Abstract

This chapter discusses responses to the return of legacy recordings of Pintupi singing made in 1976 and the collection of further metadata about the song Wanji-wanji featured on the recordings. Wanji-wanji was once a popular entertainment song that was performed across the western half of Australia, as can be seen by the many recordings of it held in archives. Custodianship of the song is unknown; the earliest reference to its performance dates back to the 1850s, where it is described as a ‘travelling dance’ (Bates 1913–1914) and so in terms of copyright its status may be comparable to ‘public domain’, i.e. outside of copyright. Responses to hearing the recording were emotional. Those who knew the song recalled the place and time in which they had heard it long ago. There was great interest in how widely it was known though little interest in the meanings of the lyrics. On the whole, responses to access and proposed uses of the recordings, as well as the future possible uses of the song, reflected its public domain status. Nevertheless, the confidence in people’s responses varied depending on whether the individual knew the song, had experience in using archival recordings, and whether they perceived community interest and support for classical Aboriginal singing practices.

Keywords: Aboriginal song, Indigenous ceremony, Pintupi, entertainment songs, Australian Aboriginal ceremony
Introduction

In 2017, I set out for Pintupi country to consult with people about audio recordings of a ceremonial song that could be described as a ‘travelling corroboree’ (Hercus 1980: 17). The ceremony was labelled *Wanji-wanji* and the recording had been made in 1976 at the now abandoned outstation of Kungkayurnti, ‘Browns Bore’, some 80 kilometres southwest of the community of Papunya in Central Australia. The five singers on the recordings were Pintupi men and women, now all deceased. Four were well-known artists who sang together on one recording: Mick Namarari Tjapaltjarri, Wintjiya Napaltjarri, Tjunkaya Napaltjarri, and Muwitja Napaltjarri. The other, who sang solo, was the renowned Nosepeg Tjungkarta Tjupurrula OBE, who entranced a series of filmmakers, politicians, and academics with his wit, knowledge, and charisma. The two recordings, totalling 1 hour and 20 minutes of singing *Wanji-wanji*, were high quality and well documented and had been archived in public institutions. They had been made by musicologist Richard Moyle, who had spent a total of 12 months at Kungkayurnti documenting Pintupi musical life in the mid 1970s (Moyle 1979).

The songs were of the *turlku* ceremonial genre, a Pintupi and Kukatja word meaning ‘social corroboree’ (Hansen & Hansen 1974: 200) or what Moyle (1979: 19) describes as “an informal song ... with occasional dancing” whose principal function is entertainment, and which has no associated sacred objects. In the neighbouring language Kukatja, in whose lands R Moyle recorded a further version of the song in 1982, the entertainment genre was called *tjulpurrpa* (Moyle 1997: 90), a term Hansen & Hansen (1974: 230) define as “a ceremony open to women and children.” Moyle compares *tjulpurrpa* with “the ‘corroborees’ seen or heard in camps by scores of early visitors to central Australia. Now largely forgotten through non-performance, the names and a few songs alone are remembered” (1997: 90). The word ‘corroboree’, originally from the Darug language of Sydney, was well-established in English by the time

---

1 I wish to acknowledge the Indigenous consultants who contributed their views and knowledge in the interviews. In particular, Aileen Napurrula, Barbara Napangarti, Brenda Napaltjarri, Bundy Rowe, Charlie Tjapangarti, Clara Rowe, Elizabeth Marks Nakamarra, George Tjungurrayi, Irene Napangarti, Janelle Larry, Jeannie Pegg Nakamarra, Joe Young, Josephine Brown, Josephine Napurrula, Linda Anderson Nakamarra, Michael Nelson, Monica Robinson, Nanyuma Napangarti, Napurla Scobie, Nguya Napaltjarri, Noya Napaltjarri, Pamela Tolson, Patrick Ooloodidi, George Lee, Mitjili Napurrula, Eunice Napanangka Jack, Anmanari Napanangka, Alice Nampijinpa, Simon Dixon, Richard Pegg, Robert Nanala Tjapaltjarri, Rubilee Napurrula, Tatuli Napurrula, and Xavier Tjapanangka. I thank Peter Bartlett, Cindy Gibson, Lyle Gibson, Robin Granites, Jess Bartlett, Marlene Spencer Napmitjin, Richard Moyle, Fred Myers, Marina Strocchi, Luis Miguel Rojas Berscia, and the Purple House, who assisted in the logistics, translation, and consultation for this research. I thank Ben Deacon, Robert Nugent, and Felicity Meakins, who assisted with recording the interviews. I also thank Jason Gibson and two anonymous reviews for their insightful comments and suggestions. Funding for this research was provided by an Australian Research Council Future Fellowship (FT140100783) and Linkage Project grant in partnership with the Central Land Council (LP140100806). Ethical clearance for both projects was obtained from the University of Sydney (2015/081, 2015/544) and permits to enter Aboriginal Land from the Central Land Council (51332, 41434, 30791).

2 Nosepeg features in numerous movies, three biographical films and countless published writings. Nosepeg and Mick are discussed by Khan (2016).

3 The spelling of Pintupi/Kukatja words, including skin names, follows that in Valiquette (1993); for people who identify as Warlpiri I have followed standard Warlpiri spellings.
Howitt (1887: 327) used it to refer to Aboriginal song, the accompanying dances and the social gathering in which they are performed. Elkin (1970: 249) describes this genre as “secular or ‘everyday’ camp music.” Most Indigenous groups across Australia have an equivalent term for this genre (e.g. Elkin 1970: 249; Treloyn et al. 2016: 96). In Aboriginal English the term ‘corroboree’ or sometimes ‘playabout’ (Egan 1997: 100) is used for this genre in contrast to ‘ceremony’ or ‘business’, which refers to the more serious land-based performance genres.

My interest in the Wanji-wanjji recordings stemmed from working on a project with linguist Felicity Meakins and Karungkarni Art Centre (Turpin & Meakins 2019) to document the traditional entertainment songs the Gurindji people of the Victoria River District (NT) perform. According to the Gurindji singers, some of their entertainment songs had come to them via Balgo, including one called Laka. Balgo had once been a hub of ceremonial exchange, and anthropologists Ronald and Catherine Berndt (1988: 383) described how ceremonies came from “all directions: the Canning Stock Route to the west, the east Kimberleys to the north.” Richard Moyle had documented Aboriginal songs at Balgo in the 1980s, and Laka was indeed the name of a “largely forgotten song” (1997: 43, 90). Moyle recorded Kukatja/Pintupi man Donkeyman Lee Tjupurrula singing and talking about Laka for 13 minutes. ‘Wanji-wanjji’ is one word that appears in a verse of Laka, as sung by the Gurindji. Moyle’s extensive set of recordings includes two long performances of a song Nosepeg refers to as Wanji-wanjji (1979: 19). With my interest piqued, I wrote to Richard Moyle requesting permission to hear both the Kungkayurnti and Balgo recordings performed some 580 kilometres and eight years apart (see Figure 1).

My analysis of these three performances finds, based on the fact that they contain many of the same verses, that Laka and Wanji-wanjji are alternative names for the same song. A summary of this analysis is presented in the next section.

---

4 Equivalent terms in neighbouring languages are purlapa in Warlpiri, inma in Pitjantjatjara, wajarra in Gurindji, and junba in Jaru and other languages across a vast area of northwestern Australia (Treloyn 2003: 209; Turpin & Meakins 2019). In Pintupi the word turlku is also used to refer to ‘song’ in a general sense, such as when the genre is unknown or unspecified (Valiquette 1993: 297).

5 Two other songs we recorded at Kalkaringi, Tjuntara and Kamul, were also recorded by Richard Moyle at Balgo, suggesting widespread ritual exchange between these regions (Turpin & Meakins 2019).

6 Both Richard Moyle’s monographs contain a vast number of song texts; but these are only a fraction of the songs he recorded. Many, such as Laka/Wanji-wanjji, did not make it into the published volumes, which focus on more well-known songs.
A comparison of the three recordings of the song

In this article I use the word ‘song’ to refer to the same entity that some musicologists call a ‘song set’ or ‘repertory’ (e.g. O’Keeffe et al. 2018: 141), which some ethnographers call a ‘ceremony’. I use the word ‘verse’ for the contrastive units that make up a song and I use ‘song item’ to refer to the multiple tokens of each verse, a structural feature ubiquitous in Central Australian Aboriginal song.\footnote{A song item is the smallest unit of singing and usually last 30–60 seconds.}

Although called by two different names, *Laka* and *Wanji-wanji* (henceforth ‘the song’) have many of the same verses. By ‘the same’ I am referring to the fact that the rhythmic-texts of the verses are indistinguishable, although their melodies may differ. This is based on my linguistic and musical analysis of the verses, but it is also supported by comments from Aboriginal singers who upon listening to these state that they are ‘the same’ and make comments such as “We sing it this way, but they sing it that way.”\footnote{On one occasion this was even accompanied by different patterns of higher and lower hand gestures, reminiscent of the way hand gestures are sometimes used to accompany a musical pitch system such as solfege.} The remarkable stability...
of the rhythmic-texts is characteristic of other Aboriginal songs, including songs that are not understood by the people who sing them (Berndt & Berndt 1988: 384; Dixon 2011: 55; Roth 1897: 168; Turpin & Meakins 2019: 19, 166).

On the Kungkayurnti recordings there are 25 unique verses of the song, 13 of which also recur in the Balgo and Gurindji recordings of the song. This is shown on the top row of Table 1. On the much shorter Balgo recording, there are seven verses of the song, five of which are also on the Kungkayurnti and Gurindji recordings. On the Gurindji recordings, there are 15 verses of the song, 12 of which are also on the Balgo and Kungkayurnti recordings.

Table 1. A comparison of *Wanji-wanji*/Laka song recorded at three different places

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Recording</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>No. of verses</th>
<th>No. of verses common to the other two recordings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kungkayurnti <em>Wanji-wanji</em></td>
<td>1975</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Balgo <em>Laka</em></td>
<td>1981</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gurindji <em>Laka</em> (Turpin &amp; Meakins)</td>
<td>2015 &amp; 2016</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2 shows the number of verses that are common to each of these three performances. The total number of verses in each performance is bolded along the diagonal (25, 7 and 15); and matching two performances along the X and Y axis gives the number of verses common to these two performances. For example, the Gurindji and Balgo performances have four verses in common.

Table 2. Number of verses in common across the three different recordings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>3 performances</th>
<th>Kungkayurnti</th>
<th>Balgo</th>
<th>Gurindji</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kungkayurnti</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Balgo</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gurindji</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Ten verses of this same song can be heard on five other archival recordings made across Western Australia and South Australia by four linguists. When we include these recordings in the comparison, we find even more verses common to other performances: a total of 19 of the 25 verses on the Kungkayurnti recordings can be heard on other recordings and six of the seven verses on the Balgo recordings can be heard on other recordings.

9 AIATSIS archive tapes Moyle_R03_Aus 80, 81, and 76.
10 AIATSIS archive tapes Moyle_R23_Aus 659/2.
11 Deposited at AIATSIS but yet to be accessioned.
12 The five recordings are held at AIATSIS. They are from Marble Bar, WA (Klokeid_T01-000669 [1967]), Roebourne, WA (OGrady_G02-000799 [1954/1955]), Norseman, WA (Von-Brandenstein_C04-002159A [1970]), Port Augusta, SA (Hercus_L03-001003B [1967]), and Maree, SA (Hercus_L27-004315A [1973]). The ‘elsewhere’ also includes a recording made with Pitjantjatjara speaker Nellie Patterson in 2017 that yielded an unelicited singing of one of the verses sung at Kalkaringi (Verse 29).
Table 3. Number of verses on the Kungkayurnti and Balgo recordings common to all other recordings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No. of verses/ Performance</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Occurring in other performances</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kungkayurnti</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Balgo</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Kungkayurnti and Kalkaringi performances of the song contain by far the most verses and have the longest duration out of all the corpus of recordings located to date.\(^{13}\) Across all the recordings of the song, there are a total of 33 different verses. These verses are listed in column 2 of Table 4 (Verse id.), each identified with a unique numeric id between 22 and 54.\(^{14}\) Twenty-one of these verses occur on more than one recording. These are the verses in the shaded rows of Table 4. Put another way, 64 per cent of the verses across these recordings are the same, while 36 per cent of verses are unique to only one recording. This suggests that Laka and Wanjii-wanjii are alternative names for the one song.

Table 4. The distribution of the 32 verses of Wanjii-wanjii/Laka across the three recordings and five from elsewhere (‘other’); 21 verses are sung on more than one recording (shaded)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Recording</th>
<th>Verse id.</th>
<th>Number of verses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kungkayurnti (K)</td>
<td>41, 42, 43, 49, 51, 52</td>
<td>12 verses on only one recording</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gurindji (G)</td>
<td>36, 37, 39</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Balgo (B)</td>
<td>23</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>53, 54</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K &amp; G</td>
<td>26, 27, 38, 30, 31, 32, 33, 35</td>
<td>21 verses on recordings from more than one location/time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K, G &amp; B</td>
<td>24, 25, 28, 34</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K &amp; B</td>
<td>47</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K &amp; other</td>
<td>40, 44, 45, 46, 48, 50</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G &amp; other</td>
<td>29</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B &amp; other</td>
<td>22</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The verses on the recordings are not performed in the same order, which is not uncommon for genres of Aboriginal song. Having discovered that the Pintupi and the Gurindji, some 800 kilometres away, sing the same song, the next question was what sort of song this is. Thus,

\(^{13}\) The past manager at Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara Media organisation (then called Ernabella Video and Television), Neil Turner, recalls playing a recording of this song at Ernabella “which caused great excitement in 1986” (email communication, June 2018). This recording has recently come to light. It has only two verses, both of which occur on the Pintupi recordings.

\(^{14}\) The numbering commences at 22 because my numbering system for verses is based on sequential ordering of verses in a single performance, which in this case was the Gurindji performance. This performance began with a different song before Laka, and thus the first Laka verse was 22. As can be imagined, a comparison of the same verse across multiple songs and performances requires a stable unique id. The numbering given here is an abbreviated form of my longer verse id system, which indicates the genre, song set, and unique verse.
my intention was to see whether contemporary Pintupi could shed light on the origins and nature of this travelling song, as well as provide contemporary views on access and publication.

**Travelling songs**

The term ‘travelling corroboree’ was first used by Roth in 1897 to refer to the ‘Molonga corroboree’ from Queensland (Roth 1897; Elkin 1970: 260), which had been passed on over huge distances, and was sometimes known by a different name, such as *Tjitjingalla* in Arrernte territory, as noted by Gillen in 1898 (Mulvaney et al. 2001: 432). Even before this, Howitt (1887: 329) described how some Aboriginal songs were “carried from tribe to tribe” and that the distance of one such song was “about five hundred miles in a direct line, but it by no means gives the length of the course followed by the song in its travels.”

Various ethnographers have used the term ‘travelling’ plus either ‘corroboree’, ‘ceremony’, ‘song’, ‘ritual’, or ‘business’ to refer to Aboriginal traditions that have circulated well beyond their place of origin (e.g. McCarthy 1939). Elkin (1970: 260) observes that in addition to the traditional trade of ceremonies, since the time of colonisation ceremonies have also spread as people sought employment on cattle stations or townships and as they moved onto Aboriginal settlements far from their own tribal country.

Many German ethnographers who were interested in cultural diffusion referred to such ceremonies as ‘Wanderkulte’, wandering cults or mobile rituals (see Kolig 2017; Widlok 1992). Petri (2014 [1952]: 161) refers to such songs as being “carried from tribe to tribe until finally the precise meaning of the words and the original source of the songs fall into oblivion.” Widlok (1992: 116), discussing three such ceremonies, argues that these are not limited to particular named genres (e.g. *turlku, yawulyu* in Pintupi), but are rather any “part of a traditional local repertoire (secret-sacred rituals or more profane poetry) [that has] become a mobile ritual” (see also Elkin 1970: 259–261). If we assume that any genre of ceremony can travel, we can understand how ceremonies might easily be recontextualised across time and place, as musicologist Wild (1987: 109) observes.

**Wanji-wanji**

The name *Wanji-wanji* was first used by ethnographer Daisy Bates, who witnessed what she called a ‘travelling show’ or ‘travel dance’ at Eucla on the south coast of Australia (Bates 1913–1914). Like the *Molonga*, this was known by different names in the regions through which it travelled. Bates believed it was the same song as what was called *Wanna Wa* in the southwest of Western Australia (WA).

The extent of the *Molonga*’s travels has been widely documented (Beckett & Hercus 2009: 11; Gibson 2017: 149; Hercus 1980; Kimber 1990; Mulvaney 1976; Skinner 2017: 340); however, this has not been the case for the *Wanji-wanji*. Unlike the *Molonga*, there were no known audio recordings of *Wanji-wanji*, and so comparisons of it until now have been based solely on Bates’

---

15 It was subsequently recorded on wax cylinder in 1901 at the Stevenson Creek in South Australia and a film of the associated dance was made in Alice Springs soon after. The unpublished notes and recordings of the *Tjitjingalla* ceremony recorded by Baldwin Spencer and Frank Gillen are discussed by Gibson (2015).
notes and anecdotal evidence. The archaeologist and museum anthropologist Fred McCarthy proposed a route for both travelling songs in a 1939 article based on Bates’ work, and personal communication with Elkin, who had “heard of it” in the Musgrave Ranges, northwest of South Australia (McCarthy 1939: 86). German ethnographer Helmut Petri, drawing on Bates’ work (2014 [1952]: 164), referred to it as ‘secret ceremonial’; however, this is not attested elsewhere and appears to be based on a misreading of Bates, as her description of it involves men and women. Later, Petri (2018 [1967]) refers to the ‘Wandji-kurang-gara’ ceremony which he documented, yet a comparison of this with Laka/Wanji-wanji shows a completely different set of verses.

In 1975, Richard Moyle was the first researcher to record a performance of Wanji-wanji and document it as such. Previous recordings of some verses existed, though these were either hidden among linguistic recordings, documented as ‘a corroboree song’, or, in the case of Hercus, who was aware of the Wanji-wanji ceremony, recorded as individual’s rememberings of it, rather than a full performance. Moyle noted that Daisy Bates had also heard a song of this name at Eucla, WA in 1913; nevertheless, he concluded that the Pintupi Wanji-wanji was not the same song that Bates had witnessed, based on the different meanings and social context that Bates attributes to it (Moyle 1979: 19).

Moyle did not publish any analysis of his Wanji-wanji or Laka recordings. My analysis of these, and a comparison with Daisy Bates’ fieldnotes, reveals that the ‘opening’ verse of Wanji-wanji (Bates 1938: 126) is identical to a verse performed by the Gurindji and the Pintupi (Verse 33). Further examination of her written notes reveals an additional 11 verses that resemble verses performed by the Pintupi: Verses 23, 24, 25, 29 and 37 (Bates 35-20T), Verses 22 and 47 (Bates 35-20T), Verse 50 (Bates 35-23T), Verse 40 (Bates 35-24T), Verse 30 (Bates 35-25T) and Verse 31 (Bates 35-27T), as well as two verses on other recordings: Verses 54 (Bates 35-18T) and 53 (Bates 35-20T).

While we know nothing about the music to which the verses sung at Eucla in 1913 were set, Bates’ transcription of the verses show Laka and Wanji-wanji are the same song (i.e. they have many of the same verses). This raises a number of questions. Where did the Wanji-wanji come from? Why did it travel? How did it travel over such a large distance? Was this a common thing? Do songs still travel today? Could some verses have come from different locations, and have been added on or forgotten over the course of time? Do people today still perform the song? Are people aware of the large geographic extent over which it was known? And more specific to the Pintupi, do they know of the existence of these recordings, and others made by Richard Moyle? Scant attention has been paid to this song in the literature; and the whole notion of what are essentially Aboriginal ‘folk songs’ (songs that are so old and have travelled so widely that their origins are unknown) has not been addressed. It was with these questions in mind that I engaged in community meetings to seek contemporary understandings of the song, and contemporary views on access and use of the recordings, consulting with both descendants of the singers and contemporary Pintupi ceremonial leaders.

These recordings are somewhat unusual in Indigenous Australia in that they contain creative work – considered also intangible cultural property – whose custodianship (composer and/or owner) is unknown, yet the identity of the performers is known. Bates’ reference to the song dates its performance back to 1850 and, additionally, no person, clan, or language
group claims ownership of the song that I am aware of. If we consider such material in terms of Australian copyright law, such songs are ‘traditional’ or what is also referred to as ‘public domain’, which means that the musical works and lyrics are out of copyright. In contrast, for most other Indigenous songs that have been recorded, custodianship can be identified through family lineage to either the original composer or to some other political unit, such as the clan, Dreaming line, or language group (e.g. Barwick & Turpin 2016; Gallagher et al. 2014; Gibson 2018; O’Keeffe et al. 2018: 141; Strehlow 1955). Furthermore, if all the descendants of the group pass away, custodianship can also be handed on to a neighbouring group or related unit. The trading and sharing of songs throughout Indigenous Australia has long been documented in the ethnographic literature (Howitt 1887; McCarthy 1939; Elkin 1970).

The song is also traditional in the sense of it being an Indigenous musical genre rather than an imported genre, in contrast with, for example, classical or popular music genres. Traditional music is characteristically music and dance whose origins are many generations in the past, and that is passed on “mostly unchanged between generations of informal players, usually without notation, and played mostly by ear.”

This article considers contemporary Pintupi people’s responses to these recordings of this relatively little-documented genre, and the process by which further information about the songs and the singers was obtained. Across Australia the repatriation of song recordings to their communities of origin has been a common research practice for musicologists (Brown 2014; Brown et al. 2017; Treloyn et al. 2016; Turpin 2005; R Moyle, pers. comm., 2018). It is also of ethical concern that ‘cultural stakeholders’ have knowledge of and access to the results of past and present research, as Treloyn et al. (2016) point out. The outline of this chapter is as follows. In the next section I describe the methods used for seeking people’s views on access, usage and further information about the recordings; then I analyse the main responses to hearing the recordings and summarise the sorts of memories and knowledge people have of the songs and the significance of these. Finally I summarise cultural stakeholders’ views on access to and usage of the recordings.

Methodology

After obtaining copies of the recordings, I transcribed the verses and compared them with recordings of the same song from elsewhere, as summarised in the Introduction. I also worked with a team of people to translate the speech on the recordings. Preliminary research on who to consult began by talking with people who had worked in Pintupi communities and with Pintupi people in Alice Springs. After assembling a list of the descendants of the singers and cultural leaders, I then set out to undertake the consultations in partnership with a field
recording assistant and in most cases also an interpreter.\textsuperscript{19} In Alice Springs these were done at the 'Purple House' (an accommodation centre for Pintupi people on dialysis),\textsuperscript{20} outside the Dialysis Unit and at Papunya Tula, while in the communities these were done at the art centre, on people’s verandas, or in a quiet location outside of the communities. Information about people’s whereabouts and additional people to consult was continually updated throughout this process.

My primary questions were about access, usage and sharing information about the song. In consultation with community members I put forward a number of uses, including my own request for radio broadcast of excerpts and the release of the recordings as an album. I asked people if they wanted access to the recordings and, if so, whether there were any restrictions on who could access them, and if they wanted copies kept at the Central Land Council based in Alice Springs (the CLC is the primary representation body for Aboriginal issues relating to land in the region) – in particular, in the CLC’s digital cultural media database, which can be accessed online and/or in a local institution.\textsuperscript{21} In addition, I wanted to create new recordings with people who knew about the songs or the singers to get a better understanding of the nature of the songs and the lives of the people who sang them.

My approach was to inform people about the recordings and explain that I was seeking further information about them. Some people wanted to hear the song before agreeing to be part of the interviews. For older people it was usually enough for me to casually sing one of the lines of the main verse and they would immediately recognise it, while for others I played part of the recording on a speaker and we would then schedule an interview for later in the day or the following day. The interviews involved between one and eight people in a public place outdoors listening to the recordings in two different ways. One was with headphones, so the songs could be heard properly (there were often noise distractions in the external environment), and so that people’s responses could be heard clearly (Figure 2). The second way was with speakers, which had the benefit of more than one person listening simultaneously (Figure 3). Sometimes other people would come by to listen briefly (see Figure 4).

All but two interviews were recorded. Depending on the person’s interest, one or more verses would be played; rarely were all 24 verses played. In all, 30 people were consulted, predominantly descendants of the singers, but also elders who knew the songs, as well as local interpreters.

\textsuperscript{19} Recording assistants were Robert Nugent, Ben Deacon, Felicity Meakins, and Shanay Hubmann and interpreters were Jessie Bartlett, Cindy Gibson, Marlene Spencer Nampitjinpa, Irene Roberts, and Robert Tjapaltjarri.

\textsuperscript{20} The Purple House is described as a “home away from home for patients forced to relocate from remote communities for dialysis treatment.” (https://www.purplehouse.org.au/alice-springs) (Last accessed 9 November 2018.)

\textsuperscript{21} https://clc.keepingculture.com/welcome (Accessed 18 March 2019.)
Return of a travelling song: *Wanji-wanji* in the Pintupi region of Central Australia

Figure 2. M Nelson, with headphones on, listening to the *Wanji-wanji* recordings at Papunya, May 2018 (photo: Robert Nugent)

Figure 3. Listening to the *Wanji-wanji* recordings on speaker at Kintore, July 2017. B Napaltjarri, R Napurrula, N Napaltjarri, J Napurrula, M Turpin, T Napurrula, and J Young (photo: Ben Deacon)

Figure 4. Listening to the *Wanji-wanji* recordings at Kiwirrkurra, July 2017. Nangala, C Tjapangarti, J Larry, P Ooloodidi, and M Turpin (unknown man standing and boy sitting stopped to listen briefly) (photo: Ben Deacon)
Responses to hearing the recordings

Emotional responses

On hearing the recording, people were immediately transported back to a time and place of their childhood. This was a bittersweet feeling, as the song was associated with joyful social occasions yet it evoked nostalgia for the song and for the people who once sang it. Clearly the song had not been heard or performed for many years. Those who knew the song recalled the accompanying dances and specific performances they witnessed. Michael Nelson, born c. 1945–1949, recounts:

I used to see my mother at Haasts Bluff, even at Yuendumu. They used to dance like that – ah really good! ... Some visitors [would be] sitting around and they [others] used to run around and woman used to sing – oh really good! I remember, you know, because I was a little boy ... But we still love that big corroboree ... [They had a] head thing you know ... and puttem red, white, black. Oh gees! But nothing’s happening now, all gone. Nothing, no corroboree now, only ceremony, that’s all.

People of Michael’s age provided eyewitness accounts of a full Wanji-wanji performance – a show with costumes and dances put on because of a visiting group. The song was vaguely familiar to a few younger people, who recalled older relatives singing it in a more casual environment. Such people lamented the loss not so much of this song in particular, but the loss of such singing in everyday life. That is, while traditional Aboriginal singing is still heard in the local land-based ceremonies, entertainment songs are now rare, possibly because they have been replaced with western genres of song. Linda Anderson Nakamarra, born in 1962, paints the following picture of her childhood while listening to the recording of her father singing:

We used to wake up every morning when they sang. Like food would be cooking and we would listen to old people singing as we waited for whatever was cooking. Just like nowadays we wake up to radio being played in the morning, well we used to listen to them singing. Beautiful singing from elders, you know. Nice, soft, it’s like going on a journey ... I used to love going to corroboree night. Old women used to call out, “Hey children, it’s corroboree time” and I used to be the first one sitting, cause I really liked the singing ... Women are missing out on that and it’s really, you know, sad when that is not happening anymore. Because our children missed out a lot on that and their children are going to miss out on that unless it is introduced back.

Bittersweet feelings from listening to the recordings were not only stirred by thinking about a bygone era, but for some they were stirred by thinking about relatives that were sorely missed.

---

22 The quotes are presented here with minor grammatical alterations to assist understanding. This involves modification to ensure agreement of person, number and tense, as well as deleting repetition. Ellipses are reserved for substantial content that is not included in order to keep to the point.

23 Here the word ‘ceremony’ refers to land-based or sacred ceremonies and is being contrasted with ‘corroboree’, presumably referring to shared entertainment ceremonies.
For Nakamarra, hearing her ‘two grandmothers’ (her father’s mother and father’s mother’s sister) brought to mind fond memories of growing up at Kungkayurnti, yet also sadness as she missed them.

*Kunya ['poor things'], my two grandmothers singing!* [0:51] … They told me to sing that song: “When you grow up, when you get old, you sing this song.” But, all my [only?] memories now. It was a good time at Kungkayurnti with my grandmothers, singing, telling stories … Sometimes I don’t like to hear them, sometimes I get worried about them. I cry, because I’ve heard their voices. [18:38–21:30, 20181522]

One Pintupi interpreter highlighted how important it was to be ‘on country’ when listening to a recording of an ancestor; that is, to be on the homelands of the person whose voice is being heard. This was not because nearby places were being referred to on the recording; on the contrary, the spoken explanations of the seven verses were general and did not refer to specific locations. Some of the explanations included things such as travelling up sandhills, dancing with two hairstrings and two emus looking back.

It’s good you put that song on of Tjapangarti. Tjapanangka, his son is listening on his own countryside, where his father walked around singing that song. If you had met Tjapanangka anywhere else, that would be out of place. Right here, look. This is right. Old man sings and you look around, how he went through, walking up everywhere. [16:40–17:20, 20180520a-1, personal names have been replaced with skin names]

This resonates with comments from Indigenous people further west on the need to bring archived song recordings “back to Country” (Treloyn et al. 2016: 97).

**Antiquity of the song**

An overwhelming response from those who knew it was that it was an ‘old’ song. Tjungurrayi, born c. 1935–1943, exclaimed after hearing the first verse “That long, long time [ago]! All passed away now” (20160716), further explaining that this was in the times before there were houses and when people were naked; when his grandfather was alive (21:35—22:05, 20170703-1).

Michael Nelson described the time he saw it as “early days, Native Affairs days,” which suggests some time prior to 1968. On the 1981 Balgo recording, the speaker says that he heard the songs when he was a young boy, which dates the performance to some time between 1920 and 1935. In the interviews, the many unsolicited comments on the antiquity of the song contrast sharply with people’s comments on other types of songs, such as the women’s land-based songs (*yawulyu*) and songs associated with initiation. Rarely do people comment on the age of such songs; instead people comment on the places, custodianship and meanings.

---

24 Between 1968 and 1972 the Native Affairs Branch (established 1939) became the Department of Aboriginal Affairs.

25 Some singers have commented on the age of specific verses of a *yawulyu* song, but not on the age of the song as a whole.
associated with such a song. How then should one interpret comments on the antiquity of *Wanji-wanji*?

While it may be that *Wanji-wanji* is older than other songs, there are two other possible interpretations. It seems likely that land-based songs have continued to be performed, albeit less frequently and in some cases with less detail, whereas *Wanji-wanji* must have ceased being performed at some early date, as it is largely unknown to people born after 1945.  

Thus comments on its old age may refer not to the time of its creation, but to when it had its heyday. A further aspect to this is that land-based songs are perceived to have always existed, although particular verses are sometimes regarded as new (see, for example Turpin & Ross 2013: 3; Turpin 2005: 69). In contrast, *Wanji-wanji* is described as having been brought in by people from elsewhere, like a traded item (Elkin 1970: 260; Mulvaney 1976). The lack of specific knowledge of the song’s origin is presumably because it came in to being so long ago and because it travelled far from its specific place of origin.

### Memories of the song

#### Social context in which it was performed

All accounts of *Wanji-wanji* concur in its public status; however, for certain verses women and children were not permitted to see the associated action and so women would lower their heads and close their eyes, and children would dive under a blanket (e.g. Verse 32). This was also required when male dancers adorned in ceremonial attire took their place ‘on stage’. Their approach could not be viewed but once in position the audience were then instructed to open their eyes, creating an effect similar to that of raising the stage curtain. Hansen and Hansen (1974: 230) similarly describe the *tjulpurrpa* ceremonial genre as one where women can be present “but are covered with blankets, for certain performances.” The detailed descriptions by Bates of the *Wanji-wanji* she witnessed at Eucla in 1913 have similar ‘restricted’ verses.

The Pintupi people interviewed commented on the public nature of the song. Tjakamarra, who recalled being in his mother’s lap and watching men and women dance, associated it with when there were visitors:

> You know some visitors, might be from Willowra and some people from west, you know. From Balgo, somewhere around that area. I used to see them. Really good dance they had … Oh just a big corroboree dance, you know, to make them happy, instead of going out somewhere like that. Better off just having a big *Wanji-wanji* … They used to dance together, people used to just come in from another place, from north. [5:40–12:30]

---

26 This date no doubt varies from place to place, as its last performance date would have varied. Indeed at Kalkaringi people performed it in 2015.

27 All contemporary accounts and all but one historical account observe it was performed by men and women. The only exception is Petri (2014 [1952]: 164), who describes it as ”secret ceremonial … analogous to the Djamba dances of the northwest”; however, there is no evidence that Petri observed this ceremony himself.

28 Similar visual restrictions for particular verses were also observed for another travelling ceremony that entered the Pintupi region from the west, *Tjulurru*, which was performed at Kintore in the 1970s (Jeff Hulcombe, pers. comm., November 2018).
This is also suggested in the words of the speaker on the 1981 Balgo recording where Donkeyman describes it as a song that "we would take out everywhere."29

Origins of Wanji-wanji

While Wanji-wanji is known as a song that was brought from elsewhere, when asked how such songs come into being, people reflected in general about how turlku songs are created by the spirits of deceased people and are often discovered by traditional healers,30 who get them in a dream. Such songs are often associated with a specific person, time and place. No one interviewed, however, had any knowledge about which specific people or places were associated with the original ‘dreamers’ of Wanji-wanji.

It is uncertain where Wanji-wanji originally came from. Bates (1938: 125) states it had come from the north of Eucla, “along the Fortescue, Gascoyne, Ashburton and Murchison rivers, east of the goldfield,” yet no place of origin is convincingly suggested. In addition to the Pintupi recordings discussed here, there are archival recordings of the song from Port Augusta and Wilcannia in the southeast, Roebourne and Marble Bar in the west and Norseman and Eucla in the southwest,31 distances that span over 1000 kilometres.32 Today the song is also remembered by people from the Kimberley (Nyikina, Karajarri, Walmajarri, Nyangumarda language groups), the Pilbara (Nyiyaparli, Kariyarra, Nyamal, Warnman, Manyjilyjarra), and Central Australia (Pitjantjatjara, Yankunytjatjara, Ngaatjatjarra, Warlpiri, Arrernte, and Anmatyerr).33

When tracing the origins of a song it is important to trace the verses themselves rather than simply the name of the song. Names vary from region to region and a single name may refer to different ceremonies in different regions. As noted previously, Laka is the name used by Gurindji, as well as people from the Pilbara and desert regions, yet Laka is also the name of a mortuary ceremony performed by older Mardu (Tonkinson 2008: 38), and there is another ceremony called Laka on Mornington Island (Nancarrow & Cleary 2017); the verses of these songs are not the same though. Conversely, the travelling song discussed here is called by different names in different regions. It is called Kulkalanya by Pitjantjatjara people, Wanajarra by Nyangumarda and Wanji-wanji in Port Augusta and Alice Springs. In addition, Wanna Wa is said to be its name among the Noongar living in the southern regions of Western Australia (Bates 1938: 125).

In 1960 and 1963 Petri documented a ceremony called ‘Wandji-kurang-kara’ with the Nyangumarda people in the southern Kimberley. Although Petri equates it with Bates’

29 Translated from the Pintupi.
30 In some other parts of Australia this genre is similarly regarded as having been created by the spirits of deceased family members (Treloyn et al. 2016: 97).
31 The Norseman recording and another almost identical recording, both recorded by von Brandenstein, have been analysed by Bracknell (2015), who first drew a connection between these and the songs witnessed by Bates at Eucla and the Pintupi recordings by Moyle (1979).
32 Most of these are short recordings of a single verse or handful of verses amid longer recordings of spoken language or other songs. Only the Pintupi and Gurindji recordings consist solely of a long performance of Wanji-wanji.
33 Based on my own fieldwork in these regions in 2017 and 2018 and Nick Thieberger’s in 2017.
Wanji-wanji (2018 [1967]: 32–33), there are no similarities between any of the 19 texts written out by Petri (2018 [1967]) and those by Bates (1913–1914). As mentioned, Nyangumarda refer to the travelling song as Wanajarra and there is no secret aspect to it in this region, as evidenced by the Nyangumarda women on the 1954–1955 archival recordings and my own fieldwork in this region. It is quite likely that the ceremony documented by Petri in the 1960s and that discussed here are two different ceremonies.

In terms of its musical form, Wanji-wanji is clearly Central Australian in style (Ellis 1985). In terms of its linguistic form, many of its verses appear to be in a language of the Western Desert or higher-level Wati linguistic subgroup (see Figure 1), which includes some 15 named varieties. Identifying any single variety within that group is difficult for three main reasons. First, songs are frequently in a language other than that associated with their place of origin. Second, words that are identifiable tend to be common to multiple language varieties (e.g. pu-’hit’, -rna ‘1sg are very widespread). Third, vowels are modified in song, and thus contrasts that occur in spoken varieties can become non-contrastive when sung (e.g. ‘hill’ is purli and pirl in different varieties yet both vowels are realised as [i] when sung). It is also possible that verses may differ in their language and place of origin. Some verses may be local ‘add-ons’ to the song; for example, one verse is only heard on the recording from Roebourne while another verse is only sung by the Gurindji.

What is known is the direction from which the song came to the Pintupi. Nosepeg at Kungkayurnti, directly west of Alice Springs, said that the song was a “Turlku from Alice Springs. Down south, bin come up, this one bin come up, Wanji-wanji, go that way, Petermann Range” (Aus 076 6:37). The archival recordings from South Australia also suggest that it went north. The late Tjungurrayi recalled it was performed at places southwest of Kiwirrkurra, including near Tjirrkarli and spread northeast (presumably along the Canning Stock Route) to Nganju, west of Jupiter Well, and Nyinmi, east of Jupiter Well. He recalls Manyjilytjarra, Ngaanyatjarra and Ngaatjatjarra groups singing the song. He also recalled the names of 12 people who used to sing these songs who left the Gibson Desert, some going south, others going north, east and west. From this evidence it seems likely that the songs originated somewhere in the Wati region and spread out in all directions, one of which involved a route south, then east, and then north in to Central Australia. This is compatible with Daisy Bates’ fieldnotes, which are cited in McCarthy (1939: 85). McCarthy hypothesises a route that shows the song originating in the Kimberleys and doing a singular journey south, then east through Eucla to Port Augusta, then northwards into the Centre (1938: 84); however, it seems more likely that the song originated in the Pilbara or desert region of Western Australia and radiated out, taking multiple routes rather than a singular route.

34 The recordings made by Petri are restricted, and thus I have not heard them.
35 The Peterman Ranges is some 250 kilometres southwest of Kungkayurnti and located in Pitjantjatjara country (Monaghan 2003: 86).
36 These were Kurinying Tjakamarra, Pikirri Tjakamarra, Kurdirr Tjakamarra (married to Wintjiya Napaltjarri, who sings these songs on R Moyle’s 1976 recordings Aus 080 and 081), Mulyarta Tjapangarti, Pungkurra Tjapangardi, Kilipta Tjapangarti, Kunturru Tjapangarti, Yawulyurr Tjapangarti and his wives, Wamiya Nampitjin, Nginana Nampitjin, and Pampartu Nampitjin (MT fieldnotes 20170704).
Like others, the Pintupi people consulted in 2017 and 2018 were surprised at how widely known the song was. At Kiwirrkurra, Tjapaltjarri, who had some familiarity with the song, gave the following explanation as to how the song might have come to be so widely known.

We might be all different clans and we’ve got our own boundaries, but we got the one song. We all come in at a certain time of the year for this singalong and go back home then ... Kukatja, Luritja, Pintupi, Mardu ... It says here [referring to the words of the Kukatja/Pintupi man on the 1981 recording] about two emu men meeting and moving with their arms, when emus had their arms first. When they use their arms, that’s how this song is nationwide in Australia here. [35:30–38:00]

The interviews did not reveal any known custodianship of the song, either an individual, clan, or language group – no doubt the basis for the public status of the song.

Meanings of the song

Few people commented on the meanings of the song. Only one archival recording includes any interpretations of the verses and song – the recording from Balgo. These meanings were not known to the Pintupi with whom I consulted, nor did they provide any alternate meanings. The Balgo recording is of Kukatja/Pintupi man Donkeyman Lee Tjupurrula (born 1925) singing and talking about seven verses of the song. Yet even with discussion, the meaning of the verse is cryptic. As an example, the first 38 seconds of the recording, consisting of speech, singing of one verse and speech that leads into the second verse, is shown below.

00:09 Ngula nanta yunganyini, nganayi, Laka, lirripirparlangku-junngu, kurlu?
   Wait, shall I tell you about the story of what’s it, Laka?
   (RM: Yuwayi)

00:17 Yananyirna Ngarirli-kutu.
   I’ll go towards Ngarirli (could be a place or Dreaming)

00:20 (sings the following verse, identified by the author elsewhere as m-laka28)

   Tjarrarna-ngkurra jarrali yananya x 2

   Ngarirli-ngarirli jarrali yananya x 2

   (repeats)

   (Possible gloss:)

   Tjarra-rna-ngkurra tjarra-li yana-nya / Ngarirli-ngarirli tjarra-li yana-nya
two-1SG-REFL two-1DU.S go-PTT place_name-RED two-1DU go-PTT
   ‘We two take ourselves off / We two go (to) ’Ngarirli’

00:39 Pakalaya ngaalji tarraparing
   Then they go up like this to avoid something

00:41 (sings the verse identified as m-laka22)
Here, the listener may be left wondering who the referents of the ‘we two’ are, where the place Ngarirli is, and why they are going there. The non-specific nature of the text, its first person reference and its simple imagery are typical of Aboriginal song. Later in the recording Donkeyman explains another verse as being about “two emu men/leaders who walk away and look back over their shoulder.”

No one in the interviews claimed to know what the song or even particular verses were about; one man who knew the song even said he had never considered the meaning of the song before. However, some people volunteered particular words in the verses, generally common words for which they provided English equivalents. For example, while listening to the main verse Michael Nelson volunteered the following:

(listening to verse m-laka 33)

**Warriwarnkanya, Warriwarnkanya Kapanala wanji-wanji wanpanarra**

Oh good song that one, very good. ‘Warri’ mean cold. Wind blowing.

(listening to verse m-laka 23)

**Jiwirdila jimarnat x 2**

**Kurakura jimarnat x 2**

Western people. ‘Jiwirdi’ mean some little wood that gets burnt, for fire, after when they have that big corroboree and they dance around. That’s what my mother told me.

[19:00–21:00]

Other people suggested words and their meanings, following prompts by me made by picking out a string of word-like syllables from the song text and asking if it had any meaning. For example, a number of people volunteered independently words such as *puyu* ‘smoke’, *purli* ‘hill’, *tali* ‘sandhill’ and *jilka* ‘prickle’, as well as the verbs *yani* ‘go’ and *nyina* ‘sit’, which are all words from Western Desert languages.

Tjungurrayi was unusual in that he interpreted the words in songs, such as *purli* ‘hill’ and *tali* ‘sandhill’, as if they referred to specific places. It is not clear whether he meant these as original meanings, or whether he was deriving meanings relevant to the context in which he had heard the songs or how they had been explained to him. Part of the skill in interpreting Aboriginal songs is being able to draw out contextually relevant meanings, in the same way that preaching can be about bringing contemporary relevance to parts of the bible.

Given its well-travelled history, a lack of meaning is not surprising, as Berndt & Berndt point out in relation to such songs at Balgo:

As one woman at Balgo pointed out, when pressed for specific interpretation of every word in a series to clarify inconsistencies in translation, “We don’t see the people who started these songs, we can’t ask them: we get them from others in between, and they are the ones who tell us.” The nearer the place of origin, the greater the likelihood of finding someone who knows the language in which they are composed; but some songs travel well beyond the reach of such intermediaries, and attempts at word-for-word translation may be no more than guesses. (Berndt & Berndt 1988: 384–385)
Return of a travelling song: Wanji-wanji in the Pintupi region of Central Australia

Views on access and usage

Most of the people consulted wanted to have the recordings included in the Central Land Council’s collection, especially younger people who had worked with local media organisations or had used the Pitjantjatjara digital database Aṟa Irititja. In terms of local access in communities, people struggled to identify a place where a copy of the recordings could be left. Presumably this was because people could not identify a building in the community that was available for public use and that had the facilities (e.g. computer, headphones) and personnel that could assist with access or could be approached for this. This was important as not everyone has access to a device that could ‘play’ a USB, or the know-how to use one. Furthermore, a USB would not last forever. Indeed, at one community I was approached by someone who no longer had the USB that I had given them five weeks previously. In Alice Springs, staff at the Purple House were keen to have a copy so that they could provide these to their clients should they get the request.

Everyone was happy for the archival recordings to be included in the radio broadcast and many were happy to have their own responses included on the broadcast. Most people liked the idea of publishing the recordings as an album and a number of younger people wanted to work on such a production. Only one person hesitated at this idea because of concerns that other people might learn and sing the songs. It was possible that she was uncertain how the past practice of trading and sharing ceremonies of this type might play out today.

Nearly everyone consulted requested a copy of the recordings on USB, which was provided. A number of people at Kintore said that they wanted personal copies, as they hoped to learn the songs so that they could perform them (and suggested I could then come back to record them).

Conclusion

The confidence with which people responded to my enquiries about the songs varied significantly according to whether they sang along with the recording (and often independently of it) or whether they only listened. ‘Listeners’ were more hesitant to comment on access and usage, perhaps uncertain or unconvinced that the song had moved beyond local circulation. Without having personal historical experience, and being unfamiliar with the song texts, it would be unlikely they could deduce on the spot that the many recordings of the songs were indeed the same song. In contrast, ‘singers’ would exclaim emotively, revealing their astonishment at hearing recordings of the song from well beyond Pintupi country, such as from Kalkaringi and Port Augusta. Many commented on how good the song was, as if the extent of its travels were evidence of this.

Since discovering the Kungkayurnti, Balgo and five further recordings in the archives from other places in Western Australia, Northern Territory and South Australia as discussed

40 In contrast, recent fieldwork at Haasts Bluff showed that some Pintupi people there did not want these recordings to be available through the Central Land Council.

41 One possible local access place might have been PAW Media and Communications (Pintubi Anmatjere Warlpiri Media and Communications, Yuendumu); however, this was not suggested.
above, I have also undertaken fieldwork that revealed the song to be known among older generations throughout Central Australia, the Pilbara, and the Kimberley. It is not known how many other recordings of the song may exist hidden in the archives, as the recordings I found were not located by searching the archives by the various names of the song. Rather, they were located by methodically listening to open access recordings that included singing from regions where I suspected the song would have been known. Without the ability to search on verse texts and song titles (notwithstanding songs often having multiple names), as well as being unable to access many restricted collections that may include materials with a range of different statuses, discovering recordings of a specific song is a difficult task.

A number of Aboriginal people I consulted requested assistance in finding out if recordings of other songs they had in mind might similarly exist. In my experience of working on songs in Central Australia over the past 20 years, it is not uncommon for Aboriginal people to listen to archival recordings to help recall a forgotten verse, gain certainty over a song text and clarify the structure of particular verses. Archival recordings play a role similar to that of song books and lyrics websites (such as https://genius.com/ and https://www.azlyrics.com/). In this sense they are valuable tools for learning, as a number of researchers have noted (e.g. Hercus & Koch 2017; O’Keeffe et al. 2018; Treloyn & Morumburri Dowding 2017).

In the Kimberley there is a revival of a travelling song known as Tjulurru, a ceremony that was traded over large distances (Glowczewski 1983, 2014; Kolig 1989: 85; Poirier 2014; Widlok 1992). Tjulurru was sung in Broome at the 2018 Native Title conference (without dancing) and prior to that was performed at the Kimberley Aboriginal Law and Culture Centre (KALACC) festival in 2017.42 Many years had passed since it was last performed in this region. KALACC and a number of other Aboriginal organisations have been instrumental in achieving this revival. In Central Australia it is uncertain whether any organisations could assist in such a revival. Certainly the availability of recordings of the song would be crucial for this task, as there are now few people in the communities who know these verses well enough to sing them ‘right through’. Yet even then the task of revitalisation is possibly much harder than it appears, as the verses are not in everyday speech and it is unclear who would drive and support the revival of what Tjapaltjarri refers to as ‘national wide song’. The song does not reflect land-based identity at a local level and so there may be fewer reasons to revive it, yet in contexts where there are no known land-based songs that can be publicly performed (the politics of performing these are sometimes difficult), Wanji-wanji might be attractive for revival, just as Tjulurru has been in the Kimberley. Whether the Wanji-wanji is similarly revived remains to be seen.

References


Bracknell, Clint. 2015. Naatj Waalanginy (What singing?): Noongar song from the south-west of Western Australia. Crawley, WA: University of Western Australia. (Unpublished PhD thesis.)


Hercus, Luise. 1980. 'How we danced the Mudlungga': Memories of 1901 and 1902. *Aboriginal History* 4. 5–32.


Nancarrow, Cassy & Peter Cleary. 2017. Finding laka for burdal: Song revitalisation at Mornington Island over the past 40 years. In Jim Wafer & Myfany Turpin (eds.),


