat, and asked him a series of questions: Where have you come from? Where have you been fishing? When did you get here? When are you leaving? Have you caught many fish? Do you know Peter Manning (a local barramundi fisherman)? Do you know Bun (the crabber operating under an NLC agreement at Yilpara)? He received brief answers to these questions, and the conversation was tense. After leaving the barramundi boat, he stated that he had wanted to ask them to leave, but he was aware that he was not allowed to do so under European law. He later engaged me in discussion about setting up a ranger program. He wished to know whether this would enable the Yolngu of Blue Mud Bay to have a permit system for boats like the Wakea and/or give them the power to ask such unwanted visitors to leave the bay.

On 1/11/00, the police drove from Nhulunbuy to Yilpara and drove through and around the community. The community leader, Djambawa Marawili was upset that they had not notified him that they were coming, and immediately went to speak with them. He made this point to them strongly before engaging in further conversation.

On 14/09/01 two recreational fishermen were observed at Djarrakpi. They claimed to have verbal permission from Yikaki Maymuru, one of the senior owners of Djarrakpi

country, who resides in Nhulunbuy. They left on 16/09/01. Baluka Maymuru, the senior traditional owner resident at Djarrakpi, later stated to me that he had told them that they could not camp at Djarrakpi, as he had not received a phone call from Yikaki about them. He stated that he sent them away. During their visit, the senior resident at Barraratjpi was Wali Wunungmurra, who is not an owner of the country at Barraratjpi. He encountered them with the researcher present. He did not ask them to leave, but requested that a Northern Land Council employee also present ask them to do so. This employee had no power to do so. Wali then stated that he intended to report the two fishermen when he went back to town.

On 24/09/01 Wanyipi Marika stated that he had seen a barramundi fishing boat in Grindall Bay (Yathikpa) and he did not want it there. He asked me about a permit system through the Northern Land Council as a way of regulating access for these boats. He did not approach the boat on this occasion. On 03/11/02 at Bulanguwuy, Mulawalnga Marawili pointed out two barramundi boats moving out of Myaloola bay. He stated that they were stealing barramundi.

8.5.1 Non-Yolngu visitors to Duluwuy Crabbers Camp

There is a base for professional crabbing operations at Duluwuy in Grindall Bay. This base operates under a formal agreement between the crabbers and the Yolngu of Blue Mud Bay. The Yolngu expressed concern on a number of occasions about visitors to the base or new employees of the crabbers who had not notified the Yolngu of their arrival. On 26/10/00 Djambawa Marawili stated his concern about this issue whilst at the crabbers camp. On 14/11/00, a non-Yolngu man and woman were removed from the crabbers camp at the request of Djambawa Marawili. They had arrived unannounced and unrequested a few days previously looking for work, but were sacked soon after by the crabber for poor performance. Djambawa Marawili's concern was that they be removed from his country safely. On 29/11/00, concern about unannounced visitors was raised during a meeting with the crabbers. On 28/07/02 Dhukaḷ Wirrpanda stated that 3 unknown non-Yolngu had been camping at the crabbers camp, drinking and smoking marijuana. He and another Yolngu man, Wanyipi Marika, had been camping in the area with their families at the time and

wanted to leave when the unknown men began bothering them. Dhukal_l stated that he thought that Wanyipi had called the police on his return to Yilpara.

8.5.2 Responsibilities to Non-Yolngu Visitors

Yolngu believe they have a responsibility to look after legitimate non-Yolngu visitors on their country. On 10/02/01, a heavy storm hit Yilpara and it was known there were no crabbers present at the crabbers camp. The following day a number of Yilpara men were sent to assess the damage to the camp. The site was partially cleaned up, and a boat that had broken off its trailer and become buried in the sand was dug out and winched back onto the trailer. Crabbers regularly travel to Yilpara to use the telephone, and to obtain freshwater, which is not available at their camp. Crabbers have also been rescued by Yolngu hunters from disabled or burning boats on several occasions.⁶⁰

8.6 Visitation and Maintenance of Sacred Sites

There are a number of sites in the Yilpara area which are important Ancestral areas and/or related to good hunting and the management of country. The sites below were visited during fieldwork.

8.6.1 Ngulmi Ngulmi

Ngulmi Ngulmi is a 'spirit woman' close to Ngarri, on the beach south of Yilpara. There is a pile of coral representing Ngulmi Ngulmi at this site. Hunters offered a lit cigarette, or a small amount of food to Ngulmi Ngulmi to ensure a good hunt. They then call out the names of the animals they hope to catch, often prefaced by a cry 'Brrr!' Hunters were observed making an offering to Ngulmi Ngulmi on 12/11/00 and 17/12/00. The cry 'Brrrr!' followed by the names of desired animals is used regularly in hunting, particularly turtle hunting. It was noted being used on 25/11/00 and 28/01/01.

⁶⁰ Djambawa Marawili, Bandipandi Wunungmurra

8.6.2 Lulumu

Lulumu is a word that refers to a type of stingray, and to an Ancestral stingray site close to Yilpara. The area was extensively used for stingray hunting, gathering mud crabs, shellfish, and bait, and for parrotfish fishing. One part of this area is in the shape of a stingray, and eyeholes have been gouged in the sand where they would appear on the animal. When heading out to fish and hunt in the area, Yolngu hunters sometimes took a handful of sand out of the eyehole and cast it away, calling the names of the animals they wished to catch, and the places they wished to go. This was performed by Malumin Marawili on 11/11/00. On the way home successful hunters might perform similar actions to give thanks.⁶¹ [Bakulangay Marawili] stated on 3/12/00 that in the past fishers would take some sand from the eyeholes with them in a shell and cast it from the boat into the water to ensure a good catch.

8.6.3 Yilpara- Yingapungapu

Yilpara itself is built adjacent to an important Ancestral site, that of the Yingapungapu burial ground. In the past there have been a number of restrictions placed on hunting in this area because of the burial ground. [Bakulangay Marawili] stated on 3/12/00 that a bay near Yilpara was called Gandang. Prior to the establishment of the homeland centre, the stingray and shark from that place were sacred, and could only be eaten by the old men (although they could be caught by the younger men, who subsequently would have to wash their hands before eating anything). This rule still existed when the Yithuwa Madarrpa first returned to Yilpara to settle, and [Bakulangay] himself caught stingray there that he was unable to eat. Only Wakuthi Marawili and another old man had been allowed to eat it. Birrikitji Gumana, Gawirrin's father and Wakuthi's classificatory father, was still alive at this point, and he was the most senior custodian of Yilpara, Yathikpa, Yarrinya, and Garraparra. Before he died at GanGan, Birrikitji instructed the senior men to smoke out the Yilpara area so everyone could eat stingray from there. [Bakulangay] repeated this story on 26/06/01.

⁶¹ Malumin Marawili

The Yingapungapu burial ground and sand sculpture lies in the dunes behind Yilpara and was a place where bones of fish and other animals were placed after they had been eaten.⁶² Bones are no longer placed there (partly based on medical and health advice), but it is still regularly maintained and used frequently in ceremonies.⁶³ The sculpture was fully cleared and rebuilt on 5/09/01, prior to an important ceremony. A number of people are buried in the Yingapungapu, including Djungi Wirrpanda, the father of Manman and Dhukaḷ Wirrpanda.⁶⁴ The related Yingapungapu areas at Garraparra and Djarrakpi were not visited during the fieldwork.

8.6.4 Yathikpa

Yathikpa is a coastal site associated with the Ancestral crocodile, a key Yithuwa Madarrpa ancestor. Yathikpa is an important hunting area, and is visited frequently for turtle hunting, oyster gathering, and fishing for catfish, barramundi and queenfish (see Appendix 1). Prior to a recent cyclone destroying the shell beds, it was also an important site for gathering shellfish in the intertidal mud and sand.⁶⁵

Yathikpa contains physical manifestations of Ancestral activities, including depressions in the sand where a sacred harpoon was buried, and the balkpalk tree under which they sat. Djambawa Marawili visited the site and explained these features on 03/06/01. On 24/07/02, he showed this site to some senior Wunungmurra Dhaḷwangu men (including Ngutjapuy Wunungmurra) who had not visited it previously.

8.6.5 Garrangali

Garrangali is an extremely important Ancestral area and crocodile breeding ground. It was visited twice during fieldwork, on 20/10/02 and 8/11/02. Both of these trips were to show the site to young people and demonstrate its significance to them. The first

⁶² Djambawa Marawili

⁶³ Djambawa Marawili, Wāka Mununggurr

⁶⁴ Djambawa Marawili

⁶⁵ Muluymuluy Marawili, Yalmakany Marawili

was led by Djambawa Marawili, the second by Wäka Mununggurr. Both trips were fully observed.

Garrangali is a highly unusual place and difficult to access. It is a stretch of jungle in the centre of a floodplain which is either grass or bare earth. In a relatively small area in the midst of this often barren and saline plain, freshwater bubbling up from beneath the ground supports dense jungle foliage and a moist habitat suitable for crocodiles to lay their eggs. The earth is extremely soft and spongy, made largely of decaying organic matter. Evidence of old eggs and of crocodile movements was observed on both trips to the site.

On a trip to Garrangali on 20/10/02, Djambawa Marawili resisted killing a brolga in a Dhuwa area very close to Garrangali, on the basis that the bird was at its Ancestral site. Crocodiles at Garrangali were not observed being targeted for food, but a small crocodile was observed being targeted unsuccessfully for food by Djuwunbin Marawili at Gurritjinya on the Yarrinya peninsula on 6/05/01.

8.7 Skills Transfer and the Continuity of Knowledge

Numerous observations were made of the transfer of knowledge and skills from senior people to younger people. Such transfers were an integral part of daily life, particularly in terms of hunting skills and transmitting the associated knowledge of the country. Knowledge transfer was also clearly evident during ceremonies, a significant number of which took place during the observation period (see Section 9). Below are some specific examples of the transmission of knowledge and/or skills.

8.7.1 Hunting

Several turtle hunts were made in which younger or less experienced hunters were able to act in more senior roles. On 9/10/2002, Djambawa Marawili made a deliberate attempt to take some younger men out to show them how to turtle hunt more effectively. They had been given access to the community boat the previous day in order to improve their skills, but had been unsuccessful. The younger men Djambawa

took with him included Dhupilawuy Marika, Ngambulili Marawili, Ditjpal Marawili, and Bandarr Wirrpanda.

On 5/12/02, Waka Mununggurr made a similar turtle hunting trip for a similar educational purpose. On board were younger men who had fewer opportunities to go on the boats: Wulukuwuluku Marawili, Djulkapuy Marawili, Dukpiri Marawili, and Walirra Mununggurr. Dukpiri, the youngest member of the party, was given the chance to drive the boat on this trip, and was clearly inexperienced. On 1/09/01, Waka made a similar trip with Bawanha Marawili and Walirra Mununggurr, in which Bawanha was given the opportunity to drive the boat, something he was not observed doing previously.

On 17/05/01, a school excursion was undertaken to the important hunting site of Yathikpa. A group of teenagers⁶⁶ were accompanied by a non-indigenous schoolteacher and a senior teacher's aide from the community, Minitja Marawili. They were given the opportunity to fish and hunt at Yathikpa, and to cook what they had successfully captured.

8.7.2 Knowledge of Country

Two visits were made to the highly important site of Garangali during the observation period. The site had not been visited by Yilpara residents for approximately ten years. On that previous occasion, Djambawa Marawili and others took schoolchildren on a formal school excursion, documenting the trip with photographs and a subsequent school publication.⁶⁷ On 20/10/02, Djambawa Marawili returned to the site with a group of teenage boys, younger men, and his youngest daughter. He walked with them through the site and explained its significance, allowing me to photograph the visit. On the 8/11/02, Waka Mununggurr took a larger group on a school excursion,

⁶⁶ Including Wulukuwuluku Marawili, Gonariny 2 Mununggurr, Wurrandan Marawili, Dukpiri Marawili, and Gurrjtjpal Marawil

⁶⁷ Bäniyala Garrangali Galtha Rom Workshop Book, Laynhapuy Schools A.S.S.P.A. Committee Project, December 1992

explaining the significance of the site to the younger people. This trip was also observed.

8.7.3 Ceremonies

Each ceremony contained significant elements of instruction and guidance for younger people. Ceremonies were critical sites of learning, and were places where the authority and knowledge were explicitly expressed. Below are some observed examples of teaching and the transmission of knowledge.

On 6/02/01, Gumbaniya and Bawanha Marawili worked together to produce a chest painting for one of the boys going through a circumcision ceremony. Gumbaniya is a senior elder and drew the outline of the painting and indicated how it was to be filled. He then carefully supervised Bawanha as the younger man produced the painting, occasionally commenting or advising Bawanha on how to proceed to the next stage.

On 25/06/02, Yilpirr Wanambi and Gawarratj Mununggurr were required to dance the dance of Baru, the sacred crocodile, at a cleansing ceremony. Both men struggled to complete the dance. Napuwarri Marawili, a slightly older man and an experienced and talented dancer, joined the two men midway through the dance. He danced with them, advising them with words and gestures about how they could improve their performance.

On this same day, another dance was performed as part of the ceremonial proceedings. This dance was about Djirikitj (the bush quail or dove), and the version of the dance performed was clearly not familiar to some of the younger men, who performed it hesitantly. The leaders of that ceremony⁶⁸ called for a second performance, and some more experienced dancers joined the group. The second performance was considerably stronger and more confident.

⁶⁸ [Bakulangay Marawili], Nuwandjali Marawili, Menga Mununggurr

8.8 Summary of Observations of Activities in the Intertidal Zone

Yolngu undertake a variety of activities in the intertidal zone. In the claim area, this zone includes shoreline rocky reefs, offshore rocks, mudflats, sand beaches, mangroves, saline swampy areas, and estuaries or creek mouths. The intertidal zone and the waters immediately beyond it are the most heavily utilised areas for hunting and gathering. Below is a summary of the main ways in which these areas of country are used.

8.8.1 Line Fishing

Line fishers generally used intertidal rocky reefs as a platform from which to fish. Depending on the state of the tide, the lines themselves were either cast into the lower reaches of the intertidal zone, or into the subtidal zone immediately beyond. Line fishing from intertidal reefs was the most common form of hunting activity observed during the fieldwork period, undertaken by all able-bodied members of the community across a wide stretch of coastline.

8.8.2 Spear Fishing

Spear fishers usually walked or waded through the intertidal zone or the subtidal zone immediately beyond it. They sometimes walked along the waters edge, gazing out into the water itself, as staying out of the water enabled them to cover territory more quickly. Where the slope of the shoreline was extremely gradual, they moved out, wading through shallower water. Spear fishers also walked through mangrove areas, where the ground was submerged in shallow (less than 50cm) water. This was a prime habitat for spearing small stingrays hiding amongst the mangrove roots.

8.8.3 Mangrove Crabs and Mangrove Shellfish

Shellfish and crabs obtained from the mangroves were collected from the intertidal zone. Crabs were sometimes located in burrows amongst the mangrove roots, and sometimes found buried in the mud on the surface. The major mangrove shellfish

species, Dhan'pala, was also found on the surface or partially buried in the mud. During 2002, Dhan'pala were observed being collected in saline mangrove areas⁶⁹ a few kilometres inland from the coastline of Yathikpa. The impact of the tide is evident in this area.⁷⁰ The tiny shells used to make necklaces for sale were also collected from the intertidal mangrove areas.

8.8.4 Mudflat Shellfish

The shellfish species traditionally collected from areas such as Yathikpa and Lumatjpi are collected from sandflats and mudflats in the intertidal zone, and in the subtidal zone immediately adjacent to it.⁷¹ Two attempts to gather these species were observed, but neither was successful.

8.8.5 Oysters

Oysters were collected from the intertidal rocks at low tide. They were observed being exploited at multiple sites in Grindall Bay, including Yathikpa and Warralwuy. They were also observed being exploited at Ningari and Balmarrawuy on Woodah Island.

8.8.6 Bait

Bait crabs for line fishing were collected from intertidal areas. Blue colored crabs (Yaḷku) were often collected from intertidal reefs as an additional bait source to sand crabs (whose burrow entrances are usually above high tide). Larger mud crabs and small orange crabs (ginybirrk) are sourced from intertidal mangrove areas for bait.

8.8.7 Miyapunu Hunting

Turtle and dugong hunting is predominantly undertaken on subtidal seagrass and reef areas. However at high tide, these animals can move into intertidal areas, where they

⁶⁹ Ditjpalwuy and Mammiditjpi were two such areas- Muluymuluy Wirrpanda, Malumin Marawili

⁷⁰ Mr Patrick Faulkner and Dr Anne Clarke excavated in this area and observed tidal influence

⁷¹ [Mayawuluk Wirrpanda], Mulkun Wirrpanda, Muluymuluy Wirrpanda, Yalmakany Marawili

are hunted. Such intertidal areas include rocks that are submerged except at very low tides.

8.8.8 Driving

The intertidal zone was an important path for driving motor vehicles in numerous places on the Yilpara peninsula. Vehicles were driven on the hard flat sand near the waters edge at low tide, and on an alternative track above the high tide mark when the low tide route was covered with water. In the late dry season of 2002, vehicles also traversed saline marsh areas subject to tidal influence. The low freshwater flow at that time of year made these areas dry enough to be negotiable, and such routes were used to access otherwise inaccessible mangrove stands in order to exploit shellfish.

8.8.9 Swimming

Yolngu, particularly children, were regularly observed swimming or bathing on the beach at Yilpara homeland centre. This beach has a shallow gradient and a relatively large intertidal zone, making it safer for swimmers.

8.8.10 Ceremony

On one occasion (10/08/01), during a ceremonial performance at Yilpara, dancers were observed being led onto the beach by the singers. The men danced along the intertidal zone on the beach in front of the community, before returning to the main ceremony ground.

Section 9: Observations of Ceremonies

9.1 Introduction

Ceremonial activity was a constant feature of Yilpara life, and of the life of the Blue Mud Bay region. Appendix 7 shows some movements and activities related to ceremonies that were noted during the period of observation. This list provides examples only, as the actual movement of people and participation in ceremonies was far greater, and documenting this movement was not an explicit focus of research.

Women and men participate in ceremonies in different ways, and almost all of the data obtained came from male informants. Men usually directed the course of the ceremony, although they did take advice and counsel from very senior women. Men did all of the singing, the playing of the clapsticks and didgeridu, and they also performed the most visible dancing as a group on the main ceremony ground. Women danced as well, joining in with the men at certain key moments, whilst at other times they usually danced on the spot around the edges of the ceremony ground. The men used gestures, body positioning, their spears and/or their spear throwers to mimic or refer in some way to the main topic of the song. Women's dancing was more understated, but referred similarly to the song topics. During circumcision ceremonies, roles were sometimes actively altered, and women were much more active and visible on the main ceremony ground, deliberately disrupting the male dancers and mimicking their roles and dancing movements.

The song topics included animals, plants, spirit beings or ancestors, activities (such as fishing or walking), and natural phenomena (wind, clouds, waves, etc). In almost all cases, no information was recorded about the detailed content of the songs, only their overall themes. Where appropriate, the topics of the songs are capitalised in the text,

reflecting their importance as part of the maḍayin,⁷² or sacred knowledge and ancestral inheritance, of the various clans.

The two major kinds of ceremonies observed were funerals and circumcision ceremonies. In the initial phase of a ceremony, the ceremony ground was prepared and the singing began, usually without any dancing. Preparing the ceremony ground involved cleaning and raking the open sand area, constructing shades or shelters for the participants, and constructing a funeral shed if required. These activities were sometimes undertaken whilst other participants were singing. Early singing was often very low intensity, with pauses of several minutes between the songs, fewer participants, and no dancers accompanying the singers. Often people would continue to hunt and work during the day, gathering for singing and preparations in the late afternoon or evening. This preparatory period usually lasted between a few days and two weeks, depending on the importance of the ceremony and on the arrival of other funeral participants.

The intensity and frequency of the singing gradually increased as more participants arrived. The timing of ceremonies was usually not fixed in advance, but was dependent upon the arrival of various participants and negotiations with them about the subsequent steps to be taken. The clan identity and kin relationships⁷³ of either the initiates (in a circumcision) or the dead person (in a funeral) were critical in determining the important participants needed for the ceremony to proceed. These important participants were variously individuals, parts of clans, clans, and groups of clans. Inter and intraclan politics played an important role in determining which participants chose to attend, and the exact nature of how the ceremonies progressed. When a significant number of representatives from the relevant clans had assembled, the ceremonial activity further intensified. Dancers began to accompany the singers more regularly, and both groups expanded in numbers.

Clans were an important organising factor in observed ceremonial activity, although they were not the only factor. The key singers from a particular clan group would

⁷² Refer to the Anthropologist's Report (3.10 and 3.36) for further discussions of maḍayin

⁷³ For a discussion of kinship and clan identity, refer to the Anthropologist's Report (Chapter 3)

assemble at a particular spot in the shade on the ceremony ground, and begin singing. The younger men from that clan and related clans would also approach and sit down. When enough were assembled, the younger men began to dance in the area in front of the singers, with the singers directing the dancers. At times the singers would stand up and lead the dancers in procession through the ceremony ground, or to a particular site (such as the gravesite or the funeral hut). At other times the singers assembled the dancers away from the ceremony ground and led them onto it. The women sometimes joined the men in dancing when such processions occurred.

Singers and dancers were not always drawn from only one clan. A singing group was often comprised of members of different, closely related clans of the same moiety. The Yithuwa Madarrpa were often observed singing together with members of the Gumana Dhalwangu, Wunungmurra Dhalwangu, or Manggalili clans. These Yirritja clans share some common song cycles, song narratives, and dances, often differentiated by different tunes, or by the fact that they refer to different locations in their respective countries. Thus they were able to perform together in harmony as a Yirritja moiety collective group. Singers almost never sang the songs of the opposite moiety, but they did play the didgeridu or occasionally use the clapsticks very quietly when songs of the opposite moiety were being sung. It was common for the waku of the singing clan to be present when that clan was performing its songs and dances. Singers were only rarely under the age of thirty. Men and boys younger than this played clapsticks or the didgeridu, but did not sing loudly, if at all. They learned the rhythms before they began singing. There were several expert didgeridu players at Yilpara. Women were never observed singing, nor using clapsticks or playing the didgeridu.

There were fewer restrictions on the identity of the dancers. Dancers comprised members of the performing clan, and members of a range of clans standing in a number of relationships to the performing clan. Such relationships included, but were not restricted to: waku, märi, gutharra, and yapa. Dancing was usually performed by boys and younger men, occasionally with senior men leading the dancers. Boys as young as seven or eight were encouraged to participate in the dancing, and when singing and dancing occurred after dark, restrictions were at times further relaxed. At these times, young children were encouraged to get up and learn, and women also

became more confident about dancing onto the ceremony ground, as opposed to remaining on the periphery of it. This type of activity should be contrasted with other, secret parts of ceremonies, which also occurred after dark. The nature of the activity depended on the context, not upon the darkness per se. Funeral ceremonies were usually more tightly regulated than circumcision ceremonies, because of the more serious attitude taken towards the event. All able-bodied members of the community were observed participating in ceremonies in roles appropriate to them.

The ceremony culminated in a period of intense ceremonial activity lasting a couple of days, in which a number of clans would be active on the ceremony ground, sometimes simultaneously. The peak of this activity was just prior to the moving of a body to the grave in a funeral, or just prior to the circumcision operation. There were usually a greater number of clans present and active in funerals than in circumcisions. Following the moving and burial of body, the next day usually contained a cleansing ceremony, involving smoking and water purification of both the objects used in the ceremony and the participants themselves.

The sections below describe the ceremonies witnessed in temporal sequence, and they are based upon fieldnotes taken during the ceremonies. These notes were derived from direct observations and from conversations with informants who were also watching or participating in the ceremony. These informants are indicated in the text where appropriate, and many times the informants were one or a number of people from the list of key informants in Section 1.8. Where no informants are indicated in the text, the material comes from direct observation.

9.2 Dhapi (circumcision) Ceremony, February 2001

A circumcision ceremony was held at Gapuwiyak during early February 2001. The three boys who were circumcised were all members of the Wunungmurra (Gurrumurru) Dhalwangu clan and residents of Gapuwiyak. Their fathers were Muwulyun and Bininydjirri Wunungmurra. Bininydjirri is closely connected to the Madarrpa, and has a name from a Yithuwa Madarrpa site at Yathikpa on the basis that he had been conceived there.⁷⁴ Preparations at Gapuwiyak were underway for several days prior to the arrival of people from Yilpara.

1/02/01, Yilpara

Yilpara residents began preparatory singing on 1/02/01, prior to going to Gapuwiyak. Senior Yithuwa Madarrpa men sat around a fire at night on the school oval in the centre of the community. They included Djambawa, Nuwandjali, [Bakulangay], Gumbaniya, Ngulpurr, and Napuwarri Marawili. Younger men present were Bawanha, Walila, and Wulukuwuluku Marawili. The men used clapsticks and were accompanied by Bawanha playing the yidaki. The songs they sang started in the sea down near the Koolatong River and worked their way inwards to the land or to the river mouth. Topics for the songs included mangrove leaves floating on the water, floating dead mangrove trees being left on the mud at low tide, the white heron, small mullets, and the barramundi chasing those mullet in the mangroves. As the song cycle approached the river mouth, the men sang about the freshwater mixing with the saltwater, and finally, they sang the song of Burrutji the lightning snake, which closed the sequence and included the sound of the snake's lightning. This lightning sends a message to the other lightning snakes from other places that the ceremony is beginning.

⁷⁴ Bininydjirri Wunungmurra. His additional name from Yathikpa is Liyawirringu

2/02/01, Gapuwiyak

The Yilpara residents made the journey to Gapuwiyak. In the evening the senior men sat in a circle and sang, whilst a number of women and children sat around the periphery. No notes were taken about these songs.

3/02/01

There was singing in the afternoon, during which the three boys to be circumcised had lines of ochre painted on their chests and were wrapped in red sarongs. Red, and red flags in particular, symbolise the Dhalwangu clans.⁷⁵ The singers were loosely grouped into Dhalwangu and Yithuwa Madarrpa clans. The song sequence related to the area near Gunyuru (Round Hill island). Topics noted include the mangrove leaf floating in the water, Miny'ga (garfish) and Makani (queenfish).⁷⁶

An important song cycle was sung in the evening. Singers included Djambawa, Gumbaniya, Nuwandjali, and Wulu Marawili, and Muwulyun and Bininydjirri Wunungmurra, the Dhalwangu fathers of the boys involved. Information about this cycle was supplied by all of the above men. The song cycle the men sang was a major saltwater cycle shared between the Yithuwa Madarrpa and the Dhalwangu clans, who sing different tunes to the same meanings. It started out in the deep sea and went to Gunyuru (Round Hill Island), then on into Djalma Bay (Baraltja), culminating with the song about Burrutji, the lightning snake. The lightning snake is a key Ancestral figure in Djalma Bay, shared between the Dhalwangu clans and the Yithuwa Madarrpa.

⁷⁵ [Bakulangay Marawili] supplied this information. At this time during fieldwork no notetaking distinction was drawn between the Gumana Dhalwangu, the Wunungmurra (Gurrumurru) Dhalwangu, and the Dhupuditj Dhalwangu clans. Members of this latter clan are few and were not encountered during the fieldwork. It is likely that the Wunungmurra Dhalwangu were heavily dominant in numbers during this ceremony, but Gumana Dhalwangu were likely to have been present. The respective Dhalwangu clans will be referred to together here until distinctions between them are noted in the fieldnotes on which these descriptions are based.

⁷⁶ [Bakulangay Marawili]

The song cycle started with clouds (Wangupini) forming out in the deep sea. Then the men sang that the south wind (Mädirriny) began to blow and blew from the cloud towards the land. As it travelled towards the land, the singers sang the names of the deepsea places and the currents found in that area. They sang about the wind stirring up the water and making it rough. Closer into shore, they sang about rocks under the sea near Gunyuru, and about objects such as seaweed, leaves, and mangrove trees floating in the water, and being left exposed on the mud at high tide. They sang that the sea became calm, and the seaweeds and mangrove leaves coming out of the rivers were floating slowly on the high tide, being returned to the land, to Yirritja areas. These floating objects connect Yirritja areas together.

The singers then sang Miny'ga (garfish), Getkit (seagull) hunting the garfish, Walungu (a black diving duck with a white breast), and Makani (queenfish). The songs built up to Baraltja, the lightning snake, and this snake is always used to finish this cycle. It relates the Yithuwa Madarrpa and the two Dhalwangu clans to other peoples who have the lightning snake as an ancestral figure, sending a message to them and establishing connections to them. The songs contained the names of the places between the deep sea and Baraltja, and were called out as they were passed by in the sequence.

4/02/01

On this day the Yithuwa Madarrpa sang and danced first.⁷⁷ The singers were Yithuwa Madarrpa but the dancers themselves were from a number of clans. The singers began by singing about the cloud at sea, and the wind that came from the cloud. The wind stirred up the sea, making it rough and foamy. At this point the dancers prepared themselves by painting themselves with white clay. This white clay symbolised the foamy Yirritja saltwater, Mungurru. The dancers then danced the actions for songs about rough saltwater, mangrove leaves, Miny'ga (garfish), Makani (queenfish), Djet (sea eagle), Wangupini (cloud), and Mädirriny (south wind). The men danced upon the ceremony ground, and the women performed related actions in their own dancing style around the periphery.

⁷⁷ Informants for this session were [Bakulangay Marawili], Nuwandjali Marawili, Gumbaniya Marawili, and Ngulpurr Marawili.

The Dhaḷwangu clans then sang and danced.⁷⁸ They began by dancing at all of the places where the grandfathers (märi) of the boys had lived. This included a small place near the ceremonial ground, where the body of the grandfather of one of the boys had lain after he died. The subsequent Dhaḷwangu songs and dances described knowledge of things associated with non-Yolngu white culture. This included dances relating to playing cards, looking for the pub, drinking alcohol, fistfighting, knife fighting, waving a flag, cooking 'bush' rice, scrub turkey (a brown bird which makes a big nest), and the northwest wind, Lungurrma (the opposite of Mäḍirrinny). The song sequence finished with the cloud (Wangupini).

After a break, the songs began again. This time they were Yithuwa Maḍarrpa songs about Yilpara, about the beach in front of the homeland centre.⁷⁹ The first song was about the Mauraki (casuarina) tree. The second was about cleaning and sweeping under the shade prior to sitting down, and the third was about people discussing what they will do. The fourth was the green parrot, Billitj billitj, flying around under the whistling tree. The fifth was making a spear, Baṭi, followed by painting a spear, ready for fighting.

At this point the dancers began to paint themselves up. The dancers danced as the singers sang about Getkit (seagull), Gatjini (sandcrab), Gara (spear), Nyirrk (white cockatoo), Wangupini (cloud), and then finished with singing about mourning or crying for the spear. The dancing ceased at this point, but the music continued. The next phase of the ceremony involved attaching elaborate armbands to the boys' arms. They were sat down in the centre of the tarpaulin whilst the men kept singing, and the armbands were unwrapped from their protective cloth. They had long, decorated tassels made of orange feathers, grey fur, and beads. There were white feathers at the end and other segments that may have been hair string.

⁷⁸ Information supplied by [Bakulangay Marawili]

⁷⁹ Information supplied by Nuwandjali Marawili, Gumbaniya Marawili, [Bakulangay Marawili], Djambawa Marawili, Ngulpurr Marawili.

Next the boys' chests were painted with elaborate paintings. Artists included Djambawa, Gumbaniya, and Wulu Marawili. The paintings were a brown diamond pattern that went across the chest and up each shoulder, and was finished off in white. The boys were stood up (as opposed to standing up by themselves) and the men shouted and sang around them. They were shaken violently by the shoulders as three older women danced around the circle of men, crying and making other grieving sounds. The boys were laid down again and the men sang about Balin (barramundi) and small mullets (Gunbirriwirr). The boys were turned from one side to the other as they lay on the ground.

Ceremonial boomerangs were used for the final stage of the ceremony, which was about the lightning snake Baraltja. The boys were stood up, then moved forwards onto the sand of the ceremonial ground, the men clustered around them. The steps were not even, rather a big step to the side, then a pause, then another step to the side. Prior to this, the women had moved their tarpaulin around to a position opposite the men stepping forward. The boys were moved back inside the cluster of men, then brought forward and sat down in front of the women, each in front of a particular woman. The ceremony ended there.

5/02/01

Ceremonial activity was interrupted by the removal of the body of a pilot who had died the previous day in a plane crash at the Gapuwiyak airstrip. A large group of Yolngu performed a short ceremony, singing and dancing around the body as it was moved to a police aeroplane. Ceremonial activity began briefly in the afternoon, but was delayed again by rain. Later in the evening some singing took place but no notes were taken.

6/02/01

The ceremony commenced at about midday. The Yithuwa Madarrpa men sang first.⁸⁰ They sang songs from freshwater Madarrpa country, and the song cycle followed the

⁸⁰ No notes were taken of the informants for this section. Informants are likely to have been one or all of [Bakulangay Marawili], Ngulpurr Marawili, Nuwandjali Marawili, Djambawa Marawili, and Gumbaniya Marawili

river down to the sea at Baraltja. The men sang about Billitjpillitj (green parrot), Nyirrk (white cockatoo), and about Yolngu heading down to the river to set fish traps (Gumurr). [Gambali Ngurruwuthun] sang a Munyuku song about the dog going from the land to the flat area in front of the mangroves. The dog ancestor is the owner of that country, which is shared between the Dhaḷwangu clans, the Munyuku, and the Madarrpa, and all of these groups can sing the song, but with different tunes. After the dog, the singers sang Nyiknyik (small marsupial or mouse), Wirripu or Nalalak (a small white cockatoo), and Ganadarrk (white heron or crane).

The Dhaḷwangu clans then began to dance, alternating with the Madarrpa. They danced the saltwater at Gunyuru. The Yithuwa Madarrpa then danced the small mullet (Gunbirrwirr) dance, followed by Borutj (sandfly) and then Wakulungul (fog). At 2pm the dancing ceased and the three boys were placed in the centre of the seated men. There was some singing, then the boys were dressed in their armbands and were turned from side to side whilst standing. The boys were then laid down to have their chests painted. At the same time, the Dhaḷwangu clans started singing at GanGan, working down the river towards the sea. The Yithuwa Madarrpa singers alternated with the Dhaḷwangu clans, their songs starting in the sea. The two were to meet at Baraltja, the mouth of the river. The Yithuwa Madarrpa clan stands in a māri-gutharra relationship with the two Dhaḷwangu clans. The eldest boy was painted by Djambawa Marawili, who put brown ochre on the boy's face as well as painting his chest. A younger man, Bawanha Marawili, initially assisted a senior man Gumbaniya Marawili to paint one of the other boys. Bawanha then completed nearly all of the painting under Gumbaniya's direction. The other young boy was painted by Muwulyun Wunungmurra and Galarrwiwuy Wunungmurra. These men painted a painting representing an inland place at GanGan. The Yithuwa Madarrpa artists painted paintings of Burrutji, the lightning snake. The paintings were intricate and required the entire afternoon to complete. Throughout this process the men kept singing, and the women danced around the periphery. The last part of the painting process was completed under a verandah due to a wet season storm. Six vertical poles were placed in a hexagon shape on the ceremony ground. These provided the frame for the screen behind which the circumcision would occur the following day.

7/02/01

In the morning the women prepared the circumcision area, spreading material around the 6 poles that had been created. The shape of the screen represented the river at Burrutji, a lightning snake area.⁸¹ The entrance was the place where the snake would lead the boys in. The boys were dressed in ceremonial armbands and cloth, and were waiting with the Yithuwa Maḍarrpa and Dhaḷwangu men under a verandah some distance away. The group of men was larger, and the singing was low and quiet.

The boys' faces were painted white and the men took them to the clearing behind the house. They surrounded the boys, shouting and making a humming sound with their lips pressed together. They surrounded the boys, escorting them to the ceremony ground itself, and then inside the shelter that had been erected. Many of the men stayed inside, singing, and the rest surrounded the shelter outside. They kept going whilst the boys were circumcised, and the women danced around the outside. This process was quick and the men then dispersed rapidly.

The boys were taken around to the other side of the house next to the ceremony ground. There a number of men heated up their fingers on the fire and put them onto the place where the boys had been cut. A short while later, four Yithuwa Maḍarrpa youths danced the crocodile dance onto the ceremony ground. They went inside the circumcision area, dancing the crocodile smelling the blood from the circumcision.⁸²

The boys' wounds were tended for over an hour, then the final phase of the ceremony began. A small fire was lit, and wet, green, shredded stringybark was heated up and placed on the hearts and mouths of the boys and the women. While this was happening the men sang the Yithuwa Maḍarrpa fire song from Baykutji and Yathikpa areas.⁸³ This was the end of the ceremony.

⁸¹ Informant not noted. Likely to have been Djambawa, Nuwandjali, [Bakulangay] or Ngulpurr Marawili

⁸² Djambawa Marawili, Nuwandjali Marawili

⁸³ Djambawa Marawili

9.3 Funeral at Gapuwiyak, March 2001

This was the funeral of a Wunungmurra Dhalwangu man⁸⁴, in which a number of Yirritja clans participated. The account provided is based on observations made from the physical perspective of Yithuwa Madarrpa participants in the ceremony. Clans often sat in a group some distance from the ceremony ground when they were not performing on it, and I observed the ceremony with the Yithuwa Madarrpa. These clan members also provided the bulk of the information that was not direct observation. As the Yithuwa Madarrpa attended this funeral to assist rather than act as a main märi clan, they were not fully involved in all that occurred. The main märi clan at this funeral was the Ritharrngu. Other clans noted as being present by Yithuwa Madarrpa informants⁸⁵ include the Dhalwangu clans, the Guyamirrilili (Gupapuyngu), the Manggalili, the Ganalpuynu, the Gurrumba Gurrumba, the Gälpu, the Djarrwark, and the Wanguri.

02/03/2001

The road to the funeral ground and the entrance to it was marked with big red flags. These red flags symbolise the Dhalwangu clans.⁸⁶ The funeral ground itself was an open, sandy area with a hut constructed of eucalypt branches at the centre. Around the edges were a number of shades of similar construction, but without walls. A power cord ran into the shed in the centre for refrigeration of the body.

In their first ceremonial performance for the day, the Yithuwa Madarrpa sang and danced saltwater dances.⁸⁷ They sang about the saltwater, winds, clouds, mangrove

⁸⁴ The name of this man was not noted. He was unknown to the researcher.

⁸⁵ List provided here constructed from various notes throughout the ceremony. Key informants throughout proceedings included Djambawa Marawili, [Bakulangay Marawili], Nuwandjali Marawili, Ngulpurr Marawili, Gumbaniya Marawili

⁸⁶ During this stage of the fieldwork, no strong notetaking distinction was drawn between the Gumana Dhalwangu and Wunungmurra (Gurrumurru) Dhalwangu clans. Hence both are referred to together, although the Wunungmurra clan would have predominated in numbers during this funeral of one of their members.

⁸⁷ Informants not noted, but likely to have been Djambawa, Nuwandjali, and Ngulpurr Marawili.

leaves, fish, and birds. After a break the second song sequence moved to the beach near Yilpara. Here the Yithuwa Maḍarrpa sang about making spears for hunting Yambirruku (parrotfish). The spears are two special hook spears, and the men sang about the spear makers sitting under the Mauraki (casuarina) tree at Yilpara whilst they made their spears. The songs related to how the spear makers discussed hunting for Yambirruku, tested and straightened their spears, then searched for Yambirruku. Finally they danced Yithuwa, the maggot, before the Yithuwa Maḍarrpa made way on the ceremony ground for the Munyuku clan, who were dancing fish at Yarrinya, south of Yilpara. The Dhalwangu clans followed, dancing their own saltwater songs. These included Ganalk'mi (stingray) and Wangupini (cloud).

The final Yithuwa Maḍarrpa song sequence for the day related how the hunters returned to the Mauraki (casuarina) tree, sat down to talk, then got ready for a war dance. The dancers danced a mock spear fight. After this dance, the Dhalwangu re-entered the ceremony ground, walking slowly in single file, the women behind the men. One woman threw herself to the ground and threw sand on herself in grief. The Dhalwangu went directly to the shade area at the front of the funeral shed, where the women were left in a huddle. The men left, then danced a return journey to the ceremony ground. At this point the Yithuwa Maḍarrpa left the ceremony ground.

03/03/01

The first dancers on this morning were the Wanguri clan. The Yithuwa Maḍarrpa and the Dhalwangu clans sang further away from the ceremony ground whilst the Wanguri danced. The Yithuwa Maḍarrpa and the Dhalwangu clans sang together about Garraparra, singing about Billitjpillitj (the parrot) in the tree picking up the language of that area.⁸⁸ Then they sang about cleaning up under the shade of the Mauraki (casuarina) tree, then about making spears under the tree, and about the Gathiritj (bush quail or dove). The boys then smeared white clay on themselves and went to the ceremony ground.

The first dance on the ceremony ground mimicked fighting with the spears that had been made. Then they danced Mantjarr (mangrove leaves), Gatjini (sandcrab), Nyirk

⁸⁸ [Bakulangay Marawili]

(white cockatoo), and mourning the spear after the spear fight. The sequence finished with Yithuwa (maggot). The Yithuwa Maḍarrpa finished as the ngandi (mothers) clan, the Gälpu, entered the parade ground.

After a break in the ceremony, the Dhaḷwangu clans danced. They were in two groups who came together from different ends of the road in front of the ceremony ground. [Bakulangay Marawili] stated that they represented two boats coming together. One group was covered in white clay and dressed in red sarongs.

At the same time, the Yithuwa Maḍarrpa were singing about preparing for a dugong hunt at Yathikpa.⁸⁹ They sang about two dugong hunters, called Borrak and Wukar. On this day they did not sing about the successful completion of a hunt, only the search for the dugong. One of the younger men (Walila Marawili) chopped a stringybark sapling and began stripping bark off it to make a mock harpoon. The men sang about hunters talking together, organising where to go, and they sang Laytjlaytj, the parrot which was perched on the baḷkpaḷk tree the hunters were sitting underneath.

The Dhaḷwangu clans finished, and the Yithuwa Maḍarrpa dancers prepared themselves by daubing themselves in white clay. Some of the Dhaḷwangu remained at the entrance to the ceremony ground, and led the Yithuwa Maḍarrpa dancers as they danced Ngathu (a palm tree with yellow fruit). This dance took only a couple of minutes and then the Yithuwa Maḍarrpa dancers were led by Yithuwa Maḍarrpa singers.⁹⁰ They danced making the dugong rope, pulling a rope backwards and forwards between two lines of dancers as the harpoon lay on the ground in front of them. The dancers then attached the rope to the harpoon, and danced into the ceremony ground. They used their spear throwers in a paddling motion, mimicking the rowing of a canoe. After dancing once around the funeral shed, the dancer holding the harpoon threw it in the direction of the shed entrance. The rhythms of the dance sped up, and a group of men hurried to retrieve the harpoon and began shaking it. They were mimicking a successful dugong strike.

⁸⁹ [Bakulangay Marawili]

⁹⁰ Information supplied by [Bakulangay Marawili], Ngulpurr Marawili, Djambawa Marawili

The singers, who had been standing and walking with the dancers, then sat down in the shade. They sang about Miny'ga (garfish) and Makani (queenfish) as the dancers danced. The Yarrwidj Gumatj from Birany Birany then entered the ceremony ground, interrupting the Yithuwa Maḍarrpa dances. At the end of the Yithuwa Maḍarrpa sequence, the Yithuwa Maḍarrpa danced the crocodile, Baru, entering the ceremony ground in two parallel lines, their spear throwers held out and touching those of the opposite line, mimicking the ridges on the crocodile's back. Then the dancers kneeled and formed a circle, two or three dancers deep. They all shifted sideways on their knees in unison, shifting the sand in a mimic of the crocodile building a nest. This was the end of the Yithuwa Maḍarrpa performance on the ceremony ground.

The dancers and singers returned to the nearby house, where they began singing again after a break. This song sequence was about the Yilpara area, about two women (Birngitj and Minyawin) going to look for yams in an inland area near Yilpara.⁹¹ The dancers had small gum leaf branches and they formed two lines, slapping each shoulder and stepping in unison, pausing after each step. Later they rubbed the leaves on their spear throwers. The singers sang about animals and plants that the women saw as they journeyed. The Dhaḷwangu clans were singing and dancing next to the Maḍarrpa, and some dancers crossed over from one set of songs to the other, depending on who was performing.

04/03/01

A Christian service occurred on this morning. The Yithuwa Maḍarrpa older men gradually assembled and began singing after midday to begin traditional Yolngu ceremonial activity. They sang about clouds, rain, and the freshwater at Garrangali, the crocodile breeding ground on Yithuwa Maḍarrpa country.⁹² They sang about how the water soaks into the ground after the rain, then bubbles through the sand and runs into the creeks. Garrangali is a mound, higher than the surrounding area, and it has freshwater whilst the lower areas around are saltwater. As the singers sang the freshwater, the dancers began to put on clay. The men sang about the freshwater running fast and then slowing down as it reaches the saltwater. They sang about the

⁹¹ Djambawa Marawili

⁹² Djambawa Marawili, Ngulpurr Marawili

Gumulu (egret) catching small mullet, then Gunbirriwrr (small mullets), then Gandjarr (crane). Then they sang about borutj, a sandfly biting the crane in the mangroves, then the gentle breeze that people feel when they step out of the mangroves. Finally they sang about Wakulungul (fog).

This song cycle finished and the men began another.⁹³ This was about freshwater at Baykutji, the Koolatong river. They sang about the rain, then about the water flowing. The Dhaḷwangu and Manggalili clans were active on the ceremony ground during this period. The Yithuwa Madarrpa sang about the clouds forming over the Koolatong river, then the men then stood up and danced to the ceremony ground. They danced freshwater up to the entrance of the ground, and danced around the shed whilst the singers sang about eddies swirling in the freshwater, flowing downstream. Then they sang about crocodiles chasing fish in the river, as two dancers split off and ran towards the rest, who parted like an evading school of fish. The men danced out of the ceremony ground, then returned dancing crocodile. In this dance the two men at the head of each single line file of dancers had a ceremonial armband held in their mouth. The men then danced on their knees in a circle as they had done the previous day, dancing the crocodile making a nest.

The men returned to the shade away from the ceremony ground. Gawirrin Gumana then made a speech. He stated that the Dhaḷwangu from GanGan and the Yithuwa Madarrpa from Yilpara should perform a joint men's ceremony away from the ceremony ground. The men went out of the community and into a clearing in the bush. They then painted each other's chests in diamond patterns, some red, some yellow, and some white. The red ones were later painted over so that all of the men had either yellow or white. There were three patterns. The first represented fire or crocodile at Baykutji and this was white diamonds with red lines across them. The second was white lines with yellow and red dots, and this represented freshwater or bush honey at GanGan. The last design, which was painted by [Bakulangay Marawili] on his son Wurrandan, represented fire at Yathikpa. This was red and white with a series of open triangles.

⁹³ Djambawa Marawili, Ngulpurr Marawili, and Nuwandjali Marawili provided information for this section

The dances were performed in silence and in secret, and were not observed. After a time, the men walked from the clearing to the main ceremony ground. The saltwater painted men were leading the freshwater painted men. The Yithuwa Maḍarrpa danced freshwater around the funeral shed and the GaṅGaṅ Dhaḷwangu followed, dancing honeybee. The Yithuwa Maḍarrpa switched from freshwater to crocodile when the two groups met in front of the funeral shed, opposite the entrance. The freshwater dances performed by the saltwater Yithuwa Maḍarrpa on this day were performed on behalf of the freshwater Maḍarrpa, who are the owners of this maḍayin, or sacred knowledge. At the end, Ngutjapuy Wunungmurra, a Wunungmurra Dhaḷwangu leader, made a speech, saying that important components of the ceremony would be completed that evening. However in the evening the ceremony was not completed. There was lots of dancing, including that by different subgroups of the Ritharrngu.

05/03/01

There was a short ceremony held on the morning of this day that was formal notification of the death of a Yolngu boy at Yirrkala.⁹⁴ His name was not noted and he was unknown to the researcher. In this ceremony, the women assembled on the ceremony ground and the men just outside. The men put white clay on and then sang a song belonging to the clan of the boy that died as they made their way onto the ceremonial ground. They then told the women which person had died, without using his name. The women cried and shouted and threw themselves onto the ground in grief. The man that died was Gupa Djapu, so only the Dhuwa men were using clapsticks and singing, although there were Yirritja men present. The men sang a Dhuwa saltwater song.

In the afternoon I observed the Gälpu clan dancing freshwater dances related to the lightning snake.⁹⁵ The Dhaḷwangu clans also performed songs and dances related to napaki (non-Yolngu). Some of the flags on the funeral ground were now yellow, representing the Gumatj. A third patterned flag represented the Ganalkpuyngu clan.

⁹⁴ Information supplied by Djambawa Marawil

⁹⁵ Information supplied by Ngulpurr Marawili

Later in the afternoon the Yithuwa Madarrpa danced Munyuku dances, led by [Gambali Ngurruwuthun]. The songs related to a cleared makarrata area between Wandawuy and Yilpara.⁹⁶ At the same time the Dhalwangu were finishing their dance sequence by dancing sunset.

In the evening the Yithuwa Madarrpa danced, but it was dark on the ceremony ground and few notes were taken.⁹⁷ They sang freshwater country at Baykutji, before 'travelling' in song to Balambala to meet up with the Dhalwangu. Then they sang the lightning snake Burrutji at GanGan, eating the soul of the deceased to finish off the ceremony. The Yithuwa Madarrpa finished their performance after midnight. This was their final performance as a clan for this ceremony.

06/03/01

The ceremony continued at midday. The Yithuwa Madarrpa were no longer to performing but a number of Yithuwa Madarrpa dancers performed Munyuku dances under the guidance of [Gambali Ngurruwuthun]. These dances were from the Yarrinya area, and were saltwater dances.⁹⁸ The men put white clay on and danced for only ten minutes. At the end of the dance sequence two dancers threw their swords away towards the end of the ceremony ground. This represented making a path for the coffin to go, and was intended to complete the ceremony.⁹⁹

After this, clans from Numbulwar performed, followed by the Ganalkpuyngu clan, and the Djarrwark.¹⁰⁰ The final part of the funeral was the bearing of the coffin to the burial site and the burial. This contained both Christian and Yolngu elements, but no notes were taken.

⁹⁶ Information during this period supplied by Ngulpurr Marawili

⁹⁷ Information below supplied by Ngulpurr Marawili in the afternoon prior to the dancing.

⁹⁸ Djambawa Marawili, Nuwandjali Marawili, Binninydjirri WUnungmurra

⁹⁹ Djambawa Marawili

¹⁰⁰ Ngulpurr Marawili

9.4 Yithuwa Madarrpa Baby's Funeral, August 2001

09/08/01

This funeral was of a Yithuwa Madarrpa baby. The baby's father was Yimakany Marawili, and the funeral was performed by the Yithuwa Madarrpa clan and their senior waku (including Menga and Wäka Mununggurr, and Dhukal Wirrpanda). The body arrived by plane during the afternoon, and the men met the plane, dancing towards it, led by Wäka and Menga Mununggurr. They took the baby's body down to the house at the beach belonging to the baby's family. Two mounds of sand had been built in front of the house, underneath the covered verandah and the women sat crying in this area. The men danced to the front of the mounds and Menga Mununggurr and Napuwarri Marawili danced Baru (crocodile) on them, mimicking the crocodile in its nest. The men moved around them and into the house, carrying the small coffin covered in a blanket. They laid the baby in a room of the house, then moved out again and onto the sandy area next to the house.

Later in the evening the dancing and singing recommenced. The beginning of this sequence was not observed, but later dances included eating parrotfish, Yithuwa (the maggot), and Wangupini (cloud).¹⁰¹ The ceremony continued on 10/08/01 and 11/08/01, but was not directly observed.

12/08/01

The baby was buried on this day, and the full days events were observed. The first dances of the morning were about stalking and spearing the parrotfish at Mulawalnga, a place close to Yilpara.¹⁰² The slow dance rhythm indicated that the men were stalking the fish quietly so the fish did not hear them. A faster rhythm indicated that the fish had been speared, and that the fish was taking off with the spear embedded in it. They sang about the tide taking the fish out, then the sea eagle (Djet) smelling the blood of the fish and looking for it. Then they sang and danced Mantjarr (mangrove leaf), Miny'ga (garfish), Getkit (seagull), and Wangupini (cloud). The motion for this cloud was different, a paddling motion with spear throwers. This referred to the

¹⁰¹ [Bakulangay Marawili]

¹⁰² [Bakulangay Marawili] and Nuwandjali Marawili supplied the information for this dance sequence

connection between clouds and boat sails. Then the men danced Makani (queenfish), Gany'tjurr (black reef heron), Wangupini (cloud) again, and finished with the Mädirriny (south wind). Women danced around the edges of the ceremony ground.

The dancers stopped for a rest. The singers began to sing a song sequence from Baykutji, an inland Yithuwa Madarrpa river area.¹⁰³ The first song was about clouds, then rain, then the flood flowing down the river to the sea. Although the men were saltwater Madarrpa, they sang the freshwater songs using the freshwater Yithuwa Madarrpa tune. Then they sang about the sound of tall, sharp reeds in swampy areas (Wukara). This sound is connected to the sound that frogs make. The dancers began again. They danced Gumulu (freshwater bird) Gany'tjurr (heron), Borutj (mosquito), Billitj billitj (parrot), Nyirrk (cockatoo), and Wakulungul (fog). The sequence was finished by singing and dancing the crocodile, Baru.

The next sequence related to the crocodile at Garrangali.¹⁰⁴ A sand sculpture representing the crocodile's nest was created, four mounds connected by walls of pushed up sand. It would normally be in the shape of a crocodile but was abbreviated because it was under the house verandah.

The songs began.¹⁰⁵ The men called the different names of Yirritja saltwater (Mungurru) as they sang, then moved on to Mantjarr (mangrove leaf), Gathul (mangrove propagule), and the tide washing this propagule away. Then they sang Miny'ga (garfish), Getkit (seagull), Makani (queenfish), and Wangupini (cloud). They finished by singing Mädirriny (south wind) using a Manggalili tune, emphasising the märi-gutharra connections with that group.

There was a break. The final song sequence related to the dugong hunters, Wukar and Borrak.¹⁰⁶ The men sang about them sitting and watching the dugongs at Yathikpa whilst preparing the rope and the harpoon. The men danced into the house and

¹⁰³ Information supplied by Bakulangay Marawili

¹⁰⁴ [Bakulangay Marawili] supplied the information for this section

¹⁰⁵ [Bakulangay Marawili] supplied the information for this section

¹⁰⁶ Information supplied by Gumbaniya Marawili

launched the mock harpoon into the room where the baby's body was, followed by a flurry of activity mimicking the rope being pulled in. The body was carried out and two younger men, Walirra and Mulawalnga Marawili then danced crocodile on the sand mounds built outside. The women were sitting inside the sand sculpture as the men danced, and they began to grieve, crying, singing, calling out the kinship term they used for the dead baby, and throwing themselves to the ground.

The body was placed inside a waiting vehicle, along with some of the baby's things. The dancers led the way to the burial ground at Yilpara, the car following slowly. At the gravesite, the dancers danced up to the back of the car. Other funeral participants sat around the periphery of the burial area. The final part of the burial incorporated Christian and traditional Yolngu elements. No notes were taken about this part.

13/08/01

The cleansing ceremony for the funeral participants, and for the house and vehicle used in the funeral, took place on this day.¹⁰⁷ A Yingapungapu sand sculpture was built under the verandah of the house, with a straw mat in the middle of it. The songs related to the country directly around Yilpara. They started with Getkit (seagull) followed by Miny'ga (garfish), the Mauraki (whistling tree), the hunters making a paddle, the hunters going down to the canoe, Milmididi (flying fish), Walungu (black diving bird), Djet (sea eagle) and the water being made rough by the Mädirriny wind.

When the men were singing this rough water, a mixed group of men and women went and sat on the mat in the middle of the Yingapungapu sand sculpture. A garden hose was used to splash this group whilst the men continued to sing rough water. A second group of women then sat down and were splashed, followed by the dancers, including the child's father. Finally the car was washed. The ceremony finished with the men singing calm water after the wind had died down, and the dancers destroyed the Yingapungapu sculpture with their hands and feet.

¹⁰⁷ Information supplied by Bakulangay Marawili

9.5 Funeral of Groote Island man, September 2001

1/09/01

The ceremony began on this day, but was not observed due to participant observation of a turtle hunt.

2/09/01

The Sunday morning was devoted to a Christian memorial service for the dead man. Some Yithuwa Maḍarrpa youths used a tractor and shovels to dig a grave for the dead man. However they had difficulty digging it, which delayed the ceremony. This was not expected by the Groote Island visitors related to the dead man. They wanted the ceremony to end that day.

Later in the day the dancing commenced, with the singing led by Djambawa, Nuwandjali, and Ngulpurr Marawili.¹⁰⁸ Wulu and Bawanha Marawili were playing *yidakis*. The dancers were mimicking making the Balandi (Yolngu fishing line). This related to the story of fishing for Yambirru (parrotfish) off Luḷumu (a reef associated with the ancestral stingray near Yilpara). Next they danced paddling out to look for the reef, anchoring, throwing the bait out, pulling in the fish, and Djeṭ (the sea eagle). In the song and dance, the eagle saw the blood in the water when the successful fisherman broke the heads of the fish. Then the singers sang Djunmili (mangrove leaf), Gathul (mangrove propagule), Miny'ga (garfish), Getkit (seagull) and Makani (queenfish). For these last two songs they used a Dhaḷwangu¹⁰⁹ tune. The men sang Makani faster, before dancing a mimicry of the hunters paddling back to shore. They moved quickly through the songs to make way for the Manggalili from Groote Island (Djarrakpa Manggalili). They sang Gany'tjurr (crane) then Yolngu walking from the canoe to the shade of a tree, then cooking and eating the fish around a campfire, then burying the fish bones in the sand. Finally they sang Yithuwa (maggot) smelling the fish bones and coming to eat them.

¹⁰⁸ Information supplied by these men and by [Bakulangay Marawili]

¹⁰⁹ Not noted which Dhaḷwangu clan. The two clans may share this tune.

The Groote Djarrakpa then performed a short dance and song sequence. At the end the women went inside the funeral hut, grieving. Another group of women danced up to the door carrying flowers.

Djambawa Marawili then picked up the megaphone and gave a speech. It was part explanatory, part conciliatory, as he detailed how the funeral of the Groote Island man had come to be at Yilpara, and gave a brief history of the connections between there and Yilpara. [Bakulangay Marawili] translated what Djambawa was saying and also said there were two Djarrakpa people buried at Yilpara from the mission period. Djambawa also said that the ceremony would start early on the Monday morning in order to be finished by 10am, in deference to the people who had wanted to leave on the Sunday.

The Yithuwa Maḍarrpa danced a final sequence in the late afternoon.¹¹⁰ They sang about Dharpa, the small stringybark trees found inland. Then they sang about Bipi (small birds) and Yukuwa (yams). The dancers mimicked both the digging action of yams and the sand being kicked away with their feet. Then they sang about Billitj billitj (parrot), Laparr (bush pigeon), Nyirrk (white cockatoo), and about the spirits crying for the dead man. Finally they sang about the red sunset and Wangupini (clouds). The singing carried on late into the night, but no further notes were taken.

3/09/01

Overnight, a Yingapungapu sand sculpture around the eucalypt funeral hut was built. Four shallow depressions or holes were scooped out of the sand in the triangles at each end. The dancers prepared themselves, and the singing was led by Djambawa, Nuwandjali, and Ngulpurr Marawili, with Wulu Marawili playing the yidaki.¹¹¹ The dancers danced the spear dance, beginning by forming a circle with their spears in the middle and shaking the shafts, rattling them together. The women put clay on whilst the men did this. The men danced in towards the hut, then turned around again and headed out in the direction of the grave. Wanmula Marawili and another man ran out ahead of the main group of dancers, launching their spears in the direction of the

¹¹⁰ Information supplied by [Bakulangay Marawili] and Wäka Mununggurr.

¹¹¹ Information for this section supplied by Djambawa Marawili and [Bakulangay Marawili]

cemetery. This was directing the body to the grave.¹¹² The two men danced back towards the hut and the dancing stopped. The men left their spears embedded in the ground in front of the hut, inside the Yingapungapu sand sculpture.

The Djarrakpa Manggalili from Groote Island danced next. Some Yithuwa Maḍarrpa men with connections to Groote danced with them. The Groote women danced behind the men. No notes were taken about the Groote Islanders dancing.

The Yithuwa Maḍarrpa began again. This time they were singing and dancing the story of spearing for Yambirrku.¹¹³ They sat on the ground with their spears in front of them, facing the Yingapungapu and funeral hut. Then they stood up and danced a mimicry of searching for Yambirrku, standing on one leg and putting their hands up to shield their eyes. The song then changed to Mungurru (Yirritja saltwater) taking the body away. The men went inside the hut and picked up the coffin, placing it in the truck.

The truck drove to the burial ground, and the Yithuwa Maḍarrpa sang about Dakanjali (the sacred harpoon from Yathikpa) as they lowered the body into the grave. The next sequence involved a combination of Christian, Yolngu and other elements, including a sequence similar to the Bayini dance performances found closer to Nhulunbuy. No detailed notes were taken about this section.

The Yithuwa Maḍarrpa began to sing and dance Yithuwa (maggot) as the grave was filled in. In the dance, the Yithuwa were smelling the body and covering up the bones. The dancing and the music continued after this point, but no notes were taken.

The final part of the ceremony was the cleansing of the funeral truck and the burning of the hut.¹¹⁴ The men sang and danced Mungurru (Yirritja saltwater), dancing into the funeral hut. The song changed to Dakanjali (the sacred harpoon). Then a sand hole

¹¹² [Bakulangay Marawili]

¹¹³ Information for this dance sequence supplied by [Bakulangay Marawili]

¹¹⁴ Information for this part supplied by [Bakulangay Marawili], Gumbaniya Marawili, Djambawa Marawili, and Wäka Mununggurr

inside the Yingapungapu was dug out, creating a firepit. People daubed themselves in red ochre, and the mattress and clothes belonging to the dead person were also brought out and laid around the edges of the Yingapungapu, near the firepit.

The men started singing the Yambirrkku (parrotfish) cycle.¹¹⁵ They sang about getting the Yambirrkku with a fishing line (Balandi) and then paddling back to Yilpara. They sang about Ganyt'jurr (the heron), about the Mungurru (Yirritja saltwater) rolling the canoe around on the shore, and about Gathiritj (brown bush quail). Then they sang about people sitting down under the Mauraki tree, cutting the fat from the parrotfish, and eating the fish. Both men and the women danced during this singing. The fire was lit in the firepit, fresh djilka leaves were set on it, and the people and possessions smoked with the smouldering leaves.

For the last song, the eating of the fish, people sat around the fire and ate bread. People ate some and then spat it into the fire. The song changed to Wakulungul (fog), and the people danced and kicked sand over the firepit, putting it out.

The singing kept going. People stood or kneeled on the edges of the Yingapungapu as they danced, rapidly destroying it. They danced a mimicry of Yithuwa (maggot) and then danced the spear dance towards the hut. The women followed the men in each case. Then they moved to the other side of the hut and danced in the same way, destroying the Yingapungapu on that side of the hut. Then they moved back to the other side. Wäka Mununggurr was leading the singing and he called out the names of locations near Yilpara: Yilili, Mapillari, Mulawalnga. They performed the songs and dances at least three times each. At the final one, at Waka's call, the men danced inside the hut. At this moment all the women burst out laughing and the men emerged looking alternatively amused, embarrassed, sheepish, or happy.

The groups separated and everyone moved back for the burning of the hut. Two men (Wäka and Menga Mununggurr) approached one side of the hut, dancing Baru (crocodile) low to the ground with burning branches in their mouths. The hut burned fiercely and rapidly, marking the end of the ceremony.

¹¹⁵ Information supplied by [Bakulangay Marawili]

9.6 Dhapi (Circumcision) at Yilpara, September 2001

This was a large circumcision ceremony, which was really two simultaneous circumcision ceremonies, one Dhuwa and one Yirritja. The Dhuwa ceremony involved 3 Rirratjingu boys (Dhukaḷ, Balurruy, and Jackie Marika) and commenced on 18/09/01. The Rirratjingu clan is a Yolngu clan that does not have country in the claim area. Their country lies further to the north, in the Yirrkala region. However the mothers of the three boys were Yithuwa Maḍarrpa sisters from Yilpara (Gurrundul 2 and Yalmakany Marawili). The boys' fathers were brothers, Waninya and Wanyipi Marika, and the fathers' mother was a Gumana Dhaḷwangu woman, a sister of Gawirrin Gumana. The two Rirratjingu men were therefore waku for Dhaḷwangu areas in Blue Mud Bay. These connections, combined with the fact that the boys spent considerable time at Yilpara with their maternal grandparents, meant that their circumcision was held at Yilpara.

The Yirritja Dhapi began a day later, and after that the two ceremonies were held concurrently on the same ceremony ground. Two of the boys (Ningiyama Marawili and Yinikarrkpathi Marawili) were Yithuwa Maḍarrpa, sons of Djambawa Marawili and Narulwuy Marawili respectively. The third boy was from the Groote Island clan connected to the Manggalili, but his mother came from Dhurupitjpi in Blue Mud Bay. His name was not noted. Observations from this ceremony were focussed on the Dhuwa components, as a Dhuwa ceremony had not been observed before.

18/09/01

The circumcision ceremonies were the most positive and upbeat of those witnessed. Social taboos were broken, roles reversed, and there was much cheering, laughter, and practical joking. This happened all through the 18/9/01 with the Dhuwa ceremony. No notes were taken about proceedings on 18/09/01, but music and dancing continued throughout that day.

19/09/01

On 19/09/01 the Yirritja Dhapi began, joining the Dhuwa one to become one large ceremony. The level of activity increased when both Dhuwa and Yirritja components

were run simultaneously from 19/09/01 onwards. The music, dancing, shouting, whistling, and cheering began in the morning. No notes were taken of the Yolngu songs but a larger than usual number of the dancers were women. They were being much more loud and boisterous than they normally would be, dancing through the line of male dancers, baseball caps on backwards and sunglasses on, throwing water over everyone from the bottles they were drinking from. They teased and mimicked the men (some of whom mimicked the women's dancing style back again), stole the mens spears, and generally caused as much chaos as they could. Prominent female dancers were Bangawuy and Boliny Wanambi, and Minitja, Makala, and Burrjtjalk Marawili.

Makala Marawili was particularly playful, stealing spears from the men, interfering with their spear dodging and spear throwing dance, and actually entering it later in the day, grabbing a spear and chasing her brother with it, stabbing at him rather than throwing. The Rirratjingu have a water song that has a chant with the same rhythm as the Yithuwa Madarrpa Yithuwa (maggot) song. When the Rirratjingu began this water song, the Yithuwa Madarrpa women ran across from where the Yithuwa Madarrpa were dancing and loudly called the Yithuwa chant in the middle of the Rirratjingu performance, mocking the similarity despite the difference in moiety. The men also mocked the women's dancing styles and appearance.

Some notes were taken of Rirratjingu performances.¹¹⁶ They included songs and dances about hunting for kangaroo, eating the raw kangaroo they had speared, about the black crow, and about spring water. At several points the Yirritja and Dhuwa dancers interacted, the most obvious being when Yirritja clan members advanced towards the ceremony ground and the Rirratjingu turned to face them, pointing their elbows at them as the Yirritja advanced with spears in mock battle. The dancers danced both Yirritja and Dhuwa dances. Yithuwa Madarrpa people observed dancing Rirratjingu dances included Mulawalnga, Muypirri, and Ngulpurr Marawili.

20/09/01

On this morning, there were three groups of people sitting in the shade around the ceremony ground. The Dhuwa people were under a constructed shade, the Yithuwa

¹¹⁶ The informant for this section was not noted

Madarrpa were sitting under trees near the beach, and nearby was a third group composed of Groote Island people. Observation was focussed on the Dhuwa people.

The Dhuwa men were painting the chest of one of the boys, Dhukaḷ (2) Marika. Men participating or supervising the painting included Dhukaḷ 1 and Wuyal Wirrpanda, and Menga Mununggur. Nearby sat a senior Dhudi Djapu woman, Mulkun Wirrpanda. The Dhudi Djapu were the māri clan for the three boys. Armbands for the three boys were lying under the shade also.

Whilst the painting was going on, the men were singing Balamumu, Dhuwa saltwater.¹¹⁷ They were singing about the area of Burdalku in Trial Bay to the north. Following Balamumu, they sang about Wapurrar (calm water), Milliga (batfish), and about Ngurula (Dhuwa seagull) flying around the saltwater catching small fish. This was followed by songs about Wuḍuku (a light driftwood that floats from overseas), and Gathaka (red beaked blackbird) that was circling around watching the Wuḍuku floating in circles in a whirlpool. The song sequence was going from the deep sea to the beach.

The Rirratjingu arrived next, including Wanyipi and Waninya Marika. They brought the other two boys to be circumcised, carrying them on their shoulders. The men sang about Ngurula (seagull) walking on the beach, and the dancers, who had danced Ngurula flying with their arms out, danced it now with their elbows tucked in. The Rirratjingu began singing Wangupini (cloud), and Gukguk (pigeon). They were singing land areas near Balaypalay, some distance to the north of Blue Mud Bay.¹¹⁸

The Rirratjingu then moved away to a separate shade, dancing and singing there whilst the Dhudi Djapu and Gupa Djapu continued sing and paint the chests of all three boys. The Dhudi Djapu began to sing about about a freshwater area near Dhurupitjpi, and about the clouds in that area. First they sang about big clouds, then about small ones called Wana, and then they sang about the rain coming from the

¹¹⁷ The senior Dhuwa men involved in the painting and singing provided information for this section. They included Dhukaḷ and Wuyal Wirrpanda, Menga Mungurr, and Wāka Mununggurr

¹¹⁸ Information on Rirratjingu songs was also provided by the Dhuwa men listed above

cloud. This rain song was shared between Dhudi Djapu and Gupa Djapu. Following the rain they sang about Gukguk, a pigeon that comes out when the rain stops.

The boys' chests were being painted with Mana (the shark), a key Ancestral figure for the Gupa Djapu and Dhudi Djapu. The men sang and danced the shark, arms out and with something held in their mouth, often feathers from the ceremonial dress. This dance was the dance of the freshwater shark that lives at Dhurupitjpi and comes out after the rains. The name of this freshwater is Guruyallayalla. The song then changed to wata, or wind.

The Yithuwa Madarra supervised the painting of the Yirritja boys. The paintings on their chests represented Mantjarr (mangrove leaves).¹¹⁹

The Gupa Djapu then sang about Ngurula (seagull). This bird also flies inland, and they sang about it travelling around Dhurupitjpi, seeing the baby sharks and pandanus driftwood floating down the river. Next they sang about Minhala (freshwater tortoise), Djarrwit (freshwater mussel), Galumay (pelican), and Gangal (freshwater catfish). In the song, the pelican saw and caught the fish, then ate it and left some remaining when he was full. Ngurula (seagull) flying over the freshwater was repeated, followed by Gukguk (pigeon) fishing at Dhurupitjpi. This ended the song sequence.

The Yithuwa Madarra had been singing about Baraltja (a place in Jalma Bay) whilst painting the Yirritja boys.¹²⁰ When the paintings were completed, the men stood up, except for some young men who knelt behind each of the boys as they lay on the ground. The boys had their shoulders turned from side to side as the men sang, and this rocking represented the rocking of the sea. The Yithuwa Madarra then danced over to where the women had assembled under a different shade, bringing the boys over and sitting them down amongst the women. The boys were still painted and dressed ceremonially. This was the end of the Yirritja proceedings.

¹¹⁹ Informant not noted. Likely to have been Djambawa, Nuwandjali, or Ngulpur Marawili.

¹²⁰ Informant not noted. Likely to have been Djambawa, Nuwandjali, or Ngulpur Marawili.

The Dhuwa boys were prepared in a similar manner, but more slowly. The songs the Dhuwa men sang related to a part of the story of the Djan'kawu sisters. The sisters were traveling from Wukili in Blue Mud Bay for the Gupa Djapu and Dhudi Djapu songs, and paddling from Yalangbara for the Rirratjingu songs. These were different journeys made by the same sisters.

When the paintings were finished, the Dhuwa boys were sung over as they were turned from side to side by their shoulders. The song being sung was the Dharpa (wood or digging stick) that the Djan'kawu traveled with. The boys were being pushed from side to side by the freshwater associated with the digging stick.

The Groote Island people sang and danced at this point, but no notes were taken, other than that the songs and dances related to fishing and hunting in saltwater.

The Yithuwa Madarrpa started singing again in the late afternoon, starting the dugong hunting sequence at Yathikpa.¹²¹ The men began by singing about the hunters at the balkpalk tree, who were talking together and walking to the beach, then about them paddling out into the Mungurru (Yirritja saltwater) at Yathikpa. The water was calm and the hunters hunted for dugong, looking for ganu (silt caused by dugong feeding). The music sped up as the dugong was sighted, and in this sequence it was frightened away into deep water. This was the end of that sequence.

In the evening the singing continued. The Dhuwa clans sang Marrakulu clan songs, singing about the spear Djanawuy, then Garralulu (crow).¹²² The Gupa Djapu were singing the same crow at Gurka'wuy, and the Rirratjingu were singing the same song as the Gupa Djapu, but using a different tune. Then the Rirratjingu sang songs from Goulburn Island, far away from Blue Mud bay, whilst the Gupa Djapu sang about a spirit man Wuyal looking for honey at Gurka'wuy. Then they sang about stringybark, then about a sacred waterhole. Only the women were dancing in the evening, and they maintained the light festive atmosphere of the daytime events.

¹²¹ Information from Djambawa, Nuwandjali, Gumbaniya, Ngulpurr, and [Bakulangay] Marawili

¹²² Information for this section supplied by Menga Munununggurr

Ngurula (seagull) was sung again. Unlike the Yirritja seagull (Getkit), it travels back and forth between freshwater and saltwater areas. Then the Dhuwa men sang about Yolngu coming up to freshwater, then about Djarrka (water goanna), Dangultji (brolga), Yidaki (didgeridu), then Barra (west wind) which comes out from the pipe of the Yidaki. No more notes were taken after this point.

21/09/01

The day on which the boys were circumcised. Observations again focussed on Dhuwa aspects of the ceremony. The Rirratjingu clan sang all night, and at 10am were singing about an area near Yirrkala called Nowul.¹²³

A screen of two pieces of cloth, one white and one blue, had been erected around the ceremony ground. At the centre was the large pole that is a permanent feature of the ceremony ground. The screen was now supported by smaller poles around the sides in a rough semicircle.

The Yirritja people gathered over the far side of the community, then made their way over to the ceremony ground. The Dhuwa boys were brought over, dressed in white sarongs. The Rirratjingu were singing about the Djan'kawu sisters associated with Yalangbara.¹²⁴ The boys were dressed up but not painted. Instead they were picked up and carried on the shoulders of the men, behind the first line of men carrying their spears horizontally in front of them to form a barricade. They carried the boys down to a shade on one side of the ceremony ground, on the opposite side from where the Yirritja boys were.

The Yirritja boys lay down in the shade as preparations were underway to paint their chests. Some of the senior women danced and ran around the group of men clustered around the boys, others sat under the trees surrounding the site. The boy from Groote Island was moved so that he was slightly separate to the others before anything started, in a movement that involved Djawila Marawili and the boy holding a single galpu (spear thrower) above their heads, with their arms intertwined together.

¹²³ Waninya Marika

¹²⁴ Waninya Marika

On the opposite side of the ceremony ground, the Dhuwa boys were painted. Singing and dancing went on during the painting process on both sides of the ceremony ground. As the painting progressed, a third singing and dancing group approached.¹²⁵ This contained men dressed as women, dancing mockingly like women, and women dressed as men, dancing like men. The festive atmosphere increased, as this group settled at another place on the ceremony ground.

Wäka Mununggurr sang about the clouds and the rain at Dhurupitjpi, whilst the rest of the Dhuwa men were singing Nyirrk (white cockatoo).¹²⁶ At that moment Waninya Marika, the father of one of the boys, ran down the hill dressed as a woman, and danced a mimicry of women's dancing, to loud cheers and laughter. The painting continued, and Wäka Mununggurr sang Gukguk (pigeon) as Wuyal Wirrpanda sang Birrkbirrk (white heron). Other Dhuwa men sang the spirit coming out of the bush.

The Dhuwa men stood the boys up, and rubbed red ochre down their arms and legs. The Yirritja boys were already having paintings of the Lightning Snake at Baraltja painted on their chests.

The Dhuwa people were singing Ngurula (seagull) again, then Danguitji (brolga). Wanyipi Marika, the father of one of the boys, danced the associated dance, putting his spear thrower to the ground like a beak. One of the women grabbed a spear thrower and ran onto the ceremony ground, mimicking shooting with a rifle as the men danced brolga flying. Then the song was the Gunga (pandanus) floating down the freshwater, then Galumay (pelican).¹²⁷ One of the boys was having the sun painted on his chest, a second the water goanna Djarrka. They then sang about Baypinnga (saratoga), Ngurula (seagull), Barribarri (white bird with long beak), Gukguk (pigeon), and the pigeon watching the freshwater flowing down as it built its nest. The

¹²⁵ No detailed notes were taken of the composition of this group, but it included Yithuwa Madarrpa: Yakutja, Minitja, Makala and Bambarrarr Marawili

¹²⁶ This group included Dhukal Wirrpanda, Menga Mununggurr, Gathinikpa Wanambi and Wuyal Wirrpanda. Information during this sequence supplied by Wäka Mununggurr

¹²⁷ Information supplied by Wäka Mununggurr and Juwalpi Marika

sequence moved to songs about Yolngu putting fishnets in the water, going to the campsite, sitting down, talking, and making a decision to build a shelter.

Meanwhile a Yirritja group opposite sang about Djarrakpa on Groote Island¹²⁸. A Yithuwa Maḍarrpa group danced Baru (crocodile) chasing fish, and later Mantjarr (leaves) floating in the saltwater. This was signified by dancing with their spears held horizontally.

The dancers stopped as the paintings were finished. Wuyal Wirrpanda had painted the sun Djakarra on Dukhal 2. The crosshatched area on his chest represented Milngurr, the sacred waterhole which is hidden under the grass at Dhurupitjpi. The arrow shapes represented the suns rays (Barawuny), and the white area under each shoulder was the thunder (Wolma). Jackie's painting was of the freshwater goanna Djarrka. This was a Marrakulu painting associated with the sun painting. The arrow design represented the same Milngurr waterhole and the top of the painting also represented the sun. The goanna looks towards the sun. Balurruy's painting was a fish trap at Dhurupitjpi. This was gapumaraweyin, water at the upper end of the river, unlike the previous two which were from the lower end of the river. The design at the top represented the thunderclouds.

The Yirritja group prepared to head to the circumcision ground. The Yithuwa Maḍarrpa formed up near the tree where they had painted the boys. As they walked towards the ceremony ground, they sang freshwater at GanGan.¹²⁹ Two mounds topped with grass had been formed inside the ceremonial compound, representing Baru's nest.

The men danced around the screen and then into it. On the ground underneath sheets were three women, classificatory mothers of the boys. The circumcision was performed by a senior Dhalwangu man, Ngutjapuy Wunungmurra.

¹²⁸ Information supplied by Wäka Mununggurr

¹²⁹ Gumbaniya Marawili

The Yirritja clans removed the boys quickly, but many of the men remained inside the enclosure for the Dhuwa ceremony. This was not observed. Both sets of boys were taken away to the men's ceremony area behind Yilpara. Wäka Mununggurr then organised a cleansing of the space where the circumcisions had been performed. First they performed Maṇa, the shark, then Baru, the crocodile, dancing to destroy the nests.

The next phase of the ceremony was the stringybark purification. A mound of wet shredded stringybark was put onto a fire, producing a cloud of eucalyptus steam. The boys had bark held to their mouths and their hands, and the mothers, brothers and sisters also underwent the same process.

The final phase of the ceremony was a speech by Wäka Mununggurr. He was standing by the pole in the middle of the circumcision area. This pole had been used in ceremonies in the past by an important ceremony man, [Dula Ngurruwuthun]. This man had died at Rurrangalla prior to the circumcision ceremony beginning. The speech was intended to prepare people for his coming funeral at Rurrangalla.

9.7 Rurrangalla Funeral of [Dula Ngurruwuthun], October 2001

This funeral was not observed in detail. It was the funeral of [Dula Ngurruwuthun], a very senior Yolngu leader and contained significant elements that were secret. A number of days of ceremony elapsed without direct observation. There were shorter ceremonies held in Darwin and Gapuwiyak as the body was transferred from these places, and these shorter ceremonies were also not observed. In addition to the closure of country (see Table 7), a prohibition was placed on painting hollow logs during this funeral.¹³⁰

The funeral was attended by most of the major Yolngu Yirritja clans of northeast Arnhem Land, including Wunungmurra (Gurrumurru) Dhaḷwangu, Gumana Dhaḷwangu, Yithuwa Maḍarra, Manggalili, Ritharrngu, Munyuku, Wanguri, Guyamirrilili, Waramirri, and Djalkiriwuy (Saltwater Warramirri). There were also

¹³⁰ Djambawa Marawili

many members of Dhuwa clans present, including Gupa Djapu and Dhudi Djapu, Marrakulu, Marrangu, Djambarrpuynngu and Djarrwark. This is not a comprehensive list, as many hundreds of people were present at key moments of the ceremony.

9.8 Garindjirra Marawili's Funeral June-July 2002

[Garindjirra Marawili] was a senior Yithuwa Maḍarrpa man who also identified strongly with the Munyuku clan during his life. He returned to Yilpara with a terminal illness, in order that he could die on Yithuwa Maḍarrpa country. He died on 23/06/2002, but a number of factors meant that his funeral was delayed, resulting in preparations for it occurring over several weeks. Observations were made of many of the early preparation stages.

23/06/02

On the night the man died, the community gathered at the house in which his body lay. Wakuthi Marawili, the invalid senior elder of the Yithuwa Maḍarrpa clan, made a rare journey outside his house to supervise the singing. A number of women remained in the room where the body lay, watching over it and grieving. No notes were taken about the singing and mourning that occurred this evening.

24/06/02

The man's body was moved from the house to the airport for transport to the morgue. The empty coffin was brought down from Yirrkala by plane, accompanied by Djambawa Marawili, and some men from the Gupa Djapu clan who were senior waku for the Maḍarrpa. Other senior men present included Dhalwangu (Wali Gumana and Yumijin Wunungmurra) and for some of the time, Wakuthi Marawili.

The men sang and danced Dakanjali (sacred harpoon at Yathikpa) to take the coffin to the house where the body lay. Wāka Mununggurr and Nuwandjali Marawili led these proceedings. The lightning snake Baraltja was sung as the body was placed in the coffin. The crocodile, Baru, was sung as the body was removed and put into the truck. Two sand mounds topped with grass had been built in front of the house, and Napuwarri and Djawila Marawili danced crocodile on top of these mounds as the body was moved. The coffin was carried by children and teenagers, most of them

girls. After the body was in the truck the men destroyed the sand mounds with a brief dance.

The coffin was loaded on one plane and another plane departed at the same time, carrying people. The funeral would be delayed because Djambawa Marawili had to fly to Galiwinku for business related to the Arts Centre. Other Yithuwa Madarrpa continued singing through the evening.

25/06/02

The smoking ceremony to cleanse the house where the man died took place on this day. This was a lighter occasion than the movement of the body the previous day. It only involved Yithuwa Madarrpa and local waku people.¹³¹ There were other people on their way from Borrooloola and the Hodgson Downs Station, where the man had lived and had relatives.¹³² The ceremony was directed by [Bakulangay Marawili] and the performances were led by Ngulpurr Marawili, Djewinbin 1 Marawili, Wäka Mununggurr, Menga Mununggurr and Napuwarri Marawili. A sand sculpture had been created in front of the house, with two crocodile mounds at one end, and a partitioned area at the other. The men sang Mungurru (Yirritja saltwater), whilst a group of younger people then sat in the middle of the sand sculpture and were hosed down, many laughing and joking. The men then danced up to the car that had been used, singing Dakanjali (sacred harpoon) as it was hosed down. Then they hosed down the room where the man had died. In the final stage of this part of the cleansing ceremony, red clay was put on the hands of those people close to the man, and a red clay stripe was put on the car and across the house and door of the room. [Bakulangay Marawili stated that anyone who had held the body or the coffin was included in this cleansing, and the cleansing was undertaken so that those people would not be followed or troubled by the mokuy (spirit) of the dead person. There was a law saying that the brother or sister of the dead person could not handle the body, or eat food or share a cup that had been touched by someone who had handled the body. Only the

¹³¹ Including Wäka Mununggurr, Menga Mununggurr, and Gawarratj Mununggurr

¹³² Information on this day supplied by [Bakulangay Marawili]

sons and daughters (gathu) and the gaminyarr¹³³ could handle the body and then they had to be cleansed.

Yilpirr Wanambi then dug a hole in the middle of the sand sculpture, which represented Yathikpa. This was for the smoking part of the ceremony. A fire was built in the hole but not lit, and the singing went on for some time. The men sang about the dugong hunters at Yathikpa. The first fires that were lit were two grass fires on top of the mounds at one end of the sand sculpture. Gawarratj Mununggurr and Yilpirr Wanambi danced Baru (crocodile), their faces and chests close to the rapidly burning grass fires. They had smouldering sticks from a nearby cooking fire in their mouths. Napuwarri Marawili, an experienced dancer, joined them to show the less experienced dancers how to dance the sequence better, as both men were struggling a little.

Then the central fire was lit, and the djilka branches were set smouldering and used to smoke the participants. There was laughing and joking as some of the djilka were burning as opposed to smouldering. After everyone had been smoked, the women brought out the cardboard box the coffin had been brought in and that was gradually burned on the fire. Napuwarri and Wulu Marawili then danced like women to destroy the fire, kicking sand over it to the amusement of all. The men sat and sang for a while, then decided on one last action to destroy the sand sculpture. This dance was Djirikitj (bush quail or dove) and the version performed was not as familiar to some of the younger men. They performed it hesitantly at first, and then more strongly on a second occasion.

30/6/2002

On this day flags were put up around the community in preparation for the funeral. [Bakulangay Marawili], a senior Yithuwa Maḍarrpa man and a brother of the dead man, asked the Wunungmurra (Gurrumurru) Dhaḷwangu clan to assist in this part of the ceremony. Many Dhaḷwangu were busy at a funeral at Doyndji, so it was Dhaḷwangu men from Gurrumurru who arrived to complete this part of the ceremony, including Wulanybuma and Banambi Wunungmurra. These men were the māri of the dead man. On this day there was strong involvement of the Yithuwa Maḍarrpa lineage

¹³³ Kinship term referring to a particular category of relative (see Anthropologist's Report 3.49)

descended from Mundukul Marawili, and less involvement from the descendants of Wakuthi Marawili.

Some younger men went out to cut stringybark saplings from the surrounding bush to use as flagpoles.¹³⁴ As the bark was stripped off the saplings, Banambi sang a song sequence about a sailing ship.¹³⁵ It is a sequence shared between the Dhalwangu, Gumatj, Warramirri, and Munyuku clans. The Yithuwa Maḍarrpa were allowed to join in this song series with the Wunungmurra (Gurrumurru) Dhalwangu but were not allowed to sing it themselves independently. As the observations began, the men sang about the (non-Yolngu) sailing boat being built at Jilil, near Numbulwar. This site is also associated with the lightning snake. In this song sequence the boat would sail north, towards Blue Mud Bay and then beyond, to Balaypalay and Garrthalala.

As the flagpoles were prepared, the men sang about preparing the mast and sail and getting ready to travel. As they sang about fixing the sail, they sang about places related to Yarrinya, moving around to Barrajalla, just north of Blue Mud Bay. Wāka Mununggurr arrived to participate in the ceremony, walking very circumspectly, and there was some laughing and joking as he sat down. The men sang about standing the sail up, ready to go sailing. They then paused, waiting for Wulanybuma Wunungmurra to arrive. When he did, the men danced and sang facing him, and he took slow steps towards them, pausing after each step. Wali had not been present when the body was removed and this was how he was received back and formally given the news. After the dance was completed the two women who arrived with him immediately began grieving. They cried and sang, using the kinship name they called the dead man to refer to him. Meanwhile the men began to sing about the anchor of the ship, and the noise the anchor chain made.

Then men then walked around the community, singing and erecting flags at each house, and at the airstrip. No notes were taken about these songs, but at the last house the men danced to a different tune, and then held the flagpole as they bent their heads.

¹³⁴ Including Wurrandan Marawili and Dhawalpandi Mununggurr

¹³⁵ [Bakulangay Marawili]

This was in mourning for the 'mast' as they were leaving it behind as they continued on their journey.¹³⁶

After this flag raising ceremony, there was a delay of almost two weeks due to meetings and other significant commitments for significant clan members. This type of delay is unusual, and a major reason was that many märi clan members (Gumana and Wunungmurra Dhaḷwangu) were occupied elsewhere. Vehicles from the Hodgson Downs Station began arriving on 13/07/02 and 14/07/02. The dead man had spent the last several years living at the Hodgson Downs Station, and had a family there. The station is a day's drive from Yilpara.

15/07/02

The first sounds of clapsticks and singing were heard on this night.¹³⁷ The men started singing at Matjanga, a place in southern Blue Mud Bay. They sang and danced as the men dug a sand sculpture, Lorr, around the funeral hut. Lorr represents the hole of the lightning snake, Baraltja, and the men sang about Baraltja as the sculpture was being built.

16/07/02

A brief ceremony brought the dead man's things from the house where he stayed to the funeral hut. The songs on this evening related to Dhupuditj (hollow log) at GanGan, the madayin of an extinct clan, the Manatja.¹³⁸ They also sang about building a bark shade. Then they sang about bush honey following down the river to the saltwater at Baraltja.

18/7/02

The singing continued in the evening on this day. No notes were taken.

19/7/02

¹³⁶ Wäka Mununggurr

¹³⁷ Information supplied by Djambawa Marawili

¹³⁸ Djambawa Marawili

The Dhaḷwangu clans¹³⁹ arrived on this day, including many people who lived at Gapuwiyak. The ceremony had been unable to proceed without them. The Yithuwa Maḍarrpa danced and sang as they went to the cemetery and marked out the gravesite. There was also a short singing session at the gravesite. The body arrived on this day, an event that was not directly observed.

20/07/02

No observations made due to travel to Nhulunbuy.

21/07/02

The Yithuwa Maḍarrpa and Dhaḷwangu clans danced and sang whilst a tractor dug the grave. A fridge to contain the coffin was also brought in, to allow the ceremony to proceed longer. No detailed observations were made of these events.

22/07/02

In the morning Wāka Mununggurr made a megaphone announcement, calling for community unity about the ceremony after a rift between some of the younger men and boys. There was some ceremonial activity in the morning but it was not observed.

In the afternoon the Yithuwa Maḍarrpa danced, led by Ngulpurr, Nuwandjali, Juwinbin 1, and Napunda Marawili.¹⁴⁰ They were followed by the Dhaḷwangu clans, who performed stingray songs related to Arnhem Bay, to the northwest of Blue Mud bay. The same song with different tunes was sung by the Yarrwidi Gumatj (referring to Cape Arnhem and Birany birany), and the Munyuku about Yarrinya. There were now a large number of Dhaḷwangu people present, and singers included Ngutjapuy 1, Yumijin, Burrumbirr 1, Bulupal, Witjiwitji, Wulanybuma, Bort'ga, Daytjirri, and Mikaniny. The ray they were singing about was Nganalk'mi, and the song also refers to the dust stirred up by the stingray. The men then sang about Murdiyil, a black and white dove, which saw the dust stirred up by the ray. This was followed by Maḍa

¹³⁹ No strong distinction was drawn between Gumana and Wunungmurra Dhaḷwangu during notetaking. The Wunungmurra Dhaḷwangu were predominant in numbers at this point in the ceremony.

¹⁴⁰ Information on this afternoon supplied by Ngulpurr Marawili

(octopus), Djapana (sunset), Wayathul (jungle fowl), Danbulal (spirit woman), then Murdiyil again (in a bush rather than mangrove area this time). The next song was about this bird crying for the northeast wind, Lungurrma. Then they sang and danced the comb (Badapu) on the head of the jungle fowl. This was followed by Lungurrma.

The Baraltja shed in its complete form has two chambers inside it.¹⁴¹ One part, Lorr, is built of leaves. The other, Bultjan, is made of paperbark. The shed built for this funeral was too small to have two components, but paperbark had been placed inside it to represent this structural feature.

23/07/02

The Dhalwangu performed on this day. They performed the series of dances relating to non-Yolngu knowledge, first observed at Gapuwiyak in February 2001. Notes were taken about some of these dances, which included Yiki (knife), Bonal (a clearing created by the knife), mouth organ, cards, and fighting. The Yithuwa Madarrpa performed briefly in the afternoon but no notes were taken.

24/07/02

There was a break from ceremonial activities. The key event in the community on this day was a turtle and dugong hunt at Yathikpa

25/07/02

The Yithuwa Madarrpa performed first on this day, partly because a big group of white schoolteachers had come down from Yirrkala to pay their respects to the dead man, who had been a schoolteacher. The men started under the trees uphill from the ceremony ground, then moved towards it. They had started with songs about freshwater Madarrpa country at Baykutji and the dances included Gunbirrwirr (small fish being pursued by the crocodile), Gumulu (heron), Murdiyil (dove), and Wakulungul (fog). They finished up with Baru in front of the funeral shed, dancing as the teachers went in to pay their last respects and leave flowers on the coffin.

¹⁴¹ Information supplied by Ngulpurr Marawili

There was a secret ceremony on the men's ceremonial ground in the afternoon, but it was not observed. In the evening the Dhalwangu clans performed, but no notes were taken.

26/7/02

Ceremonial activity continued during the day and the evening, but was not observed. Other clans, including the Yarrwidj Gumatj from Birany Birany, and the Wanguri, also sang in the evening, as they had arrived that day.

27/07/02

The first clan to start singing on this day was the Wanguri. They were followed by the Maḍarrpa, who sang about the inland area of Garrangali.¹⁴² The Yithuwa Maḍarrpa sang about Gumulu (heron), Gany'tjurr (wading bird), Borutj (sand flies), Wakulungul (fog/spiders web), and Mapulandj (cold inland wind). They ended there and the Dhaḷwangu clans danced next.

The Dhaḷwangu clans sang and danced Burrugu, a ringitj¹⁴³ area near the Yilpara turnoff on the Arnhem highway.¹⁴⁴ It is an important site for a number of Yirritja clans. The Dhaḷwangu clans sang Nanuk, a mokuy (spirit) from the Burrugu area. They sang about the mokuy walking along, causing the two trees (Dharpa) to start to move. There were Yukuwa (yams) on that tree, and Billitj billitj (the parrot) flew to eat the flowers of those yams. Nyirrk (cockatoo) was there, and was disturbed into flight by the emu, Gurrupal (the men danced with their hands behind their backs). As the Dhaḷwangu clans sang this last phase, the Wanguri clan were approaching the ceremony ground. The Wanguri are māri for the Yithuwa Maḍarrpa. The men sang and danced Wakulungul, fog. The fog and dew are connected to the smog caused by fires, and in the dance, the men lift their spear throwers up and down to symbolise the fog from the top of the tree to the bottom.

There was an argument later in the day between the Wanguri and the Munyuku clans. The Munyuku clan then left to return to their homeland at Rurangalla. Wāka Mununggurr made a speech reminding everyone present of the importance of the ceremony. The Yithuwa Maḍarrpa had retreated to the men's ceremony ground prior to the incident, and performed a brief public ceremony in the late afternoon which

¹⁴² Informants not directly noted. Likely to have been Djambawa Marawili and Ngulpurr Marawili

¹⁴³ Meeting place for several clans (see Anthropologists' Report 4.6)

¹⁴⁴ Information on Dhaḷwangu dances supplied by Ngulpurr Marawili

was not observed. In the evening the Wanguri and the Yarrwidi Gumatj performed, followed by the Yithuwa Madarrpa and Dhalwangu clans.

28/07/02

The body was buried on this day. Gawirrin Gumana, who had arrived the previous day, made a long speech in the morning, but no notes or translation of it was taken. The Wanguri were the first to make their way onto the ceremony ground at 11am. The Yithuwa Madarrpa were preparing themselves, the dancers and singers putting white clay on their bodies. They then joined in with the Manggalili, beginning with Milmididi (small mullet). The majority of these songs and dances related to the emu story. The emu travelled over a wide area of country and in the final part of the song cycle, Djambawa Marawili hurled a spear in the direction of the burial ground. He later stated that the emu was a Yolngu who turned into an emu after he threw the spear, which Djambawa had just done. This spear later struck a rock on the ocean side of Djarrakpi, called Wanumanguri.¹⁴⁵

The funeral shed now had a flag erected behind it. This flag represented Yarrinya and the Mynyuku clan.¹⁴⁶ It also had a square sand sculpture erected at the front. This had been constructed by the Yithuwa Madarrpa and Dhalwangu overnight. This represented the area in front of the snakehole, where the snake comes out.

The Yarrwidi Gumatj performed songs related to Birany Birany.¹⁴⁷ This song sequence tells the story of a fight between the crocodile and the stingray. It is also related to the makarrata, the punishment of spearing people through the leg, and at the end of the dance sequence one of the senior Yarrwidi Gumatj men deliberately broke a spear.

The Dhalwangu clans began to sing.¹⁴⁸ They sang Djalay (a knife dance shared between the Dhalwangu, the Mynyuku, and the Gumatj). It represents Yarrinya for

¹⁴⁵ Yikaki Maymuru

¹⁴⁶ Information supplied by Gawirrin Gumana

¹⁴⁷ Information provided by Gawirrin Gumana

¹⁴⁸ Information provided by Gawirrin Gumana

the Yarrwidi Gumatj and Munyuku, and represents Ngakala for the Dhalwangu. This sequence was interrupted by Milkayngu, a Gupa Djapu man upset about the relative exclusion of members of the Gupa Djapu closely connected to the dead man and to the Yithuwa Madarrpa. The Dhalwangu finished with Djapana (sunset).

The Yithuwa Madarrpa then danced Baru (crocodile), with two lines of dancers going into and then out of the shed. They then went away from the ceremony ground and reassembled. The Wanguri danced onto the ceremony ground, performing Nguykal at Dhalinbuy. The Yithuwa Madarrpa had to wait for them to complete this sequence.

The Yithuwa Madarrpa then danced the dugong hunters harpoon, Dakanjali. They started by dancing making the rope, then paddling the canoe (two lines of male and female dancers making a circuit around the funeral shed). At the height of the dancing, the harpoon was thrown into the shed. The harpoon was then held across a line of dancers, who surged back and forth holding it, crying 'burr burr burr'.

The sequence ended. The funeral shed now had a harpoon resting on it, ropes hung over the door, a new sand sculpture around it, the Munyuku flag erected behind, and the cross-shaped swords on the door. The Yolngu elements incorporated Yathikpa, Baraltja, and Yarrinya. A classificatory daughter of the dead man, Muypirri Marawili, raked over the sand sculpture, cleaning it before more dancing.

There was a break, after which the Wanguri began to perform. The Yithuwa Madarrpa and Dhalwangu remained on the men's ceremony ground, painting the chest of the dead man's brother, [Bakulangay Marawili]. This was to be his last chest painting, as he was suffering from a terminal illness.¹⁴⁹ He was painted with Burrutji the lightning snake. When this was completed, the men danced back onto the ceremony ground. The body was moved to the cemetery, and as the coffin was put into the ground, the men sang about the Lightning Snake going back into its hole. Gawirrin Gumana then took charge of the Christian part of the proceedings.

¹⁴⁹ Information supplied by Nuwandjali Marawili

29/07/02

The cleansing ceremony. Many people left straight after the burial the previous night, so this ceremony was performed by Gurrumurru Dhalwangu leaders (Wulanybuma and Banambi Wunungmurra) and by the Yithuwa Madarrpa. A Yingapungapu sand sculpture was built representing the Garraparra Yingapungapu.

The song sequence used on this day was parrotfishing off Garraparra.¹⁵⁰ The sequence was: paddling out in the naku (canoe), catching Yambirrku, the water getting rough (the water part of the cleansing ritual), paddling into shore, sitting under the Mauraki, talking about making a fire, going to get the wood, making and lighting the fire (the smoking part of the cleansing ritual), cooking the parrotfish, and eating the fish. The dancers then danced Wakulungul (fog), kicking over the traces of the fire. Then they lined up opposite the funeral shed and danced towards it, destroying the last traces of the Yingapungapu. They did this several times, dancing Yithuwa (maggott) which was eating the fish bones left behind. This was the end of the cleansing ceremony.

Late that night, the funeral shed was burned. This was a restricted mens ceremony, and women and children had to remain in the houses out of sight. The men sang about the Lightning Snake Burrutji as the shed was lit. The dancers danced close to the fierce flames, pointing their elbows at the flames as they protected their faces. This was the final part of the funeral.

9.9 Gupa Djapu Funeral of [Miliripin Mununggurr], August 2002

7/08/02

[Miliripin Mununggurr], the wife of Gumbaniya Marawili, died on 6/08/2002 in Nhulunbuy hospital. On 7/08/2002, one of her sons brought her possessions back to Yilpara on a plane. She was a Gupa Djapu woman, and the märi for the Gupa Djapu is the MARRAKULU. Some MARRAKULU people were already at Yilpara for this first part of the funeral. As the men danced towards the plane containing the dead woman's

¹⁵⁰ Information supplied by Wäka Mununggurr

possessions, they sang the Dhuwa water at Gurka'wuy in Trial Bay.¹⁵¹ This was a Gupa Djapu song. Later the Gupa Djapu and Marrakulu sang it together, with different tunes. Although the woman was a Gupa Djapu woman, the funeral would be at Yilpara because she had spent her whole adult life there.

This funeral was delayed until later in August. Only limited observations were made of this funeral, although the day of the burial was observed in full. On 22/8/02, songs relating to Ngandharkpuy or Balana were observed.¹⁵² These were about stingray, and the places where stingray are speared. These songs, and the area in general, are shared between Dhudi Djapu, Gupa Djapu, and Wanawalakuymirr Marrakulu.

On 23/08/02, a senior Yithuwa Madarrpa man, [Bakulangay Marawili], died at Yilpara. His body was transported to Nhulunbuy the following day. The ceremonies about this event were not observed.

25/08/02

The dead woman was buried. In the morning the Gupa Djapu and Dhudi Djapu sang about an area called Barralayndji in Trial Bay.¹⁵³ The songs travelled inland from this area and are about looking for yams. The area is shared between Dhäpuyngu, Dhudi and Gupa Djapu. The men sang about making a special digging stick called Bandiyal or Durr̄tji with a stone axe. They then sang about the Dhäpuyngu spirit Wuḍamanga who went looking for yams, and about another spirit Danbaniya, who was talking about going into the jungle.

The men stood up, and moved towards the centre of the ceremony ground. They were singing about the Wapitja (digging stick), and as they did, a number of them danced vigorously. Wäka Mununggurr threw his spear thrower into the ground, and the rhythm of the singing became faster. The power names¹⁵⁴ were called out, and then

¹⁵¹ Information supplied by Dhukaḷ Wirrpanda

¹⁵² Information supplied by Dhukaḷ Wirrpanda, Ngulpurr Marawili, and Wäka Mununggurr

¹⁵³ Information supplied by Dhukaḷ Wirrpanda Dhukaḷ supplied much of the information about the Dhuwa ceremony described here.

¹⁵⁴ For further discussion of power names, refer to the Anthropologist's Report (4.76 and footnote 90)

the men went to get branches from the nearby trees. The dancers held branches up against their spear throwers as the singers sang about seeing the Manmunga (yams), then digging them.

The singers switched to using a Dhäpuyngu tune, whilst singing about finishing the digging, then coming out of the jungle. The men sang that as the ancestral spirits came out, they frightened the birds, Birrkpirrk and Baripari, on the swamp Gawarratji. These songs were taking place at Barralayndji, where the songs had begun that morning. They then sang about Gurrumatji (magpie geese), Bunba (butterfly), Ngurula (seagull), and Gukguk (pigeon). The pigeon marked the end of the sequence. Concurrently at another site, a sand sculpture was being constructed to represent the Wandawuy area.

There was a break. Afterwards, the men began to sing about the Wandawuy area. The men sang about making a fish trap at Wandawuy. They sang about the wood, Dawurr, used to make the fish trap. The men then stood up and danced towards the ceremony ground. They sang and danced Mana (shark) to stand the wood up in the holes that had been dug for the upright posts of the trap. The shark dancers made a circle around one side of the fish trap. The area of the sand sculpture in front of the fish trap represents the area of the shark. The trap was constructed with a forked stick holding a cross bar and bars angling downwards to the sand to fill in the mesh of it. It was constructed across the door of the funeral shed. The sand sculpture represented Wukuḍi, a sacred Dhuwa burial ground. The men then sang about sitting down after making the fish trap.

The songs then changed to a sequence about Nurnurr. This is a flat swampy area between Ngandhark and Mayawundji, near the Djurrpardi area. This sequence was about going to get fish (barramundi and catfish) from the brackish river. The songs relate to catching fish with a spear or using a one person net made of rope strung between two sticks.

The men sang saltwater songs, before returning to Ngurula (seagull) and Nurnurr. They sang about people coming out after catching fish, and frightening birds called Mungida, Baripari and Gurrumarrtji (magpie geese). Then they sang about the

butterfly, about Ngurula (the seagull), about Djarrak (the hawk), and about Gukguk (the pigeon). This pigeon again signalled the end of the sequence.

There was a break. When the men recommenced singing they sang about the pigeon Gukguk at Wandawuy, the pigeon telling the freshwater to run into the fish trap. They sang about the water on its way to the trap as they made their way down towards the funeral shed. Barrambarr, a son of the dead woman, was standing in the fish trap, bent over slightly and with his arms out, ready to dance the shark. The men moved down to where the sand sculpture was. A mat had been placed in the centre of the square sculpture and some of the women moved into this space, already grieving and crying. The trap was moved to allow the passage of the coffin, and the shark would come out after the water had reached the coffin. The coffin was first moved towards the sand sculpture and laid there, a number of people dancing the shark in front of it as it was slowly carried forwards. The women began to throw themselves onto the ground in grief. Then the car was loaded up with waku relatives and other children related to the dead woman. The dancers all had shovel spears and spear throwers. They moved to the front of the car and danced the cloud, Mangan.

The car moved slowly to the cemetery. No notes were recorded about the songs for the burial sequence.

Soon after, the funeral hut was lit. Unlike previous occasions, this happened in the daytime, with women and children present, and the mood was more jovial than on previous occasions. The songs related to the burial ground Wukuḍi as the shed was burned. They sang about the grass on the plain near Wukuḍi burning, until the fire reached the Wukuḍi itself. They finished by singing the big wind, Wirrpanda.

26/08/02

The cleansing ceremony for the funeral. In the morning, the fish trap was still up in front of the burnt out funeral shade. The square sand sculpture had been removed, but the central round sand sculpture remained. In front of where the shed door had been was a plastic tub filled with plates and cups, and inside the burnt out shed frame was three buckets of water and a big plastic drum. A hose also ran there from a nearby tap.

Some of the younger men collected leaves for smoking, and they then went to fetch more of the dead woman's things.

The men sang about the Wandawuy area.¹⁵⁵ They had sung about heavy rain at Bikulanydji, about Gundirr (antbed), Guluwu (wood), and Gukguk (pigeon). The Gukguk was directing a path for the Yolngu walking in the song. The men sang about the path, about Yolngu walking on it, then about them sitting down, then about them going down to the freshwater to make the fish trap. They sang about the building of the trap and about the water falling down over the trap. Finally they sang about Biwiyik, the bird that heard the Yolngu talking and sang its song.

A four-wheel drive vehicle was driven down to the ceremony ground and backed towards the entrance of the shed. A mat was placed in the centre of the circle sand sculpture representing Wukuḍi. The men went down to sit close to this circle. Some women and children gathered and were ushered into the sand circle. These were the children who were waku for the dead woman and had slept inside the funeral hut. Some older boys were also in the truck, and they and the truck were hosed at the same time. The men sang the freshwater flowing whilst the women and kids were doused with hoses and buckets. The song got faster, representing the water flowing to wash away the fish trap, dawurr. Some of the men grabbed hold of spars of the fish trap and shook it, eventually dismantling it at the climax. Now the shark would come out of the fish trap. At this moment the men called out power names. Wāka Mununggurr danced the shark. There was lots of shouting and activity as he turned his head from side to side in time with changes in the music. He had something in his mouth and his arms were out at an angle to represent the shark fins.

The next phase was the people coming out from the fishtrap area to eat fish. The men sang about people talking about getting wood for the fire, and the singers themselves moved to sit around the place where the fire would be placed. The fire was built as they sang about the fire (Gurtha) and during this phase the smoking of the woman's possessions and the other people occurred, using the djilka leaves. The singers sang about the smoke from the fire forming up into Mangan (clouds), then they sang about

¹⁵⁵ Information supplied by Dhukaḷ Wirrpanda

Mulundhu and Birrwirk (unidentified birds). Finally they danced and sang about the rain, kicking over the ashes of the smoking fire with their feet, and then about Gukguk to finish the whole funeral.

At the end of this day, singing began in preparation for the funeral of [Bakulangay Marawili]. The songs related to the dugong hunters at Yathikpa.¹⁵⁶ Djambawa Marawili sang about the hunters going into the bush to look for a harpoon, then lighting fires on the way back to the balkpałk tree at Yathikpa, where they would prepare the harpoon.

9.10 Funeral of [Bakulangay Marawili], August/September 2002

27/08/02

A group of men began singing in the evening.¹⁵⁷ This included Djambawa, Nuwandjali, Ngulpur, Mulawalnga, Napuwarri, Gumbaniya and Narrulwuy Marawili from the Madarra. Also present was Wāka and Menga Mununggurr, and Dhukał Wirrpanda.

As the men sang, they began to build a sand sculpture for the cleansing of people who had handled the body of [Bakulangay Marawili] when it was transported to the plane. The sand sculpture was of Dakanjali, and Dakanjali had not been represented in public in this form for a great many years. The last time was when Wakuthi Marawili was living at Numbulwar in the 1950s. Wakuthi Marawili had directed that this sand sculpture be built after reflecting for a long time on the death of his adopted son [Bakulangay].

Following on from the previous evening, the men were singing about the dugong hunters at Yathikpa. They sang about the hunters sitting under the balkpałk tree and talking. Djambawa Marawili used a very old tune, less common since Wakuthi Marawili had made a new tune that was easier for the young people to learn.

¹⁵⁶ Djambawa Marawili

¹⁵⁷ information on this evening supplied by Djambawa and Nuwandjali Marawili

The men began to build the sculpture using shovels. They were almost exclusively Dhuwa people, the waku, ngapipi, and ngathi of the Madarrpa, and this convention is kept whenever it was possible to do so.

The men completed the sculpture, and the singing continued. They sang rope made from the strands of different trees (balkpalk, darrangulk, etc), then stretching and testing the rope, coiling it up ready for the hunt. They finished by singing Wangupini (cloud) rising in the sea. The rest of the dugong hunting sequence would be done tomorrow as part of the cleansing ceremony.

28/08/02

In the morning the singers¹⁵⁸ sat up the hill from the sand sculpture, under a tree. They sang about the hunters talking about going hunting, Billitjpillitj (parrot) in the tree above the hunters, and getting the paddle, harpoon, and rope ready. The sand sculpture was a rectangle with three ridges of sand across it at one end, two more in the middle, and a circle at the top. Inside the circle was a mat, where those being cleansed would sit. A number of senior men were present, but not many of the younger ones. Wäka Mununggurr went to the middle of the community and spoke forcefully about the need for them to participate. The younger people made their way to where the singers were and the ceremony began.

The men sang about putting the harpoon, paddle and rope in the boat, straightening the rope, and paddling out. At this point the singers stood up, and the rope that would be used in the ceremony was brought out. The dancers stood in a line, pulling the rope back and forth. They danced down to the sand sculpture. Menga Mununggurr led the line of dancers into the sand sculpture. Once inside it, he flicked up the harpoon that had been placed there with his foot, and poised it to strike. When he threw the harpoon towards the house, the rhythm of the singing became faster. The dancers pulled the rope back and forth fast, shouting out as they did so.

¹⁵⁸ Including Djambawa, Nuwandjali, Ngulpurr, Gumbaniya, Malumin, and Mulawalnga Marawili. Informants for this section were not noted, but are likely to have included the above men.

The singers then began to sing Mungurru (Yirritja saltwater), as the room where the dead man had slept was washed out. Then women and children went and sat in the sand circle that had been constructed at the end of the harpoon sculpture. They were splashed with water, and the process was repeated with other people. The singers moved to the far end of the sculpture, away from the house. The mat in the sculpture was removed, and a firepit dug in the same place. The song changed to Djet, sea eagle, flying over the saltwater at Yathikpa, then to the two dugong hunters paddling back to shore.¹⁵⁹ This was followed by Gany'tjurr (crane), and singing about the hunters leaving their equipment on the beach. Next the Mädirriny (south wind) blew, rocking the hunters' canoe, followed by Gathiritj (bush dove or quail).

Piles of grass were fetched for the fire. The men sang about the people walking back to the shade, and about them using a rock to sharpen the knife. This rock is called Dirrimu, and came from Dipi'wuy at Garraparra. They sang about cutting up the dugong, then the hunters talking to each other about making fire. At this point some of the groups of women who had been around the periphery began to walk away. Gumbaniya Marawili made a strong and passionate speech, urging them to remain. The singers stood up, and two piles of grass were put inside the sculpture and lit. Four men danced on their knees as they pushed the grass towards the house, destroying the sculpture with their knees as they went. The front two dancers were dancing Djirikitj (quail), the back two Baru (crocodile). These dancers were joined by a number of others who danced crocodile in a circle on their knees, destroying the sand sculpture. The singers sang Billitj pillitj (parrot) as a red clay line was painted on the vehicle that bore the body to the airport, and on the house and other possessions of the dead man. The fire inside the sand sculpture was still burning, and the singers sang Wakulungul (fog) as the dancers covered the fire with sand. This was the end of the ceremony.

31/08/02

On this day construction of the funeral shed for the dead man began. Saplings and eucalypt branches were collected from the surrounding countryside. The structure of the shed was initially mapped out by Wäka Mununggurr, but the size was extended later by sons of the dead man. Wäka consulted Gumbaniya Marawili on what the

¹⁵⁹ Information from this point on was supplied by Nuwandjali Marawili

name (and associated sand sculpture) for this funeral shed would be. Wakuthi Marawili had declined to make a decision about this, and had decided not to participate further in the funeral.

The frame was completed, but the walls and roof were left until the following day, when eucalypt and paperbark would be gathered. Both were required because the shed has two parts, one representing the Yithuwa Maḍarrpa and one the Dhalwangu clans. Menga Mununggurr came over and inspected the work, then travelled to Djambawa Marawili's house to inquire what songs would be sung that evening.

The songs that evening related to the Yilpara area.¹⁶⁰ The men sang about clearing out an area in the shade, then talking about making a sail, then making the sail, then walking down to the canoe, then putting the sail, paddles, and fishing line into the canoe, then paddling out. They did not sing about going fishing, but left that until the following night.

An old Wunungmurra Dhalwangu man, Nyongala, sang a different song sequence interspersed with the Yithuwa Maḍarrpa one. He sang about GanGan, about the cloud Baltha rising from inland, rain, Nyirrk (cockatoo), Dharpa (wood or tree), Yukuwa (yams), Billitj pillitj (parrot).

02/09/02

Observation of a turtle hunt was made on 1/09/02, so no notes were taken. On the 2/09/02, further construction of the funeral shed was observed. This included adding branches and paperbark to create the roof and walls. The shed was Lorr, the hole of the lightning snake, and the front smaller room represented Yithuwa Maḍarrpa and saltwater, and would be unlined.¹⁶¹ The back room was Dhalwangu freshwater lined with paperbark, and would house the body. Only initiated men would be allowed into this space. Construction was overseen by Ngalpa Wirrpanda, a waku of the Yithuwa Maḍarrpa.

¹⁶⁰ Information supplied by Ngulpurr Marawili

¹⁶¹ Information supplied by Lulpangi Mununggurr

In the evening the men sang songs related to a canoe journey from Numbulwar to Garraparra, a journey made by the Nungbirindi people.¹⁶² These are sea people, and another word for them is Gumurrmarwalamirri (literally, the chest paddle people). People from Dhalwangu clans were leading the singing. When observation commenced, they were approaching the end of the sequence. They sang about calm saltwater (Mungurru), Gany'tjurr (heron), the canoe approaching Garraparra, the saltwater pushing the canoe onto the sand, Mantjarr (leaves) at Walarrka, Gathiritj (bush quail), Mauraki (casuarina tree), Yolngu sitting under the Mauraki, and Yolngu looking out at the rocks of Garraparra. The song sequence continued after this point but no more observations were taken.

03/09/02

Further construction of the funeral shed was observed on this day. The walls were filled in with fresh leaves. A change in the construction had occurred. The main room would be leaf lined and represent the Madarrpa, whereas the anteroom would be lined with paperbark and represented Dhalwangu clans. This was the opposite plan from yesterday. The construction was supervised by Gumbaniya Marawili.

No observations were made on 4/09/02 and 5/09/02. On 06/09/02, there was activity on the men's ceremony ground during the afternoon, and singing in the evening. No detailed observations were made of these events. On 7/09/02 secret men's business was undertaken in the Yathikpa area. This was not observed. On 08/09/02, further men's business was undertaken in the Yathikpa/Garrangali area during the afternoon. In the evening the men sang a Yambirru (parrotfish) fishing sequence. No detailed notes were taken. The funeral was delayed during this period, pending the arrival of a refrigerator to place the coffin in.

09/09/02

The movement of the dead man's clothes to the funeral shed. In the afternoon, the Dhalwangu, including Wulanybuma and Nyongala Wunungmurra began singing. Many senior Yithuwa Madarrpa were not present. The clothes were brought into the

¹⁶² Information supplied by Lulpangi Mununggurr

shed whilst the men sang a brown bush bird from GanGan, a Dhalwangu bird.¹⁶³ As this process was completed, Djambawa Marawili, Gumbaniya Marawili, Dhukaḷ Wirrpanda, and Wäka Mununggurr arrived at the ceremony ground, from where they had been on the separate men's ceremony ground some distance away. They were angry, stating strongly that they had intended that Lorr, the hole of the lightning snake, was to be built around the funeral shed, and a hole where the snake lives dug inside the shed. This should have occurred before the clothes were moved.

Wulanybuma and Nyongala (Nonngi) replied to these statements, and the ceremony ended there. In the evening, the Wunungmurra Dhalwangu men and the Yithuwa Madarrpa participated jointly in the performance of the songs related to the Lightning snake. The men danced into the hut and prepared the area, constructing a sand sculpture representing Lorr.

10/09/02

A song sequence was sung in the early evening that was not observed. Subsequently, a second sequence was begun. This sequence related to Numbulwar, but a different version of it can be used to refer to the Yilpara area.¹⁶⁴ In the Numbulwar version, it tells the story of Yolngu walking in the bush to cut wood, then returning to make boomerangs for a ceremony. In the Yilpara songs, spears are cut and made for the same purpose. The singers were Yithuwa Madarrpa men, and waku for the Yithuwa Madarrpa were also present.

The men sang about walking in the bush, about a green-winged pigeon, about cutting the wood for boomerangs, then walking back and lighting bushfires along the way. Finally they sang Wakulungul, the fog and smoke that comes from the bushfires. Numbulwar can also be called Ngulpurr.¹⁶⁵ This name also applies to Yilpara, as both places are covered in sand.

¹⁶³ Wanmula Marawili

¹⁶⁴ Information for this section supplied by Dhukaḷ Wirrpanda

¹⁶⁵ Djambawa Marawili

The Yolngu in the songs walked back to their camp, hot and tired because the area was so sandy, and then sat down at the camp.¹⁶⁶ The men then went on to sing about Yolngu carving the boomerangs, and about using them in the Gunapipi (a secret men's ceremony) and Mandiyala, a circumcision ceremony that lasts all night.¹⁶⁷ These last songs relating to the boomerang were not observed.

11/09/02

The funeral continued to be delayed due to problems obtaining a refrigerator for the coffin. There was further activity on the men's ceremony ground that was not observed. Some fish were caught from Warrapa, which were sent to the men on the men's ceremony ground. In the evening the men sang a sequence about a spear fight at Yilpara, which is a mapillari (ritual fighting) area.¹⁶⁸ The fight occurred at low tide, and when the high tide came in, it carried the spears away. Blood was spilled, and the sand crab came up to clear away the blood and the remains of the argument. The men sang about crying for the spears that floated away. Then they sang Wangupini cloud, then the south wind Mädirriny.

The Dhalwangu clans performed separately on the other side of the ceremony ground. They sang a saltwater sequence from Garraparra.¹⁶⁹ This lasted considerably longer than the Yithuwa Madarrpa sequence.

12/09/02

The men were busy on the men's ceremony ground on this day. In the late afternoon the Yithuwa Madarrpa performed a short ceremony to mark out the gravesite. They sang and danced the spear sequence that they had performed the previous evening. Menga Mununggurr thrust the spear in the sand to end the sequence and mark the point where the grave would be dug. After this the men sang Mungurru (saltwater) as the spear was carried away by the tide. They then moved back to the ceremony

¹⁶⁶ Nuwandjali Marawili

¹⁶⁷ Djambawa Marawili

¹⁶⁸ Information supplied by Menga Mununggurr

¹⁶⁹ Information supplied by Menga Mununggurr

ground and were joined by Wunungmurra Dhalwangu clan members to sing Miny'ga (garfish), Getkit (seagull), and Wangupini (cloud).¹⁷⁰

In the evening the homeland centre was quiet and dark. The road to Yilpara was closed on this night and all of the following day, as the Gumana Dhalwangu from GanGan were due to arrive. They performed a special ceremony which could not be witnessed by women and children, who had to remain indoors out of sight. Wäka Mununggurr gave me permission to observe this ceremony.

After some hours, Gawirrin Gumana arrived in his vehicle, which drove to the ceremony ground. The sound of singing and clapsticks was heard from the men's ceremony ground, as approximately twenty dancers led by Gumana and Wunungmurra Dhalwangu approached the ceremony ground. They were met by approximately 15 Yithuwa Madarrpa dancers, who spread across the entrance of the funeral shed to meet them. The Yithuwa Madarrpa tapped the metal points of their spears with clapsticks. The Dhalwangu represented freshwater, the Yithuwa Madarrpa saltwater.¹⁷¹ The Dhalwangu danced around the shed once then up to the Madarrpa, then stopped and pointed their elbows. They did this several times, then finished with a cry.

Wäka Mununggurr, Menga Mununggurr and Dhuka Wirrpanda began marking out a Yingapungapu shape with their feet. Younger men followed, shaping it with their spear throwers. Some women began to reappear, but remained in the background as the sculpture was completed in relative quiet and without a great deal of ceremony. When it was completed, people headed back to their camps. Although in the shape of a Yingapungapu, this sculpture represented an inland site near GanGan.

13/09/02

The body of the dead man arrived on this day. In the morning the Yithuwa Madarrpa sang about Baraltja whilst the Dhalwangu clans, sitting on the opposite side of the ceremony ground, sang about GanGan. One of the songs the Yithuwa Madarrpa sang

¹⁷⁰ Informant not noted

¹⁷¹ Informant not noted

was *widiyarr*. This means a tidal, muddy area where it is not possible to see the tide coming in, but rather it bubbles up through the mud as brackish water. Other songs sung by the Yithuwa Madarrpa included *Getkit* (seagull), *Wangupini* (cloud), *Mantjarr* (mangrove leaves), and *Balin* (barramundi).¹⁷²

The Dhalwangu clans were assigned to meet the body when it arrived by plane. The car was placed so that the back faced towards where the plane would roughly stop. A group of approximately five senior Dhalwangu and *wakus* waited under a nearby tree, and further away, *Dhukaḷ* and *Wuyal Wirrpanda* supervised the preparation of the dancers. Many people had white clay on their foreheads and red clay on their arms and legs. The funeral plane approached and circled the homeland centre. *Dhukaḷ* and *Wuyal* addressed the dancers, instructing them on the actions they were to perform. *Dhukaḷ* sang and played the clapsticks, singing about the Lightning Snake. The men danced and walked to the plane. As they danced and sang, they loaded the coffin into the car, which then followed behind the dancing men. The truck halted about ten metres from the shed. The women began to grieve and cry as the body was brought out of the vehicle. The men danced with the coffin, taking it into the shed, as the grieving continued. After the men left the shed, the ceremony ended immediately.

In the evening there was more dancing and singing.¹⁷³ The Yithuwa Madarrpa danced about the area between *Garangarri* and *Yilpara*, singing about a *Dhuwa* spirit coming from *Garangarri* into *Yilpara*. The Dhalwangu sang and danced about the *Garraparra* area, led by *Yumujin Wunungmurra*. Two armbands that were carried with the body represented *Yathikpa* and *Baraltja* respectively. The Dhalwangu clans were also performing songs related to the ancestral figures *Barrama* and *Lanytjun*. The paperbark section of the shed represents *Bungurrapungurr*, the place of *Barrama*. Later in the evening, the coffin was moved into the refrigerator inside the storage hut.

14/09/02

The funeral vehicle was purified on this day, so that it could be used to drive to *Nhulunbuy*. The Yithuwa Madarrpa began singing and dancing in the morning. After

¹⁷² Information supplied by *Wäka Munungurr* and *Djambawa Marawili*

¹⁷³ Information supplied by *Djambawa Marawili*

a delay they brought the car to a prepared firepit, and whilst singing and dancing, beat the outside and inside of the car with smoking branches. Two men, Menga and Wāka Mununggurr, painted designs representing fire on the doors of the car.

In the afternoon the singing began on the main ceremony ground. A number of senior men were still busy on the men's ceremony ground, where they had remained all day. The Yithuwa Madarrpa men on the main ceremony ground sang about spearing for Yambirrku (parrotfish) at Mulawalnga, close to Yilpara.¹⁷⁴ They sang about the 'bites' in the sand that the Yambirrku makes when it is searching for crabs. The fish was speared, and the men sang Mungurru saltwater carrying the spear and the fish away after it had been speared. Following songs were about Mantjarr (mangrove leaves), Gathul (mangrove propagule), Getkit (seagull), Makani (queenfish), Gany'tjurr (heron), and Borutj (sandfly). The men then sang about the spear fisherman returning to the shade of a tree, then about Gathiritj (the bush dove), then Yithuwa, the maggot.

15/09/02

In the morning, the Dhalwangu clans and the Yithuwa Madarrpa began singing together using different tunes.¹⁷⁵ The Dhalwangu clans were singing about Garraparra, the Yithuwa Madarrpa about Yilpara. They were singing about Yolngu sitting in the shade, making a rope to go fishing with. The men got up as the song shifted to paddling the canoe. The dancers 'paddled' with their spear throwers as they walked around the funeral shed, and then the men returned to the shade and sang and danced, mimicking casting the line to go fishing. The men then sang Djeṭ (sea eagle), Getkit(seagull), Miny'ga (garfish), Makani(queenfish), then Makani evading the spear. The Dhalwangu clans then sang Mantjarr (mangrove leaves). The Yithuwa Madarrpa sang cloud, formed by the splashing tail of the Makani, then Mädirriny (south, southeast wind). The song sequence ended here. The Yarrwidi Gumatj clan arrived to perform on this particular day.

¹⁷⁴ Information for this section supplied by Ngulpurr Marawili

¹⁷⁵ Information supplied by Ngulpurr Marawili

Singing recommenced in the afternoon.¹⁷⁶ Yumijin and Nyongala Wunungmurra performed with the Madarrpa. They sang about rough water, calm water, the canoe paddling back to shore, Bitpuwa (small garfish), Gany'tjurr (reef heron), pushing the boat ashore, walking up to the shade, and Mauraki tree. The singing ended soon after.

In the evening the Yithuwa Madarrpa and Dhalwangu clans performed songs related to inland areas. They were joined by the Yarrwidi Gumatj later in the evening. No detailed notes were taken about these sequences.

16/09/02

The Yithuwa Madarrpa began in the morning by dancing Mungurru saltwater around the funeral shed.¹⁷⁷ They were continuing the parrotfish story from the previous day, only this time they sang about successfully catching the fish. The men used their spear throwers to paddle their canoes, then circled them above their heads and cast them out to mimic the actions of fishing. Then they slid their hands up and down the galpus to mimic pulling in the line. They then danced the action of the fishermen breaking the heads of the fish and the singers sang of the blood going into the water, which makes the sea go calm. They sang about Djet the sea eagle, circling high above, fishing the smaller fish that get attracted to the blood in the water.

The men then sang about Mantjarr (mangrove leaves), Miny'ga (garfish), Getkit (seagull), Makani (queenfish), Bulunu (wet season wind), paddling back to shore, Gany'tjurr (heron) seeing the fishermen on the shore, the boat arriving on the beach, and the fishermen walking up to the shade. At this point the singers stood up and directed the dancers to sit around two prepared firepits in front of the funeral shed. The men sang about lighting the fire, and then bread was distributed amongst the dancers as the singers sang about eating the fish. The dancers danced around the fire on their knees, then turned and danced towards the shade. Finally they were lined up in two lines to perform Yithuwa (maggot). The dancers had to roll around on their stomachs in the hot sand to perform Yithuwa. They repeated this action several times. The women also danced Yithuwa after the men.

¹⁷⁶ Information supplied by Ngulpurr Marawili

¹⁷⁷ Informants not noted

In the afternoon, the Yithuwa Madarrpa sang songs from Garrangali, including Miny'ga (queenfish) coming in with the tide, Gany'tjurr (heron), Gumulu (crane), Borutj (biting insect), and Wakulungul (fog).¹⁷⁸ The Dhalwangu clans performed songs at another place on the ceremony ground, but no notes were taken.

The grave was dug in the afternoon. No further notes were taken about the conduct of this funeral.

¹⁷⁸ Information supplied by Djambawa Marawili