DA:WAJIL: A WESTERN DESERT ABORIGINAL RAINMAKING RITUAL

by

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M.A., University of Western Australia, 1966

A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

in the Department
of
Anthropology and Sociology

We accept this thesis as conforming to the required standard

THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

March, 1972

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Date May 16th 1972

Abstract

Much of Australia is arid and droughts are common in many areas. The Aboriginal inhabitants, a semi-nomadic hunting and gathering people, nevertheless occupied the entire continent. Given the highly developed cosmology and magico-religious system of the Aborigines, it is not surprising that rainmaking rituals were an important part of their religious life, particularly in the dry interior regions.

Available literature concerning Australian Aboriginal society contains frequent references to rainmaking practices in widely differing areas of the continent, yet detailed descriptions are lacking, and in most of Aboriginal Australia today the traditional religious life has all but ceased to exist. In the relatively isolated Western Desert area, however, there are still communities of largely tradition-oriented Aborigines who continue to perform rituals. At Jigalong, a Western Desert community that is the setting for this study, a rainmaking ritual called the Ɲa:wajil has come to assume major importance in the life of the local Aborigines, despite its relatively recent introduction. An important concern of this study is to present a detailed ethnographic description of the Ɲa:wajil. Two chapters (4 and 5) are devoted to a full account of the background to the ritual, including the circumstances of its introduction to Jigalong, and its performance.

Chapters 1 and 2 describe the setting of the study and outline briefly the religious life of Jigalong's Aborigines;

they provide the Ɲa:wajil with its social and religious context as a Western Desert ritual. These chapters introduce the ethnographic account of the ritual.

In addition to its ethnographic aim, this thesis also explores certain broader problems. Its central concern is to explain why the Ɲa:wajil has assumed such importance in a situation where the survival of the Aboriginal community is no longer dependent upon rain falling in a particular locality. Part of the answer to this question lies in the nature of the ritual itself. It is clear from a survey of available literature on Aboriginal rainmaking that the Ɲa:wajil is in several ways unique. Traditionally, most rainmaking magic was performed by specialists or small groups of men; thus few accounts of large-scale performances exist, and these lack detail. No known rainmaking rituals approach the Ɲa:wajil in scale or organizational complexity, and no other ritual performed at Jigalong rivals it in these respects.

One basic reason for the enthusiastic adoption of the ritual by Jigalong Aborigines is that, in their view, it works; that is, it brings rain. But it also has many other attractions. The impressive scale of its performance is one of them. Some but not all the multifold functions it fulfils are shared with other rituals performed at Jigalong, and for this reason the Ɲa:wajil is compared and contrasted with these others (see Chapter 6). In view of its status as a large and unique ritual, it invites analysis as such, so in the same chapter it is examined

in terms of some of its symbolic aspects, as well as its relevance to the question of internal dynamism in Aboriginal ritual, particularly the interrelation of myth, songline and ritual.

Symbolic analysis of the Ɲa:wajil, however, does not yield the kind of information necessary to answer the question posed in the second part of the thesis, though it is valuable for an appreciation of the nature of Aboriginal religious thought. Keeping in mind the status of the Ɲa:wajil as an imported ritual, and the fact that its annual performance at Jigalong involves Aborigines from at least two different Western Desert areas, analysis leads inevitably into the field of intercommunity relations. It is through an examination of this field, undertaken in Chapter 7, that the reasons for the rise to prominence of the Ɲa:wajil are revealed.

The Ɲa:wajil is of great importance to the Jigalong people largely because of their felt responsibility for its continuance, which results from the conjunction of two sets of political pressures emanating from neighbouring Aboriginal groups. At a more abstract level, the prominence of the Ɲa:wajil can also be attributed to its role as a symbolic statement of political relations and aspirations. The ritual, with its unique status hierarchy and highly organized division of labour, serves as an appropriate symbolic model for any future political organization capable of dealing more efficiently with the acculturative pressures that are constantly being exerted by the wider society.

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Preface

This thesis is based on a total of approximately sixteen months' fieldwork, carried out in six trips ranging in duration from two weeks to six months, between April 1963 and February 1970, at Jigalong settlement in Western Australia. In addition, between 1963 and 1969 I made five brief trips into the Western Desert area, as an interpreter-advisor for the Native Welfare Department, and one trip as a technical advisor for a Commonwealth Film unit crew. During these expeditions, which amounted to a further six months in the field, I was able to gather anthropological material in the course of my work. Early fieldwork at Jigalong (1963-6) was carried out while I was a graduate student at the University of Western Australia, and it formed the basis for my Master of Arts thesis (1966), which was a study of social structure and acculturation among the Aborigines of Jigalong. The fieldwork in 1969-70, financed by a grant from the Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies, was undertaken while I was a Graduate Fellow of the University of British Columbia, Canada, and its specific focus was the rainmaking ritual that forms the subject of this thesis. I witnessed performances of the ritual during all three visits to Jigalong between 1963 and 1965 and collected a considerable amount of material on the ritual during these early visits. It was mentioned briefly in my M.A. thesis (Tonkinson, 1966:227-229)

In the field, information was gathered using standard ethnographic methods; observation and interviews, genealogy collection some participant observation, the eliciting of crayon drawings, the

gathering of census information, and so on. Tape recorders were used to collect songs and language material, as well as accounts of certain activities such as public meetings, fights and informal discussions with small groups of informants. Most interviews and conversations were carried out in the local language after the first period of fieldwork. In addition, I took approximately 1100 colour slides, 2000 black and white photographs, and 4000 feet of eight millimetre colour movie film. Unfortunately, I was unable to film secret-sacred sections of the Ɲa:wajil ritual during the 1969-70 fieldwork period, because the Jigalong men were nervous about the possible reactions of their Aboriginal visitors to my doing so, and also because some of the objects and dances involved are now considered too 'dangerous' or sacred to be filmed.

In this thesis, I name secret-sacred objects by Aboriginal name, and I describe in detail certain ritual activities that the Aborigines consider to be highly sacred. I do this with their knowledge and approval. Their objection is <u>not</u> to the printed word, but to the publication of photographs of such objects and activities in newspapers, magazines, etc. that may be seen by their womenfolk and children.

<u>Kinship Notation and Orthography</u>. When citing kinship terms, I use standard abbreviations, with the symbol Z representing 'sister' and S, 'son'; e.g. FZS is 'father's sister's son'. Classificatory relationships are distinguished from actual relationships by the use of ' ' to enclose them, thus: 'FZ'.

To transcribe Aboriginal words used in this thesis, I follow

the practice adopted in earlier works (Tonkinson, 1965;1966;1970). There are seventeen consonant phonemes (sublineal dots indicate retroflexed sounds):

b, dj, ḍ, g, m, nj, ṇ, n, ŋ, lj, ḷ, l, r, ṛ, w, j (pronounced y):

three short vowels: a, i, u; three lengthened vowels: a:, i:, u:. For a full description of the phonemic system, see Douglas (1958).

Acknowledgments. In the eight years since beginning research at Jigalong, I have been indebted to many people and several organizations whose assistance I have greatly appreciated. Financial assistance from the University of Western Australia, Australian Universities Commission, Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies and the University of British Columbia helped make the various field trips possible. Administrators and staff of the Native Welfare Department in Western Australia cooperated willingly at all stages of my work and enabled me to accompany several desert patrols.

During the early fieldwork periods and the writing of my M.A. I received much valuable assistance from members of the Anthropology Department at the University of Western Australia, particularly from Professor R.M. Berndt, Dr. C.H. Berndt, Dr. D.J. Ryan and Mrs. T. Robertson. Discussions with Dr. Richard A. Gould, Dr. M.A. Jaspan, Mr.C.F. Makin, Mr. P.H. Lucich and Mrs. S. Woenne proved helpful to me.

For their guidance and advice in the final preparation of this thesis, I thank members of the Department of Anthropology and Sociology at the University of British Columbia, namely my supervisor Dr. K.O.L. Burridge, and committee members: Professor C.S. Belshaw, Dr. M. Egan, Dr. M. Kew, and Dr. P. Maranda. I am especially grateful to Mrs. Peggy Campbell, who typed this thesis, but much more than that, has been a great friend. Thanks too, to my wife Myrna, for putting up with me during the writing of this, especially on the bad days!

To Trevor and Peggy Levien, and David and Gloria Goold (all formerly of Jigalong), I extend my grateful thanks for their hospitality and friendship, and my thanks also to Joe Criddle of Walgun Station and Charlie Snell, now of Mount Newman, for their cold beer and good conversation.

Finally, I would like to thank the people whose friendship and cooperation made the research possible at Jigalong - the Aborigines, who accepted my presence with patience and good humour, and kindly allowed me to witness many secret-sacred objects and ritual performances normally closed to outsiders. It is perhaps unfair to single out individuals when so many people gave me information, but I must mention those who taught me the most: Gogara, Djiljiljal, Malinja, Madimadi, Bindja, Njinu, Njangabidi, Djawaru, Djangar, Rowley, Joshua and Colin; and the women Kimi, Minawa, Jessie, Nandu, Njungula, Najabi, Lois, Dada, Dadabuga and Majabi.

Introduction

My choice of the Jigalong area for field research was prompted by two major considerations: a prior lack of scientific research in this part of the Western Desert; the position of Jigalong as the centre for a large community of tradition-oriented Aborigines whose ritual life and kinship organization are still functioning strongly, and whose contact with the wider Australian society has been comparatively slight. I decided to concentrate on the Ɲa:wajil for this study because it is the most complex ritual of the many performed each year at Jigalong, involving as it does the entire community (plus Aborigines from neighbouring areas) at some time or other during its performance, in a wide range of activities that in sum represent almost the entire range of ritual behaviour occurring at the settlement. Traditionally, the Ɲa:wajil was not the property of the Aborigines who now live at Jigalong. Yet today, approximately a decade after its first performance there, it is firmly entrenched and is considered by the local Aborigines to be one of the major rituals performed there.

To understand the reasons for the present prominence of the Ɲa:wajil, it will be necessary to discuss several things, namely: the place of the ritual in the religious life of the Aborigines at Jigalong; the many functions that the Ɲa:wajil and other rituals appear to fulfil for the Aborigines, and the structure of inter-community cultural transmission and the tenor of intercommunity relations, to see why it is that the Jigalong people feel responsible for the continuance of the Ɲa:wajil and the bringing of rain every summer.

By a brief consideration of the facts of cultural transmission throughout the Western Desert cultural bloc, it will be shown that the acceptance of the Ɲa:wajil by the Aborigines of Jigalong is normal and expected behaviour on their part. Although increase rites do not normally enter into this transmission chain, it is suggested that the Ɲa:wajil has done so because of the overriding importance of rain in a desert environment. The ritual has retained its importance in a contact situation because the Aborigines still consider rain, or its symbolic values, to be the vital prerequisite for continued existence.

Examination of the relations between Jigalong and its northern neighbours who are the acknowledged owners of this ritual reveals the underlying importance of political factors. The Aborigines of Jigalong consider that the northerners are abandoning their traditional observances and practices to the detriment of the distinctive set of beliefs, attitudes, behaviours and ethos that the Aborigines call 'the Law'. Partially protected by their greater isolation, Jigalong's Aborigines have remained much more tradition-oriented and resistant to changes in their core values than have the more acculturated northerners. From their viewpoint, the failure of the northerners to observe the proper behaviours, especially in their ritual life, makes them no longer reliable as guardians of the Law. These ideological differences between Aborigines of the two areas constitute a major underlying influence on the current status of the Ɲa:wajil at Jigalong. Another important factor that

is discussed concerns the place of Jigalong as the main Ɲa:wajil centre for the initiation of interested Aborigines from areas to the south, since the northern headmen have forbidden the construction of Ɲa:wajil ceremonial grounds anywhere south of Jigalong. Because Jigalong and Law centres to the south are active in the exchange of visits and in general cultural transmission, the Aborigines of Jigalong must perform the Ɲa:wajil regularly to initiate their southern visitors further into the ritual.

It will be shown in this study that the Ɲa:wajil fulfils many other functions besides its immediate stated aim of bringing summer rain, and that many of these functions are shared with other rituals performed at the settlement. Besides feelings of satisfaction generated among Ɲa:wajil participants by the successful bringing of rain, the ritual itself gives rise to greater excitement and enjoyment than any other performed by the Jigalong Aborigines, and for this reason alone is exceedingly popular. Because it involves everybody at some time, the Ɲa:wajil clearly serves as a focus of community sentiment and promotes in-group solidarity while at the same time strengthening the bonds between Aborigines of other participating Law centres and the Jigalong people. In addition, the ritual has both protective and curative aspects which are made explicit during the course of associated ritual activities. The Ɲa:wajil also has a significant initiatory-educational aspect, since an integral part of it is the induction of new members and their gradual elevation to higher ritual status.

Associated with this are social control aspects, both in the general sense that conflict is not permitted during ritual activities, and specifically in that during the course of the ritual known troublemakers among the young men are subject to considerable verbal abuse. Also, higher ritual status is withheld from any man who causes trouble of any kind or does not perform satisfactorily his allotted ritual tasks.

Seen in a wider perspective, however, the many and varying functions listed above are less significant than the political implications of the ritual. The Aborigines of Jigalong feel obliged to continue performing the Ɲa:wajil in large part because of pressures, albeit of very different kinds, exerted by both their southern and northern neighbours. Less directly, their determination to maintain their religious life is in part a response to increasing acculturational pressures brought to bear by agents of the wider society. The significance of these different pressures is discussed below.

In the course of examining the place of the Ɲa:wajil at Jigalong, I will touch upon several issues of broader theoretical importance that arise from consideration of the ritual complex, namely:

(a) interpretation of certain symbolic aspects

(b) elements of internal dynamism in the traditional religious life, including consideration of the nature of the relationship between myth, songline and ritual

(c) the role of the religious life in general as a defence against cultural disintegration in the face of acculturational pressures exerted by the wider society, and also by certain more sophisticated Aborigines in neighbouring areas

(d) the political implications of the Ɲa:wajil for the Aborigines of Jigalong.

From a brief analysis of the more obvious symbolic aspects of the Ɲa:wajil (Chapter 6), it is concluded that the Jigalong data accord, if only in very general terms, with Turner's assertion that major Ndembu ritual symbols tend to cluster around two distinct poles of meaning, what he calls the sensory and the normative. It is also suggested that the Ɲa:wajil could be seen as a fertility rite, if the outside observer is permitted to make some of his own interpretations of what appear to be dominant symbols in this ritual. Elsewhere in Aboriginal Australia, watersnake ancestral beings have strong connotations of fertility in general, in addition to their rainbringing powers. It is surmised that the Ɲa:wajil has not developed into a fertility rite in this area of the Western Desert because, for the Aborigines to acknowledge the role of semen in the explanation of rainmaking, they would have to run counter to strongly entrenched dogma denying that semen is relevant to physiological paternity, in favour of spirit-child beliefs.

The presence of several elements of internal dynamism, all in evidence in the traditional religious life at Jigalong, is given considerable emphasis in this study, because there has been a tendency in the literature on Aboriginal culture to concur with earlier writers who held that the religion was static in nature, and to attribute whatever changes have occurred to acculturational pressures. It is suggested that the traditional religion is capable of a greater degree of adaptation (in its pre-contact form) than has been attributed to it, especially in desert areas where cultural transmission was a vital part of the religious life and new elements were constantly being incorporated and old ones discarded. Besides the well-documented fact of cultural transmission, two other less well-known elements of internal dynamism are discussed in detail: dream-spirit journeys, which may result in the creation of entire new rituals, and the discovery of secret-sacred objects (revealed by the ancestral beings through the mediation of spirit-children), which extends available knowledge of ancestral exploits and the routes they followed, and in some cases leads to the inclusion of new information into already existing mythological accounts.

Such incorporation of new information into the mythology occurs in the case of the Ɲa:wajil and serves to illuminate some interesting aspects of the nature of the interrelationship of myth, songline and ritual, which are the essential components of any Aboriginal ritual complex. Using the Ɲa:wajil as example, it

is clear that one cannot argue for the primacy of any one of these elements, but rather for a necessary degree of autonomy between them, since this allows for the incorporation of new religious knowledge as it comes to hand, either through cultural transmission (which in the case of the Ɲa:wajil, as an imported ritual, is sure to take place) or by revelation emanating from the ancestral beings that are the ultimate source of all knowledge. Depending on the criteria of differentiation being used, the verbal elements of the Ɲa:wajil (myth and songline) are demonstrably more closely related than either of them is to ritual; or alternatively, it can be posited that the plasticity of myth makes it the most suitable avenue for the addition of new knowledge, because the publicly transmitted ritual and songline elements are far less variable in content and are therefore less amenable to modification than is mythology, most of which is individually transmitted. On this basis, songline and ritual are more closely related than either of them is to mythology. Whatever criterion of differentiation is used, however, a degree of autonomy does exist between the three elements and this fact has important implications for the existence of a strong internal dynamism in traditional Aboriginal religion.

In this thesis (Chapter 7) I return to a theme suggested in an earlier work (Tonkinson, 1966): that the religious life, as a vital part of the ethos of the Jigalong Aborigines, constitutes a force that maintains and strengthens Aboriginal group solidarity and cultural identity in the face of externally-originated pres-

sures towards change. Ritual activity gives participants the feeling that they control their own internal affairs, and it reinforces the self-pride on which their survival as a viable cultural minority depends. The Ɲa:wajil, as a rainmaking ritual, generates considerable feelings of power among its participants, for the Aborigines believe that they alone are capable of bringing summer rain, so that the white man is ultimately dependent on them for his future survival.

To justify this theme of the religious life as defence mechanism it is necessary to demonstrate the central importance of ritual in the lives of the Aborigines of Jigalong, and this is an important subsidiary aim of this study. It is principally through the medium of ritual that Aborigines can enter the realm of the Dreamtime and communicate with the great powers that are believed to emanate from there. The Aborigines attempt to activate the links of reciprocity that bind them and the ancestral creative beings together within the same cosmic order. Such reciprocity is anticipated because the ancestral beings are regarded as kinsmen, with all the obligations and responsibilities that this relationship entails. Thus the Ɲa:wajil succeeds because the rainmaking beings, it is asserted, feel obliged to repay the Aborigines for all the attention and nourishment that they have received during the performance of the ritual. Through the media of ritual and dream-spirit journeys Aborigines may enter briefly into the realm of the spiritual, the ultimate source of all power. For the community,

ritual is a powerful unifying force which demands peace for its effective working, and transcends many potentially disruptive divisions that exist in a community of this nature. For the individual, the ritual experience is one that involves learning, transition, an increased self-awareness and improved self-understanding. These less obvious aspects of ritual, especially its unitive functions, are discussed in this study for the light they throw on the overriding importance of their religious life to the Jigalong Aborigines.

In the final analysis, it is the political implications of the Ɲa:wajil that assure its continuance at Jigalong, given the nature of intercommunity relations and the likelihood of ever increasing acculturative pressures being brought to bear on these Aborigines. The efficaciousness of the ritual will not be called into question, since the rain invariably falls <u>somewhere</u> in the north west area after the performance of the Ɲa:wajil. As long as the Aborigines of Jigalong continue to have contact with others in neighbouring areas, they will feel heavily committed to the continued performance of the ritual, because, on the one hand, the northerners are forfeiting their position of prime responsibility for the annual holding of the ritual, leaving the Jigalong people as the caretakers, by default, while on the other hand, their neighbours to the south, unable to set up the ritual in their own territories rely on the Jigalong Aborigines to perform it for them whenever they visit the settlement at the time of periodic 'big meetings' (discussed in Chapter 2).

The very nature of the Ɔa:wajil as a complex ritual also has implications for the future survival of the Jigalong Aborigines. With this ritual, the Aborigines have for the first time a relatively complex ritual status hierarchy, hitherto absent in their traditional life, both in its secular and religious spheres. It is suggested that this status hierarchy could easily serve as a symbolic model for the kind of hierarchical ordering and division of labour that will probably be best suited to dealing with the wider society, whose bureaucracy itself functions on a basically similar hierarchical model. If the Aborigines do eventaully see a need for the development of some kind of hierarchical organization as the best way to deal with the whites, it is anticipated that they will turn to their religious life for a suitable working model, since it is this sphere that links them to the source of all their power and provides them with the sense of racial pride on which their future as a viable cultural minority depends. In their predominantly egalitarian society, where hierarchical ordering is minimal and interpersonal relationships are ordered by the kinship system, the Aborigines have nowhere else to look for such home-made models other than in their religious life, and there, it is the Ɔa:wajil that provides them with the most appropriate blueprint for action.

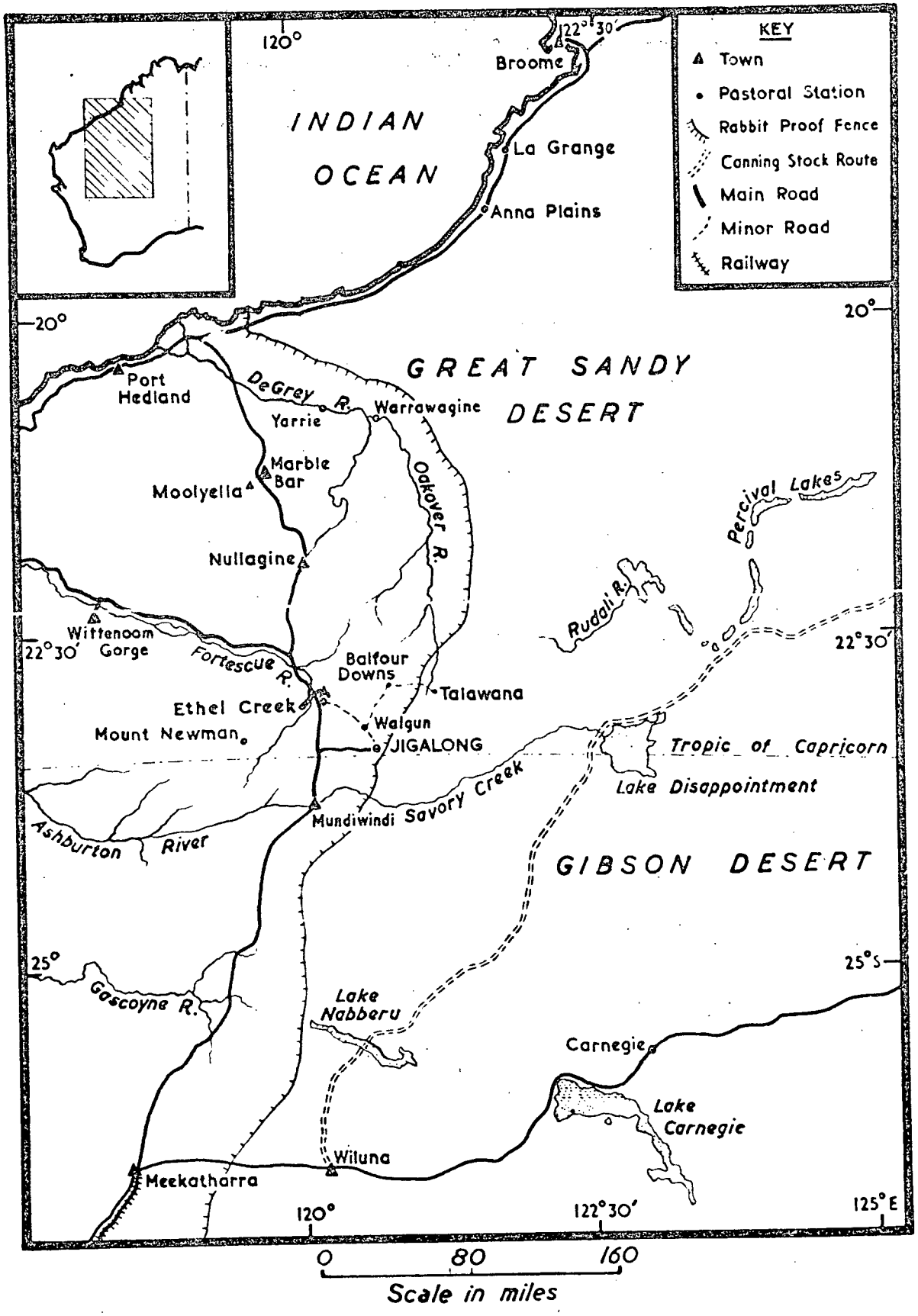
Chapter 1. The Setting.

Jigalong is a relatively isolated settlement on the western fringe of the Gibson Desert in Western Australia (see Figure 1). Begun in 1907 as a maintenance depot for the Vermin Control Board, it attracted Aborigines from surrounding areas, and from about the 1930s onwards, increasingly large numbers of desert Aborigines from the east. When the depot closed in 1945, it was handed over to the Apostolic Church of Australia, which established a mission to minister to the hundred or so desert Aborigines then living nearby. The missionaries ran Jigalong as a pastoral concern, employed as many indigent Aborigines as possible, issued food rations, put the school-age children into dormitories and concentrated their evangelical efforts on the children, having largely given up the adults as being beyond redemption. Hampered throughout its history by staff shortages, lack of properly trained personnel and a high staff turnover rate, the mission finally ceased operation in 1969 after winning only one full convert to the faith in twenty-four years. The settlement is now the Jigalong Aborigines Project, which is run by State Government employees aided by local Aborigines.

A. Climate

The Jigalong area has a semi-desert plant regime, but is desert in terms of its temperature and rainfall characteristics. Daily and seasonal temperature variations are considerable. Shade temperatures in summer range from 80°F - 125°F., and in winter from below 30°F to about 80°F. Rainfall

FIGURE 1 NORTH CENTRAL AREA OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA



is extremely erratic, so the average annual figure of six inches means little; the total for several years may account to only a few inches, then in one cyclonic storm more than ten inches may fall in a matter of hours. If rain falls, it is mostly in summer and is associated with violent thunderstorm activity, high winds, threatening skies, duststorms, but very little effective precipitation, since most rain evaporates before reaching the ground. Water supply is consequently a frequent problem, since the local windmills tap relatively small reservoirs, many of which may turn saline if ground-water supplies are not periodically replenished by rainfall. After heavy rain has fallen and the creeks flow for a brief period, the Aborigines can obtain water from creekbed soaks for some months following. At least half an inch of rain concentrated in the hilly catchment area a few miles from the settlement is needed for the creeks to flow.

B. The Settlement.

The built-up area of Jigalong consists of two clusters of buildings along a central " street', with a Government school near the central area. The dormitories were abandoned in 1969, and the school-age children now sleep in the Camp. There is a kitchen dining-room, where bread is baked daily for sale and where, formerly, meals were prepared for school-children and Pensioners.[1] A government-run store sells food-

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[1] About fifty Aborigines receive Old Age or Invalid Pensions, or Wife's Allowances, and many parents receive small Child Endowment payments, from the Government. Since 1967 Pensioners have been given larger lump-sum payments and they buy their own food and provisions.

stuffs, fresh fruit and vegetables and a wide range of material goods that are in demand locally. The small hospital now operates largely as a clinic, since sick people are flown to Port Hedland. There is a garage-workshop, at which settlement vehicles are maintained,and a diesel generator.

The Aboriginal Camp is a motley collection of abodes, mostly primitive structures of iron, canvas, bushes and poles, which are easily re-aligned to adapt to prevailing weather conditions (the prevailing wind is easterly, but there is great variability in wind direction) and readily moved when the immediate area becomes too dirty, or after a death has occurred. The main camping area is along the western side of the bed of Jigalong Creek, about 200 yards west of the settlement buildings. The general impression is one of ugly disorder (see Meggitt's description of a Walbiri camp; 1962:75), with hordes of underfed dogs scavenging everywhere. There are broad spatial divisions of camping areas according to linguistic group and area of origin: thus groups recreate the orientation vis-a-vis one another that they had in the desert; Gaḍudjara camp to the west and south of Mandjildjara and other groups from further north. Some intermingling of camps does occur, however, because of a long history of intergroup marriage between those Gaḍudjara and Mandjildjara who have been friends for several decades.

C. Demography.

Table 1 (below) reveals a steadily increasing population over the years and considerable fluctuation in numbers within a given year. Around a relatively stable core of schoolchildren,

Pensioners, working women and whites[1], there are seasonal variations caused mainly by the movement of able-bodied men (some of whom take their families) who go away to work on pastoral stations for varying periods. In the mid-summer slack season for employment, most Aborigines return to the settlement, and each year at this time they hold what they call 'big meetings', attended by Aborigines from different areas who congregate for ritual activities at an agreed-upon venue. When such a gathering occurs at Jigalong, the population reaches its annual peak, but it soon decreases as visitors leave and men once more return to work.

In 1970, 75.6% of the Aboriginal adults (all those over 15 years of age) at Jigalong had been born in the desert, whereas only 6.4% of the children were desert-born. Thus the majority of adults spent much of their early life in the desert away from any direct contact with whites, but most children were born and raised in a contact situation, and all children over the age of six attend school. Between 1963 and 1966, five groups of Aborigines, comprising in all 45 adults and 34 children, arrived from desert areas to the north east and east to settle at Jigalong.

In terms of linguistic group of origin, the Mandjildjara speakers are the numerically dominant sector of the Jigalong population (47.5%); the second largest group is the Gadudjara,

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[1]In this thesis I use the terms 'whites', 'aliens', and 'Europeans', interchangeably to refer to non-Aborigines, while admitting that none of these terms is entirely satisfactory. The Aborigines generally use the term 'whitefella' to refer to non-Aborigines in English.

with 36.0%, and all others comprise 16.5% of the total (November 1969). This residual category comprises members of at least ten different linguistic groups, most of whom identify with either of the two main groups. The two main dialects are mutually intelligible and there is an increasing tendency, especially among younger people, to speak a composite dialect, with the addition of some English words.[1]

TABLE 1

Jigalong Population (1947-1970)

	Adult Ab. Males	Adult Ab. Females	Ab. School-chn	Ab. Preschl-chn	Whites	T
1947	31	38		35	?	104
June 1963	26	38	40	13	15	132
Sept 1963	36	51	54	23	20	184
Dec 1963	59	76	69	38	20	262
June 1964	51	69	71	32	20	243
Sept 1964	37	62	65	29	23	216
Dec 1964	109	101	78	52	17	357
Mar 1966	79	78	59	25	17	258
July 1966	52	66	44	45	15	222
Aug 1967	48	77	61	37	18	241
July 1969	128		185		13	326
Nov 1969	113	112	55	77	12	369
Dec 1969	170	157	81	101	6	515
Jan 1970	108	105	50	78	7	348

[1] In the Camp environment, very little English is spoken and only certain of the older school-children and young adults have more than a limited command of it.

D. Social Structure.[1]

Most Western Desert[2] Aborigines now settled around its periphery are emigrants from their original home territories (see Figure 2). The area has been of little interest to the whites, so for a long time after the more fertile regions of the continent had been exploited and their Aboriginal inhabitants decimated, the only visitors to the desert were a few explorers and prospectors in the late 1800s and early 1900s. The contact situation in the area is thus atypical in that initially, at least, the Aborigines had the choice of either seeking or avoiding contact with the aliens. According to informants, it was their curiosity about the newcomers that initially prompted some of them to visit the fringe settlements (pastoral stations, mining towns, missions) that were established along certain parts of the desert periphery. A combination of severe droughts and an increasing desire for tea, sugar and other European goods led most to become eventually permanent residents of these settlements.

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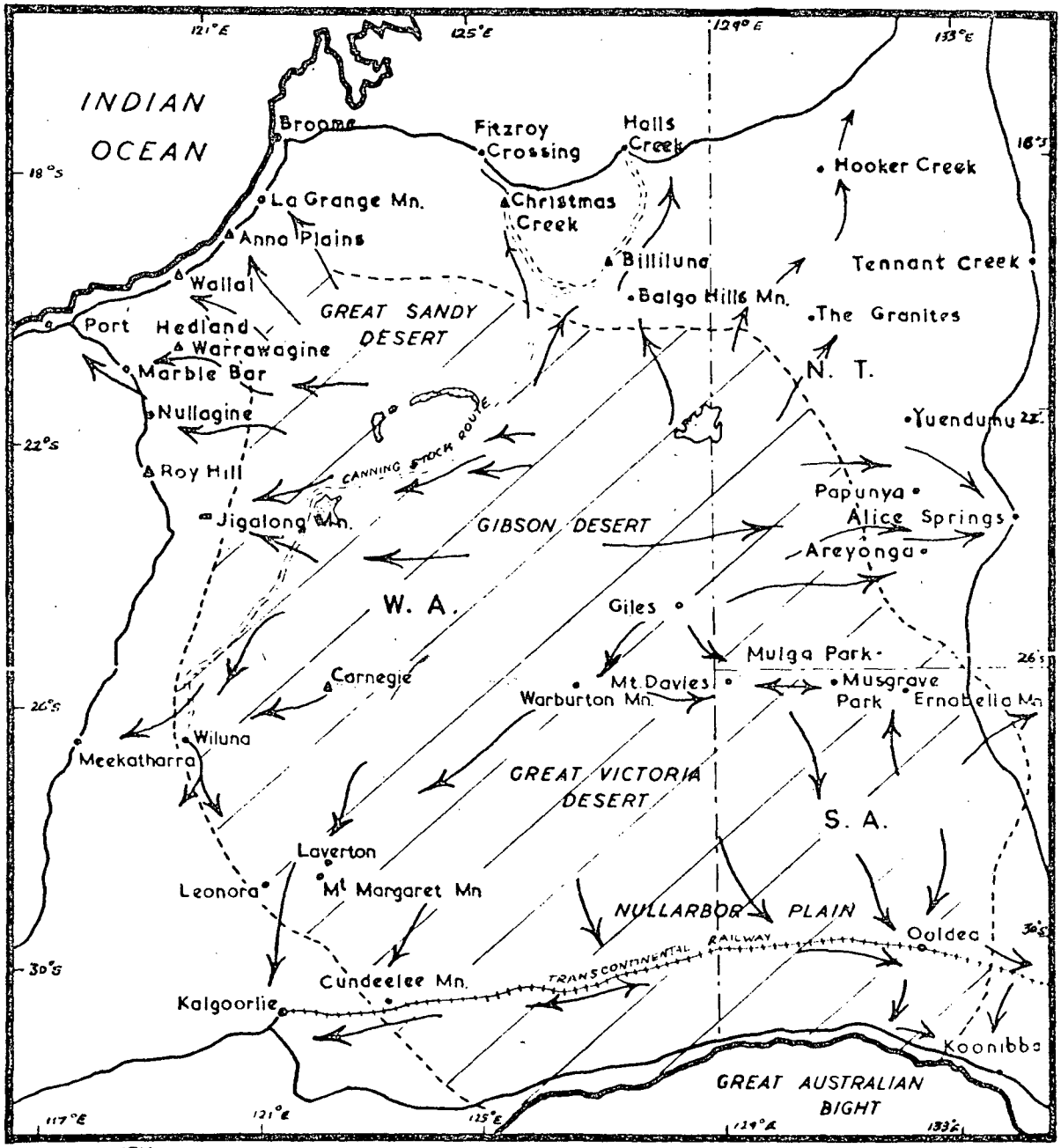
[1]For a detailed account of the social structure, see Tonkinson (1966:76-129)

[2]The term Western Desert connotes both a geographical entity and a cultural bloc. Over a million square miles in area, it exhibits similar physiographic characteristics and climatic conditions throughout (Gentilli, 1947). Its Aboriginal inhabitants share a common language with dialectal variations (Wurm, 1963:133; W. Douglas, 1958:i-ii), and a common basic social organization, relationship to the natural environment, mythology, religion and forms of aesthetic expression. (See R.Berndt, 1959, 1963:393-394; R. and C. Berndt, 1945; C. Berndt, 1960; Meggitt, 1962, 1966; Long, 1964; Munn, 1965, 1970; T. Strehlow, 1965;121-145; Gould, 1969a, 1969b, 1970).

FIGURE 2 THE WESTERN DESERT AREA OF AUSTRALIA



KEY

▲ Pastoral Station

— — Interstate Boundary

——— Main Road

+++++++ Transcontinental Railway

NOTE: The dotted lines indicate the approximate boundaries of the Western Desert cultural bloc (the shaded area).

The arrows indicate the directions of Aboriginal migration in the Western Desert area.

The common features of these fringe settlements include:

> (a) the aggregation of Aborigines, who are members of several different tribal or linguistic groups at settlements within Native Reserves (entry to which is illegal for all but authorized aliens); (b) a rising rate of natural population increase; (c) basic economic changes that have led to increased dependence on aliens; (d) increased literacy, but, (e) insufficient employment opportunities to bring about effective utilization of Aboriginal labour; (f) the inability (owing to loss of traditional skills) and disinclination of Aborigines to return to their former desert life; (g) regular contact with Aborigines at neighbouring settlements; (h) intercultural communication difficulties between Aborigines and aliens; (i) ready acceptance of alien material culture, and (j) the retention of Aboriginal languages, and in varying degrees,of traditional non-material cultural forms. (Tonkinson, 1966:34)

In these settlements, the Aborigines' shared kinship system, religious life and general cultural background are important integrative forces that serve to maintain wider group cohesion, and as a result new feelings of unity have emerged. The Aborigines now identify strongly with their settlement, and identify themselves to outsiders accordingly. The label that the Jigalong Aborigines give themselves ('Jigalong mob') connotes this new wider entity and indicates their feeling of common identity when contrasting themselves with outsiders. The Aborigines are still largely tradition-oriented in their basic ethos, but this heritage is in many aspects of their life being constantly modified and redefined in response to pressures from the wider society.

The typical family unit at Jigalong is of a nuclear or composite type, consisting of a man, his wife or wives[1], their unmarried daughters and uninitiated sons, with the possible addition of other relatives, such as a married daughter and her children whose husband is away, an elderly 'wife' whom the man at times looks after, and perhaps his aged mother if she has chosen not to camp with several other widows. Although constantly impinged upon by the wider kinship system and the communal atmosphere of the Camp, the family is still the basic kinship and social unit at Jigalong.

Infant betrothal is still the ideal and is commonly practised, but fewer girls now marry the men to whom they were originally betrothed. Whereas the great majority of girls are married before they are nineteen, no boys ever marry so young, because there are strong pressures on them to complete a substantial part of their initiation process before even considering marriage. Although the practice of young men marrying in their mid-twenties, before they have completed full initiation, is common, there are no cases of unsubincised Jigalong men marrying. This practice is known

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[1]Polygyny is practised by about 23.0% of Jigalong men, who have either two or three wives (November 1969). When absentee Jigalong people are also included, the percentage of polygynists drops to about 13.0%.

to sometimes occur in other Law[1] centres, however, such as Wiluna.

The kinship system-type that most nearly approximates that found at Jigalong is the Kariera (see Radcliffe-Brown 1930-31; Elkin, 1938-40, 1954), which is based on a rule of preferred marriage with either MBD or FZD. The system is a typical classificatory one, i.e. its terms are an elaboration and extension of the relationships that obtain within the family. Among the 500 or so people who identify as members of the Jigalong community, only three 'wrong' marriages (i.e. that between two people not related to each other as 'spouse') are known. Every Aborigine at Jigalong is related to all others and generally adheres to the behaviour patterns and associated norms of obligation and reciprocity that accompany these relationships.

Kin behavioural patterns range from complete avoidance at one extreme to joking relationships at the other. Although in all cases there are variations in the degree of conformity to the behavioural norm, there appear to have been very few changes in the traditional patterns. In general, relation-

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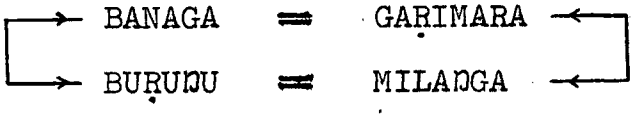
[1]Following J.Wilson (1961) and K.Wilson (1961,1970), I use the capitalized word Law to refer to the Aboriginal concept, which is a body of jural rules and moral evaluations of customary and socially sanctioned behaviour patterns, allegedly originating from the creative period. The Aborigines use the English word at least as often as its dialect equivalent, julubidi. I use the term 'law' to refer to European law. In making a conceptual equation, the Aborigines emphasize the use of rules, formal behaviour and social control in the two systems.

ships between women tend to be less restrained than those between men. Restraint relationships characterize interaction between a man and most of his adult consanguineal kin. Kin distinctions are largely irrelevant to social interaction among children, who may also behave unrestrainedly towards adults, regardless of the kinship categories involved.

Most Aborigines now at Jigalong come from areas that traditionally possessed a four-section system.[1] The diagram below shows the arrangement of the sections at Jigalong:



The symbol = connects intermarrying sections, and the arrows connect the sections of mother and child. Section names do not indicate sex distinctions. Nor does the section system of itself regulate marriage, since in an ego's intermarrying section there are always females not classified as wife (e.g. his FM, 'FM', DD and 'DD'). Rules expressed in terms of kinship categories regulate marriage, while sections serve to categorize people into groups and are utilized mostly as convenient reference terms.

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[1]Some local Mandjildjara people are also acquainted with subsection terminology almost identical to that of the Walbiri (vide Meggitt, 1962:165), which was apparently spreading south and west into their home areas. But the Aborigines at Jigalong are not conversant with Kimberley subsection terms such as those reported by Kaberry (1939:46) and C. Berndt (1950:19) which suggests the existence traditionally of a cultural barrier between the Kimberley area and desert areas to the south.

Inherent in any section system are three further grouping-possibilities: patrilineal and matrilineal moieties, and alternate generation levels. Neither of the first two groupings operates at Jigalong and there is no evidence that they functioned traditionally as corporate groups or social entities of any kind. Alternate generation level groupings, however, are found at the settlement. An ego refers to all members of his or her own generation level (i.e. real and classificatory B,Z, MM, MF, FM, FF, BW, ZH, MBS, MBD, FZS, FZD, etc.) as marira and those of the alternate generation level (F, M, S, D, MB, FZ, ZS, ZD, BS, BD, FB, MZ,) as jinara. Thus, for example, a Banaga ego would refer to all other Banaga and Garimara as marira, and to all Burunu - Milanga as jinara, where as a Burunu ego would call all other Burunu and Milanga marira, and all Banaga-Garimara jinara. This type of grouping is not important in mundane affairs but is a feature of the religious life. For many types of ritual, seating arrangements are made on the basis of this kind of dual organization, and the proceedings invariably include the frequent expression of ritual opposition between the two groups so formed. The Na:wajil is a good example of this kind of division of the participants in ritual.

The traditional form of local group organization no longer exists among the Aborigines of Jigalong; it lost its raison-d'être once the Aborigines gave up their semi-nomadic hunting and gathering existence and left their original local group territories and associated sacred sites for good. Local groups appear to have been labile in composition, with a

patrilineal core, but varying frequently in size and in some of their membership. For most of the year, the local group was small, consisting of between one and three families, generally related agnatically through the male heads, with various other members who could at times include affines, and young single men being taken by their elders on extensive travels that entailed the tracing of mythological routes followed by the ancestral beings of the creative period.

The wider linguistic unit is more easily defined, since it is named by the dialect its members speak, and it was comprised traditionally of a number of contiguous local groups who normally occupied a specific stretch of territory and who came together once or twice a year, in combination with members of neighbouring linguistic groups, to hold initiation and other religious rituals, settle conflicts, give women in marriage, plan future meetings, and so on. Today, linguistic group membership is reflected at Jigalong in the camping arrangements of the local people, and shared local group membership in desert time is indicated by close ties of kinship and friendship that bind people so affiliated together, even after decades of living at Jigalong. The complete disappearance of traditional local group organization is the most obvious change that has taken place among these people since contact with Europeans began.

E. Employment and Leisure-time Activities.

Most able-bodied men are away for most of the year, working as stockmen on pastoral stations within a 500 mile radius

of Jigalong. Most are hired on a seasonal basis and are released when the work in hand is completed. Between jobs they either go to towns such as Meekatharra and Wiluna to spend their money, or else return to Jigalong for a holiday. In the towns, drinking and gambling are favoured pastimes of the Aborigines, and during the annual horse-racing meetings that are held in towns throughout the area, large numbers of Aborigines and local whites assemble for the festivities. At these times the Aborigines may hold rituals if in Wiluna, but only sing-songs if in Meekatharra, where a breakdown in the traditional Law is more evident.

Other than in stockwork, very little employment is available in the area for Aborigines, and since the end of 1968 when minimum wage regulations became applicable to Aboriginal station workers, job openings on stations appear to have declined in number.[1] Most middle-aged and older men at the settlement have neither the necessary skills for pastoral work nor sufficient command of English, so they spend most of their time at Jigalong. During the mission period, many of them, and large numbers of women, were employed at menial tasks in return for food rations and clothing. Since the closing of the dormitories and the Government take-over most people have lost their jobs and heavier reliance has been placed on income from Social Service payments.

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[1] A few Jigalong men worked for a time as labourers at the township and giant iron-ore mining operation at Mount Newman, about 100 miles west of Jigalong, but Aborigines are no longer employed there. The town has featured as a popular destination for groups of Jigalong Aborigines who drive there to visit relatives in the Camp near Newman, and can drink while there. (Tonkinson, 1970a:5).

Most adults supplement purchased food supplies by hunting and, to a much lesser extent, gathering activities, which give them a break from the routine of settlement life and help satisfy their considerable hunger for bush meats, such as kangaroo, emu and lizard. They hunt with dogs and rifles mostly, either in vehicles[1] or on foot, and most trips are of less than a day's duration. The hunting of game to fulfil ritual requirements is common and important, especially during big meetings. Families sometimes go for weekend camping trips to hunt and gather bush foods, and during the winter months some older people make longer trips (up to a month in duration) into the desert east of Jigalong.

Settlement Aborigines now engage in few other traditional economic pursuits. There is a considerable amount of weapon-making, mostly for personal use, since non-Aboriginal weapons are tabu during conflicts. Most other male craft activities, such as the carving of sacred wooden boards, are more closely connected to ritual and secret-sacred affairs than to the secular life.

Local Aborigines have much leisure time. Household tasks such as wood-gathering, cooking, modifications or relocations of campsites, and so on, occupy relatively little time, thus freeing people to do as they like for most of the day. Visiting and gossiping are favoured pastimes of members

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[1]An increasing number of Jigalong Aborigines (about twenty in January 1970) own their own vehicles and sometimes use them to make trips to neighbouring stations and towns in the area.

of both sexes. For some, card-playing is a major form of recreation which, as gambling, ensures the circulation of a certain amount of money and clothing. Initiated men spend a great deal of time in activities related to the religious life, (discussed in the following chapter); women are also involved, but to a markedly lesser extent.

F. Administration.

During the mission period, the superintendent was held responsible for the welfare of local Aborigines and the day-to-day running of the settlement as a mission and pastoral concern, but he had to answer to his Church superiors in Melbourne, and to local representatives of the Native Welfare Department who made periodic visits of inspection. Local Aborigines had no representation on any advisory or supervisory body, but there was a 'boss' for each of the two main linguistic groups in the Camp. These men acted as spokesmen in most dealings with the whites, but were not necessarily consulted by either mission or Government administrators on matters affecting local Aboriginal welfare.

In 1969 the Native Welfare Department held meetings with the Aborigines and a representative council was organized for the Camp, with elected members. Since this involved innovations such as voting, the Aborigines were wary and the council apparently never functioned as such. The Aborigines prefer their own council, an informal gathering of whatever initiated men are present at the settlement.

Since the Government takeover on December 31st, 1969, the

Native Welfare Department continues to administer the settlement, from Port Hedland and the district agency of Marble Bar (about 210 miles north), whose Welfare Officer was at that time scheduled to visit Jigalong about once a month. Law enforcement is still operative from the small settlement of Nullagine, 140 miles north; the policeman there makes periodic trips to pick up offenders from the settlement, for trial and possible imprisonment at Nullagine.

It appears that the new administration will continue with a policy of minimum interference in the internal politics of the Aboriginal community and in the ritual life, which has always been kept secret from virtually all outsiders. The dominant concern of local Aboriginal men is that they remain free to initiate their youths into the traditional Law and to carry on their religious activities without interference from outsiders. They have adapted the timing of their big meetings to fit in with the seasonal demands of station activities, but so far they have not had to contend with attempts by whites (myself excepted) to observe secret-sacred ritual performances held in the bush.

Chapter 2. The Religious Life

In the previous chapter it was suggested that the activities at Jigalong which have been least affected by alien cultural influences are those concerned with the religious life. Its underlying ideology, especially, remains intact from precontact times. Local whites have generally known little of the cosmology and ritual activities of the Aborigines, and have understood less. Those who wanted to put an end to it; i.e. the missionaries, lacked the communicative skills necessary to erode the foundations of the belief system and failed to present their version of Christianity as a plausible alternative. Christianity has therefore meant very little to the Aborigines, who never considered it as a possible replacement for traditional beliefs; and no religious syncretism has taken place. The Aborigines quickly perceived the discrepancy between what the missionaries preached and what they and other local whites practised, and this realization reinforced their already negative attitude towards Christianity. Their antagonism was strengthened by many aspects of the missionaries' behaviour, in particular their attempts to turn the schoolchildren against their parents.

Basic traditional values remained largely unassailable in a situation marked by a relative paucity of contact with whites and poor intercultural communication. While they had little difficulty in accepting a wide range of material goods that were obviously useful and did not appear to be threatening

their Law, the Aborigines were able to ignore or reject nonmaterial European cultural elements and social forms that conflicted with their own. Thus the Aborigines have remained markedly tradition-oriented in the operation of their kinship system and religious life. The missionaries inadvertently aided in the maintenance of these traditional forms by enabling such a large community of once disparate groups to live together on a permanent basis, with sufficient autonomy and leisure time to engage in activities that supported the values of their former semi-nomadic life.

When it migrated to the settlement, each desert group brought with it a body of mythology, songlines[1], rituals and religious knowledge that was in some of its content unique. This fact of variation despite overall homogeneity in belief systems is basic to Western Desert religion, since each local group knew in greatest detail the exploits and routes of those ancestral beings who wandered within and through its own stretch of territory, but was less certain of ancestral tracks and activities in areas further from its own. The divergent areas of origin and differing tribal affiliations of the Aborigines now at Jigalong provided the individual with considerable scope for widening his religious knowledge.

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[1]A songline is a series of short songs pertaining to the travels and exploits of ancestral beings during the Dreamtime. These songs are usually sung in association with ritual activity, particularly dancing. The Aborigines use the English word 'line' frequently, to refer to a ritual complex as well as to a song series.

There was now the time and the opportunity to compare notes and link up the various ancestral tracks that are shared by most groups. It appears that the cosmology was too loosely integrated and variable to lead to any major clashes of belief as a result of the new situation, especially since there was a common denominator in their conception of their cosmic order and, within it, of the same major ancestral routes and associated songlines that crisscross the entire Western Desert area. Jigalong Aborigines now have contact with members of groups congregated in other communities, hundreds of miles from the settlement, and interarea cultural transmission (discussed later in this chapter) also serves to increase the breadth of religious knowledge among Aborigines who participate in the annual big meetings that are held at the various Law centres.

A. The Dreamtime and Mythology

The concept of the Dreamtime (cf. Stanner, 1958:513-523; Elkin, 1954:148,199; R. and C. Berndt, 1964:187-188) is basic to Aboriginal cosmology. The term refers to the creative period, an indefinable past era when Australia was said to be inhabited only by largely benevolent ancestral heroes and often malevolent spirits (malbu). Most of the ancestral beings roamed about the continent, creating natural features as they went by means of their superhuman magical powers, but sometimes behaving in ways that were all too human: quarrelling, killing, copulating with many different

women, disobeying laws, and so on. In contrast to these more reprehensible excesses, the ancestral beings also laid the foundations for the rules and way of life that man was to follow after they placed him on earth.

At Jigalong, the name for the creative period and its beings is manun(ba) or djugudani, or the term more widely known to scholars of Aboriginal culture, djugur(ba) (cf. Elkin, 1954:199; R. and C. Berndt, 1964:187; Munn, 1965:14). At the completion of their adventures during the Dreamtime most djugudani beings turned to stone or other natural features or else flew into the sky to become stars and other heavenly bodies, where they are said to live on, for the killings and 'deaths' that abounded in the creative period were never final and all the heroes remained immortal. In this sense the creative period is timeless, and is relevant to the present, since the heroes maintain their interest in the affairs of man, as long as he follows their directives in the prescribed manner and perpetuates their founding design. The ancestors and their associated spirits are still in control of plant, animal and human fertility, and their ways must be followed if this fertility is to be maintained. Thus the Aborigines cling to their Law in the belief that their continued well-being and their very existence depend on the performance of rituals and the maintenance of the religious life. Despite their increased involvement in the alien culture in some areas of life, notably economic, the people at Jigalong

repeatedly stress the necessity to 'hold onto' the Law and the dangers of anyone attempting to 'throw it away'. Much of their current conformity to the Law rests on this set of assumptions about its validation by the events of the Dreamtime.

Some writers (Radcliffe-Brown, 1952:166; R. and C. Berndt, 1964:188) have commented on the unsuitability of the term 'ancestral' to describe the creative beings, since they are not bound to present-day Aborigines by actual genealogical links. But, as the Berndts point out, Dreamtime beings are ancestral in the sense that some have produced, from their own bodies or through their own efforts, the progenitors of the present Aborigines. Furthermore, in a sense that is crucial to any proper understanding of totemism among local Aborigines, the beings are conceived of as genealogically linked ancestors, albeit putatively. Aborigines refer to the various ancestors by kinship term; e.g. "Kangaroo (Malu) is my gaga ('MB'); Crow (Ga:ṇga) is djamu ('FF' or 'MF')". Furthermore, the kinship terms used always refer to an ascendant generation (parent or grandparent level), implying that a measure of respect and deference is the behavioural concomitant of the relationship.

Most of the travels and exploits of the ancestral beings are embodied in thousands of songs and a large corpus of myths known to the Aborigines at Jigalong. Every Aborigine-man, woman and child - knows at least some songs and some

myths, but the greatest knowledge is concentrated in the hands of initiated men. . Since coming into the settlement, almost all local Aborigines have learned new myths and songlines, some as part of the normal processes of cultural transmission, and some incidentally. What all the Aborigines seem to share in common is the complete acceptance, at face value, of the events and drama depicted in the myths and songs. I have never heard an Aborigine question the motives of an ancestral being in speaking or acting as he does in a song or myth, and nor do the Aborigines philosophise about the characters or events so depicted. They do not stand apart and question any of their religion, and they are apparently disinterested in why the ancestral beings acted as they did, if this is not clear from the context. As I have noted elsewhere (Tonkinson, 1966:204), "Basic assumptions are not questioned, and although some variation and alteration is inevitable during the process of oral transmission of the Law, the emphasis remains on continuity."

The association of a host of natural objects with the beings who created them indicates that for the Aborigine, the physical environment and the heavens are concrete proofs of the absolute truths embodied in their myths and songlines. In addition to natural features, there are the many sacred objects that the creative beings left behind as repositories of life-force and as further proofs that the events of the Dreamtime most certainly did occur. From the viewpoint of

the individual, the myths and songs he knows best are those that involve sites in his home territory, and the creative exploits of ancestral beings in that area. For his homeland, he knows in detail who did what and with which and to whom and where, and he can point out all the natural features that were so created during the Dreamtime period. For the major ancestral beings who may have travelled through his country as one part of their long journey that took them all over the Western Desert, he will know best that part of their wanderings that took place in his home area. Since these major lines are shared by most people, variations in the content of the descriptive myth are inevitable, but no one quarrels over the discrepancies that exist. Nobody claims a more correct version than anybody else. Generally, any given group of men will concur about the main events in myths that are narrative versions of songlines, but there will be variations in their accounts of events not covered by the songs. When several men are together narrating a myth of this kind, they generally reach common agreement as to details through discussion, since some men are acknowledged as having a greater knowledge of the mythology than others. The others usually accede to the version given by a man in whose home area the particular set of events related took place.

It is clear that the Aborigines conceive of the Western Desert as an area that was crisscrossed by what is to an out-

sider a seemingly bewildering amount of Dreamtime traffic. Supposedly the first men of the Dreamtime, and the most important and widely travelled creative beings, known all over the desert, were the Two Men, Wadi Gudjara, who created life and natural features and by their activities laid the foundations for much of the Law. Also of great importance over a wide area was the ancestral kangaroo-man, Maḷu, who instituted the practices of circumcision and subincision, among many other creative exploits. Many of the ancestors travelled in large groups rather than in ones or twos: the Minijiburu women, who were pursued eastwards by the rapacious Ṇjiru; the Njanaji, bird-men who were on a 'featherfeet' ritual killing expedition; Wajuḍa, the possum people and Giŋgiḷba the native cat mob, who travelled extensively and form the core of the Diŋari tradition, and a host of others (see Tindale, 1936; Mountford, 1937; R. and C. Berndt, 1945, 1964; Gould, 1969a; Tonkinson, 1966:216-227; Mountford and Tonkinson, 1969:371-390; R. Berndt, 1970:216-247; for descriptions of Western Desert mythological beings).

The Aborigines are aware that the Western Desert area, despite its great size, has many overall cultural similarities. They attribute this homogeneity to the fact that the ancestral beings travelled widely, and different groups of heroes often came into contact with one another. During these meetings, they exchanged both sacred and non-sacred objects, songs,

rituals, decorations and so on, thus spreading these cultural elements to the extremes of the desert area, and often beyond. But cultural variations, too, are often explained in terms of the mythology which validates the differences; thus the coastal peoples, such as the Dala, north west of Jigalong, did not practise circumcision because Wadi Gudjara tried to do so during the Dreamtime but found that their foreskins were too tough to cut.

Besides sharing the attributes of great magical powers, and the ability to assume their animal totemic form at will, all ancestral beings carried with them on their travels a great deal of paraphernalia, including carved wooden boards and other highly sacred objects. These they left behind in the various places that they visited, for man to discover, contemplate and draw strength and a sense of certainty from. The creative heroes also wore elaborate body decorations, and instituted different songs and rituals as they went, usually at some significant spots, such as waterholes and prominent hills. There they also created storehouses of sacred boards, just as man must do at similar sacred sites.

An examination of the myths collected at Jigalong suggests that it is possible to divide them into two main types: the more common and apparently more important kind is the descriptive narrative, which tells of the travels of an ancestor or group of ancestors throughout the countryside,

and is replete with place names and brief accounts, at times, of the formation by the ancestors concerned of major physiographic features. Generally these myths are long, and are associated with major ancestral beings whose exploits are also encapsulated in songlines associated with important rituals. This kind of myth fleshes out the skeleton provided by the songs, which are very short and at best are cryptic and oblique references to certain events that occur during the ancestor's travels. Even if the songs are in the local dialects, it is impossible from the translation of the words alone to make coherent sense of them, without some kind of explanation. When the observer asks for interpretations, the myth may be told in explanation of the songs. The myths are not related as part of the ritual and will probably not be mentioned at all during its performance. 'Explanation' of ritual invariably consists of a few brief comments and the reiteration of the secret-sacred names for associated objects and activities, but never the recitation of the associated myth, if one exists. This is particularly true of the Ɲa:wajil.

The other type of myth recorded at Jigalong could be termed a situational one, in which the site of the myth is either not given or is not important to the events depicted. The emphasis is on situation and character interaction, and this kind of myth often validates a particular practice, or more often, a characteristic of some variety of fauna; e.g. why the emu cannot fly, or how the crow came to be black.

In the kind of interaction that takes place in such myths, kinship relationships are almost always specified, so that the ideal associated kin behavioural patterns can be discerned, though in practice characters do not act as they should towards their kin, and the story often entails some form of trickery.

The two main kinds of myth are never mutually exclusive since narrative myths often mention practices that validate, or are cited to validate, present-day Law. In addition, the narrative myths sometimes contain sections that dwell on character interaction, but generally at a given site. The mythology that is associated with the Da:wajil ritual and is described in a later chapter (see pages 89 - 93). will be seen to belong to the first type, the narrative exposition, with an emphasis on the route that is taken by the rainmaking ancestor and the objects he leaves behind, rather than on character development.

B. Totemism

All Jigalong Aborigines share what can be called a totemistic philosophy. Almost all the major ancestral beings are conceived of by the Aborigines as being both human and animal in form and behaviour, sometimes simultaneously. They travel predominantly in one form, but can change to the other at will, in keeping with their superhuman magical abilities. Generally, when people are recounting myths they may not bother to make this distinction unless or until it becomes

crucial to the development of the plot. So although most of the ancestral heroes bear the names of natural species and exhibit their species characteristics at times, they are also essentially human in their propensities. Thus Wadi Gudjara, the Two Men, were also two varieties of lizard, Maḷu was a kangaroo-man, Guṛugandi was an owl-man, the Nji:nji were a mob of zebra-finch people, and so on. Even the ancestral beings with non-species names are usually associated with a particular variety of fauna; thus Winba the rainmaker was also a snake. In a few cases, though, a story may specify a character as a human, with presumably no animal or bird association.

The Aborigines conceptualize a single, unified cosmic order in which man and the natural species, man and ancestral beings, spirits and other conceived entities are on an equal footing and are all interrelated on a genealogical and pseudo-genealogical basis, with some form of communication possible among all of them. Thus the Aborigines assign their dogs to sections and refer to them frequently by kinship terms, as they do to ancestral beings. Most people are aware of the section membership of the fauna with which they are familiar, and therefore know their kinship connection with each kind of fauna. Aboriginal man does not talk to the trees, but, depending on his particular totemic connection and territorial affiliation, he can communicate with spirit beings who are believed to be responsible for the continued

growth and fertility of flora and fauna, emanating from certain specific sites, or increase centres (djabija.) He is bound to his totemic ancestors and spirits by 'descent' and genealogy and can therefore expect reciprocity from them in return for his ritual services, just as he expects it from the relatives to whom he is linked by ties of obligation and reciprocity. At increase centres, when he and his agnatic relatives talk to the spirits, they discuss their needs normally and rationally, as between humans (ideally), since in essence they do not appear to conceive of the spirit world as being on a different level of reality from the physical world.

In the following paragraphs I will describe only the two major types of totemic belief found at Jigalong, since a detailed account of totemism in this area has been given elsewhere (Tonkinson, 1966:209-214), and, more importantly, since totemic affiliations are not significant variables in the actual carrying out of the Ɲa:wajil ritual.

Conception Totemism. Every Aborigine at Jigalong has a conception totem (njuga or djarinba), and a few possess two. The totem may be a plant, animal, insect, secretion or mineral, and in many cases, a person bears its name with the result that his or her totem is known to all other local Aborigines. All but a handful of the younger people have been told by their parents what their totem is, and this is the most common form occurring at the settlement. A person does not generally feel any special relationship of affection or an emotional bond with his njuga, he adopts

no special ritual attitude towards it, and he may kill or eat it whenever he so desires.

The conception totem is a manifestation of spirit-children (djidjigargal), who are said to have inhabited certain hilly areas and large trees since the Dreamtime, but travel far afield at times in search of their mothers, and are thought to be quite mischievous. But neither the conception site nor the home of the spirit-child is relevant to the discerning of a child's njuga. It is most commonly identified when a woman feels ill or vomits after eating a certain food. Some peculiarity in the appearance or taste of the food, or its overabundance at one particular spot, suggests to the woman or her husband that it was actually a spirit-child, which has found and entered its mother, who is always of the correct kinship category for it. When the child is born, its relatives look for further signs - birthmarks, blemishes, etc. - that will verify its conception totem. Many people bear 'digging'stick' or 'spear' marks on their bodies, and believe that these were inflicted by their mother or father while they were still in plant or animal form, as spirit-children. Despite variations in individual conceptions of the spirit-child and its activities, it is clear that, traditionally, the spiritual dimension of parenthood was strongly emphasized, at the expense of whatever knowledge Aborigines may have had of physiological aspects of paternity. This is still true today, regardless of whatever in-

formation to the contrary many Aborigines have gained from whites.

Ancestral Totemism. This is analogous to 'cult' totemism, but the latter term is unsatisfactory as a label for what obtains in the Jigalong situation. I mentioned earlier that the ancestral heroes are said to have carried with them all manner of ritual and mundane paraphernalia as they travelled about. At spots all along their route, they left behind various objects, such as weapons, hairstring, sacred boards and stones and bullroarers, and everywhere they shed eaglehawk-down from their decorations. All these things were animated with a kind of life-force or power and later turned into all kinds of plants, animals, birds and so on, which in many cases embody spirit-children, who live together in groups and bide their time until they have an opportunity to enter their mothers and be born as human Aborigines. This is the essential connection between ancestral and conception totemism, both of which owe their existence to the life-force that was part of the ancestral beings and all that they possessed.

Any child who was conceived or born in the vicinity of the route of a particular ancestral being or group of beings is therefore attributed with them as his ancestral totem. The way to ask a person's ancestral totem at Jigalong is "Danalunda ganu djunu janu?","Who carried you, left you and

went on?" Most adults were born in the same territory as their fathers but their ancestral totem need not coincide with that of their fathers since any given area may have several ancestral tracks crossing it.

Despite these shared ancestral totems, people so connected do not indicate any special bond in their social interaction with one another, and are in no way committed to action on this basis. That is, there are no totemic 'cults' as such, and there is no evidence to indicate that such groups were operative in pre-contact days. Hence my avoidance of the term 'cult' or 'lodge' to describe this form of totemic belief, since it is not used as a focus of in-group sentiment at Jigalong. During rituals that concern major ancestral beings, the allocation of roles to singers and dancers, when this occurs, is not based on totemic affiliation. Nor does possession of a particular totem usually give the person concerned any special privilege or responsibility during the performance of a ritual that involves his totem. However, 'descendants' of rainmaking ancestor, Winba, to be discussed later, are credited with special abilities as a result of their totemic affiliation. The men who lead the singing during certain rituals do so because they have the longest acquaintance with the line, or because they have travelled in the area of origin of the songline and have learned it in greater detail as a result. This applies especially to some of the younger men, in their knowledge of the Malu Kangaroo line, called

Milgu or Njungunj; they have spent time in the southern areas most closely associated with the line, and know it best.

It thus appears that the major rituals and songlines which have travelled to all parts of the Western Desert, via normal channels of cultural transmission that characterize the area, have long since ceased to be the property of any one group. Instead they are held in common and performed by responsible elders and initiated men, regardless of ancestral or other kinds of totemic affiliation. At the local group level, the annual performance of increase ceremonies at specified sites was apparently the responsibility of groups of men united by ownership of sites in the area whether or not they all possessed the species concerned as their totem. This fact, plus the overriding importance of cultural transmission of religious lore in the traditional life of the Western Desert Aborigines, helps to account for the lack of cult totemism in this area. If it were important for the formation of cult 'lodges', one would expect the local Aborigines to make efforts to have sons inherit the ancestral totem of their father, to guarantee the continuance of such groups in the contact situation, far from their home territories. But this has not been the case. People appear less interested in their ancestral totem than in their conception totem, but neither provides them with much in the way of conversation topics, or occupies their frequent attention. An observer who attempted to use totemism as a heuristic tool for the explanation of cult activities, role allocation,

and so on would make very little headway. I agree with Stanner (1965:236-237) who concludes his perceptive paper on totemism with the observation that the 'totemic idiom' is not in itself of any great religious interest, since it is a somewhat obvious means of symbolizing aspects of the great events of the creative period by or through familiar elements in the environment of the Aborigines.

C. Magic and Sorcery.

My intention in this section is merely to outline the main characteristics of local beliefs in magic and sorcery, since a more detailed treatment of magical practices that impinge on the Ɲa:wajil will be given in Chapter 6. The heading above is not meant to imply that magical practices and sorcery can be defined or discussed in isolation from more general magico-religious phenomena, since a clear distinction is analytically unsound.

As in all Aboriginal societies, there are at Jigalong a number of men (approximately fifteen in all) who are credited with possession of a mabaṇ, the magical object or objects kept within their bodies, usually their stomachs, and capable of both curative and destructive powers. These are the native doctors, called mabaṇ, almost all of whom have inherited their powers from their fathers and can use them, allegedly, to see inside other people, in order to diagnose and treat the cause of illness. They are presumed to be capable also of the exercise of their special powers to do

injury to others, but this aspect of their capacities; i.e. sorcery, is not socially sanctioned and is thus denied by almost all of them.

Native doctors have important functions to perform as leaders and guides on trips that local people believe they take during their dreams. Most of these dream-spirit journeys are said to be undertaken in large groups, for safety's sake, since they travel widely in the desert areas and sometimes visit sacred and other sites, encountering spirit-children, malevolent spirits and other beings that could cause sickness if the native doctors were not present to ward off these evils. The reality of these journeys is unquestioned by the Aborigines and they play an important part (see pages 41-43,47,109-111) in the religious life of the local people.

Relatively few deaths are attributed to natural causes, so the practice of sorcery is believed by Jigalong people to be widespread and common to all Aboriginal groups. Accusations are sometimes exchanged by members of the settlement community. There is some basic distrust between the Mandjildjara and Gaḍudjara which at times surfaces in private conversations when people voice their suspicions about who is responsible for a given death. A great many deaths are attributed instead to acts of sorcery by dreaded 'featherfeet' killers (djinagarbil). These are allegedly men, not spirits, who come from 'far away' and lie in wait for their victims whom they ambush, 'kill' then revive and

send them back to camp, where they remember nothing of the attack but die within days. Since sorcery accusations and counter-accusations occur both within and between Aboriginal communities, they have considerable divisive and conflict-inducing potential. This is why, at the time of the big meetings each year, the assembled communities attempt to settle all outstanding disputes and encourage the airing of sorcery accusations and rebuttals so that subsequent ritual activities are not interrupted or spoiled by conflict.

D. Ritual

Ritual activity is the most important concern of the people at Jigalong, both from an insider's and an outsider's viewpoint, but especially when we consider what the Aborigines hold to be most significant and crucial to their continued well-being; i.e. the faithful following of the design for life that is their heritage from the Dreamtime, and in particular, its acting out in the form of ritual activities that are foci for their feelings of security and belonging. The Law, especially in its ritual aspects, remains the traditional force that maintains and reinforces the Aborigines' cultural identity and group solidarity and continues to give them a considerable feeling of being able to control their own internal affairs and their own ultimate destiny. Their rituals and their esoteric religious knowledge are their big secret, their uniquely Aboriginal power that aliens cannot comprehend or usurp. But if the rituals should be lost, and they abandon the Law, it will mean the end of them, according

to those who are the current guardians of the religious life.

Thus, to the Aborigines, they have no choice but to continue to perform their rituals and engage in interarea cultural transmission if they are to survive as whole people. They frequently allude to the consequences of 'throwing the Law away', for they have seen them - in the town areas where some of the more European-oriented Aborigines have forsaken the Law and are now inextricably caught in the bind of liquor, gambling, fighting and frequent imprisonment. These town-dwellers serve as the models for what happens to those who turn their backs on their cultural heritage, but by this I am not inferring that Jigalong Aborigines remain aloof from such activities when they are visiting town. Many of the local men do drink and get into trouble with others and with the police when in town, but in retrospect they can talk about the effects of grog and gambling on the Law. They remain adamant in their opposition to liquor being brought onto the settlement, and about card-playing during periods of ritual activity, a transgression that does at times occur at Jigalong.

When they are at the settlement, fully initiated men devote a considerable amount of time to activities associated with their religion. Ritual activities are at their peak during the midsummer big meetings, but at any time of the year some kind of religious business is being planned,

carried out or analyzed in retrospect. Discussions and meetings, of either formal or informal kinds, are almost daily affairs and involve anything from a handful of men to virtually the entire adult initiated male population.

Groups of men, generally elders, make periodic trips into the bush where the most important sacred objects are hidden, to check on them and keep them cleaned and in good condition. Older men who have ritual status as custodians of the sacred board storehouses visit the area from time to time to inspect it, and others go in groups periodically to work on the cutting and carving of sacred boards, ideally an activity that continues year-round. Ritual performances are organized by the 'bosses' concerned at any time during the year, but the Aborigines say that in winter it is often too cold and there are insufficient men available to stage any long and elaborate rituals. At such times, rituals that can be performed in the Camp area seem to be preferred. Women's ritual activity, on the other hand, is more likely to be concentrated in the big meeting period, unless groups of women learn new rituals in neighbouring Law centres at other times; e.g. during Race Meetings in Wiluna.

Ritual Statuses. As would be expected in a society as egalitarian as that of the Australian Aborigines, few well-defined named and ranked statuses of any kind exist for the community as a whole, though as will be shown later, the Da:wajil ritual is notable for the presence of clearly

labelled and ranked statuses. The major division is between subincised and unsubincised men, since within the initiation process there are a number of named intermediate stages through which a novice must pass before being considered fully initiated and eligible to marry. Among fully initiated men, there is a broad division into the older men who have attained the position of cooks for the midajidi feasts that are held periodically, (mostly in association with ritual activities held at the storehouse), and those middle-aged and younger men who are the hunters. The latter supply the fresh meat that is eaten in association with the dampers[1] cooked by the midajidi elders, and is a general kind of payment rendered to those who are instructing their juniors in the Law. Election of new cooks is in the hands of the midajidi men (called gadada, or madjugadja which translates as the 'big ones'), who base their choice on an assessment of the appointees' performance over a long period as upholders of the Law. Several elders are also charged with the custodianship of the sacred storehouses. Their main tasks are to clean and prepare the storehouse area for ritual activities while the cooks are at work elsewhere (in the main creekbed, closer to Camp) and to keep the sacred boards oiled and clean.

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[1]A kind of cake bread made of flour, baking powder, water, and cooked in hot ashes. Traditionally it was made from grass-seed flour.

For every ritual there are certain elders who are acknowledged as its ' head bosses' and are charged with the organization and direction of the performances. There is no special term for such a status, and the incumbents vary according to the ritual being staged. The men who were initiated earliest and most often into a particular ritual, and best know its content are the heads, in most cases regardless of whatever totemic affiliations are involved. Just as native doctors tend to hand on their powers and techniques to their sons, ritual heads usually endeavour to do the same with their esoteric knowledge.

There is a broad division of the adult women, too, into midajidi cooks and others. Female cooks are chosen by the male midajidi heads, and do the mixing and kneading of the dampers, while the men do the actual fire-tending and cooking. Younger women are sometimes co-opted by the men and made to do the bulk of the heavy mixing and kneading work, as punishment for having made some kind of trouble. The same is sometimes done to a man who has caused trouble, and he is made to tend fire. The remarks made above about male ritual heads apply also to the females, although the headship of rituals appears to be concentrated in the hands of relatively fewer women than men.

Ritual Types . For purposes of clarification, the many different kinds of ritual that are performed at Jigalong may be conveniently divided into three main categories; the first, which is recognized by the people themselves, is ac-

cording to the alleged origin of the ritual; the second is according to the personnel involved, and the third is in terms of its apparent overall purpose.

1. Origin. Rituals may be distinguished as either manundjanu, 'from the creative period', or badundjaridjanu, 'from the dream-spirit'. The great majority of the rituals performed at the settlement are said to belong to the first type, that is, to have been composed during the Dreamtime and to have been handed on via countless generations of Aborigines down to the present. Less common, but nevertheless important in the local religious life, are those of the second type, composed by local men who were 'given' them by spirit-beings during travels they undertake, or believe that they undertake, during their dreams. One of these rituals is usually composed every few years and is sung and performed periodically until a newly composed successor takes over. Meanwhile the older one has generally been handed on to groups from other Law centres and begins its journey around the desert via the normal channels of inter-community cultural transmission. Two of the three badundjaridjanu rituals witnessed during fieldwork were introduced from places north of Jigalong.

A locally originated ritual of the second type was composed in 1962 by ten men of mixed tribal affiliation. It consists of about one hundred and twenty verses and has as its central theme weather phenomena - rain, clouds, lightning and thunder - and associated beings. It is called Winba

of Djaramara, from the names of the major rainmaking ancestor. It deals with the same themes and beings as does the Da:wajil, though it is not closely linked to any of the major Da:wajil sites; most places mentioned in the Winba ritual are much closer to Jigalong than are the majority of the Da:wajil sites.

Such rituals come into being through informal discussions among men, generally native doctors, who during dream-spirit journeys have songs, dances and associated sacred objects (generally of the thread-cross, wanigi, variety) revealed to them.[1] When several men report similar kinds of experience, they can then establish a theme. As more men 'find' songs, etc., these are added to the line, which is later learned by members of both sexes. Each ritual has its distinctive tune, dance steps, body decorations and sacred objects, but the overall form and procedures of the badundjaridjanu rituals are similar. These have been described in detail elsewhere (Tonkinson, 1966:229-239; 1970b; 1970c; Mountford and Tonkinson, 1969: 371-374).

A full session of the Winba ritual would last about ten to twelve nights if performed in its entirety. Most often the ritual is performed for only a few nights at a time. During the 1969-70 meetings, four nights of it were performed as a gift to the visitors from the south, who were given official sanction to stage that much of the ritual back in their home centres. The local people told them that if they

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[1]See Howitt, 1904:397; R. Berndt, 1951:72; Pentony, 1961:146 Coate, 1966:99; R. and P. Waterman, 1970:107-108, for the role of dreams in the revelation of new knowledge.

returned for some future meetings, they would be given the remainder of the ritual.

There seemed to be disagreement among the Aborigines as to the rainmaking potential of the Winba line. Some men felt that the singing of the line could bring rain, but the majority I questioned maintained that the Da:wajil is the only strong rainmaking line. Although the badundjaridjanu lines are relatively shortlived with respect to their actual span of performances at any one settlement, and almost all their songs can be sung by both sexes, this is not to say that the Aborigines consider them to be any less valid or significant than the manundjanu lines. Most of the latter probably originated in much the same way, and only later became regarded as being Dreamtime creations, as they were passed on from group to group across the desert.

The number and variety of manundjanu rituals known to and/or performed by the Aborigines of Jigalong is such that an adequate description of them is beyond the scope of this thesis. During the three month period over Christmas 1969-70, there were more than seventy performances of at least thirteen different rituals, several of which were of recent introduction, and several major rituals were not performed because of time limitations and competition from so many other lines. The main rituals have been described in more detail elsewhere (Tonkinson, 1966:220-229), but later in this chapter brief mention will be made of some of them.

2. Personnel Involved. The term 'secret-sacred' refers to rituals held in the bush out of sight of Camp and involving fully initiated members of the same sex only, with the complete exclusion of both the uninitiated and members of the opposite sex. Understandably, I could gather very little information about women-only secret-sacred rituals, but I attended several performances of part of the Gunajanbalinjdji line at which men were present and sang the songs, but were not permitted to watch most of the dancing. Most of the objects associated with secret-sacred rituals are termed 'sacred' in that they are considered to be very dangerous to any but the fully initiated and can be seen only by them.

In rituals I have called 'sacred', some initiated members of both sexes may be involved at the same time, and perhaps at the same place, to the exclusion of all uninitiated. For instance, in some cases most men are away in the bush carrying out secret-sacred rituals, while near Camp a group composed of male and female midajidi cooks prepares dampers for a later ritual feast to be eaten by the men when they return. The section of the Gunajanbalinjdji line mentioned above would be classed as 'sacred' in that men and women are together and all uninitiated people are excluded from both witnessing and participating.

Rituals that are classed as 'general-sacred' involve the presence of both men and women and uninitiated youths and children assembled in the same place at the same time, generally in or close to the main camp. In some of these the women can

sing and/or dance and in some children may also participate. If any ritual ends with dances in which sacred objects are displayed, women and children must hide their heads under blankets.

It will be clear, from a later description of the Da:wajil (Chapter 5) that most rituals contain sections that correspond to each of the three broad categories listed above, but all such ritual segments clearly belong in one or other of these categories.

3. Purpose. When rituals are classified according to their purpose or intent, clear divisions are not so easily made, since any given ritual can be interpreted as fulfilling several different but complementary functions, manifest and latent, in Aboriginal society. For example, it could safely be said that all rituals function as integratory elements and promote feelings of in-group solidarity vis-a-vis non-Aborigines and a sense of security and certainty among those who subscribe to the society's basic values. All this notwithstanding, a broad division is possible according to a ritual's main underlying purpose, as follows:

(a) Initiation. Two rituals are specifically associated with the early part of the initiation process, which at Jigalong begins with circumcision when a boy is about seventeen years old and proceeds through subincision (six to twelve months later) and several other named stages which, ideally, should

precede marriage; this long process is detailed elsewhere (Tonkinson, 1966:182-194). The most important ritual is the Njunjunj (or Milgu), a maŋundjanu line entirely secret-sacred to initiated men, performed far from the Camp and centering mainly on the exploits of Malu, the ancestral kangaroo-man. The Njunjunj, which appears to be the most widely known Western Desert ritual, consists of hundreds of verses and a great many dances. It is sung before, during and after both physical operations, mainly during daylight hours. Dances are performed late in the afternoon after several hours of spirited singing, as the men follow in song the route of Malu and associated ancestral beings. During big meetings this ritual is often held at the same time as general-sacred rituals so that at night women and children can attend the latter in or near Camp, and thus do not feel left out of the action.

The second ritual closely associated with initiation, but held much less often, is the Walawalaŋu or Djindjun, which concerns the travels and adventures of Wadi Gudjara, the Two Men. This line, also secret-sacred to initiated men, is first begun in the post-circumcision novice's camp, when his penis is almost healed, and also at the binmal storehouses during the Midajidi ritual when sacred boards are first revealed to novices. The main Walawalaŋu performance is an all-night affair, to mark the boy's return to 'life' and to the Camp. In contrast to the Njungunj, few dances are associated with this ritual.

(b) Ancestral-Instructive. The majority of rituals performed at Jigalong belong to this category, in that they concern the acting out of what Stanner (1965:213-214) calls the 'founding dramas', or 'marvels' of the Dreamtime, that are embodied in myths, songs and dances. Like the two initiation rituals mentioned above, these performances always have an instructive aspect, because invariably there are novices present and some explanations, however cryptic, are given by elders who know the ritual well. Formal instruction as such is generally minimal, since the emphasis is on the naming and identification of objects and associated ancestral beings; the elders impress upon the novices the secret-sacred and dangerous character of the names and information imparted during the ritual. It is through repeated attendance at the same ritual that younger men get some clearer idea of what the mythological background is all about.

(c) Commemorative-Recreational. Included in this category would be the dream-spirit rituals, which can be regarded as acting out and commemorating of verses, dances, etc. revealed during alleged journeys made by men in dream-spirit form. Because women and children can attend and witness most of the ritual activity they function as recreational forms in a more general way than do most of the other kinds of ritual which concern smaller segments of the settlement population most of the time. Nevertheless, the great enjoyment that Aborigines derive from all their rituals and associated pursuits is immediately obvious to an outside observer.

(d) Increase. The physical separation of the Jigalong Aborigines from their original home territories and the increase sites located therein means that it is no longer possible for Aborigines to perform the small seasonal rites traditionally held at the sites (djabija). The ceremonies were usually simple, and performed by a few male elders of a particular local group, who visited their site, cleaned around it, perhaps polished and anointed it with armblood, then talked to the spirits of the particular species believed to be living within and asked for them to come up and be plentiful across the land. One very interesting post-migration development at Jigalong, discussed in detail in a recent paper (Tonkinson, 1970b:277-291) is the local Aborigines' use of dream-spirit journeys to return periodically to their old home areas and visit the increase centres for the purpose of 'bringing up'[1] the species concerned. That is, the Aborigines, or certain elders and native doctors among them, believe that they do revisit the increase sites and can still ensure the continuation of the associated species, without actually having to trek across the desert to these places. They say that they had the power of flight long before the white man got it, and that such journeys, though fraught at times with dangers from malevolent beings, are relatively effortless. It thus appears that dream-spirit journeys have come to assume

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[1]This expression is commonly used by the Aborigines to refer to the effect of their increase rituals, thus the Da:wajil 'brings up' rain.

increased significance as the only avenue of contact utilized by the Aborigines between Jigalong and their homelands, and the means by which they can continue to maintain vital and life-sustaining links with the desert proper.

Despite that fact that it is a far more complex and complicated ritual than were any of the other traditional increase rites, the Ɔa:wajil belongs in the general category of increase ritual because it does have a central and specific purpose, which is to bring up rain during the midsummer season.

In a more general sense, all rituals have, for the Aborigines, an increase function since it is only by the continuing performance of the various rituals that Aboriginal man and the natural species are assured of continued existence and fertility. Some rituals are said to promote the increase of the animals, reptiles, birds, etc. whose exploits are reenacted in song and dance. Thus the Njuṅgunj line will bring up both plains and hill kangaroos and the other natural species that are included in this ritual complex.

Ritual Paraphernalia. The most obvious distinction with regard to ritual paraphernalia is that between objects that can be seen by members of the opposite sex and the uninitiated, and objects that can never be seen by anyone other than initiated members of the same sex, (and perhaps also by novices undergoing initiation into particular rituals). Para-

phernalia belonging to the first category, which could be termed general-sacred, include the woollen and hairstring bands that are worn by men on their foreheads, necks and upper arms, white forehead bands, pearlshell necklets (worn by members of both sexes), upper arm ornaments and pubic pendants (worn only by men; are usually of engraved pearlshell) hair-belts (men only wear these), bundles of wood-shavings worn mostly in armbands and across the forehead, by men, and bunches of green leaves held in the hands and shaken during dances, by members of both sexes. Fat, red ochre and blood are used by the men on their bodies, usually in association with body designs of various kinds. Women do not use blood on their bodies. In most cases, these decorations can be seen by opposite sex members and the uninitiated, but certain of the patterns are secret-sacred and must be carefully rubbed off their bodies before they return to Camp.

The women have some secret-sacred objects but I know nothing in detail about these. The men, of course, have many. In some rituals there are elaborate headdresses, facepieces or tails, constructed from grass wrapped in old rags, and used only in the bush. Lengths of red ochre and fat-covered twine, called juljdja, are the main decoration in certain of the more recently introduced southern lines. There are a great many different varieties of objects that are worn or carried during dances, and are lumped under the generic term wanigi. These are all variants on the thread-cross and share

the property that they can only be used once, and then must be dismantled and rethreaded for future use. These range in size from the little raba, or kangaroo 'ears', to thirty foot fence-like constructions made by joining sacred boards and spears together to form a framework on which wool is threaded. Although wanigi may take a team of men a half-day or more to construct, they are used in dances that last rarely more than four or five minutes.

Secret-sacred carved wooden boards form a category of their own. These boards, ranging in size from a few inches to nearly twenty feet, are man-made replicas of the boards that all ancestral beings are said to have carried with them and to have left behind at all important sites throughout the country. The cutting and carving of a sacred board is the important final step of a young man's initiation process. Typically, the carved pattern on a board is a stylized representation of a stretch of country and an associated ancestral being or beings, generally linked to the carver totemically, but not necessarily so. Men are expected to continue cutting and carving boards throughout their life, until their hands become too unsteady to do the fine chisel work. Most boards are considered to be the property of the collectivity, regardless of carver, but some of the smaller boards, particularly those of the bull-roarer type, are individually owned and are kept in saddle-bags or other containers close to Camp. All boards have potential utility for the practice of sorcery (of the 'pointing and firing' type) and are highly dangerous to the uninitiated, so they are kept well hidden at all times.

Traditionally, for a woman or uninitiated person to have seen these boards would have meant death, or at the very least, blindness.

The last category of objects is to the initiated Aboriginal men the most important. These are the secret-sacred polished stones that can be seen only by the middle-aged and older men and are regarded as the most sacred objects, because of their allegedly direct link with the ancestral beings, who either left them behind or else metamorphosed into them. A few are carved (cf. the Aranda tjurunga; T. Strehlow, 1947:84) and many are shaped and polished, but the carving and shaping are firmly believed to be the work of Dreamtime beings, not man. Most are of unusual colour and texture, which lends credence to their alleged Dreamtime origin, and although most of them have no particular ritual usage, other than being touched, rubbed and contemplated upon, they are believed to be major repositories of an unlimited amount of great power.

Their location is usually revealed to Aborigines by spirit-children (djidjigargal) either during dreams or in waking life, and their shape, plus the Aborigines' knowledge of which ancestral paths passed through which areas, leads to their identification in most cases. If there is doubt, native doctors at the settlement are consulted, and they and the elders identify the ancestral associations of the stones.

The discovery of these objects and their subsequent incorporation into the religious life have important implications for the question of internal dynamism in traditional Aboriginal religion, which is discussed in detail later in this study. (see pages 281-283).

Many of these highly secret-sacred stones eventually enter the intercommunity transmission circuit and are handed on, amid great precautions, from Law centre to neighbouring Law centre, for further contemplation and discussion. They may or may not travel in association with a particular ritual. In January, 1970, the Jigalong elders gave their southern visitors nine such stones, associated with Two Men, Emu and Eaglehawk, to take back to the Laverton area with them. Two of the Wadi Gudjara stones were shaped exactly like a meat-chopper and a revolver - definite proof, the men informed me, that the Two Men had these objects long before whites. The significance of this category of secret-sacred objects is akin to that of similar kinds of objects reported by the Berndts (1945:134-140) at Ooldea in South Australia, an area that is also within the Western Desert cultural bloc.

E. Intercommunity Contacts and Cultural Transmission.

The religious life of the Aborigines of Jigalong cannot be properly considered without reference to the wider socio-cultural bloc of which the local community is an integral part. The main characteristics of this bloc have already been

outlined, but more must be said about the Western Desert people's lack of cultural conservatism compared to most other Aboriginal peoples. Individuals and groups undoubtedly felt a close emotional attachment to their local group areas and sacred sites, cemented by the complex religious and totemic links that everywhere existed. But in an area of such irregular rainfall and recurrent droughts, many groups would have had to travel long distances at such times, to less affected, better watered regions. The reason why they would be well received by local groups in these better areas, and were assured on hospitality, lay in the existence of interlinking religious ties. The major ancestral beings crisscrossed the desert for hundreds of miles, travelling through the territories of many different local and linguistic groups, thus creating religious and social ties among the peoples through whose home areas they wandered. The annual big meetings also served to bring together groups from far-reaching areas for the communal performance of rituals, and thus further strengthened interarea ties. As T. Strehlow (1965:131) notes: "Unhindered by the rigidity of outlook that results from centuries of residence within safe hunting grounds, the Western Desert people borrowed religious concepts, social norms, and artistic practices freely..." In some areas these borrowings further diffused into the coastal periphery outside the desert bloc. Fink (1960:272) has noted that those Aborigines on the coastal side of Jigalong who have re-

tained an interest in the traditional life look to the desert people for inspiration. Certain of the young men from such areas continue to visit Wiluna and Jigalong to undergo initiatory physical operations so that they can 'become men', and it appears that this trend is increasing, as coastal Aborigines lose more and more of their traditional ritual life.

The various groups of Aborigines who congregate for several weeks each year at one or another Law centre, primarily to engage in ritual activity, constitute the widest acknowledged social whole, the religious unit. Despite variation in the number and composition of the groups so congregated, and the transient nature of the community so formed, it can be considered as a 'society' (*vide* R. Berndt, 1959:99) since it involves both sexes in fairly regularized interaction, with a common basis for action and the sharing of a common culture. The majority of visitors at any given meeting generally come from contiguous Law centres, but the size and composition of the gathering are dependent on factors such as the location and timing of the meeting, weather conditions, availability of transport and the current emotional state of intercommunity relationships. Improved communications and the seasonal nature of station employment have contributed to the maintenance of the wider religious unit, which now sometimes includes groups that would have been too far apart traditionally to combine for big meetings. Good examples of this are visits recently exchanged by groups from La Grange and Jigalong

(see Figure 1), and the 1969-70 visit to Jigalong by people from Laverton and the Warburton Ranges - both unprecedented occurrences, which constitute evidence in support of a further widening of the boundaries of the religious unit.

The Law centres contiguous to Jigalong, with whose members the local people combine most often for big meetings, are Wiluna, Nullagine, and Marble Bar-Moolyella, as well as some of the remaining Njijabali people from station areas west of Jigalong and from Mount Newman. To date, apart from small groups of men who sometimes take pre-circumcision novices on long tours, and a few isolated individuals, Jigalong people rarely go further south than Wiluna or further north than Moolyella. Likewise, most Wiluna people rarely move beyond Laverton in the south or Nullagine in the north, and so on around the desert, so that each Law centre's sphere of interaction overlaps with, but is different from, contiguous Law centres. Songlines, dances, sacred objects and other elements of religious lore are passed on from group to group and many end up travelling literally thousands of miles from their point of origin, in some cases getting back some of their own rituals that have gone the full circle. In central Australia I saw pearlshells, and sacred boards belonging to the Guranara line, all of which originated in north western Australia and had travelled in an anticlockwise direction around the desert fringe and into the interior. At

Jigalong in 1963 I recorded songs almost identical to those recorded twenty two years earlier and 950 miles away to the south east by R. and C. Berndt (see Tonkinson, 1966:162), which is indicative of both the extent and effectiveness of interarea cultural transmission in the Western Desert.

Many people from Jigalong and contiguous Law centres such as Wiluna and Nullagine are related by consanguineal and affinal ties, and Jigalong Aborigines have relatives as far away as La Grange, the south Kimberleys, and Warburton Mission. This is because some groups decided to leave the desert via different avenues: if they went north along the Stock Route they emerged in the south Kimberleys, if they headed west near the north end they ended up in the La Grange area, if they went south, they emerged at Wiluna, and so on. On the western side of the desert, Jigalong appears to attract the largest congregations of Aborigines at big meeting times, probably because it is the most centrally located Law centre. Since all people in attendance speak dialects of the same basic language, there is no problem with communication. Besides, the participants also share in most respects the same Law. The socio-cultural similarities that are so marked between Jigalong and other Law centres in the desert area are further evidence of a long history of cultural transmission.

Big meetings are always, to some extent, pre-arranged. Each year, most centres choose several men to make trips to

neighbouring centres for meetings to gather information about new rituals, songlines, etc. and to arrange the venue for forthcoming big meetings. Messengers sent specially to summon Aborigines from other centres carry with them hairbelts and small sacred objects (and sometimes a pre-circumcision novice) which are supposed to bind the others to acceptance of the invitation. During the actual big meetings, participants engage in the exchange of weapons, ochre, pearlshells, sacred boards and other sacred objects, which serve to maintain friendship and coreligionist links among participating groups.

The general format of the big meetings is similar. The visitors assemble outside the settlement and decorate; the locals, meanwhile, have been getting ready for days and an air of great excitement prevails as they decorate and assemble en masse. The visitors enter the settlement, sit at one spot and are entertained by a massed dance done by the locals. The visitors reciprocate, then as soon as possible afterwards, there is a settlement of all outstanding disputes between members of the various groups present, in ritual fashion. This must be done early so that subsequent ritual activity, which must take place in an atmosphere of cooperation and amity, will not be marred by conflicts. If the visitors have been summoned to attend an initiation (generally there are several novices to be put through at each big meeting), this will usually be the first order of business. If, however, they are

invited to be initiated into a particular ritual, this will be the first event staged. There is some initiatory activity involving circumcision and subincision at virtually every big meeting, because visitors are preferred for the roles of operators. A boy cannot be operated upon by a closely related kinsman, and the subsequent relationship is one characterized by embarrassment and avoidance, so it is preferable to choose men from other communities to do the job. Most meetings last at least two or three weeks, after which the visitors depart and local men begin to return to their work on stations.

At Wiluna and Marble Bar, and perhaps still at Port Hedland, there is usually some ritual activity held at Race Meeting time, and there are generally meetings of men from the various areas to plan for future big meetings. With the steady increase in both the number and road-worthiness of Aboriginal-owned vehicles, interarea communications are improving, and Aborigines also make frequent use of radio-telegraph to inform other centres about their movements and request transport assistance. For all this, big meetings rarely begin on schedule, and travelling groups invariably spend much longer on the road than intended, what with breakdowns and delays at 'watering-places' en route, where thirsts are not easily slaked and the beer is ice-cold. Nevertheless, it appears that news of impending meetings is spreading further now, and groups of Aborigines are moving further from

their home centres than ever before to attend them. Nor does there seem to be a diminution in the amount of ritual material being transmitted between most centres. In fact it appeared during the 1969-70 big meeting at Jigalong that there was a surfeit of possible rituals and the men were having difficulties in deciding which to perform.

F. European Culture and the Traditional Religion.

Because local whites were not interested and the missionaries were frightened to interfere actively in ritual activities, Jigalong's Aborigines have had no difficulty in shielding their religion from direct alien influences. After leaving the dormitories, virtually all teen-age children quickly sloughed off what little Apostolic Christianity may have seeped through and in general they proceeded to follow the cultural dictates of their elders. As young adults their belief in the reality and truth of the Dreamtime appears to remain strong, and they emulate the rest of the community in following most of the dictates of the Law.

As yet, there have been few threats posed with regard to the possible alienation of the young, and children continue to join the local community after leaving elementary school, rather than continue their education outside the area. True, there are ever-present intergenerational tensions, caused mainly by a mutual dissatisfaction about behaviour: the elders feel that too many of the younger people are interested only in sex, not in the Law, while on the other hand, the

young men complain that the elders are lethargic about getting rituals organized and performed, since they allegedly spend most of their time engaged in endless discussion and argument. This tries the patience of the young men, who say that they have returned to the settlement to be put through rituals, not to hang around waiting for the elders to act. But so far there have been no major conflicts pitting the younger initiated men against their elders, and both groups continue to share substantially similar value-orientations. Despite their adoption of many of the trappings of a 'cowboy culture', the young men are not really more involved in the alien culture and most see for themselves a future that is much the same as that of their elders.

Young newly initiated men show much enthusiasm for ritual activities. It is some of the older middle-aged men, not them, who are addicted to card-playing, which at times constitutes an indirect threat to the religious life. It is difficult to assess whether or not card-playing is on the increase, since it is a favourite spare-time and station activity, but at times it is a strong enough counterattraction to stop some of its addicts from participating in rituals, and for this reason has been strongly attacked by other Aborigines. Currently, Aborigines are not supposed to play cards at any time during ritual activity, according to a rule promulgated by the men's council, but transgressions nevertheless sometimes occur. So far, they have involved a small minority of

men, and have had no adverse effect on the ritual life.

There has been some incorporation of European material elements into certain aspects of the religious life, where their presence and use are not viewed as contravening any ancestral directives. Thus wool and cloth binding-strips are used extensively in the making of thread-crosses, because the highly coloured wool improves their appearances. Male dancers often wear cotton shorts, and many women now wear brassieres in addition to skirts when they dance. Axes, chisels and so on are used for the cutting and carving of sacred objects, since by using these the men are able to carve with more accuracy and care than with stone tools. Vehicles are used frequently for hunting, and for carting food, water and firewood in connection with ritual feasts. At these feasts, European foods have replaced traditional vegetable foods, and canned meats supplement the meat supplied by hunting. But the local men have not followed the practice of Aborigines in some other areas who use steel knives and razor blades as circumcision instruments; at Jigalong stone knives are still used in the operation, since this is the Law.

The Jigalong people are very well aware of what is happening to the traditional religion among Aborigines in most town areas, and during their visits to these places can clearly see the effects of grog and gambling on the Law there. But they do not vizualize any similar breakdown occurring at the settlement, because they are aware of their relative iso-

lation at Jigalong and of the protective benefits that this entails.

Chapter 3. Rainmaking in Aboriginal Australia

This chapter presents a survey of available literature on rainmaking in Aboriginal Australia, with the aim of discerning the main characteristics common to most areas reported upon, and through this survey, to draw attention to the many unique features of the Da:wajil ritual as performed at Jigalong.

Although many books about Aborigines mention rainmaking practices, usually under the rubric of beneficent magic, the references so made are invariably brief and sketchy, and nowhere does a detailed and coherent account of rainmaking emerge in the literature. The reasons for this relative paucity of information are not clear. Perhaps it is because very few rainmaking ceremonies, which are generally held in secret away from camps, have ever actually been witnessed, so most existing accounts were received second-hand from Aboriginal informants. Another possible reason is that individual rainmaking, or that involving a small group of elders, appears to be the dominant form of rainmaking as revealed by the literature, and in relatively few areas are larger collective rites known to have been practised. I found less than a half a dozen accounts, in any detail at all, of collective rites being performed, and will refer to them later in this chapter. It may well be, however, that collective rainmaking rites were far more common and widespread in pre-contact times, but

in the areas of greatest influence by whites these and other facets of the ritual life were among the first to be abandoned. This is suggested by the fact that the collective rites that have been recorded occurred in widely scattered parts of the continent, although all of them inland and in relatively arid areas.

There is insufficient information to posit any close correlation between arid areas and rainmaking and well-watered areas and a lack of such practices, so this will not be attempted. R. and C. Berndt (1945:180-181) report that at Ooldea in the Great Victoria Desert, which is part of the Western Desert cultural bloc, rainmaking is less important than expected, and they contrast this region with the more arid Dieri tribal area where water shortages are a real problem and rainmaking has been developed into a fine art, with both individual and collective rainmaking rites performed under the direction of native doctors. Unfortunately, we have no detailed information about the Dieri, apart from Gason's brief description of a collective Dieri rite (Taplin, 1879: 76-77), which will be referred to later (page 77). Spencer and Gillen (1899:189-193), who give a reasonably detailed account of a rainmaking increase rite, also mention in passing that some ceremonies connected with the making of rain take the form of ordinary dancing festivals which any member of the Aranda tribe, man or woman, of whatever class or totem, can see, but again, nowhere do they give an account of one of these festivals. However, the totemic increase rite that they do describe bears some resemblances to parts of the Ɔa:wajil

and these will be alluded to later.

A. Mythological References

Since all ancestral creative beings are believed to have been endowed with great magical powers, it can be expected that among their many activities some of them would engage in rainmaking during their travels. Thus there are many accounts of myths in which rainmaking occurs (vide Spencer and Gillen, 1899:109, 1904:294, 314, 393-394, 1912:21-22; R. Berndt, 1947:359-364; R. and C. Berndt, 1945:180; Mountford, 1956: 208, 210, 218; Meggitt, 1966:5-22), either as an incidental feature of a long myth, as in Meggitt's detailed account of the wanderings of the Mamandabari men, or as a discrete account in itself. As an example of the latter, Spencer and Gillen (1912:21-22) give an account of an Arabana myth concerning Ularaka, a Dreamtime man, who had plenty of gypsum, a substance often associated with rain men because it is white like clouds. Ularaka ground some gypsum then threw it into the sky, where it became clouds then came back to earth in the form of rainmen and women. As clouds, the rain-beings repeatedly rose and rain fell, filling creeks and claypans. Later, Ularaka went travelling with all the people he had made riding on his back. The rain spirits he left behind later turned into Aboriginal men and women of the rain totem. In some cases there are myths concerning rainmaking ancestors that are associated with particular localities that are in-

crease centres for rain. Spencer and Gillen (1904:294-296), in describing a Kaitish (Northern Territory tribe) increase rite, say that it is performed at a place called Anira, where in the Dreamtime two old men sat down and drew water from their whiskers, the latter now represented by stones from which the rainbow arose.

Many of these myths that mention rainmaking by Dreamtime heroes generally refer to the use of certain objects and substances that are considered to be essential to the rainmaking endeavours of man: blood, human hair, bird feathers, gypsum or quartz crystals, pearlshells and water. These are the most common and widespread media through which the Aborigines hope to bring up rain. They use sympathetic magical practices expecting that the ancestral beings will cooperate and send rain(which is requested by means of ritual manipulation of these various objects). Both elements, the objects and the expectation of cooperation by the associated ancestral beings, appear to be common features of Australian Aboriginal rainmaking beliefs and practices.

B. General Features of Aboriginal Rainmaking.

The following summary outlines the main characteristics of rainmaking that are common to most areas of Aboriginal Australia.

Rainmaking rites, of whatever type, are held only during certain seasons of the year, at times when rain can be reasonably expected to fall (Roth, 1897:168; Warner, 1937/64:208; Abbie, 1969:155). Generally it is unthinkable that Aborigines

would attempt to make rain other than during the right season. Mountford (1956:218) reports that the Aborigines at Oenpelli in North East Arnhem Land made a demonstration rain-pole for their white visitors, but refused to sing the associated songs until the pole was heavily wrapped in paperbark and taken far enough away that it could not 'hear' the songs; otherwise, the Aborigines averred, if the rain spirit entered the ground at that (the wrong) time of year, heavy rain would come and flood them all out.

Most accounts say that there are specialists in the art of rainmaking (e.g. Curr, 1886,I:403,II:144;Spencer and Gillen, 1899:189; Spencer, 1928:9; Howitt, 1904:398; Elkin 1933:479,480) but in a few cases (Roth, 1897:167; Warner, 1937/64:208) it is stated that anyone can make rain. The rainmakers and active participants in the rites are nearly always middle-aged and older men, often native doctors, or men who by virtue of their possession of certain rainmaking objects are socially sanctioned to make rain for the benefit of the group as a whole. Rainmaking is generally practised at a spot some distance from and out of sight of camping areas, away from the eyes and ears of women and children, and often close to some body of water (Curr, 1886,I:48; Howitt, 1904:397 Spencer and Gillen, 1904:313-315; Elkin, 1933:295,497). Often the blowing or splashing of water is an important part of the proceedings (Roth, 1897:167; Spencer and Gillen, 1904:294-296, 313-314; Howitt, 1904:398; Thomas, 1906:236-237; McCarthy 1957:149-150; Warner, 1937/64:209).

Although rainmaking as beneficent magic is socially sanctioned, in some areas there is a belief that prolonged, flooding rain is caused by the actions of unfriendly Aborigines in other areas. Judging by the available evidence, it is clear that Aborigines are as concerned with techniques for stopping rain as for producing it, because in nearly all parts of Australia reported on, there are well known methods of stopping rain when enough is deemed to have fallen (Curr, 1886,I:48; Roth, 1897:168; Howitt,1904:396-398; Elkin, 1933-490, 1945:142, McCarthy, 1957:150, Warner, 1937/64:209; R. and C. Berndt, 1970b:143-144.)

The need for rain in most parts of the arid Australian continent appears to be so obvious that few writers have thought to comment on the manifest purposes of rainmaking activity. McCarthy (1957:149), in his general work, refers to the presence of one or more ritually sanctioned and officially recognized controllers of weather in most local groups, who employ traditional methods created in the Dreamtime, and make rain for any of the following reasons: to end drought, to punish another group by sending storms to spoil their hunting and fishing, to obliterate tracks of revenge expeditions, and to cool the atmosphere in the hot summer months. McCarthy probably derived most of this information from R. and C. Berndt (1945:180-181) who are the only other writers to have suggested motives for making rain, during their discussion of rainmaking activities in the Coldea area of South Australia. The Berndts suggest

that there, rain is made less to fill waterholes than for its cooling effect and its use in helping Aborigines track animals. If this is the case, the Ooldea people differ markedly in their reasons for rainmaking from the Jigalong Aborigines who attribute a wider and more important overall purpose to their activities in bringing up rain every summer.

The singing of certain chants or songs seems to be an essential part of rainmaking all over the continent, but unfortunately few writers have ever recorded the words of the songs, and none appear to have offered interlinear translations, so we know nothing of their subject matter.[1] It is thus impossible to compare or contrast any of them to the many songs that are sung at Jigalong during the Ɲa:wajil.

In many areas there are certain tabus associated with rainmaking practices, mostly involving some restriction of contact with women (Curr, 1886,II:183; Roth, 1897:167,168; Howitt, 1904:397; Spencer and Gillen, 1899:189-193; 1904: 294-296; Elkin, 1933:480), but in few cases are there any explicit reasons given for such tabus or restrictions.

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[1] The only exception I have found is given by R. and C. Berndt (1945:182) who cite an example of the kind of song sung during a rainmaking rite at Ooldea:

jilgarina	bilararanu	jilgarina	bilara
no rain or clouds/	lightning and heavy rain/	no rain and clouds/	lightning and heavy rain.

On the other hand, among the Dieri (Taplin, 1879:76-77), the Miorli (Roth, 1897:167), the Georgina River tribes (Roth, 1897:168) and the Aranda (Spencer and Gillen, 1899: 193), women have a definite part to play at some stage during the ritual performance, even though it is a peripheral one. This parallels the role of women during the Da:wajil, but their involvement is much more an integral part of the ritual.

The most widespread rainmaking objects have already been listed. The general distribution of these rainmaking media is probably partly a result of diffusion and partly due to features held in common with certain weather phenomena by these objects. Thus blood and human hair (often from the beard) usually connote rain; bird down, feathers, gypsum, calcite and quartz crystals are associated with clouds, sharing the common characteristic of whitish colouration. Quartz crystals and pearlshell, because of their prismatic colouring and iridescence, also connote the rainbow, which is everywhere connected in some way with rain. Some rites involve the crushing of white stones into powder, which is then thrown into water or the air, to simulate and promote the appearance of clouds (Roth, 1897:168; Spencer and Gillen, 1904:311; Howitt, 1904:397). As McCarthy (1957:149) notes, most methods involving such objects are imitative of clouds and falling rain, and less often, of the movements of aquatic animals (vide (Roth, 1897:168).

In some areas, the media involved in bringing rain are quite different from those listed above, and seem to be unique to the particular group. Among the Murngin of Arnhem Land, for instance, (Warner, 1927/64:208) a man makes a human image out of grass and then buries it. Once it has noticeably swelled up, rain is supposed to begin falling. Members of one moiety of the Tjingilli tribe of the Northern Territory (Spencer and Gillen, 1904:311) catch a bandicoot, wrap it in paperbark and carry it around in a dish and sing over it until it becomes thin and weak. It is then released, and rain is supposed to follow. McCarthy (1957:150) reports that among the Barkundji tribe of the Darling River region in New South Wales, a piece of flesh was cut from a dead man's stomach or the thigh of a dead child, then sun-dried and cut into strips. It was then distributed among friends of the deceased, some of whom would, in dry seasons, throw a piece into the river to bring rain. Among the Dieri (Howitt, 1904:396), the severed foreskin of an initiate was believed to have great power to produce rain. It was kept in feathers and opened out of sight of women, then buried; rain was expected to follow soon after.

The natural species most commonly associated with rain and weather phenomena is the snake, which in turn connotes the rainbow. Myths and related cults of the Rainbow Serpent

or mythical snakes are very widespread, especially across northern Australia. Whatever the name and characteristics of the serpent, it is everywhere linked closely to rain and water sources (Radcliffe-Brown, 1926:19-25; 1930:342-347; Elkin, 1930a:279, 1930b:349-352, 1954:220-221; Kaberry, 1935:435, 1939:194; Piddington, 1930:352-354; R. and C. Berndt, 1964:209). In Arnhem Land the mythological serpent, under a variety of names, is the major ancestral being in a number of important cults, such as the Kunapipi, Djaŋgawul and Maraian, but in these the maintenance of the regularity of the wet season appears to be incidental to the overall purpose of these performances, which is the fertility and well-being of the Aborigines (See Warner, 1937/64:372-377; R. Berndt, 1951, 1952; R. and C. Berndt, 1964:209, 1970b; Elkin, 1961:5).

In the Kimberley area of north western Australia, the famous Wandjina cave paintings are believed to be closely linked with mythological snakes, clouds and weather phenomena (Elkin, 1933:461; Lommel, 1949:160; Hernandez, 1961:116; Arndt, 1964:161-169; Crawford, 1968). Some Aboriginal beliefs about the Wandjina and associated rain and cloud spirits parallel certain beliefs held by the people of Jigalong, as will be pointed out in subsequent chapters, but the name Wandjina is unknown to them.

Among the Warramunga tribe of northern central Australia

there are major ceremonies associated with a mythical snake, called Wollunqua (Spencer and Gillen, 1904:226-256). Further south, the Pitjandjara-speaking peoples share myths concerning the big snake Wonampi, which is connected closely with the initiation of native doctors and with rain and water sources (R. and C. Berndt, 1945:160-164, 182; Elkin, 1945:113,115; Mountford, 1965:152-154; Gould, 1969a:210). Interestingly, the Aborigines at Jigalong appear not to have known the word Wonampi, and when referring to water-snakes that live in the rainmaking country north east of the settlement they use the single generic term djila. Nor do they have any constellation of beliefs relating to the swallowing and regurgitating activities of mythical snakes, which are common to northern Australia and desert areas well south east of Jigalong.

Birds are the only other natural species often associated with Aboriginal rainmaking beliefs and activities (Roth, 1897:168; Spencer and Gillen, 1899:189-193; 1904: 314,393; Spencer, 1928:359; Hernandez, 1961:116). Some myths explicitly mention particular kinds of birds that acted as messengers for rainmaking ancestors, or brought up the rain themselves. This helps to explain the common use of bird down and bird feathers as part of rainmaking decorations. In most cases, the bird species concerned are those closely associated with waterholes, lakes, etc. or with

thunderstorms and rainfall, which suggests why they were chosen in mythological accounts as friends, companions or messengers of the Dreamtime rainmakers. In several accounts recorded, particularly those concerning collective rainmaking rites, the participants must sing out certain birdcalls as an accompaniment to their singing. This is what occurs during the Da:wajil at Jigalong, where each generation level grouping is associated with a particular rainmaking bird, and most of the non-secret sacred dancing is in imitation of the flight and activities of these two birds.

Most descriptions of rainmaking rites end with a comment to the effect that rain is expected to follow soon afterwards, but largely absent from the literature are explanations of failure, which must occur from time to time. McCarthy (1957:150), in his general account of rainmaking, says that failure is explained by improper procedure, the anger of the Aborigines' spiritual benefactors, someone's neglect to observe a tabu, or the counter-magic of an enemy group. Among the Dieri (Taplin, 1879:77), failure of their collective rite is attributed to the <u>muramura</u> spirits being angry with the group, or is blamed on another local group which has nullified the power of the rainmakers. The long list of explanations of failure of the Da:wajil to bring rain to Jigalong (see pages 114-116)

suggests the capriciousness of the rainmaking beings and the mischievousness of man as plausible reasons for the non-arrival of rain.

C. Rainmaking Increase Rites

All rainmaking activities, of whatever type, can be regarded as a form of increase rite, since their aim is everywhere to promote the fall of rain. But some rites are more nearly typical of other increase rites in that they must be performed at a specific spot by men who have close totemic associations with that place, which is generally somewhere where ancestral beings are said to have performed rainmaking magic in the Dreamtime, and is therefore a repository of rain-spirits or of rain-making life essence or power. The rites that are performed at or near these spots can be either individual, involving at most two or three rain totem men, or collective, with large numbers of men participating.

Elkin (1933:295, 461) gives some examples of the former type of rite: among the Yauor tribe of the dry coastal region north of La Grange in north-western Western Australia, a member of the local group which has spring-water for its totem goes to the spring concerned and digs a hole nearby, in which water rises. He then makes a heap of earth, which is black at the bottom and white at the top, representing a cloud. It is not known whether or not singing takes place

in accompaniment to the rite. Senior rain-totem men of the Ungarinyin tribe in the Kimberley region allegedly bring up rain simply by retouching certain Wondjina cave paintings in their home area. For one particular Ungarinyin Wondjina, the headman of the totemic group need only dream that he has visited the rock gallery to usher in the wet season there.

The making of a dream-spirit journey, which is an integral part of the Da:wajil at Jigalong, is also part of a rainmaking rite reported by R. Berndt (1947:359-365) for the Wuradjeri people of Menindee on the Darling River, in Eastern Australia. The native doctor who decides to do the rainmaking 'sings' the camp's inhabitants to sleep, and sings over a quartz crystal rainstone and bundle of feathers, then goes in dream-spirit form into the skyworld from which all rain emanates. Next morning he puts the objects in a tree and sings again, to bring up the north wind and storm clouds.Within two or three days, according to the local Aborigines, rain would always come.

The best known and most frequently quoted collective rainmaking rite is that reported for the Dieri by Gason (Taplin, 1879:76-77):

> After messengers have assembled the tribe, the men dig a hole over which they build a conical wooden hut with bough roof. The women are called over to look inside, then return to camp about a quarter of a mile away. Two men open their arm veins and anoint all the men who are huddled in the hut; at the same

> time, the pair throw down which sticks to the men. Two large stones, said to represent gathering clouds, are resting in the centre of the hut during the rite. The women are called over a second time to look in the hut, then return again to camp. Later the two men carry the stones far away and put them in the top of the highest tree about. In the meantime the other men gather gypsum and pound it fine, then throw it into a waterhole. The muramura spirits are supposed to see this and cause clouds to appear. Finally, all the men surround the hut and batter it down with their heads; this piercing of the hut with their heads is said to symbolize the piercing of the clouds, and the fall of the hut, the falling of rain.

In this rite, the use of messengers, the construction of a wooden hut, the use of blood and down, the central importance of rain stones and the reliance placed on spirit beings for the success of the rite are all elements which exist also in the Da:wajil.

In the other account of rainmaking practices that exist for the Western Desert area, R. and C. Berndt (1945: 180-183) describe three forms of rite:

(a) the native doctor undoes the bundle attached to his beard; the bag, called waralga (a rain cloud), contains several rainmaking stones and a piece of bone (R. and C. Berndt, 1945:159). This is an individual rite;

(b) the rainmaker (usually a member of the cult lodge that has the rainmaking ancestor, Djunban, as totem) uses a stone knife to scrape some shavings off a pearlshell disc, then he chews some grass and spits it onto a flat stone; he then mixes this with the shell scrapings. This may be an individual rite, or several men may be involved;

(c) the third form, an inma (ritual), is collective; several men wear shell pendants and go into the bush on a warm still

day and chant, then that night a ritual 'thanksgiving' is held, at which all the participants wear shell pendants and head-dresses resembling snakes (said to be representations of Wonampi). Judging by the description of the head-dresses given by the Berndts, it is probable that this is a men-only performance.

Roth (1897:167-168), in his ethnology of the Aborigines of north-west-central Queensland tells of the Miorli rainmakers, who travel to neighbouring districts and perform collective rainmaking rites in response to requests from Aborigines of these other areas. Part of this rite has a close parallel to the original Da:wajil rites performed at the Percival Lakes in that the men stand in a waterhole and sing and dance there; this is the only other report of such an activity. And as with the Da:wajil, part of the rite is performed in secret at the waterhole, and the rest back in the camp, with singing and dancing in the presence of women. Roth also reports a collective rite performed at Roxburgh by the Georgina River tribes, during which a bell-like hut similar to that of the Dieri is constructed. The men make a small artificial waterhole nearby and dance and sing around this, all the while imitating the movements and calls of various aquatic birds and animals, such as ducks and frogs. (During the Da:wajil, women make frog calls and the men imitate rainmaking birds' calls.) The men surround the women and throw crushed white stone over them in a simulation of rainfall. In the Da:wajil, the men and women throw water over one another to promote a similar fall of

rain on them.

The only other collective increase rite for rain that has been reported in some detail is that of the Aranda water totem men (Spencer and Gillen, 1899:189-193) of Central Australia. The quatcha is the rite that appears to have most in common with the Da:wajil, so the similarities between the two will be pointed out here. In both, messengers are sent out, though in the Aranda rite only members of the water-totem can participate; other men may attend, but as spectators only. The Aranda messengers carry a human hair girdle, a bundle of cockatoo tail feathers and a hollow nosebone, with which to summon the others; Jigalong men carry hairstring and feather-bundles as part of their travellers' gear. Both rites entail secret-sacred activities in the bush, and other activities close to the main camp, where a boughshed is the locus of this part of the ritual. Body decorations are worn in both, and hunting takes place as an important part of the rite. In both, the followers adopt an arms folded posture at times, and when moving they do so in single file. There is an all-night singing session in both rites, and dancing occurs too, but in the Aranda case, this is done only by the rain-totem headman, who directs all activities, whereas in the Da:wajil there is dancing by most men, and activities are controlled and directed by members of several different

ritual status groups. Although much shorter in duration (about forty eight hours) than the Da:wajil, the Aranda rite is nevertheless prolonged In both rites, the men return to camp to eat and drink at the conclusion of the bush activities. At the ordinary dance festivals that are held in association with the Aranda increase rite, all the men take part, as in the Da:wajil, with women as spectators. In the Aranda case, the women may assist by singing, whereas in the Da:wajil women never sing the songs.

Kaberry(1939:175,196,207) who worked in the Kimberley area, well to the north of the Percival Lakes, but with some groups who were originally desert people, makes several references to what appears to be the Da:wajil, though she does not mention it by name. Among the Wolmeri (called Wanmadjari by the Jigalong people), Kaberry reports the existence of a collective rainmaking rite with both sexes participating, and division of the group into alternate generation levels ('endogamous moieties') which are associated with birds: gidör (Jigalong: gidir) and wi:r (wijur). Kaberry refers to these as moiety totems, whose social relevance apparently lies in the fact that they are associated with the quarters from which rain comes: gidör from the north east and wi:r from the north west. This is not the case at Jigalong but in both areas the birds are not used as food. In the Wolmeri rite, each generation level grouping has a specific role, and gidör men and women sit on the east side of the rainmaking pool, wi:r on the west. Ac-

cording to Kaberry (1939:196), "It is because certain totemic ancestors under the direction of the rainbow serpent carried out the ceremony in the past that a repetition in the present by wi:r and gidör men and women has the same potency and efficiency." Certain sections of the rite are carried out by two old men of opposite groups; they construct a figure to represent Yeruwiri, the rainbow serpent, and also a grass circlet decorated with cockatoo feathers to represent Tandera (this is obviously the djandura of the Jigalong rite), which Kaberry describes as another important totemic ancestor). Although no object akin to the Yeruwiri is used in the Jigalong ritual, the small amount of information given by Kaberry is sufficient to suggest that the ritual she was told about is the Da:wajil, and that some of her Wolmeri informants had probably been initiated into the rite before they left the desert.

D. The Uniqueness of the Da:wajil

In this chapter I have endeavoured to draw attention, whenever possible, to similarities between rainmaking activities elsewhere in Australia and the Da:wajil. It is clear that in some of the objects used, and in the ideas underlying the bringing of rain through ritual activity, parallels can be drawn. But what stands out are the many unique features of the Da:wajil, which appears

to be by far the longest and most complex of any rainmaking rituals reported for Aboriginal Australia, and is very probably the only large-scale collective rainmaking ritual still being performed. Meggitt (1966:66) gives a list of ritual performances by the Walbiri at Hooker Creek, Northern Territory, in 1954; two of these were rituals connected with a rain-totem, but unfortunately no details of them are given, and judging by the totemic ceremonies that are reported upon, it seems very unlikely that the rain-totem performances would approach the Da:wajil in either scale or complexity. It would appear then, that the Da:wajil is the only Aboriginal rainmaking ritual to have a clearly defined status hierarchy, a duration of several days, a number of simultaneous ceremonial activities enacted each day, and events which involve at certain times the entire community, as well as visitors from other and distant Law centres. Moreover, it appears to be the only one which has ceremonial feasting as part of the complex, including the drinking of blood. It is unique in that the final ritual authorities are not local Aborigines, but people from another Law centre who are , in theory at least, the main guardians of the ritual.

It is clear from the majority of the bibliographical references listed throughout this chapter that most accounts of rainmaking come from early publications, which clearly

suggests that rainmaking activities have long since been abandoned in Aboriginal Australia. The most recent account of actual rainmaking rites appears to be that of the Berndts who worked at Ooldea in 1941. Much of the ritual life in Aboriginal Australia has been lost anyway, as a result of acculturational pressures, but the early abandonment of rainmaking activities in most areas suggests that they ceased to be considered of importance by the Aborigines once they became dependent on the white man and his windmills, wells and dams, etc. Once the Aborigines abandoned their semi-nomadic traditional life in favour of a sedentary existence at settlements, where most of their immediate physical needs were satisfied by the whites, rituals of the increase variety apparently lost most of their importance, especially once the Aborigines were permanently separated from the increase sites they had formerly tended.

This thesis is, then, to explain the important place of a rainmaking ritual complex in a context where an Aboriginal community's survival no longer depends upon rain falling in a particular locality. Why is it, when rainmaking has long since disappeared elsewhere, that the Da:wajil has rapidly come to assume great importance to the Aborigines of Jigalong? The remainder of this study attempts to arrive at some satisfactory answers to this basic question.

Chapter 4. The Ɲa:wajil: Background

A. Area of Origin

The Ɲa:wajil[1] originated in the Percival Lakes area, which is situated in the Great Sandy Desert, about three hundred miles north east of Jigalong (see Figure 1). Little is known of this poorly accessible region, but the Percival Lakes mark the line of an old river system that existed during a more pluvial period, probably Pleistocene, but has since become dismembered into a series of salt lakes, dry most of the time and surrounded by parallel sand ridges 50-100 feet high, with laterite rises on the flanks of the drainage system. What is unusual, and of great significance for local Aborigines, in such an extremely arid area is the presence of a relatively large number of good water sources - springs, wells and rockholes - that occur around the margins of the generally dry lake surface, and in at least one case, Jimiri, the well is in the middle of the actual lakebed. This phenomenon is attributed to the presence of calcrete rock, a type of limestone that is

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[1] Jigalong informants suggest that the word Ɲa:wajil means '(water) flowing here' (Ɲa: can mean 'here'; wajila is the verb 'to flow'). Elsewhere in this chapter see page 97, footnote 1), it is noted that the Waramunga (a tribe in the Kimberleys) use the word gnapa:waili ('rain leg') to refer to the rain-curtain that can sometimes be seen moving across the ground during summer storms. If the 'pa' is removed from this word (at Jigalong pa or ba functions only as a subject indicator when suffixed to nouns, and is often omitted), it becomes 'ɲa:wajili'. The original connotation of 'Ɲa:wajil' in its area of origin may well be something more akin to the Waramunga word than is the Jigalong explanation of it.

a very effective aquifer in which the water table remains quite high, at around ten feet. This assures Aborigines of a reliable water supply in a region that would otherwise be virtually uninhabitable because of the porosity of the sandhills and the very low and erratic rainfall.[1]

Although its origin is attributed by Aborigines to the Dreamtime, the Da:wajil was probably composed by Djiwalinj and Manala linguistic groups who roamed the area, and in whose dialects allegedly the songs associated with the ritual are sung. Several Mandjildjara people now at Jigalong were born in the Percival Lakes area, but traditionally their tribal territories were much further east. However, groups of Aborigines from widely differing areas used to be invited to attend performances of the Da:wajil that were held usually at the main site and home of the major rainmaking ancestor, Winba, situated close to the north shore of the central lakebed. The yearly performance of the ritual attracted groups of visitors from as far south as the Lake Disappointment area (east of the settlement) and some of the older Aborigines now at Jigalong made the journey in pre-contact days. This would have been about forty years ago

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[1] I have never seen the Percival Lakes, and am indebted to a geologist, Dr. P. Playford, for the above information, and to Mr. T. Long, of the W.A. Native Welfare Department, for photos of the area. Aboriginal informants who know the area well provided information about the sites and local physiography. Veevers and Wells (1961) contains photos, maps, information on the climate, physiography and geomorphology of the Canning Basin, of which the Percival Lakes are a part.

at a time when migration towards the desert fringes was already in progress, so it is difficult to say whether people as far away as the Gadudjara would have attended traditionally. Whether or not Aborigines in distant areas had actually visited the Winba area, the name Winba was known to most people, as was the rainmaking connotation of the ritual held there.

B. Mythological Background to the Ritual

According to the mythology, the Percival Lakes were not created by the rainmaking ancestors, but by Girgi (banded plover), a Dreamtime birdman who set fire to large areas of scrub during his pursuit of two kangaroos. The lakebeds, called njunma ('burnt grass'), were formed from the burnt areas, which explains their often blackish colouration, according to the Aborigines. Their formation is merely an incidental episode in a myth that is mainly concerned with conflict between Girgi and Ga:nga (Crow) over the hunted kangaroos. The myth explains how Crow got his black colouring, why Crow and Plover are friends today, and also the origin of the waterhole, Jimiri ('rib'), where Crow left all the rib-bones of the kangaroos he had eaten there, on the lakebed.

There is general agreement about the main details of the above myth among Jigalong men who are familiar with it, but in the case of the rainmaking ancestors and their activi-

ties, there are as many different accounts and divergent opinions as there are Aborigines at Jigalong. Given that the myths come from an area far from their own, plus the fact that the Ɲa:wajil ritual is a relatively recent innovation at the settlement, it is not surprising that local Aborigines differ greatly in the extent of their knowledge about rainmaking myths, their associated personages and rainmaking phenomena. All those men who have been initiated into the ritual know something of the mythological background; in general their knowledge is fragmentary and skimpy but they are all gradually learning more, and it is clear, as I shall show later, that the myth concerning the travels of Winba is itself being expanded and fleshed out in the light of a continuing acquisition of new knowledge about the Ɲa:wajil. In the account that follows, which is fuller than most I recorded, I will indicate, where applicable, any major discrepancies between this and other accounts that deal with the exploits of Winba and the other ancestral rainmaking beings, then I will outline the details that appear to be most widely known and agreed upon by the Aboriginal men at Jigalong. This account came from Bilurbunadja, a Gaḍudjara man in his fifties, who visited the Winba area as a child, and holds a senior rank in the Ɲa:wajil.

Winba,[1] the snake-man, lived and hunted in the Percival Lakes area with a mob of rainmakers like himself.[2] One day he left his home at Winba waterhole and set off south west taking a Djiwalinj malulu (novice taken into custody some time prior to circumcision)[3] who he later circumcised and left behind somewhere en route.[4] He stopped at Galga, a spring east of Mount Newman, where he met a mob of Minjiburu women and mobs of Gingiljba and Wajuḍa.[5] He hunted for the men, then they cooked seedcakes and they ate a feast (wanaburga). There, Winba left plenty of buṇu (lightning rods), some of which (large stones, called djaḍan) are now at Jigalong.

Winba went on south towards the Kalgoorlie area. There at Maljuru rockhole he met Wadi Gudjara (Two Men) and they hunted then ate a wanaburga feast, consisting of a blood-damper which consisted entirely of Winba's armblood. Wadi Gudjara tried to make Winba go and hunt but he convinced them of his greater age and seniority so they capitulated and went hunting in-

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[1]Winba, like many other ancestral beings is said to be autogenous; he had no mother, but hatched himself out of an egg; cf. Elkin, 1936: 489; Roheim, 1945:222; Stanner 1966:97.

[2]The rainmakers were of mixed section membership; most informants say that Winba was a Milaṇga, but some claim he was a Buruṇu. Most of the rainmakers were malgarara, the senior Ḍa:wajil status, but Winba and some of the other best known ones, like Garbadi and Gudalj, were said to be of walumalinj (hunter-traveller-'workingman') status.

[3]Many accounts make no mention of Winba taking a novice with him.

[4]This was Winba's last big journey. The songline associated with the Ḍa:wajil mainly concerns Winba's hunting exploits in the Lakes area.

[5]Native Cat and Possum mobs, who belong to the Diṇari tradition.

stead. At that place Winba left behind sacred rainmaking objects in his camp.[1] He went on and camped east of Lake Darlot, but left nothing there. He went on east, camped at Djilgandjara north east of Carnegie, then to Gurangul, then Munalu, where he camped and left lots of bunu, then to Nji:ga, where he also left rainmaking stones, then north west to Malijadu where he camped, then to Wigi:. This is an increase centre for two sorts of grass-seed, nu:n and julgujulgu, and Winba ate a wanaburga feast of these seeds with the mob of grass-seed people who lived at Wigi:, then he went on to Guliluwagal, in Mandjildjara country, where he left a snake and ate a seed-cake wanaburga (made from djulu, a white seed) by himself, before going on to Bidu, then Njinjiri, then Loulou, then Gawungawin, then to Wingi, then on to Jinaru. At this place he found his ailing MB rainmaker called Djabula, who had collapsed under the weight of all the sacred rainmaking objects he was carrying, so Winba carried him on to Djabula and left him there. After Winba had gone, Djabula, the malgarara (the most senior status in the Da:wajil) tried to leave but had to return because he was too old and tired and had too much water in his stomach and the sacra were too heavy.

Winba went on northwards and met Kangaroo (Malu) who was now heading back towards the south. Malu asked Winba for

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[1] It is in this region that Winba is said to have experimented with rainmaking, using the fur of a small marsupial mixed with eaglehawk down and armblood, to make cloud 'beds' in the sky. After many attempts he finally succeeded in making heavy flooding rain.

bunu rods[1] and held out his hand. Winba gave him one but it was too small so Malu refused it. Winba gave him a larger one, plus a big rainmaking stone (bidurba), a large bull-roarer with string attached, a stone circumcision knife and a Da:wajil dance. In exchange, Malu gave Winba a long stone knife, a decoration and a dance, and a ŋajigala ('damper' made exclusively from his armblood), which they both ate. They also gave each other bark dishes to drink the ŋajigala from, and bidirgadji (sharpened sticks for piercing the urethra to make blood flow from the subincised area).[2] They then went on their respective ways.

Winba went on, saw tracks of a mob of Minjiburu women and followed them. When he found them he asked them where they were going and they told him, "East". They left behind Djinjaŋga (a Mandjildjara woman at the settlement) in spirit-child form. Winba went on and came upon Emu (Galaja) who was lying alone near a waterhole, after being bitten by dingoes, which Winba could see nearby. Winba travelled on, and became wet with sweat, and he could smell himself. He went on northwards and saw his old 'F' Mildjididi Banaga,

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[1]This was the first point at which my informant linked the myth to a Da:wajil song, which is said to concern Malu's request, although Malu's name is not mentioned.

[2]There is variation as to exactly what objects were exchanged.

already turned into a watersnake. Then he went on to Jabilindjadu, his Milanga 'EB' who had also turned into a snake and was living in a waterhole. Then he went north to Wili: , his Milanga 'EB', who had also done the same thing.[1] This snake was 'cheeky' and there were clouds all around the pool. From there, Winba turned south, to see Djabinga, his Banaga 'F' who had already become a snake and was living in his home waterhole.

He went on to Garbadi, his Milanga jalburu (age-mate), who had not yet turned into a snake. Winba went hunting and caught a marsupial (mala). Garbadi cooked it, plus a seedcake damper, and they ate a wanaburga feast, which they fed each other. They got up and left, but both complained of tiredness, so Garbadi made himself a windbreak then lay down, at Garbadi waterhole, where he still lives, as a snake. Winba went on northwards and saw sheet lightning to the north, and rain falling. He was looking for his 'F', but he was too late because all were already turned to snakes. He wept for them, then went on west, saw lightning at Maduwara, where there were two Banaga mudilja (uncircumcised boys) and a big rain falling from the clouds above that waterhole. The two boys were sitting on top of the clouds, with four snakes.

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[1] The sequence of Winba's movements in this area varies from informant to informant, which suggests that the associated songs are not sung in a set order at Jigalong.

Winba went back east to Galiwara, and then on until he became tired and lay down at Winba where he went inside the water as a big snake, and big clouds rose up from the waterhole. Winba was the 'last man', the last rainmaker left alive.[1] On all his travels Winba was followed by rain and it fell wherever he went.[2]

All the other rainmakers had turned to snakes and gone inside waterholes (except for Djabula and Garbadi) while Winba was away on travels. For some reason or other[3] the other rainmakers who had been left behind got into a big spearfight, and all of them injured one another in the thighs. Unable to walk, they had all crawled off in different directions until they could go on no further. The spots where they lay became waterholes[4] and they turned to snakes and went to live inside the holes, and they are still living there today. Some are quiet and good, others are 'cheeky' and may be dangerous.

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[1]According to some informants, several other hunter-traveller rainmakers (Gudalj, and Garbadi among them) were away at the time of the big fight, and consequently changed to snakes after the rest. Two men, both northerners, claimed Djabula and Gudalj respectively as the true last rainmaker, but the Jigalong Aborigines assert that Winba was the last one left alive in human form.

[2]Winba made his own clouds (sometimes from his beard-hair) and rain (from penis and armblood, and perhaps arm-pit sweat) as he went.

[3]No informants ventured any reasons for this big fight. Some say that it was only the young men camped at Galiwara waterhole who fought, and that the old senior men were brought to a halt by their age and the weight of all the sacred rainmaking objects they were carrying.

[4]The blood from their wounds filled the depressions made by their bodies and turned into water.

The section of the Winba myth where there is greatest variation in detail is the earlier part dealing with Winba's trip to the south, which is not surprising in view of the fact that this journey hardly appears in the Da:wajil song-line, which centres on his exploits in the Percival Lakes and surrounding areas. All informants agree that Winba must have made a big trip to the south, because many of the rain-making objects he left behind en route have been found by Aborigines, but few people are clear as to the exact route taken by Winba. Other widely agreed-upon facets of the Winba myth are:

(a) Winba carried much rainmaking equipment with him (some of which he left at his camping spots en route), and made rain wherever he went.

(b) He met up with the Two Men and with Kangaroo, with whom he exchanged objects and dances.

(c) Winba found the tired Djabula and carried him to his home.

(d) While he was away, the rest of the rainmaking ancestors had a big fight, were wounded, crawled away in different directions and turned into snakes and waterholes.

(e) When Winba arrived back in his home area he found the rainmakers already changed to snakes and living in water-holes, with clouds and lightning visible above them. He wept for them.

(f) Coming closer to his final resting place, he met his age-mate Garbaḍi, ate with him then went on until he too grew tired,[1] changed into a big snake and went into a big waterhole, at Winba.

The great deal of variation that occurs in the Winba myth outside these core elements results from each person's attempt to piece together and unify the rather fragmentary information he has accumulated about the Da:wajil line. As more details come to hand, an Aborigine is able to give a fuller account of the myth, and he may discard certain details in the light of what he considers to be more accurate knowledge. This is possible because the myth plays no part in the performance of the Da:wajil, which centres mainly on the songline and the dances. It is these elements that vary very little in actual content from performance to performance.

C. Rainmaking Beings

The Aborigines use the term Djaṛamara to refer to the Percival Lakes area, its waterholes, the rainmaking ancestors and their associated beings; i.e. it connotes rainmakers and

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[1]Central Australian myths concerning the wandering ancestral heroes end with the phrase, "they became tired, became tjurunga" (Roheim, 1945:209). Similarly, Crawford (1968:124) cites a myth about two crocodiles who hid in a cave and had to lie down and stay there when their knees got too tired and heavy.

rainmaking. It appears that not all the ancestral rainmakers assumed or maintained watersnake form when they reached their final resting places, because the Aborigines distinguish as Dajaṛamara several human and bird manifestations that are said to have originated in the Dreamtime, and will be described in the following paragraphs.

Jadaṇgal.[1] These large humanoid creatures which live in the Djaṛamara waterholes, are Winba's workingmen who parallel in status men of the second highest level in the Da:wajil hierarchy. Some informants say that some of the rainmaking ancestors turned into Jadaṇgal, or that the watersnakes are also Jadaṇgal and can assume either form at will, being clever magicians like all ancestral beings. The Jadaṇgal act as hunters for the Djaṛamara snakes, and do the work of bringing rain. Fully decorated and carrying rainmaking objects, they ride in rainclouds, direct them to the desired areas (generally in response to Da:wajil performances, or visits by Aborigines in dream-spirit form, who journey to Djaṛamara country to bring up rain), then cause the rain to fall by releasing blood from their arms and penises, and some say, sweat from their armpits. Their heads are sometimes visible, sticking out above distant cumulus-type clouds (people point out the head-shaped vertical protuberances) and their legs are seen running across the ground very rapidly, in the form of moving curtain-like sheets of rain falling from

[1] Piddington(1932:375), in his discussion of the totemic system of Karadjeri tribe (northwest of Jigalong) gives the term yardaṇgal as referring to 'spirit child'. At Jigalong the name is identical, but the connotation of Jadaṇgal is different.

thunderclouds during summer storms in the desert.[1] They hunt using powerful lightning bolts (wiḷudjuṛu; wiḷu means 'penis') which emanate from buṇu rods that either hang from their penises, or actually are their penises.[2] They thrust these into the ground, the charge travels underground then back up into the sky where they quickly retrieve it. All such bolts travel from ground to sky and can be used to kill and cook game, or to kill Aborigines who have offended them. After the Jaḍaṇgal have dropped their rain, they are weakened

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[1]In his discussion of Aboriginal beliefs associated with the Wandjina beings of north-western Australia, Crawford (1968: 28-31) refers to them as cloud spirits which are human in form and have power over rainclouds and lightning. He notes that clouds often take on human shapes, like people wandering through the sky; the cumulo-nimbus clouds that herald the arrival of the summer monsoon are thought by the Aborigines to be the Wandjina themselves.
Arndt (1964:161-169) also notes the humanoid characteristics of cumulo-nimbus clouds with their trailing curtain of rain as they move erratically about the countryside. The Waramunga in fact call the rain-curtain gnapa:waili ('rain leg') Arndt posits the evolution of Wandjinas from rainclouds. "The development of ideas about a spiritual control of rain clouds is not difficult to understand since the clouds are still regarded as walking about the countryside and the dark patches on the storm head do on occasion resemble facial features." Arndt thus suggests a shift in emphasis from the amorphous shape of clouds to the more regular anthropomorphic shape of a spirit. This is a convincing explanation in the light of the Jigalong Aborigines' beliefs about rain-cloud spirits (Jaḍaṇgal).

[2]Roheim (1945:55,84) states that among the Central Australian tribes,as among the Dieri of South Australia, lightning is thought to be the penis of the rain.

from the loss of blood and must return to their Djaṛamara homes to recuperate before setting forth again. They take back with them cooked meat for the snakes. Some people say that there are female and child Jaḍaṇgal, while others say that they are all bachelors, as were Winba and the other rainmaking ancestors.

Raḷi. To many Aborigines, Raḷi and Jaḍaṇgal are synonymous, but some make a clear distinction between the two sorts of being.[1] Raḷi are said to be very tall and hairy and of human form. They also live in Djaṛamara country, but venture abroad only during the spring and early summer months, when they hunt galahs, eaglehawks, white cockatoos and other birds by taking them directly from their nests high in trees, then returning to Djaṛamara with them for themselves and the Jaḍaṇgal to consume. They travel alone, move constantly and are associated with weather known as minibugu: scattered thundershowers with loud thunder and strong lightning, but little accompanying rainfall. For the rest of the year

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[1]Several Aboriginal groups in north-western Australia use the term rai to refer to spirit-children, which are thought to sometimes reveal new songs and dances to men during dreams (Coate, 1966:93-123). Elkin (1933:295) also refers to them as "totemic species spirits" in the beliefs of the Karadjeri. There is a connection between rai and weather phenomena among the Bardi, who believe that the rai have superhuman powers and subsist solely on their own armblood. If a pearlshell ornament (bindjibindj) is found in a tree that has apparently been struck by lightning, it is thought that a rai really killed the tree with one of the shells that it keeps inside its body (Elkin, 1933:449-450).

they remain inside their home waterholes.

Ganjdjinada. Little is known of these humanoid beings except that they are supposedly a mob of uncircumcised old men who live in Djaṛamara country, and give their name to the forked lightning decoration associated with the Da:wajil line.

Gidirba and Wijurba (or Badjiwiriwiri). These two birds, which are said to have their permanent homes in Djaṛamara country, are closely associated with rainmaking and with the Da:wajil and are mentioned in the songline as having been seen by Winba flying above the waterholes upon his return from his long journey. Both are named from their calls. I have never been able to positively identify either bird, since they are rare in the Jigalong area, but from informants' descriptions, gidirba is probably the oriental pratincole (glareola pratincola), an Asian migrant that spends from December to about April in the north-west of Australia, and, according to Hill (1967), is associated with the coming of rain among both the whites and the Aborigines.[1] The smaller

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[1] cf. North (1898:160-161): "The appearance of this bird is regarded by residents of North West Australia as an indication of the approach of rain, and it is known locally as the 'Little Storm-bird'." ....."They came in a similar manner to a flight of Swifts, scattered over a wide area and circling or dashing along in pursuit of insects."....."The examples secured were shot whilst skimming over a swamp, from which they were retrieved by a little black urchin about eight years old. The natives were very indignant at my shooting these birds, and a deputation from the blacks' camp explained for my edification that if I killed any more a big rain would come and never stop until it had washed everything away." Jigalong people give the same reason for not harming either of these birds.

wijurba, also known as badjiwiriwiri, is probably the fork-tailed swift (apus pacificus), another Asian bird that migrates to Australia in late spring and stays until the end of summer. Both birds fly high, except in humid, thundery weather, catch almost all their food on the wing, and rarely land on the ground. They fly in circles and in swooping, dashing zigzags, and the movements of the two groups of Da:wajil dancers who represent these birds are said to be in imitation of their flight. Gidirba belong to the Banaga and Garimara sections, wijurba to the Burunu and Milanga sections, and throughout the Da:wajil members of the respective pairs of sections imitate the call of the bird with which they are associated.

The birds are only seen during the time of big rains and are thought to live in the clouds while away from Djaramara country.[1] Gidirba are associated with heavier rainfall and more powerful lightning than wijurba, but no

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[1] According to McConnel (1930:347-349) in a paper on rainbow serpent beliefs in North Queensland, two storm birds are associated with thunder, as its parents. If Aborigines kill them, floods follow and all the people will be drowned, they believe. Similarly, two birds figure prominently in the water-serpent myth reported by Piddington (1930:352-354) for the Karadjeri people of north-western Australia.

The Drysdale River Aborigines of north-western Australia regard the water-serpent Galoru as the rainbow and spirit of rain, and have a myth in which he sends two birds as messengers down to earth (Hernandez, 1961:116).

special rainmaking tasks are allotted to the birds. In the Dreamtime, flocks of both birds (some say they were in human form at that time) were like men of the walumalinj status; i.e. they hunted meat for the senior rainmakers. Now they just help bring up the rain. When rain begins, wijurba are generally seen first, and are said to be 'hunting up the rain' with their strong smell.

Another bird, limbi, the black-fronted dotterel, a water-lover, is also closely associated with rain and surface water, and is usually sighted first when rain is approaching. Limbi is also said to be Djaṛamara and to have been with the rainmakers during the Dreamtime.

Frogs are also thought to originate in Djaṛamara country and to be closely associated with rain. Their croaking noises are said to be in gleeful anticipation of imminent rainfall. In the Dreamtime they were a mob of women, who lived at the Djaṛamara waterholes and sang out during performances of the Ḍa:wajil by the ancestors. This is why today, women make frog-noises at intervals during the singing.

D. Weather Phenomena

This section is a discussion of Aboriginal views and explanations of the various weather phenomena, in an attempt to illuminate some of the underlying concepts of the Ḍa:wajil.

Rain. In terms of season of occurrence, most Aborigines distinguish summer rain (ṇangaliraṇu), which comes from

Djaṛamara country in response to rainmaking activities, from winter rain (guḷuwa), which comes from certain ancestral beings who are now in the heavens in star form. Some people also distinguish spring rain (miṇibuga) and early summer rain (wiḷudjaḍu), both of which are said to emanate from Djaṛamara country.

The Two Men (Wadi Gudjara) and their MB Gamuṛubul, the Minjiburu women, the Native Cat and Possum mobs (Giŋgiljba and Wajuḍa), like most other ancestral beings, went into the sky and became stars after they had finished their earthly exploits. Early in winter, these sets of stars disappear below the western horizon, 'into the sea-water'; first to go are the Minjiburu, then Giŋgilba-Wajuḍa, then Wadi Gudjara-Gamuṛubul, and at that time winter rain comes from the west. When they later reappear on the eastern horizon, winter rain comes from the east. The first light rains are Minjiburu's, and are said to be a mixture of sea-water and the ancestresses' urine; the next rains, also light, are Giŋgiljba-Wajuḍa's and come from the ocean, as do the final heavy, thunder-shower rains that are attributed to Wadi Gudjara-Gamuṛubul. The Aborigines are ambivalent about winter rain, because although it germinates grasses, it also brings cold and miserable weather conditions to the desert. There is disagreement among

informants as to whether or not native doctors have the power to journey in dream-spirit form to the ocean and obtain winter rain, and whether or not they and the senior rainmakers have the power to stop or drive away this kind of rain, coming as it does from the ancestral beings in the sky.

All summer rain originates in the Percival Lakes area, is controlled by Winba and the other resident rainmakers, and brought by the Jadangal, who release it from their bodies as blood (and as sweat, according to some informants). This rain is supplied in response to performances of the Da:wajil and visits to Djaramara country by native doctors and others in dream-spirit form.

In addition to their season of occurrence, rains may be classified according to their direction of origin, intensity, duration and type of accompaniment(e.g. lightning, thunder, hail).

Clouds. The clouds made by Winba were a mixture of marsupial fur and eagle hawk down, but they may also be formed from watergrasses. The Aborigines have many different names for cloud-types, which they classify according to size, shape, colouration, direction and speed of movement, apparent height, configuration and so on. The broadest division is between jundurba ('rubbish clouds') which contain no rain and therefore, according to most informants, no Jadangal, and rain-clouds, usually referred to generically as nangali,

which is the name of the big cumulo-nimbus cloud.[1] Some of the many cloud names, and the names of winds, are mentioned in certain of the Da:wajil songs. There are no special explanations for the occurrence of winds, except that they bring up clouds. Winds are identified according to the direction from which they blow and the kind of weather conditions they generally bring. Good winds are those that bring rain-clouds with them.

Lightning. Fork-lightning is the weapon of the Jaḍaṇgal as they hunt, or as they 'try out their power' during their travels inside clouds. Many of the secret-sacred dances of the Da:wajil focus on the Jaḍaṇgal and this great power to shoot bolts of lightning.[2] Some say that the lightning is the Jaḍaṇgal's hunting boomerangs as they bounce back off the ground, and that distant bushfires are evidence of the Jaḍaṇgal cooking their game. When the Jaḍaṇgal set out from Djaṛamara country, their lightning rods (bunu) are 'loaded' with power,

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1 Warner (1937/64:372), writing on the Murngin of Arnhem Land, cites an Aboriginal belief that clouds coming from the south and east are male, and those from the west are female. The two meet and copulate; i.e. they are really snakes. Rain is said to be the saliva of the rainbow serpent.

2 In a myth regarding the origin of subincision among the Wunambal of north-western Australia (Lommel, 1949:160) the Wandjina Kalaru threw the first flash of lightning by splitting his penis and letting out the fire and flash of lightning. Kalaru can direct the flash by taking his penis in his left hand and showing the direction he wants the lightning to go with a club in his right hand. In this way he can hit his enemies and split trees into firewood.

and they fire them by pointing the rods (their penises) down past their anuses and into the ground, then they shake their legs rapidly and stamp their feet to discharge the bolt. Bunu, either broken or intact are said to be sometimes found near spots where lightning has struck.

Sheet-lightning (barbar or giriwiri), which is generally seen high in clouds and at a distance, is said to be caused by female Jadangal, who have lights on the inside of their thighs, which flicker as they dance and produce sheet-lightning. They are said to do this to make a lighted path for Aborigines who are making journeys in dream-spirit form to and from Djaramara country. This appears to be the only time that the existence of female Jadangal is ever mentioned. Sheet-lightning is sometimes said to be caused by Djaramara beings waving their feather-bundles (jiliwiri or naluwiri) that are worn sticking up through their forehead bands; this shaking movement is thought to induce rain.

Thunder. This is called dududu, and is of two main types, according to noise level and causation. Loud thunder-claps are the noise emitted by the Jadangal as they release lightning bolts. Softer, more distant, groaning noises of thunder are attributed to two kinds of little insect that are believed to fall with the rain: birumbur, a small water beetle, and lidilidi, an unidentified red-mouthed being, shaped like

a centipede, which lives in claypans and dies when they dry up.

Hail. Known variously as gunada, bulidjida and warurugu, is obtained by Winba and the Jadangal from the bottom of Djaramara waterholes. Hailstones may originally have been Winba's food-pounders. He is said to have once made some big, black, sharp ones, which proved too dangerous to use, so he left them at the waterhole. Hail is feared and disliked by the Aborigines, who consider it very dangerous, and when it falls they sing out to it and tell it to go away. Men may pick it up, put it in their mouths, then spit it back into the sky, shouting, "Take it away!" Old women who sing out are said to be the most effective, since the Jadangal are thought to be nervous of females. In the same way, old women are enjoined to sing out to the Jadangal during lightning storms and scare them away by embarrassing them. They cry out, "Wilu gambara! Gawa wirilji!", "Newly subincised penis! Take it far away!" On hearing this the Jadangal would be gravely embarrassed and retreat, it is said.[1]

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[1] In north-western Australia, the Aborigines claim that they have the power to call up 'dry' lightning, which precedes the first monsoonal rains by several weeks, and use it to kill people or hit trees or rocks (Crawford, 1968:96). They may also dismiss it; the Aborigines at Kunmunya Mission used to chase the lightning brandishing sticks to drive it away. 'Wet' lightning, which accompanies the monsoon, is thought to be controlled by Wandjina.
Similarly, the Aborigines at Kalumburu in north-western Australia, who believe that lightning is the work of evil spirits (djimi), try to scare it away. The women shout at the sky and threaten the lightning with sticks (Cawte, 1964:174)

Rainbows. The rainbow (dunjdju)is believed to be a Jaḍaŋgal man protecting his 'WM', another Jaḍaŋgal, who is below him, against the possibility of an attack by Aboriginal native doctors who attempt to stop excessive rain or wind. In the Dreamtime, the rainbow was Winba himself, with his 'WM' below.[1] Such a juxtaposition is unusual because the DH-WM relationship is par excellence one of avoidance, though the pair is bound by ties of reciprocal obligation. Some say that the presence of a rainbow is to let Aborigines know of the presence of a big rain, but others say that a full rainbow is a sure sign that no rain will fall, because the body odour coming from the crotches of the Jaḍaŋgal pair scares the rain away.[2] A very short, partial rainbow, however, has hardly any smell and indicates that a big rain is going to fall. The rainbow is always travelling along, rapidly. Big round water-holes are formed from the point of origin of rainbows; i.e. from the depression made by the feet of the Jaḍaŋgal in the rainbow. Many become dry, but if the bottoms are dug out,it is said, water will always be found.

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[1] In Aranda myth, the rainbow is a man with his brother-in-law and mother-in-law (C. Strehlow, 1907:28)

[2] Among the Murngin (Warner, 1937/64:372) the rainbow connotes variously snake, snake's house and trumpet. It is the announcement not only of heavy rains, but also of heavy flooding at the height of the rainy season.

The Northern Territory Kaitish, on the other hand, regard the rainbow as the sons of the rain, which is said to be always trying to stop it (Spencer and Gillen 1904:295). Similarly the Aborigines of the Pennefather River area in North Queensland regard the rainbow as a very brightly coloured snake that comes up to stop the rain that has been wilfully made by their enemies (Roth 1907:10)

Dew and Frost. Dew (warguljba - 'sweat') and frost (djunmiri - 'ice') are not attributed to the Djaṛamara beings, but to the work of spirit-children (djidjigargal), for whom this is their main water-supply. Dew and frost come from winter-rain and so are found only in winter. The ice that is sometimes seen forming on water in winter is called djaguljugulju (another name for the Minijiburu ancestresses) or gumbu (urine). It is considered to be bad and is not eaten, but may be drunk later when it melts.

E. How Rain is Made.

The rationale behind the bringing up of rain is quite simple and is based on the same expectations of reciprocity that obtain between Aborigines in their everyday life. At certain specially constructed grounds, and using a variety of sacred objects that are specifically related to the Djaṛamara beings, they perform many different ritual activities, including singing, dancing, water-throwing, anointing and 'feeding' the piles of sacred stones, etc. All this is done for the benefit of their kinsmen, the Djaṛamara, who it is presumed will be both flattered by all this attention and indebted to the Aborigines for all their kind actions, and will thus be expected to reciprocate, as any good kinsmen would, by rewarding them with rain.

The lightning rods that make up the bulk of the two piles of sacred objects at the men's Ḏa:wajil ground in the bush do not merely represent lightning and snakes, they are

lightning and snakes, and they are connected with the Djaṛamara area and with Winba via underground tunnels that allow them to be in both places virtually at the same time. Thus Winba can see and hear all that transpires during performances of the Da:wajil, and reacts favourably or adversely depending on the events he witnesses at Jigalong. Like humans, the Djaṛamara beings are sensitive to slights and insults, and may also fall prey to the selfishness of men who may for personal reasons want to do them harm (this is discussed in the following section).

If all goes well with the ritual, the Jaḍaṇgal, acting on the commands of Winba and the other rainmakers, will load themselves up with rainmaking objects, which, being now full of power as a result of the blood, meat and other foodstuffs that have been fed to them during the ritual, will be capable of producing much rain. But for rain to come, the participants in the ritual must make journeys in <u>baḍundjari</u> (dream-spirit) form, led by the senior rainmaking men and protected by native doctors, to acquaint themselves with the Djaṛamara waterholes, see the snakes, and show the Jaḍaṇgal the route they must take with the rain. Such activity is consistent with the idea of the Da:wajil as an increase rite, since the Aborigines say that they make such journeys to other increase centres (<u>djabija</u>) to persuade the ancestral beings therein to send out lots of the species concerned.

These alleged journeys are taken en masse, as the participants (men, women and children) assume bird-like badundjari form and sit astride jungujungu, long lengths of hair-string with a pearlshell 'light' on the end, used during some Da:wajil dances. These jungujungu become snakes (often seen as long thin clouds that bear the same name), piloted front and rear by powerful native doctors to protect them against malignant spirits that may be encountered en route, and led by malgarara, men of the most senior Da:wajil status who are said to be snakes themselves and powerful rainmakers in their own right.[1] They do not fly directly, but follow the route taken by Winba,[2] and when they reach Djaramara

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[1]Roheim (1945:184-185) cites an explanation of rainmaking given him by Pintupi-Jumu Aborigines, whose desert culture is similar to that of the people now at Jigalong. Native doctors are believed to lie on top of a water-snake, which ties them into a knot and takes them inside a waterhole, where they rot and grow thin. The snake later surfaces and vomits onto the bank, then releases the men, who lie face down on the bank. Then they get up and encircle the waterhole with both hands raised. Clouds then come up, and the native doctors jump up and down, swaying their penises as they do so. Lightning is said to come out of their penises as they move.
Elkin (1930b:349-350), writing about the Forrest River district of north-western Australia, where the water serpent is the ultimate source of the native doctor's powers, states that the doctor rides on the snake's back and the snake inserts small snakes and quartz crystals into his body.
Among the Aborigines of Kalumburu in north-western Australia, the native doctor can summon the rainbow serpent to do his bidding. The snake transforms its back into a hollow like a canoe and may take a large group of native doctors aboard. (Cawte, 1964:186)

[2]cf. Elkin, 1934:173-174: "The importance of the 'dream time' tracks is seen in the custom of approaching sacred heroic and totemic sites by the actual path believed to have been followed by the hero or ancestor."

country they fly right inside the waterholes to the home of the rainmakers. They pat the snakes on the head to quieten them , just as the men pat the tops of the sacred piles of objects when first they enter the bush ground, then the leaders talk with the Jaḍaṇgal. They say, "We want rain; the country is too dry; we want green countryside - food for the game." They then leave the waterholes and return to the settlement, and if all goes well, a big wind should follow them back, then clouds and finally rain should fall in the Jigalong area. If it does not rain, another trip will be needed.

If the Ḍa:wajil and dream-spirit journeys have been successful, the Jaḍaṇgal will come in their big rain-clouds and empty them onto the desired area, until,weakened from the loss of power via their blood and presumably also their lightning bolts,they return to their homes to recuperate. Likewise, the lightning rods, etc. in the two piles of rain-making objects at the settlement lose their power, and for more rain to be made, they must be 'reloaded' or recharged by anointing, feeding and repeated performance of the Ḍa:wajil.

Individual Rainmaking. Men fortunate enough to have been born in the Djaṛamara area already have snakes inside them and by virtue of this are able to make rain on their own, if they so desire. In addition, men who have been through the Ḍa:wajil many times and rise to the rank of malgaṛara, or

masters, as they are often called in English, also have powerful enough snakes inside them to be able to make rain. If he is upset by something, a master may visit the Djaṛamara area during a dream and flick water-grass (gubanba) out of the waterholes and into the air, using a sacred board. The grass becomes clouds which follow him back and may bring incessant heavy rain and local flooding. The now-dead fathers of some of the older Jigalong men are said to have done this. They can also make rain by tying a ŋaluwiri feather bundle or a small pearlshell (binjdjabinjdja) to the end of a spear which is held upright and shaken to and fro, as they sing Ɲa:wajil songs. They are also said to have the power to enlist the help of the Djaṛamara beings in punishing murderers or other serious transgressors. Only the malgaṛara and those men who were born in Djaṛamara territory can safely make dream-spirit trips into the snakes' waterholes. But, according to informants, few attempts at individual rainmaking are made unless a person is upset and wants to bring misfortune to others.

F. Control of Rain

In summer, rain can sometimes be seen falling at some distance from the settlement. Although they have no power to recall clouds once they have passed overhead towards the south, any man from the second lowest rank up can sing Ɲa:wajil songs and beckon rainbearing clouds towards the

settlement from areas to the north. As they sing, they may shake a feather-bundle to and fro, to attract the Jaḍaŋgal. When fast-moving 'traveller' clouds are spotted on the horizon in summer, men often break spontaneously into choruses of Ɲa:wajil songs to encourage the clouds to enlarge and come closer. Most efforts to attract rain are concentrated into the performance of the Ɲa:wajil, but there is also the problem of how to control or put a stop to excessive rain on the infrequent occasions that this occurs and there is danger of local flooding.

The Aborigines can take several steps to attempt to bring a halt to excessive rain. A group of senior Ɲa:wajil status men may visit the secret bush ground (baljbara), remove the long juŋgujuŋgu hairstring if it is still wound around the piles of objects and then sing some Ɲa:wajil songs, but this time to drive the rain away. The removal of the hairstring is likened to the turning off of a tap, or the releasing of the clouds to dissipate, as is the removal of all the men's hairstring belts. They either take their own off, or have them forcibly removed by certain older women, who are related to them as 'ZD'. Some of the older women who wear pearlshell neck-ornaments (most are women who come from Djaṛamara country) remove them, and any men who may be wearing pearlshell ornaments also remove them. People will wave the rain away, and call out to the Jaḍaŋgal to go away.

During one prolonged fall of heavy rain, about 1968, when the Jigalong Creek was rising rapidly and the rain showed no signs of abating, three of the senior ex-Djaṛamara country men were forcibly enjoined to stop it. Women related to them as 'ZD' entered their camps,pushed them onto their backs, rubbed fresh mud on their heads (to cover up the feather-bundles that all such men are said to have inside their heads), then removed their hair-belts. The three men stripped naked and walked down to the creekbank, with everyone watching, then the senior man blew onto two short sticks (to load them with power, presumably) and stuck them in the mud just above the water's edge, as a 'fence', beyond which the waterlevel would not rise.[1] The three men then 'lifted' the water in both hands and threw it back towards Djaṛamara country. According to informants, the rain stopped shortly after and the water-level abated.

Rationales for the Non-Arrival of Rain. In an area where rainfall is most unreliable and irregular, the Da:wajil is not always successful in bringing rain to Jigalong, even though it is held only during the midsummer months when the chances of precipitation are highest and there is frequent thunderstorm activity. The Aborigines can always find ex-

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[1]Old men of the Bangerang tribe in Victoria used to wrap a little human hair around a twig about six inches long, then stick it into the mud on the margin of the river and sing over it, to make the waters recede (Curr, 1886,I:48).

planations for failure, and although individual opinions frequently differ as to the cause of failure, some conjectures quickly find favour and become generally accepted rationales. The following paragraph lists some of the many reasons given for the non-arrival of rain to illustrate the wide range of such explanations.

(a) Too many loud arguments and fights in the Camp area caused Winba to become upset and withhold the rain.

(b) Dogs urinated on the piles of stones, and disarranged them, thus offending Winba.

(c) Some men had thrown boomerangs during fights at rain-making time and these had severed the jungujungu hair-string-snake-cloud in which Jaḍangal were riding, thus injuring them and making them angry.

(d) Local native doctors, upset for some reason, had maliciously cut the cloud jungujungu, with the same result as in (c).

(e) The snakes inside the piles may not have been fed sufficient meat, damper, etc. and were thus too weak to bring up rain.

(f) Some of the men who went on dream-spirit journeys upset Winba because when they went they were jundiṛi (a frequently used word, translated variously as 'sulky', 'cross', 'mean bugger', a mood that is the standard reaction of people who are offended by something and become jundiṛi to let others know how they feel). To make rain come, everyone must be happy in their hearts, with a good feeling inside their stomachs. (wiḷaḷgara).

(g) The spirits of two recently dead 'head bosses' in Moolyella were holding back the rain. This action was also attributed to the oldest rainmaker at Jigalong after his death in 1969.

(h) A local native doctor, said to possess very strong magic, was allegedly angry at not getting either of the two girls promised to him in marriage, so he removed the snakes from the piles and hid them in the desert a long way east of the settlement. They were later discovered and released by two other local men during a dream-spirit journey.

(i) Persons unknown, but certain local native doctors were suspected, cut the jungujungu on which a mob of people were travelling as dream-spirits on their way back from Djaṛamara country, and they all fell to the ground, so the rain did not follow them.

Tabus. There are a number of proper behaviours that people should observe at the time of the Ɲa:wajil, but these are not imperatives in the sense that sanctions would be immediately invoked to punish transgressors. There should be no fighting or arguments and people should have a good feeling in their stomachs. Young men should not fool around with girls, or else their elders might later give them onerous tasks to fulfil. Boomerangs should not be thrown at Ɲa:wajil time when there are clouds in the sky, for fear of accidentally cutting

the jungujungu, which may cause illness or blindness to the Jaḍaŋgal therein. People should not make excessive noise at Ɲa:wajil time; the hitting of dry wood, for instance, will result in dusty, windy conditions but no rain. Likewise, if people run away from having water poured over them during the ritual, the rain will also run away from them. Participant males should not cut wood for at least a week after the end of the Ɲa:wajil, because they are still 'loaded' with power from the designs on their bodies and the small lightning rods that have been 'inserted' magically into them for protective purposes during the ritual. If they cut wood, the power within them could try to escape and cripple them in the arms.

G. The Ritual and its Introduction to Jigalong

The Ɲa:wajil in Djaṛamara Country. According to the few men who actually participated in the ritual at one or other of the major Djaṛamara waterholes in the Percival Lakes area, the overall form of the ritual, the decorations, dances and songs, differed very little from its present form. Among the many Aborigines who at some stage journeyed to Djaṛamara country to attend the big mid-summer performances of the Ɲa:wajil, were at least twenty who later settled at Jigalong. Only four of these are known to have reached the highest rank (malgaṛara) in pre-contact days, which suggests that

these men must have made repeated trips to the area; the last of the four died in 1969.

Just prior to the start of the hot, cloudy season (November-December), the custodians of the waterhole that was to be the venue would send out messengers, carrying feather-bundles and small lightning rods to summon the various groups who were invited to attend. One such venue was the waterhole at Djabula, which from informants' descriptions sounds typical of the Djaramara centres. The pool itself is rectangular, measuring about thirty by twenty feet with one end much shallower than the other, permanent water, edged with reeds or watergrass and surrounded by naljga trees (possibly a type of white gum) and a high sandhill which is allegedly the rainmaker Djabula's jungujungu (beard-hairstring-snake-cloud) which he put around his camp as a windbreak and it became a sandhill. During most of the Da:wajil the pool was tabu to women and children. The men's ceremonial ground, the baljbara, was 200-300 yards from the pool surrounded by trees. This is the ground where piles of lightning rods, etc. were kept, and underground here were huge rods, called bidurba. Also about two hundred yards from the pool, but in a different direction from the baljbara, was the ninjinganu, the fenced area where the women and children spent their day during the men's performances of the Da:wajil. The main focal points for the

ritual were the pool and the baljbara, and the men spent a considerable time standing in the pool itself as they sang and threw water, and each day fed the snake that was thought to live in the bottom of the pool. At Jigalong there is no pool, so the snakes are fed at the baljbara. The bulk of the water-throwing and much singing and dancing take place at the ninjinganu boughshed and nearby ground (nuralanandji) where night sessions of singing, dancing and water-throwing are held. This would appear to be the only major difference between traditional and contemporary performances at the Na:wajil.

The Westward Movement of the Na:wajil. Depopulation of the Great Sandy Desert region probably began early this century as groups of Aborigines, attracted by reports of the presence of exotic aliens, headed west to see for themselves and ultimately stayed on as permanent residents of cattle stations, missions, etc. Most of the original inhabitants of the Djaṛamara area, mainly Djiwalinj and Manala speakers, followed the earlier emigrants to coastal settlements at La Grange and Anna Plains, and to outlying stations in the De Grey and Oakover River areas (see Figure 1),notably to Warrawagine, Callawa and Yarrie and later on to the towns of Marble Bar-Moolyella and Nullagine. Others left the desert via waterhole routes to the north, and settled on stations and missions in the South Kimberley region, but it is not known to me whether or not they continued to perform

the Ɲa:wajil in that area.

When the senior Ɲa:wajil custodians left the Percival Lakes area for the last time they took with them many of the more portable lightning rods and other sacred stones, presumably so that they could continue to hold the ritual, and thus ensure a continuance of their rainmaking abilities in their new locations.[1] Ceremonial grounds and the necessary piles of rainmaking stones, etc. were established in the bush close to the settlements and the Ɲa:wajil was performed regularly. Yarrie station, where most of the senior status rainmakers settled, apparently became the most important centre, and attracted Aborigines from many areas, including large numbers who had never known the ritual traditionally. Many members of more coastal groups were initiated. As the general westward migration continued, many of the stones and associated paraphernalia were moved down to Moolyella, a large Aboriginal community close to the mining town of Marble Bar, and Moolyella in turn became, and allegedly still is, the major Ɲa:wajil centre. New malgarara 'masters' for the ritual were appointed as the older ones died and

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[1]According to informants, at some stage there were rainmaking grounds and paraphernalia at Warrawagine, Yarrie, Callawa (a station twenty miles east of Yarrie), La Grange, Anna Plains, Moolyella, Nullagine, and perhaps at Wallal, (see Figure 2), Broome and even Derby (a town about 130 road miles north east of Broome).

custodianship of the Da:wajil passed on to the older residents of Moolyella, who are still today acknowledged by the Jigalong elders as the 'head bosses' and final authorities in all major matters of policy concerning the ritual. The Jigalong malgarara who now direct the Da:wajil there were appointed by the Moolyella bosses.

Introduction of the Da:wajil to Jigalong. As previously stated, some of the desert Aborigines who migrated into the Old Jigalong depot from the 1920s onwards had been initiated into the Da:wajil in Djaramara country, and two or three of the senior men owned some lightning rods and other gear given to them by Djaramara custodians. Although they are said to have sometimes engaged in individual rainmaking, they never built any Da:wajil grounds or performed the ritual. According to informants this was because there were too few men who had been initiated into the ritual and also because they had no authority to stage the ritual, which belonged to the Djaramara people, not to them.

The first Jigalong men to make the trip to Moolyella and be initiated into the Da:wajil did so in the mid-1940s not long prior to the establishment of the mission. Between that time and about 1960, other groups attended big meetings at Moolyella and Nullagine during which Da:wajil performances were held, but no men were elevated to a higher status than

madinjanu, that of the newly initiated, even though some had been put through the ritual several times.[1] A few Jigalong men had journeyed further north and were put through the ritual at Warrawigine and Yarrie. Most initiated men received small pearlshells and lightning rods from the northerners to caretake, and were told to look out for lightning rods, which would be left behind in creekbeds and bush areas by Jadangal. After the death of two Jigalong men who were malgarara masters from pre-contact days, men began finding lightning rods, thought to have been put there by the spirits of the dead men. These were collected and brought to the mission, where, with the addition of some other stones given them by the northerners, the locals constructed their first bunu pile, under the supervision of two Moolyella visitors, about 1960. The local bosses were the old ex-desert masters, who conducted singing and anointing activities at this small pile, but without any dancing or major ritual acitivty, since this had not been sanctioned by the Moolyella bosses. It was at this time that some of the older local men who had not journeyed north were initiated, and others were elevated to the jirgiliwindi (cook) status.

About a year later it was decided that the location of the pile was too close to the main camp, so a second site

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[1]Some informants disagree with this, and say that the men who had been initiated into the ritual in the desert were elevated to the top status at Moolyella meetings.

very close to the present one, was selected north of Camp and the pile was shifted to there. Although there were still no major rituals being held, there was singing and anointing of the pile, and the men held wanaburga feasts in association with their activities at the pile. Also, more local men were elevated by the masters to the rank of cook.

Most of the stones in the pile were removed and taken away when the Aborigines left the mission after a confrontation with the missionaries at Christmas time in 1962, and held their big meeting at a soak near the main northern highway. Many Nullagine and Marble Bar Aborigines were in attendance so Da:wajil songs were sung, and the effectiveness of the Jigalong stones was proved when a very big rain followed the performance. When the Jigalong people later moved back into the mission, they constructed a new pile of rainmaking stones (most of which had been recently discovered and brought in) in the creekbed close to Camp and there they held the Da:wajil to test the stones. This was late in 1963, during my first fieldwork period at the mission. The stones proved potent, and rain fell, so the northern bosses agreed that these stones should be moved to the ground north of the settlement. A new site was chosen, two piles were erected, and Jigalong finally had its first proper ceremonial bush ground, or baljbara. Earlier in 1963 several ritually

prominent Jigalong men journeyed to Moolyella and were appointed to the second highest status, walumalinj, were shown new dances and given insignia of their new rank to take back to Jigalong with them. Despite political differences between the Jigalong and Moolyella mobs, local men continued to make trips north to be further initiated into the Ɲa:wajil and to pick up new dances, sacred objects and so on, to strengthen the ritual at Jigalong, now that its full performance had been sanctioned by the northern bosses.

Early in 1966 a group of Moolyella Ɲa:wajil leaders made a special trip to Jigalong to inspect the new ground and to participate in a full performance of the ritual. At this time, they chose ten local men for elevation to the rank of walumalinj, and appointed from the ranks of those who had recently been given walumalinj rank at Moolyella, eight men to be malgarara, the top rank. They joined seven others who had been given top status membership at Moolyella earlier, and three surviving malgarara from desert times.

At the big meeting of Christmas, 1965, held at Jigalong, two senior Moolyella men visited the mission and authorized the construction of a ninjinganu boughshed, and nearby ɲuralanandji ground. This gave the local people all the necessary grounds to hold a full Ɲa:wajil, in time to initiate a large group of southerners who were making their first visit

en masse specifically to be initiated into the Da:wajil. Almost all of the Jigalong men who had long been resident in the Wiluna area had already been through the ritual at either Jigalong or the northern centres, and a few Wiluna men had been through it during earlier visits to the settlement. The building of the ninjinjanu was later judged premature by the other Da:wajil leaders in Moolyella, and they punished the two men who had authorized the construction without prior consultation with the other bosses. The new grounds remained however, and have been in use for the Da:wajil ever since.

The Moolyella head bosses have left the Jigalong masters with considerable autonomy in the organization and running of the ritual each year, and while some men say that there are still a few more dances to be obtained from Moolyella, little intervisiting has taken place since 1966. The deterioration of relations between the two communities will be discussed in a later chapter.

One ruling by the Moolyella heads that is of great importance for Jigalong as a major centre for the Da:wajil is that forbidding the formation of new piles and grounds anywhere south of Jigalong. Thus any southerners who want to be initiated into the Da:wajil must journey north to Jigalong, or even further if they so desire, to do so. Initiated men are permitted to receive pearlshells and other

objects such as small lightning rods, as insignia of status, but they too must obey the rule that prohibits the sale or giving away of these objects, which they must bring back with them at every subsequent Da:wajil performance they attend, to be replaced by larger objects if their work in connection with the ritual continues to be satisfactory. They can sing Da:wajil songs back at their home centres, but they cannot use their objects to form the basis of new bunu piles, and any large stones that they discover during the year should be brought up to Jigalong with them, or at least into Wiluna, where visiting Jigalong Da:wajil leaders can examine them. This ban on the southerly spread of the Da:wajil means that Jigalong is assured of its central place in the performance of the ritual. For the 1969-1970 big meeting at Jigalong, visitors came from as far south as Warburton Ranges mission, about 900 miles by road, to be initiated into the Da:wajil and to take part in other religious activities.

Thus it is that the Da:wajil was introduced to Jigalong and has since rapidly grown in significance, to become, in the view of local Aborigines, one of the three or four most important rituals performed by them. Because of its status as an imported ritual, the Da:wajil has involved Jigalong Aborigines in periodic and important interaction with their northern and later their southern, neighbours. Inter-

community cultural transmissionkof this kind has traditionally characterized Western Desert Aboriginal groups. Likewise, the transfer of rituals and other knowledge has always been influenced by political considerations, especially the current tenor of relationships between contiguous groups. Later in this study (Chapter 7) it will be shown that growing ideological differences between Jigalong Aborigines and their more acculturated northern neighbours constitute a major reason for the assumption of responsibility by Jigalong's leaders for the continuance of the Da:wajil. These marked ideological conflicts with the northerners, combined with the strong desire of Jigalong's Aborigines to maintain and if possible expand cultural transmission links with their southern neighbours, are highly relevant to the search for answers to the question posed at the outset of this thesis. The implications entailed by these political considerations are considered at length in the last two chapters.

Chapter 5. The Da:wajil: Ritual Activities

This chapter describes in some detail the main features of the Da:wajil ritual. The temporal sequence chosen for this outline is that of the full-scale performances that are held during the big meetings that take place around Christmas time, when large numbers of visitors from southern Law centres come to Jigalong specifically to participate in this ritual. The following account is based largely on the Da:wajil performed during the meetings of the 1965-6 and 1969-70 hot seasons, held at the beginning of January.[1] Many other Da:wajil sessions were seen and recorded, mainly in the latter parts of 1963 and 1964, but these were not held at big meeting time, and generally involved the initiation of local Aborigines newly arrived from their places of employment. These smaller-scale initiatory performances usually entailed some feasting (wanaburga), and sessions at the baljbara bush ground to familiarize newcomers with the paraphernalia and songs that accompany the ritual. Such performances rarely continued over a number of consecutive

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[1]During the 1969-70 Da:wajil, I took notes on all activities as they occurred. For activities at the Camp grounds, I also took photographs, and tape recorded some of the evening singing sessions. I witnessed all secret-sacred activities here described. Interpretation of the activities was gained from listening to Aboriginal exegeses during the performances, by remarks volunteered to me by Aborigines and by direct questioning, the same day wherever possible.

days, but they sometimes involved the selection of men for elevation into a higher ritual status.

Regardless of the immediate motivations behind any given performance of the Da:wajil, and regardless of its duration, the sequences of events and the kinds of behaviours that take place at the baljbara ground and during the feasts are very similar no matter what the circumstances. What varies most is the number of personnel involved, and the choice of certain dances to be either performed or omitted depending on the numbers present and on their ritual statuses; i.e. some dances require large numbers, and there are certain dances that newly initiated men cannot witness. Basic activities such as arranging and anointing the piles of sacred stones (i.e. the 'opening' of the baljbara at the commencement of the Da:wajil) and related singing and dancing are always much the same regardless of the scale of the performance to follow. Likewise the basic repertoire of songs that make up the line is generally the same, though the sequence of the songs and the number sung at any one session will vary.

A. Principles of Dual Organization.

The Generation Level Division. Mention was made in Chapter 1 (page 11) of this kind of social division and of its importance in the ritual life of the Aborigines of Jigalong. It is nowhere better exemplified as an organizing principle than in the Da:wajil, where it is em-

ployed to separate all the participants into two ideologically equal but opposing groups, who are encouraged to give vent to their opposition at certain times during the rites, but particularly during those held at the grounds near the main camp area, where men, women and children are in attendance much of the time.

At times when the two sides are most actively opposed, good-humoured shouting matches are directed en masse at the opposition, or to all opposition members of the one sex, pertaining mostly to matters such as hunting prowess (or lack thereof), laziness and other inadequacies, or alleged failures to fulfil obligations pertaining to the giving of women in marriage. But interpersonal opposition, which is acted out by the throwing or spitting of water over other people's heads and bodies, is directed at members of the other division who stand in specific kinship relationships to Ego. Thus a man can throw water over his 'MB', 'ZS', 'WM', 'FZ' (some FZ are not classified as WM), and 'ZD' and a woman can throw water over her 'ZS', ('DH'), 'MB', ('HF'), 'ZD' ('SW') and 'FZ'. Of people in these categories, water is not thrown over members who are closely related to Ego; e.g. a consanguineal MB or ZD, or an actual WM or HF. It is between members of the above-mentioned kinship categories in opposing levels that most of the 'poking

fun' (miljura) takes place during the 'play' (the verb barawa, to play, is used to describe the activities that take place at the grounds near the Camp).

Senior members of the two groups meet separately to arrange for the collection of money and the purchase of foodstuffs for the feasts. These are bought and stored separately and cooked by members of the respective sides, but at the same place. Members of both sides donate money for the men chosen as travellers whose number must include members of both sides, when they go to collect Aborigines from other Law centres. Each side rounds up its own members for each performance, people sit in their respective groups, and novices are led to and from the bush ground in two groups, But the songs, dances and ritual paraphernalia of the Da:wajil are shared by all who are entitled to witness or participate in Da:wajil activities. Again, the overall emphasis is on the Aborigines' sharing of the Da:wajil as a totality.

During ritual activities that take place at the bush ground there is a division in the seating arrangement of most participants, most noticeably for the novices (and least so for the malgarara masters who sit closest to the piles). The preliminary dancing and the selection(called 'grabbing') of new cooks is undertaken by the respective groups, as is

the supervision and decoration of the novices, and their chastisement if this is necessary. At the blood-drinking rite (ŋajigala wanaburga), members of the two sides will drink one another's blood if there are only local people at the rite, but during the big meeting when there are many visitors, the division for the blood-drinking is between locals and visitors, not according to generation level membership. For much of the activity at the bush ground, the more important division is between novices and initiated men, and this becomes the principal determinant of people's behaviour. The same is true for what happens in the Camp area grounds in the early stages of the ritual, when the activities of the novices are considerably restricted.

The Sexual Division. As is the case with most of the religious life at Jigalong, women play a relatively minor and peripheral part in the performance of the Ɲa:wajil. Yet although they neither sing nor dance and cannot go anywhere near the bush ground, they participate actively in certain Ɲa:wajil ritual activities, particularly water-throwing bouts at the boughshed ground (ninjingaŋu). In addition, certain senior women have the rank of cook, and prepare dampers for the men's wanaburga feast, while other women are selected as 'creekbed cooks', who prepare dampers for consumption by the women and children. Each day during the Ɲa:wajil, all

women and children at the settlement must be in attendance at the boughshed ground for the activities that precede the departure of the men (for the bush grounds, or to go hunting) and again in the late afternoon when all the men return to the ninjinganu area. They are also said to take part in dream-spirit journeys to Djaṛamara country at night during the course of the Ɲa:wajil.

B. The Ritual Status Hierarchy

There is a ritual division of labour in the Ɲa:wajil, based on membership in a particular named ritual status, of which there are five if we include the status of the not yet initiated man, who is referred to as ɲurba ('unknowing'). The other four statuses, in increasing order of rank, are as follows:

1. Maḍinjanu (S.IV).[1] This term refers to newly initiated men who have not yet been chosen for elevation to the second rank, an event that may not take place until they have participated in the Ɲa:wajil several times. During ritual performances they are usually recognizable by their reserved behaviour, and if decorated, by the complexity of the lightning designs on their bodies. At all times they must act according to the directives of higher status men, and during Ɲa:wajil

[1]For easier comprehension, subsequent references to these statuses will be by initials only; thus S.IV is Status No.4; i.e. madinjanu, S.III is jirgiliwindi, S.II refers to waḷumalinj, and S.I, the highest, is maḷgaṛara.

feasts they are permitted to eat only vegetable foods, never meat.

2. Jirgiliwindi (S.III). Selection of the jirgiliwindi ('having boomerangs') usually takes place at the bush ground, when they are suddenly and roughly grabbed by men of the next highest status. They are then given meat for the first time, and two boomerangs, the main insignia of their new status. At the time of their grabbing, they are lectured to by the older men present and told of their new responsibilities, which include the 'mustering' of all the people for each day or night's performance of the ritual, assistance with the cooking of the wanaburga dampers (hence the frequent use of the English word 'cooks' to refer to men of this status), performance of most of the non-secret sacred dances that take place at both Camp and bush grounds, and assistance in hunting activities associated with wanaburga feasting. Some of the older jirgiliwindi men are in charge of the cooking operations at the boughshed, and supervise the work of the women who prepare the dampers. If men of this status perform their various tasks well, they are presented with small pearlshells and perhaps small lightning rods (buṇu) for safekeeping as insignia of their rank. During Ɗaːwajil performances they are distinguished by their two boomerangs and to a lesser extent by their body designs, which are less complex than those of the maḍinjaṇu, but more so than those of men of

higher status, whose simpler lightning designs are said to represent stronger bolts of lightning.

3. Walumalinj (S.II). Men of this rank are selected from among the ranks of the jirgiliwindi, by the highest status men, on the basis of their knowledge of the ritual (much of which was acquired during trips to attend Ɲa:wajil performances at northern centres) and their performance while members of lower ranks. At the time of their selection, they are given larger pearlshells and bunu rods and other Ɲa:wajil gear by their ritual seniors, and are instructed in their new duties and responsiblities. They must organize and supervise hunts, which are an integral part of the proceedings and constitute the mechanism of reciprocity through which men of lower statuses repay, with meat, the senior men who provide both knowledge and most of the vegetable foods (maji) eaten during the feasts. Men from this rank also act as messengers who travel to other Law centres each year and summon Aborigines to Jigalong for the annual performance of the Ɲa:wajil. Members of this status are responsible for choosing new S.III men from the ranks of the S.IV, and for the selection of women to act as 'creekbed cooks' (see page 132). Although any man from S.III up may be chosen to participate in secret-sacred dances, the most important dances performed around the rainmaking piles involve only members of the two highest statuses.

4. Malgarara (S.I.). Men of this rank are commonly referred to as 'masters' or as 'proper snakes'. In the Jigalong case, all were chosen by the northern headmen who are the acknowledged owners of the ritual and its final authorities. All Jigalong malgarara are middle-aged and older. As the caretakers of the ritual and itssassociated objects, their duties are concentrated at the bush ground, where they clean the area and prepare the piles, organize secret-sacred dances, blood-drinking rites and other activities there, and select the dancers. They are the final local authorities in matters pertaining to the mechanics of holding the Ɲa:wajil, and members of the lower statuses must at all times defer to their judgment. Their insignia, presented to them by the northern leaders, include the biggest pearlshells, bunu rods, hairstrings

that can be personally owned. They alone can perform certain of the dances done at the baljbara (bush ground) because they are said to be 'snakes' themselves, with the strongest bunu rods/snakes inside their bodies, like the men who have Winba as their ancestral totem. Because they are able to journey safely to and from Djaramara country in dream-spirit form, the malgarara act as leaders for dream-spirit journeys that all participants must make to Djaramara country during the course of the ritual, as an essential part of the proceedings. Malgarara are said to have the power to make rain individually if they so desire. During the ritual they have the responsibility (shared in part by S.II men) of providing the bulk of the vegetable foods that are con-

sumed during wanaburga feasts. During Ɲa:wajil performances they sit in the centre of the circle of singers and dancers (surrounding the bunu pile if at the bush ground). They usually wear the simplest chest design, sometimes a mere line a few inches long, representing both a bunu rod and a very strong lightning bolt.

The S.I men usually confer and organize their work en masse. The division into generation level groupings is least noticeable among members of this status as they go about their business. Not even when they are sitting around the rainmaking piles is this division always discernible. For all activities not centring on the baljbara ground, the highest status men rely heavily in the S.II members (who are often referred to as the 'workingmen bosses') for the smooth running of the Ɲa:wajil. Although S.II men operate in their two groups, they confer together constantly to make sure that all activities are synchronized. This collaboration applies at all levels of the Ɲa:wajil hierarchy because it is essential that each group knows what the other is planning to do next.

When visitors are initiated into the Ɲa:wajil, the oldest and most senior among them are not expected to proceed through the status ranks in the same manner as middle-aged and younger men. S.I Jigalong men generally take them to the

baljbara before the main activities begin, and initiate them separately and much less formally than the rest. All the most sacred stones are shown to them, and the associated information conveyed, and when they are decorated for the first time, the type of lightning design put on them is similar to that of Jigalong men of high status. Although they cannot be accorded malgarara status, since such an action is the prerogative of the Moolyella headmen, these old men are treated by the Jigalong masters as if they were of the highest rank in the ritual.

The Status of Women. Despite the peripheral nature of the role of women in the Da:wajil, it is possible to distinguish several different groups. Like their male counterparts, female novices play passive roles, remain undecorated until towards the end of the Da:wajil ritual series and cannot participate in the water-throwing activities, even though they are victims of much of the merriment and get thoroughly drenched during the proceedings. Women who have already been initiated into the ritual are active participants in the water-throwing, but for most, this, plus the decoration of visiting female novices (with white ochre body designs) and the making of frog noises during the night sessions of the Da:wajil, is the extent of their active role. The middle-aged women who are chosen by the S.II men as creekbed cooks must prepare several dampers each day, for consumption by the women and children, who are confined in their two groups, to the creekbed area for most of the day. Women of each

generation level group prepare their own dampers and are supervised by S.III men of the same group, who tend the fires and do the actual cooking in two separate spots in the creekbed. Men sometimes refer to these women as jirgiliwindi, the term for S.III men; which suggests a conceptual equation in status. The dozen or so older women who are chosen by the S.I men to prepare dampers for men's wanaburga feasts include several who were born in Djaṛamara country and claim Winba as their ancestral totem. These women are called bidinjaṇu, (a term also applied to the older men who supervise the cooking activities near the ninjangaṇu boughshed) and theirs is the highest status that women can attain in the Ɲa:wajil. Apart from kneading and preparing dampers, however, even their role is minimal and passive compared to that of males involved in the ritual.

C. Ɲa:wajil Ceremonial Grounds

The Ɲuralaṇandji and Ninjingaṇu. These terms refer to two different sections of the same general area, which is situated about two hundred yards north of the northern end of the main Camp area at Jigalong and about fifty yards from the western bank of Jigalong Creek, which is dry most of the time. The clearing for the ground is roughly square in shape and about fifty yards across. Fifteen yards in from the eastern side is a wooden structure thirty yards long, pointing north and south, two yards wide and five feet

high, which is the ninjinganu boughshed. It consists of two parallel rows of posts with crosspieces on top which support leafy branches that provide shade. The sides and ends of the ninjinganu are open to the wind. A mound of ashes in the north east corner of the ground marks the site of the cooking area, where the wanaburga dampers are baked. The area to the west of the boughshed, where the bulk of the singing, dancing and waterthrowing takes place, is known as the nuralanandji. Apart from the preparation and cooking of dampers for the women and children in the creekbed, all Na:wajil activities not occurring at the bush ground centre on the nuralanandji-ninjinganu area.

The Baljbara. The bush ground is situated in what the Aborigines call 'men's country' near the confluence of two small creekbeds about a half a mile from, and out of sight of, the northern end of the settlement proper. The ground is rectangular, with an approximately west-east orientation, and measures about fifty yards in length, fifteen to twenty yards in width. There are four mulga trees on the ground itself, but the dominant features are the two piles of rainmaking stones, each about two feet in diameter and a foot and a half high, about forty yards apart near the opposite ends of the ground. These two conical piles of objects, but particularly the slightly larger western pile, are the foci of most of the rainmaking activity. The rain-

making snakes are said to be in these piles which are believed to be directly connected to Djaṛamara country via underground links. Like the other two grounds described above, this one is used only in connection with the Ɲa:wajil, but it is restricted to initiated men (i.e. men who are both circumcised and subincised) who are participants in the Ɲa:wajil. At other times it can only be visited by men of the two highest ranks. When not in use its piles are covered by several layers of hessian, which protect them from dogs and from the eyes of people in vehicles that pass on the main road north of the settlement, which runs about eighty yards east of the ground. All the most important and sacred objects associated with the Ɲa:wajil are stored at or near the ground, but men keep their personal pearlshells and bunu rods in carrybags that are stored in men's country much closer to the Camp.

D. Ɲa:wajil Paraphernalia

Components of the Rainmaking Piles. During Ɲa:wajil performances, the two piles are made up of a core of secret-sacred objects that remain in the baljbara area and are seen only by initiated men, plus certain other objects, associated with rainmaking, which may be worn at the Camp grounds and are seen by women and children. But each of this latter class of objects has at least two names, one of which is secret-sacred in that it cannot be mentioned in front of uninitiated persons and is specifically associated with the

Ɲa:wajil. The major class of objects is the bunu, which I have referred to as lightning rods, but can also connote snakes (since in each 'loaded' rod a snake spirit is said to reside) and the penis of the Jaḍaŋgal rainmakers, and also a bolt of lightning. They vary in length from a couple of inches to four feet, and in diameter from less than an inch to about two feet, are composed of several different types of rock (most appear to be either knotted schists or travertine pipes), and are given several different names according to shape or size. In almost every case the sacred name is derived from one of the songs that make up the Ɲa:wajil line; when the stones are handled and talked about, the appropriate song is usually sung. Several stones share their names with clouds whose shape they are said to resemble, and some are said to be the metamorphosed bodies of Jaḍaŋgal beings. The biggest and thickest rods, known variously as djaḍan, bidur, bidagaḷi, are believed to have been carried by Winba and the other rainmaking ancestors as part of their collection of sacred boards, and to have later turned to stone at points along their routes. The big waḷumalinj, which gives it name to the second highest ritual status, was originally Winba's firestick which he carried with him during his travels. Because all these stones have a direct connection with the ancestral beings, they are believed to

be repositories of power, or life-essence. Unlike most other sacred objects, these can lose their charge, as it were, during the making of rain, and must be recharged by performance of the Ɲa:wajil before they can bring rain a second time.

There are a number of small, roughly circular stones with a sacred-type concentric circles design occurring naturally on them. These are called bandjilṇaṛa, gunaḍa, or buḷidjiḍa, 'hailstones'. Some informants say that these hailstone rocks were used by Winba as pounders, while others claim that they are metamorphosed testicles of rainmaking ancestors. The men's name for them is ṇuṛinjba. Some very similar stones are called gaḷiwaḍaljba, and are thought to be metamorphosed bodies of ancestral frogs.

Two steel axes at the base of each pile represent gundjalmaṛa, the stone axe (really a sacred board) used by Winba, and other rainmakers, to split open trees for firewood and while hunting with lightning as a weapon. Informants say that the stone axes actually used by Winba are still at the Moolyella and Yarrie baljbara.

The jungujungu is a very long piece of hairstring, with a small binjdjabinjdja pearlshell sliver at one end, which is wound around both piles during the Ɲa:wajil and is thought to hold the clouds in (represented on the pile by eaglehawk down, which is stuck onto the tops of the upright lightning

rods with blood, which represents rain) and thus cause rain to fall. It is said to have been Winba's hairbelt, and can change into a snake or vehicle during dream-spirit journeys; its passengers travel by sitting astride it, and the pearl-shell acts as a light, to illuminate the sky and show the native doctors who pilot the craft which direction to go. It is used for dances at both the baljbara and Camp grounds, but in the latter case it is always danced at night and the jungujungu is not seen by the women and children present.

Large pearlshells, called redji (one of the secret names is dingidingi), are placed around the base of the piles for the duration of the Da:wajil. They all originate from the Broome area on the north west coast and are traded south; most are already incised (mainly with abstract patterns said to represent lightning) before they reach Jigalong. These, like the jiliwiri feather-bundle forehead decorations (secret name naluwiri) are individually owned and may be worn in the Camp ground area. The rainmaking ancestors are all thought to have worn redji as pubic pendants, but the shells are said by some to have also served as food dishes. The jiliwiri, several of which are also used to decorate the piles, provided Winba with shade. The one he wore in his forehead was like a hat, but when he stuck its wooden shaft into the ground it became a huge shade tree. Jiliwiri worn by Djaramara beings may be seen in the sky as a flickering kind of sheet lightning. Any kind of bird feathers and wooden or bone shaft can be used to make a jiliwiri, but the

feathers of the white cockatoo (gagaljalja) seem to be preferred. The sharpened end is also used to prick open the armvein ready for anointing the piles with blood. Widjiwidji are thin, wooden rods, twleve to eighteen inches long, topped with down and used in a dance of the same name.

Individual Paraphernalia. Most men from the rank of S.III up have their own pearlshell pendants, presented to them as insignia of rank but outside the realm of the Ɔa:wajil all men who passed through the initiation stage called buŋaṇa have their own ṛedji. The jiliwiri feather-bundle can be worn by men of the two highest ranks as part of their personal decorations. All men from the rank of S.III up have two boomerangs (secret name lirlirba) which they carry during the Ɔa:wajil mainly to provide the clicking accompaniment to its songs and dances, and in the case of the S.III as insignia of their status. Small knife-blade shaped pearlshell slivers, binjdjabinjdja, are worn as forehead and armband decorations by many men, and as neck-ornaments by senior women. These are thought to be the small sacred boards that Winba, etc. carried during their travels and were later metamorphosed into shells. All men from the rank of S.IV up wear a white forehead band, buṇḍawaḷu, about an inch wide and made of cloth or plastic, in contrast to the redwool headbands worn during most other rituals. All initiates may also wear

hairbelts (nanba) during the Ɲa:wajil, but should too much rain fall and local flooding become imminent, these must be removed, to let the clouds 'escape' and drop their rain elsewhere. Body designs are also an essential part of personal adornment in the Ɲa:wajil, and are worn by all initiates. Put on with charcoal, and edged with white ochre, all designs (called wiludjuru, 'lightning', or ganjdjiɲada, after a type of rainmaking being) represent various types of lightning, ranging from strong, straight bolts in the case of highest status men, to weak, fragmented sheet-type lightning in the lowest rank. Every year, at some stage during the Ɲa:wajil initiates are 'loaded' by the local native doctors; i.e. the latter allegedly remove lightning rods from inside the bodies of men of senior rank and insert them into the bodies of the novices, for protection. The decorations worn during the rites are said to sink into the body and help the little bunu to grow, thus increasing its protective powers.

Women and children decorate with white ochre designs that represent rainclouds, and older children blow white or yellow ochre from their mouths over their hands to produce outlines on each other's back. Like the men, they use small leafy bundles to spatter white ochre all over their bodies, but apart from the few older women who wear pearlshell pendants around their necks, women and children have no decorations or paraphernalia other than the ochre markings.

Paraphernalia at the Camp Grounds. Apart from the ninjinganu itself, there is very little gear specifically associated with the two grounds close to the main camp. Old tins and cans are used as containers for throwing and drinking water, and 44-gallon drums are used to cart water whenever necessary (there are no taps near the ceremonial grounds). An old drum is used to store the flour and other bought foodstuffs during the Ɔa:wajil, mainly to protect the food from scavenging dogs. Several hundred pounds of flour and at least a hundred dollars' worth of other food (mainly canned meat, jams, fruit, packaged cakes and biscuits) are consumed at wanaburga feasts held during the Ɔa:wajil. They are bought at the settlement store and taken to the ground in local vehicles. Female bidinjanu bring their own mixing bowls and hessian bags for preparing the dampers, and the only utensils used by the male cooks are branch brooms, long sticks and their boomerangs. Tea is brewed in several buckets and large tins, and men drink straight out of the buckets, or else from newly emptied food cans and old mugs.

E. Ritual Activities

The temporal sequence followed in this descriptive account of the Ɔa:wajil complex is that of the 1969-1970 performance at Jigalong, when more than 130 southern visitors

were present. For many of the visitors this was their first experience of the ritual.

1. General Preparations

The Opening of the Baljbara. One morning about three weeks before the arrival of the visitors, senior members (S.I and S.II as well as a few S.III men) of both generation level groupings take their carrybags with them and go to the bush ground to 'open' the rainmaking piles and thus begin the Da:wajil activities. This is done prior to the departure of the messengers, to give them cool weather and perhaps light rain to make travelling more comfortable. S.I men arrive first, to uncover the piles and sweep the ground, followed by the rest who walk in single file but are separated according to generation level membership. They wail loudly as they enter the ground. This is variously explained as showing sorrow at the recent death of a master, a mixture of sorrow and joy at renewing acquaintance with all the sacred objects there, and as showing concern for the snakes that live inside the piles.[1] All the men touch both hands to the top of one pile, then

[1]The wailing is also to indicate to Winba and the other rainmaking ancestors that the Aborigines feel sorry for all the work that their older kinsmen must do in bringing rain, and to express their sorrow that the ancestors lay down and could not get up again.

the other, to 'quieten' and reassure the snakes within, then every man either shoulder-taps, head-taps or grasps the chin of every other man present, depending on the kinship relationship involved. Shoulder-tapping takes place among men during many different rituals, and is interpreted by some as a gesture of peace and friendship, but apart from claiming that the practice originated among the ancestral beings during the Dreamtime, no other explanations are given by the Aborigines.

The men then sit around the piles and decorate them with pearlshells (redji and binjdjabinjdja taken from their carry-bags) and sing relevant Ɲa:wajil songs as they all assist in the winding of long jungujungu hairstrings around and around each pile. Several of the middle-aged and younger men then pierce their armveins and anoint the top of the piles with blood while others sprinkle water around the base of the piles, to 'feed' the snakes within. S. I men stick eagle-hawk down (ɲudala) onto the tops of the bunu rods, using blood as fixative. The fluffy down represents clouds that are held in by the hairstring bound around the rods and should thus produce rain. Both piles are prepared in the same way, amid singing, and several of the biggest rods are brought out of hiding to be displayed and discussed, before the men return en masse to the settlement for lunch.

Cleaning of the Camp Grounds. Late the same day, the older S.II men and the senior female cooks sweep the entire ŋuralaŋandji area clean, using bushy shrubs as brooms. The men also add fresh branches to the boughshed so that it will give adequate shade. Members of each generation level grouping clean their own part of the ground; the northern half and northern end of the boughshed belong to the Banaga-Garimara sections, the southern area to the Milaŋga-Buruŋu group. Throughout the Ɲa:wajil, whenever groups congregate, the Banaga-Garimara group is always to the north of the other. The same configuration applies during other rituals where a generation level division exists.

Despatch of Messengers. The initiated men hold a general meeting at the ninjinganu boughshed, after the baljbara has been opened and the ground prepared, to decide which S.II men will travel to Wiluna to summon the southern Aborigines back to Jigalong for the Ɲa:wajil. In 1969-70 six men went, three from each group, and they took with them Ɲa:wajil paraphernalia to indicate the reason for their journey. Of all the gear taken (hairstrings, bunu rods, feather-bundles, pearlshells, and boomerangs), only the boomerangs and feather-bundles were actually seen by the Wiluna people, since the other objects could not be revealed in the presence of uninitiated persons. Prior to departure, all men who are able contribute money towards petrol, and the travellers are given flour, tea and sugar to consume en route. Usually a wanaburga feast is held before the travellers set off, but in 1969-70 they left

before this could be organized.

Purchase of Foodstuffs. At a boughshed meeting, the men begin collecting contributions of cash for the purchase of the food necessary to hold several wanaburga feasts and feed the entire settlement population for several days. The bulk of this cash comes from S.I (most of whom are on pensions) and S.II men, but other initiated men who have cash to spare may donate some. Each generation level group collects its own, but both endeavour to collect about the same amount of money each time, so that roughly equal amounts of food will be bought for both groups. S. II men usually do the actual purchasing, and they arrange for the transportation of the food to the ground with whomever has a vehicle handy. Men with vehicles are also heavily called upon throughout the Ɲa:wajil to collect firewood, cart water, take hunting parties out into the bush and carry old or sick men to and from the bush ground.

Before the arrival of the visitors, the initiated men will hold several wanaburga feasts in the creekbed near the Camp grounds. Such feasting occurs at frequent intervals during the summer season, whether or nor there is any Ɲa:wajil ritual activity taking place. The men get together to eat a hearty meal and to discuss matters relating to the ritual, they display and discuss Ɲa:wajil paraphernalia

and plan future activities. These feasts are attended only by men; S.III members knead and cook the dampers and brew the tea. All men from S.IV rank up are eligible to attend such gatherings, but S. IV men cannot eat meat.

'Loading' the Young Men. Two or three times again before the visitors arrive, groups of men visit the baljbara to further decorate, anoint and sing around the piles, and to let newly arrived initiated men pay their respects at the bush ground. One day, after eating a midday wanaburga, all available men visit the ground, and after singing and anointing the piles and putting fresh eaglehawk down on the rods, they decorate themselves. Then all the younger men present are told to stand in a line between the two piles, with arms above heads and each with his chest against the back of the man in front, ready to be 'loaded' with invisible bunu rods to protect them against attacks by ritual killers. The loading, called junna, is done by two naked S.I men who are also native doctors. They dance down the ground, holding a bunu rod penis-like between their legs, then they press it hard into the front and rear members of the line (both of whom are also native doctors and thus able to withstand the shock of direct contact with the powerful rods). They then 'remove' bunu from inside the bodies of several older men present and 'insert' these into the line; by contagious magic the bunu pass into the bodies of all men in the line. All

the rainmakers are said to have carried such protective stones inside their bodies as they travelled around the country.

The Practice Welcome. Early in the morning of the day when the visitors are expected to arrive, all the local people begin decorating in readiness. Men, women and children decorate themselves to look as 'flashed up' as possible. Women and children carry small leaf bundles to wave as they dance, while most men carry boomerangs which they click in accompaniment to their singing. By mid-morning everyone is decorated and ready to practice the ceremonial welcome that they will extend to the visitors late the same afternoon. The men dance in their two groups, which are strung out in a line to give the appearance of the greatest possible numbers, with their respective groups of women bringing up the rear. After a few practice runs, which generate great hilarity and excitement, they settle down to await the actual arrival of the visitors, who by this time are camped just outside the settlement and are putting on the plain red-ochre covering that is traditional for the visiting group.

The Welcome. As soon as the news of the impending arrival of the visitors reaches the Camp, the entire population assembles in the creekbed, hidden from the sight of the visitors, so as to add an element of surprise to the welcome. The visitors' vehicles arrive first and assemble on the south

western side of the main Camp on the edge of a cleared area, then the visitors approach on foot in single file, men in front, and Da:wajil novices with arms folded and heads down, as is the correct behaviour for men of that status. The visitors then all sit down in the cleared area, in their respective generation level groupings. With a huge roar the Jigalong mob surges up over the rise near the creekbed and dances right up to the visitors then retires about 200 yards and sits down, to allow the southerners to reciprocate the welcome. They do so, then sit down, and almost immediately afterwards the settlement of outstanding disputes begins, because, ideally all fighting must be done with before the ceremonial activities get under way.[1] Women and children of the respective mobs scatter for shelter as the boomerangs and spears begin to fly. Owing to the relatively late arrival of the visitors at the 1969-70 meeting, the public settlement of disputes was postponed until the following day shortly after they had begun, because everyone was tired and the visitors were very thirsty.

2. <u>The Opening Session of the Da:wajil</u>.[2]

The same night, after the visitors have established their camps and have rested and eaten, local men of S.III status begin to round up all the inhabitants of the Camp.

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[1]Conflict is forbidden during ceremonial activity; cf. Warner 1937/64:383: "This sanction or a similar one is absolutely necessary to allow the ritual to remain an interclan or tribal affair."

[2]See Appendix A (songs sung December 30th, 1969) for a list of the songs sung this night.

Jigalong women and children then make their own way across to the old ŋurala ŋandji ground which is about 150 yards south of the Camp ceremonial grounds. This ground is used for the first night's performance because the visitors should enter the ninjinganu area for the first time in daylight. First to arrive are the S.I men who sit in a circle in the centre of the ground and are actively singing by the time the others arrive. The visitors are ushered, in their respective groups, onto the ground and are seated to the north and south of the central circle, where they will remain, silent and passive, all through the evening's performance. Jigalong women and children sit in their two groups, to the north and south of the visitors, and Jigalong men stand around the central circle, but on their respective sides. Throughout the evening they periodically dance in circles around the seated men, first one way then the other. Both excitement and general noise level remain very high throughout, as male and female members of both sides engage in protracted bouts of water-throwing and a constant barrage of comments is directed at members of the opposite level. During the songs, S.III men repeatedly make the birdcall appropriate to their level, either gidirrrrrr (Banaga-Garimara) or wijurrrrrrr (Milanga-Buruŋu), and the Jigalong women make frequent frog calls in accompaniment. The visitors receive a heavy barrage

of water and comments as to what is going to happen to them in the days that follow. About half an hour after the session commences, car lights that had been used to illuminate the ground are all turned off, and the performance proceeds in almost complete darkness. But the promised all night session does not eventuate, as a very strong dusty wind springs up about ten o'clock and by 11:30 it has become too uncomfortable to continue. Besides, the visitors are very tired, so everyone returns to Camp.

As with most aspects of the Da:wajil, and indeed of all Aboriginal rituals, people cannot say for sure why they do much of the ritual things they do; the stock answer is, "We do it because it is the Law; it is what the Dreamtime beings did." And if one asks why the Dreamtime people acted thus, nobody knows. But people may sometimes hazard a guess, and in the case of the water-throwing, some say that they throw water over one another to induce the rainmaking beings to do the same and pour rain over them. Certainly many believe that if they throw water violently and roughly, instead of pouring it or throwing it gently as they are supposed to do, the resulting rain and weather will be wild and rough, and that if people run away from being wet by others, the clouds too will run away and no rain will fall in the Jigalong area.

3. <u>The First Day.</u>

Ideally, this is supposed to be a full day's performance but the rest of the dispute settlements took up most of the morning and activities did not get under way until after an

early lunch.

At the Ninjinganu. About midday the mustering begins, and the people assemble and march to the Camp grounds in four lines (two each for the Jigalong and visiting mobs, and each divided into generation level grouping) with the men in front walking with arms folded and heads down as novices must always do until they are initiated. Two groups of senior men are already assembled at the ground and sitting in their respective circles, just east of the boughshed, singing, as the novices are led in by the S.III men. The novices are made to lie face down inside the boughshed, with Jigalong novices and older children at the two ends of the ninjinganu, and Jigalong women sitting along the western edge of the boughshed behind the male and female southern novices. The musterers immediately join the older men, standing in a semicircle around them and singing loudly, but breaking off regularly to engage in water-throwing activities, which begin as soon as men and women can fill their containers or mouths. Everyone, novices included, gets drenched, amid great hilarity and a great deal of noise, movement and frequent physical clashes between members of same and opposite sex as attempts are made to disarm water-bearing members of the opposite group. After about half an hour novices are permitted to sit up and watch the proceedings more fully, but they remain still. Although some water is thrown generally, either across all the novices of the opposite group or across the top of their section of the boughshed, most is aimed at specific targets (i.e. certain kin categories) in the opposite level.

At intervals during the afternoon, the S.III men of first one group then the other take their respective novices and S.IV men and lead them off to perform dances that represent the hunting activities of the rainmaking birds gidir and wijur who destroyed (or in the case of the smaller wijur birds, split open) trees with their lightning bolts. Skipping in single file and making frequent bird calls, with the S.III men clicking their boomerangs each line of dancers circles a tree which they pretend to destroy with lightning by stamping their feet and whooping. They then pause before circling the ground and passing close to women of the opposite group who douse them with water as they dance past. The Banaga-Garimara men, representing bigger and stronger birds who hunted further afield, circle the same tree as the others but then dance further away before returning to the ground. Both groups circle the boughshed in opposite directions at the same time, before putting the novices back inside the shade and resuming their singing and water-throwing. There are frequent lulls in the latter activity as the supply of water runs out fairly quickly and people then have to wait for the drums, etc. to be refilled. The two circles sing almost continuously, usually the same song, but not always in perfect synchronization. During the songs, men and women frequently make to a fro waving motions with their upturned hands, which they say represent water flowing in a creek.

About four o'clock most of the people disperse for a break. Local women go to the settlement to pick up fresh bread from the bulk store and some of the S.II men go to buy stores for wanaburga. The visiting novices are led off the ground to

eat damper and drink tea, prepared earlier in the afternoon by some of the creekbed cooks and S. III men. The senior female cooks remain in the boughshed. Later the musterers return to Camp to round everyone up again and bring them back to the ground. The singing and some water-throwing resume, and there is more dancing by the two groups of men. About seven o'clock all women, children and novices leave the ground and return to Camp. The men stay on to discuss the coming hunt, before they too go back to Camp. The hunters, organized and led by S. II men, and assisted by a few of the S. III and S. IV men, leave about 7:30 p.m. in several vehicles, intending to camp out overnight and hunt the next morning. The rest of the people will have an early night, as tomorrow a full day and night of Da:wajil activities are to follow.

4. The Second Day

The Assembly. About 8:30 a.m. the musterers assemble all novices, women and children and march them to the main creekbed about 200 yards south of the boughshed. There they sit under shade trees in their respective groups, women and children separate from the men, where they will spend most of the day. Mid-afternoon, the novices will be taken to the baljbara for the first time. The women and children will stay in the creekbed until late afternoon, when they will be mustered to the boughshed area to await the return of all the men from the bush.

All those in the creekbed are supervised and fed by S.III men, who oversee the creekbed female food preparers and do the actual cooking of the dampers.

Division of Food. While the others are being assembled, senior status men move to the boughshed area to organize the division of the day's food. Ideally this is the task of S.II men but other senior men may assist. From the food drum, which by now contains over 700 lbs of flour and other foodstuffs, they make two piles of food, each containing 100 lbs of flour, plus tea, sugar and a few tins of fruit. S.III men of the respective groups carry their food stock to the creekbed and hand it over to their female food preparers who will later make dampers and brew tea for members of their own generation level group.

Selection of New Female Cooks. Senior men of S.II rank, will decide whether more female cooks are needed and will themselves 'grab' women to enter the rank of bidinjaŋu. If new creekbed cooks are also to be chosen, the S.II men will delegate the actual 'grabbing' to the older S.III men who oversee the creekbed activities. In 1969-70, they chose two women to become bidinjaŋu. When she is selected the woman weeps as she is led to join the other bidinjaŋu, who are already assembled and waiting at the ninjingaŋu. These women will prepare a large number of dampers, some of which will be taken to the baljbara and eaten by the men there; the rest will be consumed at the wanaburga feast eaten by the men after their return from the bush ground. They will return to the creekbed after about midday to eat lunch with the other women.

Activities at the Baljbara. Today the most important initiatory activities take place at the bush ground, which is the focus of all secret-sacred Ɲa:wajil rites. S. I men proceed to the ground immediately after the food for the day has been divided up. They uncover the piles, clean the ground, then put on their decorations. More pearlshells are added to the piles, then several of the biggest rods are displayed and discussed, largely for the benefit of two Wiluna elders who are present at the baljbara for the first time. The men present sing the appropriate songs and tell the visitors where, when and by whom each stone was found, as well as its Ɲa:wajil name and significance.

Late in the morning a small group of Jigalong S. II men and southern S. III men arrive in a vehicle, bringing with them the Ɲa:wajil gear that the travellers[1] had taken with them to Wiluna, plus several bunu rods discovered by these southern Aborigines. These objects are displayed and talked about by the newcomers and the senior men already present, then a group of S.II men returns to the boughshed to pick up dampers and food for the men at the baljbara. They arrive back about 2:30 and lunch is then eaten.

After lunch the men resume singing and continue preparing for the afternoon's dances. First to arrive are all the S.III men who head for the baljbara as soon as they have finished supervising the serving of lunch to those in the creekbed. They enter the ground in single file, touch both piles and all the

[1] i.e. the group of Jigalong men who visited Wiluna to summon the southerners.

men present then wail for the stones. Amid continued singing, and some water-throwing between men of opposing generation levels, some of the newcomers pierce their armveins and anoint both piles with blood, while older men 'feed' the piles with small pieces of damper saved from lunch. More eaglehawk down is added to the tops of the newly bloodied rocks and the piles are made ready for their first showing to the novices, who have been shepherded over to the creekbed near the baljbara by the S. III men and left to wait there.

Ten S.I men strip naked and begin decorating for the first dance, called widjiwidji madunganu from its associated song,[1] which will begin just as the novices are led onto the ground. The dancers ochre themselves then put a strip of down (stuck on with blood or saliva) vertically down the middle of their bodies, through their legs, up their backs and across their heads to form a continuous bisecting line. They take feather-bundles from the piles and wear them through their forehead-bands, and each holds a widjiwidji rod, (see page 145) prepared by S.I men earlier the same day. The audience forms a large semicircle around and west of the western pile, around which the dancers are arranged, reclining on one side and one elbow, with the widjwidji in one hand and pointed back through their legs so that they appear to be protruding from their buttocks.

[1]The song is: widjiwidji madunganu widjiwidji madunganu

The audience breaks into loud singing as the novices, with heads down and arms folded, skip onto the ground in their two lines, led by Jigalong men. They circle each pile separately, then join the rest of the spectators in their respective groups and are told to watch the dance, which has already begun. The dancers make strangling-type noises as they slowly roll over and look behind them, on both sides, with staring eyes, then kneel and lean forward. One by one they stand, with feet wide apart and they stamp down hard on each slow,deliberate step forward as they circle the western pile. They pause between each step, and look searchingly left and right, and as they stamp their feet they utter a high-pitched **didididi** sound, then a deep-throated wooooooooooo. They move out onto the ground between the piles then change rhythm into a sideways shuffle as they return to circle the pile and repeat the foot-stamp and woooooo sound to finish the dance. They then return the objects to the pile, shoulder-tap some of the spectators closest to them and begin removing the down from their bodies as the audience sits and wails loudly. In this dance they represented Jadangal-snakes travelling along the ground and firing lightning bolts with their widjiwidji, which are the same as bunu rods and protrude from the ends of their penises. They shake their legs to 'load' the bolt, then stamp to 'fire' it, then look back to see where the lightning shot up from. The high-pitched cry is the lightning

crackling, and the wooooo is the sound of the following thunder. The pile represents their Djaṛamara home waterhole from which they start their travels and to which they return at the end.

The novices are told to touch the pile and then kneel close to it, ready for instruction. Explanations are given by several S.I men who stand next to the pile and point to each object as it is named, amid singing from the rest of the men. Between songs, initiated men begin to castigate Jigalong novices of the same generation level group for their general trouble-making and shortcomings as men, and the abuse grows steadily worse for some minutes while the novices sit with heads bowed as their alleged sexual and other exploits are made public. High status men of both groups remove bunu from the pile and give them to each novice one at a time to clasp against his stomach then pass on. The travellers' gear is displayed and explained to the novices, then more objects are removed from the pile and their names are revealed to them, together with warnings about using these terms in public, and especially about saying these names while drunk. Through all this the visiting novices have escaped castigation, and instead are held up to the Jigalong young men by the local elders as being "good boys - not like you lot".

About five o'clock the second dance is held, also at the western pile. This dance, called djandura, is performed by two

S.I or S.II men who kneel on opposite sides of the pile and take turns to shake a rainbow-shaped object, wilanjba or djandura, which they pass backwards and forwards across the top. Made of grass wrapped in rags, and with about six feather-bundles stuck into the top of it, the object represents a curved cloud (also called wilanjba), topped with sheet lightning (represented by the shaking feather-bundles), which often precedes a big rainstorm. A second pair of men repeats the dance then its name and significance are explained to the novices as the audience repeats the associated song several more times.[1]

Most of the men then leave the ground to put on body designs, and in the case of the novices, to have the appropriate lightning pattern painted on them by initiated men, generally their 'ZH', ('WB'), 'EB', or their 'MB' or 'ZS'. As the decorating continues, S.I men stay at the pile singing, and lines of S.III and S.II men circle the piles in their groups as they dance the non-secret sacred dances several times. Meanwhile the hunters bring cooked meat to the ground from their vehicles and senior S.III and S.II members confer together quietly, to decide which S.IV men will be grabbed and elevated to S.III rank. They will choose a mixture of southern and local men, and the two generation level groups will alternate with each other in the dancing that is the pretext for the actual grabbing.

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[1]The song is: djandura ja wuru janbana ja djandura

The members of one of the groups begin dancing around the ground area, then suddenly break ranks and pounce on one (sometimes two or three) unsuspecting S.IV man who is pushed roughly onto his back. His captors sit and wail with him for a short time before leading him by hand to the spot where the cooked meat has been laid out. He is told to eat some meat and is then presented with two boomerangs, the symbols of his new rank, by initiated members of his own generation level group. As the dancers grab each new recruit, they place their hands over his mouth, and they make the woowoowoo sound that is said to represent thunder that follows a lightning bolt. The alternate dancing and grabbing of new S.III men continues for about twenty minutes. (During the 1969-70 meeting, 23 such men were grabbed.)

Everyone is then called over to the western pile, in readiness for the final dance of the afternoon, called jiljba or buljgu, which involves the largest number of men. As the men stand around the pile singing Da:wajil songs, the large hairstring jungujungu is unwound from the pile, into a big ball, while the seated novices look on in silence. Then about sixty initiated men move onto the ground and form a single line as they kneel side by side. The line coils around the western pile, and native doctors sit at the two ends. The hairstring is unwound across their shoulders and every man grasps it above his shoulders with both hands. As the singing begins in earnest,[1] the dancers stand, shuffle

[1]The associated song is: wadirimi ja lirbi wadirmi (Song No. 80, Appendix A)

sideways in the same direction and make the woowoo sound as they bend up and down from the waist to create an undulating wave-effect in the line. The dance lasts about three minutes as the native doctor at the head leads them around the pile and back out onto the ground. To end the dance they sit, then fall onto their backs. The hairstring is quickly rewound and elders from the audience move along the line and chin-tap the dancers to get them to their feet. In this dance, the hairstring is variously described as a watersnake (and the pearlshell at its end is a light or eye on the snake's tongue) as the vehicle men ride on while making dream-spirit journeys, and as a long cloud (djalura) that precedes rain. The dancers represent Jaḍaŋgal (some say they are wijur and gidir rainmaking birds) who are bringing up the rain; the undulating motion of the dancers would accord with either of these explanations, since the movement is snakelike and also like the alleged flight patterns of these birds.

About 6:45 the men leave the ground and return to Camp. The S.I men walk back separately, or return in vehicles, while the rest form into their two lines, with novices included, and walk in single file until almost to the boughshed.

Activities at the Camp Grounds. Supervised by older S.III men, the senior female cooks returned to the boughshed after lunch and prepared more dampers, which were then cooked by the men who also brewed several buckets of tea late in the afternoon and

laid out the dampers and foodstuffs in two piles on the eastern side of the boughshed, ready for the feast. The rest of the women and the children were rounded up and led to the boughshed after they had purchased their daily bread, about five o'clock. Before leaving the creekbed they decorated themselves and the children with white ochre. Most carry leaf-bundles (from acacia shrubs) with them to the ground, where they arrange themselves in two groups along its western edge facing the boughshed.

Just before seven o'clock, as the two lines of dancers are seen approaching the ground from the north, about eight women from each generation level group stand in front of the rest, holding containers full of water. The dancers circle north and north east of the ground, then move around the western edge, then back so that men of one group pass in front of women of the opposing group, thus enabling the latter to douse them with water as they come within range. A half a minute later the second group of men do the same with their opposing women, and many men get drenched. The men sit in their groups just to the east of the boughshed and facing away from the setting sun. They slake their thirsts with water while several of the hunters carry four cooked kangaroos onto the ground and place them near the food. The two groups then exchange two dampers each, and the novices are beckoned to sit in a circle around their respective food piles. The rest of the men sit in smaller groups and mostly S. II men hand around the dampers and food and tea. The S.III

men who supervised the women and did the cooking are fed first. Several S.II men butcher the meat and distribute it among those who are eligible to eat it. There is some sporadic singing and occasional water-throwing among the men, but this is incidental to the main business of eating the wanaburga feast. The women and children sit fairly quietly throughout, watching the men eat from a distance. A quantity of leftover damper is stored in the roof of the boughshed, to be eaten for breakfast tomorrow. Just before dusk, many of those present return briefly to Camp, mainly to get blankets ready for the night session of the Da:wajil, which will begin shortly after dark.

Night Session of the Da:wajil. By about 8:15 p.m. the men have formed two circles on the west side of the boughshed and the singing is under way in earnest, with the women, children and novices in their groups and strung out along the western edge of the ground. The format of the night session is very similar to that of the previous night Da:wajil, with the seated S.I men forming the core of each circle, surrounded by the rest of the initiated men who sing and dance in circles around them. Bird-calls are made by the men, frog noises by the women, and some waterthrowing occurs both between and among the sexes, but a water shortage limits this activity to sporadic outbursts tonight. About 9:30 a repeat of this afternoon's jiljba dance, using the long piece of hairstring, is performed by about fifty men, who circle around both groups of singers, then collapse dramatically

onto their backs to end the dance. The women lie down during the dance, but are permitted to glance at it. They wail during the dance, then everyone present wails at the dance's conclusion. About ten o'clock some of the people leave the ground, after a prolonged discussion as to whether this will be an all night session, or half-night only. Some men who go do so because tomorrow will again be a full day's performance and therefore they say they need an early night tonight. They prove to be very much in the minority, however; the rest stay and sing all night. As the evening wears on, all the men finally sit down in the circles, and the women and children lie down to sleep.

The singing ends not long before dawn, and at 4:45 a.m. everyone leaves the ground. The women and children head for the creekbed or back into Camp, to sleep some more or else to get breakfast. The men move to the eastern periphery of the ground, where they break into small groups and huddle around fires in the chill of the dawn. Vehicles leave to get firewood and water and the newly grabbed cooks set fires and go about preparing buckets of tea and laying out leftover damper.

5. The Third Day

Breakfast at the Boughshed. At six o'clock, the seventy men still in the boughshed area begin to eat breakfast. Although the generation level division is not evident in the grouping of the men, the everpresent spirit of opposition manifests itself during breakfast as men of one side endeavour to steal tea from

the others. After the men have eaten they sit around and chat, while the S.I men and some S.II men confer together south of the boughshed area, to discuss the day's activities.

The Assembly. Before eight o'clock, the two groups of S.III men assemble at the ground, ready to round up the women, children and novices. They go their separate ways right through to the south end of Camp, then usher the people before them until they meet up again in the main creekbed, and lead their respective groups along to the boughshed area. Today, the women and bigger children actually sit inside the boughshed. The men resume their circles, on the east side of the boughshed and singing begins with some water-throwing by opposing S.III men. Only fifteen minutes later, the women and children are ushered back to t heir creekbed positions, where they will again spend the day while the men are away at the bush ground.

As the S.I men head for the baljbara, S.III supervisors take the day's flour and foodstuffs across to the creekbed ready for the cooks there to prepare dampers and tea. Vehicles are sent away to get firewood and water, and some S.II men arrange for the purchase of foodstuffs from the settlement store when it opens later in the morning. The novices remain near the boughshed, awaiting directions from the S.III men who are in charge of them.

Activities at the Baljbara. Upon their arrival at the ground, S.I men uncover the western pile (the other remains covered until just before the arrival of the rest of the men an hour later), then move to the shade just off the ground to

ochre themselves and proceed with decorations. Some of the older southerners are with them, including several who were grabbed as S.III yesterday. The latter have their decorations put on them by the Jigalong men.

When the novices arrive with the S.III men, they move in single file to touch both piles and the men already present, then move to their respective sides of the ground. The novices sit quietly while singing continues and the other men decorate, but no one is seated around the piles yet.

About 11:30, several of the S.I and S.II men begin preparing for the first of the day's dances. They remove bunu rods from both piles and give one each, plus a pinch of eaglehawk down, to the young men, both S.III and S.IV who led by S.II men will perform the dance. In all, about thirty dancers move out of sight to the creekbed north of the ground to prepare for the dance.

Fifteen minutes later, another thirty-five men, of the same three statuses as the other dancers, move to an area north east of the ground to prepare for the second big dance of the day.

During the more than two hours interim, while the dancers are decorating away from the baljbara, the Jigalong novices decorate themselves, and the southern novices have their decorations renewed by local men, mostly of the S.I and S.II ranks. Once decorated, these men move around and touch all others present then return to sit quietly in the shade. S.I men continue with

sporadic choruses of Ɲa:wajil songs as they work. After a vehicle arrives with drinking water for the men, the piles are anointed with water.

At 1:45, the novices and others present are called onto the ground, ready to witness the first dance, the walurmalinj, which is said to be the dance given to Winba by Kangaroo when they met during their Dreamtime travels.[1] The dancers, naked and in single file as they approach the ground, wear a charcoal design edged with down and representing watersnakes (boomerang shaped across chest with points towards shoulders, line around body above waist, and two vertical strips down thighs; called wirundadja, the design worn by Malu as he travelled). Each carries a bunu rod pointed down from his penis between his legs, has down on his pubic hairs (representing clouds) and blood on the inside of his thighs (from his urethra, and representing falling rain); he wears a hairbelt and forehead band. Some dancers wear jiliwiri feather-bundles on their foreheads. They move slowly forward, crouching as they stamp-step, shake their legs rapidly then look back furtively (as if fearing discovery) as the boomerangs held by the singers are very rapidly clicked. They then pause slightly, and shake their shoulders before moving forward again, and round the western pile to form a circle, then they crouch or kneel then finish their dance by falling on their backs, as loud wailing begins in the audience. They then stand

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[1]The associated song is: walurmalinj walurmalinj garbuŋga garbuŋga miŋanbula ŋariṅdja jana (See Song No. 2 Appendix A).

at the pile and put back the bunu rods and the down; silence reigns after the wailing is over. The front and rear dancers, both S.II men, carry wood that represents a firestick and are said to be setting trees alight (i.e. by striking them with lightning) as they travel. The front man blows on the firestick first, then makes the wooo sound as he points it and the lightning supposedly shoots out to hit the tree from below. This is what causes bushfires. In the dance, the men are Jadaŋgal out hunting, and their movements represent the 'loading' and firing of lightning bolts. The pile represents their home waterhole where they lie down, too exhausted to get up again, after their long journey.

Once the dancers have finished taking off the down, they rejoin the audience and await the second dance, which is performed about ten minutes later. This is the gudugudu dance, given to Malu by Winba in exchange for the first dance.[1] The dancers are first seen about thirty yards north east of the ground, crouching, and facing south-east in a line oriented towards the western end of the ground. All are naked, and wearing a charcoal diagonal stripe from one shoulder to the other knee, edged in white ochre and with spots of down at intervals down the black stripe. They have down on their heads and pubic hair, and bloodied thighs from where they have a pierced their urethra.

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[1]The associated song is: wanadjinbidi ja guduŋga (Song No. 88, Appendix A).

The line moves towards the ground along a cleared track, with a sideways shuffle and an undulating motion made by moving the top half of the body up and down from the waist. They crouch low and periodically pause, to look east. They have both hands up holding a long hairstring jungujungu across their shoulders. They circle the western pile, form into a circle, then suddenly fall onto their backs. Wailing breaks out among the audience, and several men run out to lift the dancers to their feet and to wind up the hairstring. They shoulder-tap all around then return to the bush to pick up their clothes. The first and last dancers were S.I and S.II men respectively, and each held a long spear with a jiliwiri bound onto the end, which was shaken to make wind and sheet lightning. The dancers represent Jaḍaṇgal people riding on a big watersnake (the hairstring) in dream-spirit form, protected front and rear by native doctors. Guḍuguḍu is a long thin cloud that precedes proper rainclouds and is sometimes accompanied by sheet lightning. Both dances take their names from words of the song which in both cases mention clouds that precede rain. In both performances men of both generation level groups participated in the same dance.

About 2:20 p.m., the newly selected cooks and some other S.III men leave the ground to return to Camp and remove the dampers from the ashes. It appears that today no one was left in charge of the women during the prelunch period after the dampers were put in to cook.

Singing recommences, and there are about ninety men around the western pile, and twenty or so, mostly novices, in the shade close to the ground. After a conference among several Milaŋga men to decide who will be chosen to perform the next dance in company with the principal dancer, several men throw their hair-belts into the centre of the circle, to be used to strap big bunu rods to the backs of the dancers. This dance, the djadan (also from the associated song, and also the name of the huge rods that are used),[1] was planned yesterday, as punishment for a local man of the Milaŋga section who had falsely posed as a master while visiting one of the southern Law centres recently, when in fact he is only a S.III man in the Da:wajil hierarchy.[2] Two Milaŋga men take down from the pile, and choose the dancers by holding it against the selected men's chests. The three chosen men return to the pile and sit on their knees facing the pile while senior men bind rods against their backs with belts. The offender has to carry the biggest and heaviest djadan rod. To protect the dancers against the strong power of the rods, native doctors stand with their hands on the men's heads during

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[1]The associated song is: wandjulu ja djadan (Song No. 78, Appendix A): during the middle part of this dance the song: widjiwidji madunganu (see page 162) was also sung.

[2]This man originally came from the Warburton Range area, but adopted Jigalong as his home in the early 1960s.

the preparation. The dancers help support the weight of the stones with their hands cupped beneath them behind their backs. As the dance begins, the three men, with the offender in the middle, shuffle sideways around the pile on their knees, then stand up and stamp slowly east down the centre of the ground in a snakelike curving movement. Half way between the piles they turn and head back towards the western pile, where they assume the same kneeling position to end the dance. The audience wails loudly as the rods are removed from the men. The dancers shoulder-tap all around then sit down.

During the dance the two native doctors stood at the eastern pile with their hands on the top of the stones, to keep the snakes within quiet; the snakes in this pile are said to be 'more cheeky' and more dangerous than those in the other pile, but no one can say why this is so. The dancers are beckoned back to assume their kneeling position in front of the pile, while the masters in the audience tell the offender that all is now well and his punishment is over. Then the older southerners have their say and explain to all present the circumstances behind this punishment. But, sounding somewhat embarrassed, the Jigalong men present repeatedly assure the man that all is well and that he can come back for the Ŋa:wajil any time. Then the singing recommences and the novices are told that they can get up and take a break.

At 3:45, the Jigalong men present begin preparing a 'blood

damper' (najigala wanaburga), as the young and middle-aged men who feel so inclined begin opening their armveins, then pour blood into a tin mixing bowl that has been brought to the ground for this purpose. Many use jiliwiri - the sharpened end of the wooden stick - to secure the final opening of the armvein. About fifteen of the hundred men present give blood, but it is decided that more is needed so some higher status men also contribute. Several men keep watch on the donors and grab them when they decide that they have given sufficient blood, making the woowoo sound as they do so. The bowl is on the ground between the two piles. The visitors are invited to drink from it, but are cautioned to take only a small amount as there is a large number to feed. The recently punished man, who is originally a southerner, is invited to drink first. The men lie close to the bowl and use their fingers to scoop out small quanitities of the now congealing blood and drink it.

At 4:50, after the men have eased their thirst from a newly arrived drum of water, the visitors begin opening their armveins and pouring blood into the dish, to reciprocate the Jigalong wanaburga, just as the ancestral beings, including Winba and Malu, drank each other's armblood as a token of friendship during the Dreamtime. The Jigalong men move around and shoulder-tap with the visitors and one another then move forward to eat blood, but of the younger men only those who

gave blood go and drink some. The blood damper eaten, singing recommences and some men go to refurbish their body decorations while the rest assemble around the pile. The piles are freshly anointed with blood, put on by some S.I men at the same time as they gave blood for the damper. During the singing, relevant rods are removed from the pile and their name is told to all those present, novices included. The older men point out and name some cirrostratus clouds that can be seen coming up from the east; they are called walumalinj and contain Jadangal who are coming in response to the Da:wajil performances, the novices are told. At 5:50, the men touch the pile then head back towards the Camp.

Activities at the Camp Grounds. Just prior to the return of the men from the baljbara, the S.III men who have been back in Camp since mid-afternoon quickly muster the women and children and assemble them at the ground, in time for some of the women to throw water over the men as they dance around the ground. Tonight the women and children are told to leave and they return to Camp before the men sit down to eat the wanaburga feast that has been prepared for them. They eat quickly and fairly quietly, and most leave the ground straight afterwards. At seven o'clock the Gadudjara camp headman breaks the news to one of the visitors that his daughter has died in hospital in Wiluna, and prolonged wailing follows. This was known two days earlier but the news was withheld lest it spoil the

Da:wajil. No night session is held tonight.

6. The Fourth Day

Breakfast at the Boughshed. A large group of visitors and local men go to the boughshed for leftover damper and tea, brewed by the new cooks, but they return to Camp again straight afterwards, since today is the time chosen to hold the ritual introductions (miljangul) between the visitors who are at Jigalong for their first visit, and the local people who do not yet know them.

7. The Fifth Day

At the Boughshed. By about 9:30 more than twenty of the senior men have assembled there to discuss plans for the day. An S.II man suggests that some of his number should go to Moolyella and summon the mob there back to Jigalong for more Da:wajil, but no further comments are made on this suggestion. Yesterday, more flour was purchased, this time by the newly grabbed cooks, (acting on the instructions of the Jigalong senior men) as a gesture of reciprocity for having been elevated in status.

Shortly after the men go down to the nearby creekbed to decorate, the senior female food preparers (thirteen in all, including several old women who do not actually do any of the kneading work) arrive at the boughshed, and immediately begin sweeping the ground clean, aided by several elderly men. By this time, 10:30, there are about fifty Jigalong and southern men in the creekbed putting on fresh body decorations.

As soon as they are decorated, the new cooks return to the ground and begin preparing the cooking fires, but when the others arrive they send them back to Camp, saying that it is too hot to cook a midday wanaburga, so they can return to Camp and eat there. All but a few S.II and S.I men then go back to Camp; the men who are left discuss how many dances will be performed later today in the bush and here at the ground tonight. The chief S.II spokesman tells the others that there will still be another big dance to be held, but that the masters themselves must do a reciprocal hunt first, to repay the men of other statuses who hunted meat for them earlier.

The Assembly. At one o'clock the S.III men go through the Camp and muster all its inhabitants. By 1:20 they have ushered all the women, children and novices into their usual creekbed positions, where the women and children will spend the afternoon. Two men are left in charge of the women and the rest go to the boughshed where the day's food will be divided then brought back to the creekbed. The men at the creekbed engage in some water-pouring, onto the heads of certain women of the opposing generation level. The senior female cooks are still at the creekbed; after the men have left the boughshed they move there and begin preparing dampers, under the supervision of the 'kitchen masters'. Apparently, the walumalinj were intending to organize a hunt this morning, but it did not eventuate.

Activities at the Baljbara. By 1:15, the first of the S.I men have arrived at the bush ground and have uncovered both

piles. They retire to the cool of the creekbed shade, to await the others. This is the hottest part of the day, and the shade temperature is about 118°F. Most of the rest of the men are resting in the shade of the boughshed, back at the Camp ground, waiting for the temperature to drop a little before they usher the novices to the bush ground. By about 2:30, there are thirty or so older men near the baljbara, talking quietly or sleeping.

At 3:15, the men from Camp arrive at the bush ground in their two lines, which include the novices. They move onto the ground one line at a time and touch the eastern pile, then the other, then all the men present.

As the singing gets under way at the western pile, a group of ten Jigalong men, members of both groups, prepare to use Da:wajil gear and songs in a curative ceremony just off the southern edge of the ground.[1] Nine of the visiting men have been complaining of bad feelings in their stomachs, so the Jigalong men have decided to cure them at the baljbara. Three of them lie down side by side on their backs, stripped to the waist while the local men, led by native doctors who are also high status Da:wajil men, prepare to treat them. Several small bunu and binjdjabinjdja shells are put into cans of water, then

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[1] cf. the Aborigines of Kalumburu in the North Kimberley area, who believe that the rainbow serpent is the healing symbol. The native doctor alone dares dive into its pool to collect his magical artifacts, and he heals people by virtue of his partnership with the snake (Cawte, 1964:186-187).

lengths of jungujungu hairstring are bound around the extremities of the three men, across their heads, down the sides of the two outer men, and through the toes of all of them. Binjdjabinjdja are put onto their foreheads, water is sprinkled on their stomachs, then the wet bunu are pushed into their stomachs as the local men sing loud choruses of Da:wajil songs.[1] They surround the patients on all fours and chant into their bodies, with the expectation that the songs and gear combined will cool the hot insides of the patients and thus cure them. While this is going on, some men are singing at the western pile, and the rest are decorating themselves, novices included. After twenty minutes of singing and anointing the patients' bodies with water, the Jigalong men signal the trio to sit up, but the gear remains on them for a further twenty minutes. It is then removed and returned to the western pile, from where it was taken, and the hairstrings are rewound. The rest of the ailing men are not treated directly, but all are thought to benefit by the magical operations performed on the three.

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[1] These songs which were sung with a distinctive quick rhythm and without accompaniment, appear to be unique to this aspect of the ritual. The seven songs I recorded at that time are:
madugurudangudangu djuriwidiwidi
januja maduguru gundjurundjuru banabana
juguru wajiri bulidjida manarara
bulidjida djirumururuganu
bununa bunu lalgura gari
bibiljarga djananga la waja guradjalbur bana
bunu bar bunu barbar

At 4:30, when all the men have finished decorating themselves, they are called to surround the western pile, ready to witness the first of the day's dances, which is the djandura, the same dance described earlier in this chapter (page 165). Two S.II men perform it, passing the curved object topped with jiliwiri back and forward across the pile as initiated men sing the appropriate song. After the dance ends, S.I men explain again its significance and the name of the object used. The jiliwiri are removed from the object and returned either to the pile or to their owners, then the S.II headman takes some down from the top of the pile and presses it against the chest of the men he selects for the next dance. Two S.II and an S.III man are chosen, for the widjiwidji, the same dance that was performed as the novices entered the ground for the first time (page 162). The men strip naked and put a line of down right around them, aided by others, while the singing continues. After their dance is finished, they return the down to the pile, then dress. For all three (and for the two men who perform the following dance), this is the first time they have been selected to do this dance.

Two more men, both S.III, strip naked except for their hairbelts, then sit by the pile and begin putting on down, aided by two men who affix a line of down to their backs. Two senior status men water around the base of the western pile, while a third selects two bunu rods ready for use by the dancers. A hatchet is brought over from the eastern pile, to be carried by one of the dancers. This is the gundjalmara dance, depicting

Winba carrying his stone axe (gundjalmara) with him as he travelled and hunted.[1] The dance begins at 5:15 as the audience breaks into a loud chorus of the associated song. The two dancers begin in a reclining position, with their knees up and apart and with wildly staring eyes. They change to a kneeling position, then get onto their feet, holding the rods down from their penises and through their legs as in other similar dances already described. In his other hand one dancer carried the hatchet in a threatening position above his head. They slowly circle the pile, making a hissing sound, and shaking their shoulders and legs intermittently as they stamp forward. For the final ten seconds of the dance they break into a sideways shuffle, then the audience wails gently as the dancers return the rods and hatchet, then shoulder-tap around the audience. An S. I man holds up the hatchet and explains that the one carried by Winba was made of stone and called a gundjalmara, which is a secret name, so the men must never call out the name while drunk. Another elder removes a small slab-like stone (lirbi) from the pile and tells the novices that this is one of the chips that flew off the tree Winba was chopping down, then it turned to stone and became a bunu. The men sing the appropriate song, concerning lirbi, after this explanation is given.[2]

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[1]The associated song is: gundjal mara jabilindji gundjal mara (Song No. 14, Appendix A)

[2]This song is: wadirmi ja lirbi wadirmi (Song No. 80, Appendix A)

Once again, between dances, there is a brief whispered consultation among several men of the two highest statuses as they discuss who will perform next. Then the S.II spokesman touches some down to the chest of an S.I man, who will dance with the huge walumalinj stone, which will now be seen by the novices for the first time. Two senior men go and get the stone from its hiding place north of the baljbara. Several men remove their hairbelts and throw them into the centre of the ground, for use in strapping the big stone to the back of the dancer, who stands with feet apart and his hands cupped behind his back to help support the weight of the stone. Seven senior men help strap the walumalinj (Winba's firestick) on the man's back, then the audience is told to stand and singing commences.[1] The dancer, who also has a small bunu strapped to the front of his body, begins with a low crouch, then, bending forward and with a high knee lift and stamping step, he winds his way westwards, then turns, stamping his feet very hard and shaking his torso to end each chorus. He turns back and makes the low-pitched woowoo sound as he reaches the western pile again and crouches. Loud wailing ensues, from all but the novices who sit silently with heads bowed. Men quickly remove both stones, then the dancer moves around and shoulder and head taps among the audience, and says repeatedly, "Waljgunanjuramba!" ("I did it badly for you all!") in an apology for his performance. This is usually done, and is

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[1] The associated song is: bidurdja muna bidurdja (Song No. 77, Appendix A).

referred to as 'liar talk', since it is not really meant; the men know that the dancer has in fact performed well. Winba is said to have done this same dance with his firestick as he travelled.

The hairbelts are returned to their owners, and the singing resumes, amid a discussion by the senior men about the ritual in general, obviously for the benefit of the visitors. An S.I man says that they must again go north to Moolyella and 'finish the line right out'. Another says that they must keep giving blood to the pile, and he uses the English words 'feeding it'. Another S.I man refers to the trouble in the south, caused by the man who was punished during the Ɲa:wajil, and says that there can be no more attempts at making baljbara grounds in the south; the southerners must come up to here, because this ground will be here forever (gagubudu), and is not for jundiṛi men, but is for making rain only (jundiṛi referring to men with bad feelings inside them). Another man says that if there is any trouble here, the Moolyella leaders will shift the buṇu piles away from Jigalong.

The novices are told to kneel in a circle around the western pile, then six of the large stones are laid out just west of the pile. Some of the older novices wail at the sight of them and all novices are told to touch the stones. Senior men tell the novices the names of the stones, where they were found, and make some references to their likely origin and use by the rainmakers. They say that Winba left a gu:ḍi (spirit) in one and that this was later used by native doctors

of the Njijabali linguistic group, in whose area it was recently found. Another is pointed out as a 'proper Jadangal' which allegedly swallows meat. These stones are wrapped and put away again, then at 6:15 everyone stands, touches both piles, which are then covered, and everyone leaves the baljbara.

Activities at the Camp Grounds. The women and children are ushered from the creekbed by jirgiliwindi men a few minutes before the rest of the men arrive back from the baljbara. This afternoon, again, Jigalong women put white ochre decorations on the Wiluna female novices and their children. The women and children again line the western edge of the ground, just before the two lines of men dance onto it and receive a dousing from the two groups of women who awaited them with full containers of water. Male cooks carry the dampers and tea to the western side of the boughshed and lay them out in two piles about fifteen yards apart, with four large dampers on each pile. By seven o'clock all the men are seated and eating in their respective groups, while the women and children watch quietly. As soon as they finish eating, some of the men begin throwing water on other men and the seated women, and there is much hilarity. The water-throwing activities increase in scope, and many Jigalong women get up and actively join in; this continues as the men, having finished eating, move into their two circles and begin singing and some dancing around the circles.[1]

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[1]For a list of the songs sung this night see Appendix A (songs sung January 4th, 1970).

Sustained noise and merriment continue for an hour, then all the men of the northern circle join the other one so that they can watch the coming dance. At 8:30, two men, sitting in the centre of the circle and therefore well hidden from the women and children, do the djandura dance, (see page 165) passing the object backwards and forwards, and shaking it so that the feather-bundle stuck across the top will induce sheet-lightning and the wilanjba cloud that precedes good rain. During the dance, the women and children are all reclining and facing west, away from the ground. The men resume singing in their two circles, and fifteen minutes later the women are told to sit up and look as a long line of dancers can be discerned moving in from the north end of the ground, west of the boughshed. About fifty men, mostly younger S.III and S.IV members perform the jiljba dance with the jungujungu hairstring along their shoulders. They circle the seated men, between them and the women and children, with the same sideways shuffle and waving motion as in previously described performances of this dance. An S.II native doctor again leads them, and the dance ends as all fall suddenly on their backs. Loud wailing ensues, as several men run out to lift them to their feet and wind up the hairstring. After a few more minutes of singing, the session is declared to be ended, and everyone returns to Camp, about nine o'clock.

8. The Sixth Day

The Masters' Hunt. Early this morning, six S.I and two S.II (four men from each generation level grouping) were taken hunting in one of the Camp vehicles, to pay back the regular

hunters for all the meat they provided, and to repay the new cooks for the flour, etc. that they bought for yesterday's wanaburga and will buy for another feast today.

Wanaburga Feast. During the morning, the new cooks, both local and southern men, went to the settlement and bought fresh supplies of flour, tea and sugar, which they store at the boughshed. Mid-afternoon, about thirty five S.III men assemble at the boughshed to prepare for the feast. They organize vehicles to cart firewood and water, then about 3:45, seven of the senior female food preparers are ushered to the ground to knead the necessary dampers. Each group kneads two large dampers, then immediately afterwards they are sent back to Camp. Since the major Da:wajil activities are considered over, the women and children are in Camp going about their normal activities.

As more men arrive from Camp, they join the cooks who have moved to the nearby creekbed to decorate themselves in preparation for the return of the hunters. By five o'clock they have put on their charcoal and white ochre lightning patterns and return to the boughshed in time for the new cooks to remove the now cooked dampers from the fire. About 5:30, two lines of novices walk onto the ground from Camp and join their respective groups to await the arrival of the hunters. More men drift over from the Camp later.

The hunters arrive back shortly after six o'clock and approach the ground. The canvas sheets containing the food are

pulled out from the boughshed to the east, and the cooks are told to 'line up', so they sit in two semicircles facing east, towards the hunters who sit in their two groups on the eastern edge of the ground. A hunter carries a cooked kangaroo over and places it with the food of the opposite generational level. A senior cook later butchers it and gives half to the other group. All is quiet as the rest of the S.I men come from the creekbed and sit with the hunters. One damper and some canned food are exchanged by each of the two groups, carried by S.II men. They then take food over to their respective S.I. men, together with a bucket of tea. S.II men cut up the dampers and hand them around to the senior men. The 102 men present then begin eating and drinking.

During this wanaburga, many of the men stand and move about, feeding small pieces of damper or meat directly into the mouths of kinsmen of both the same and the opposing generation level. This mutual feeding does not take place between close consanguineal relatives, or between 'F' and 'S'. Many of the men interlock their arms as they say, "Nja:' ("Take it!) and insert the food. There is a Da:wajil song to validate this rite, which is said to have occurred between Winba and Garbadi, when they ate a wanaburga before going off to change into snakes and take up permanent residence in their respective waterholes. Sporadic singing occurs during the feast, but this is not prolonged, and the men return to Camp shortly after they finish eating. Tonight, as one of the S.II men announced during the feast, they will go

'another way'; i.e. will begin another ritual line, since there are many to be performed before the visitors leave Jigalong.

9. The Seventh Day

Ceremonial Blanket Exchange. A large crowd of people begins to assemble in the main Camp area, on an extensive stretch of open flat land, about nine o'clock in the morning. There will be an exchange of blankets (and between some of the women, clothes as well) between those who decorated novices during the Da:wajil, and those who were decorated. The person who had the decoration put on his or her body should give a blanket first. The women exchange clothes and blankets separately from the men,but in the same general area. There is much discussion, but no singing or other ceremonial activity. By about 9:30, the exchanges are complete, and only about thirty men are still at the ground, talking and planning the other activity of the day, which will be the 'loading' of the visiting novices by local native doctors, and the presentation of Da:wajil gear to some of the newly elevated men.

Presentation of Shells. By eleven o'clock a group of about fifty men has assembled in the creekbed near the boughshed, and those present include almost all the new southern cooks. S.I and S.II men of both groups have opened their carrybags and are displaying and discussing the pearlshells, some of which will be given to deserving men to safekeep as their own. Members of each generation level group discuss their own side's gear, in

separate groups. As each shell is allotted, an 'EB' of the man who will receive it touches several others on the shoulder with the shell then presents it to the new cook. He then talks to the recipient for one or two minutes, telling him to keep the shell and watch over it closely, and not to sell it, but to bring it back with him next Ɲa:wajil time, and perhaps he will then be given a bigger shell if he continues to be a good Law man. Two young Jigalong men are among the nine men who receive shells this morning. Most of the shells are already decorated, but a couple are not yet pierced, so the recipients are instructed in how to bore a hole through the shell, using heated wire. After the presentations are over, everyone returns to Camp to eat lunch.

Junga: The 'Loading" of the Visiting Novices. About four o'clock, after the afternoon siesta, men from Camp join those already resting in the creekbed area near the boughshed. The visiting novices assemble in two lines, then move north along the creekbed, following the Jigalong senior status men and native doctors, who have chosen a spot around a bend in the creekbed and out of sight of the Camp for the performance of this rite. Novices of one group, then the other, are told to move around and shoulder or chin tap with all other people present. They do so then retire to shade to await further directions. The S.II spokesman, who is also a native doctor, lays out three bunu rods

and a jungujungu hairstring as he warns the novices against cutting down trees, or else they may be crippled by the power of the newly inserted bunu rods. He tells them that the rods inside them must be given time to settle down.

Novices of the Banaga-Garimara generation level are told to remove their shirts and line up, all facing the same way and pressed back to chest. The hairstring is wound around the group, just above navel level, as two S.II men take their place at the front and rear of the line, to absorb the main shock of the bunu as they are 'inserted' into the line of men by two native doctors, each operating from a different end. The doctors, one S.I and the other S.II, strip naked, put some down on their faces, then point a bunu rod down through their legs as they dance backwards towards the line. They turn, then push the bunu hard into the bodies of the end men. They move about five yards away then repeat the pushing action; this time the native doctor facing the line hits himself in the back as he pushes his chest hard against that of the front man. The men in the line stand passively, with their hands on the waist of the man in front, during the 'loading' rite, while a few sporadic bursts of song ring out from the audience. One of the native doctors presses his hands, which are together as if holding a stick, hard into the front man, then makes as if to insert something into the man's right wrist then pushes it right up into his arm, then pushes his hand into the man's chest again. Then he walks over to several of the senior

men and 'extracts' something from their shoulders, which he then 'inserts' into the front man in the line, while another man explains to the novices that not just one, but all of them, are thus being loaded with bunu as a protection against attacks by ritual killers. The novices then go and sit in the shade.

The other group of novices now forms a line, facing the opposite direction from the others, as singing again breaks out in the audience. They are told that the right way to stand is with hands on the shoulders of the man in front, and they do so. The native doctors begin the loading before the hairstring can be wound around the group, so it is left off. The same two doctors do the insertion, but they are aided by two others. As before, they make several runs at the line, 'inserting' variously, bunu, the invisible something, and pieces of down. One of the doctors shoulder-taps everyone in the line, and this ends the 'loading'.

An informant tells me that during the Dreamtime the ancestral rainmakers did not actually insert bunu into each other's body, but they gave each other the rods, which they themselves inserted into their bodies to carry with them wherever they went. After the second line is 'loaded', the bulk of the men return to Camp, while the rest remain to discuss a forthcoming circumcision.

10. Two Weeks Later[1]

Further Presentations of Da:wajil Objects. Late in the morning, a group of about thirty men, of both generation level

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[1] During the intervening two weeks, the Aborigines were fully occupied with an initiation (a circumcision and associated ceremonials) and with the holding of several other rituals, so that everyone could participate in as much religious activity as possible before having to return to work.

groups, assembles at the creekbed shade near the boughshed, while Jigalong S.I and S.II men distribute more pearlshells, this time mainly to southerners of the S.III rank who have been through the line several times before, and are due to receive bigger pearlshells. As at the previous presentations, the shell to be given is first touched against the shoulders of several other men, then handed over to the recipient, but without instructions on the care of the object, since these men have received shells before. After each man has received his shell, he too moves about and shoulder-taps the others with it, then sits again. Eleven visitors, including one newly initiated young southerner, are presented with shells at this session. Shortly after midday, the men return the rest of the gear to carrybags, then return to Camp.

Two days later, in the morning, a final gathering is held by senior Jigalong men, this time at the mulga tree which is the main men's meeting place west of Camp. At this meeting, more visitors, mostly S.III men who know the ritual well, receive <u>redji</u> and <u>binjdjabinjdja</u> from Jigalong 'B', and some are told to look after them well and bring them back with them the next time, so that they will get bigger and better ones eventually. The recipients shoulder-tap most others present with the shells, then put them away to take back south with them when they leave, which will be in two days' time.

With this final set of presentations, everyone is deemed satisfied and the Ɲa:wajil is over, as far as the visitors are

concerned, until their next visit to Jigalong in a year's time, if all goes as expected. The piles at the baljbara have been left covered, and the pearlshells have been removed and stored. If the Ɲa:wajil has been successful, rain will fall soon, and it will follow the visitors home and bring rain to their home areas.

That night, after the bulk of the visitors had left Jigalong, heavy rain fell and early the following morning the creek flowed for the first time that summer.

Chapter 6. The Da:wajil: Analysis

The two previous chapters, as descriptive ethnography, outlined the major features of the Da:wajil complex and presented a diachronic account of the performance of the ritual at Jigalong. It is intended that such a detailed ethnographic description will provide the reader with an adequate basis for evaluating the worth of the analytical comments made during the course of this chapter. I now examine the Da:wajil from a synchronic viewpoint so that a better understanding of its meaning and its place in the ritual life at Jigalong can be gained.

The first section of this chapter compares and contrasts the Da:wajil with other rituals that comprise the Jigalong corpus. For while it has been established that as a rainmaking ritual the Da:wajil has many apparently unique aspects, in order to be accepted by local Aborigines it must bear some resemblances to the other rituals that they perform. It is also necessary to point out the many functions that the Da:wajil shares with other rituals, so that in view of these shared functions the reader is not led to impute a greater measure of importance to the Da:wajil than is warranted.

Secondly, because of the central importance of symbolism to an appreciation of religious phenomena, certain symbolic aspects of the Da:wajil will be considered. In addition to interpretations

provided by the Aborigines themselves, those of the observer are also included, since the Aborigines are not given to philosophical speculation and operate on a relatively low level of conscious symbolic extrapolation. It is not anticipated that symbolic analysis of the Da:wajil will go very far towards answering the questions posed at the outset of this thesis, but it does provide some valuable insights into the nature of Aboriginal world view, and considered as a symbolic model, the ritual does have important political implications, which are discussed in the following chapter.

Thirdly, this chapter includes a brief examination of the nature of the relationship between the ritual, songline and mythology of the Da:wajil, which has considerable bearing on the important issue of internal dynamism in traditional Aboriginal religion and on the political aspects of ritual performances.

A. The Da:wajil Compared to Other Rituals

Part of the reason for the acceptance of the Da:wajil by the Aborigines of Jigalong undoubtedly lies in the fact that in many of its general features it is culturally very much a Western Desert ritual. This is an important reason why its subsequent incorporation into the local religious life has been assured.

In the paragraphs that follow I will outline the more general characteristics that the Da:wajil shares with one or more other rituals performed at Jigalong.

There is a clear sexual division of labour in the Da:wajil, and, as with several other men's rituals which have non-secret sacred aspects, involvement of women is marginal in comparison with that of initiated men and male novices. Women's activities are restricted to the Camp area and Camp ceremonial grounds, whereas the men operate between the Camp grounds and a secret ground away from the settlement. This pattern of alternation of men-only bush activities with general-sacred ceremonials close to the main Camp, involving men dancing and singing, is shared with several other important rituals. Likewise the marginal participation of certain of the more senior women, as food preparers (specifically of dampers), occurs in connection with at least two other rituals, the midajidi (see page 39) and the Wadanjugu, a line of southern origin that centres on the exploits of certain lizard ancestors (Djindjila).

It was mentioned in the first chapter that dual organization, in the form of a division into alternate generation level groups, characterizes many Jigalong rituals, and that there is invariably some kind of ritual opposition expressed between the groups so formed. The Da:wajil is thus certainly not unique in this respect, although the operation of this form of dual organization is more general and obvious, expecially at the Camp ground, and the ritual opposition more vigorously expressed, than in any other ritual performed at the settlement. Of the grouping possibilities inherent in any section system (see page 11),

the Aborigines' choice of alternate generation levels seems to be the most sensible, since it effectively separates an Ego from his or her umari; i.e. 'sons-in-law' from 'mothers-in'law', between which categories strict avoidance is the norm. A person's own generation level (marira) also includes members of the grandparent and grandchild generations, and is thus composed of people with whom one has the kind of symmetrical relationships characterized by a relative lack of restraint and a corresponding absence of avoidance behaviour. Members of the opposing generation level (jinara), on the other hand, are mostly people with whom one has asymmetrical relationships, and include those whom one must avoid and others towards whom one must act with considerable restraint. By physically separating people who normally avoid one another, this kind of division obviates the need to be concerned constantly about avoidance behaviour. Also, those who are opposed ritually and can thus openly but jokingly chastise and tease one another are mainly those who sometimes have conflicting interests in everyday life; e.g. as wife-givers and wife-receivers, and as the wives involved in such exchanges. The division could thus be viewed as a relatively harmless way of channelling potential conflict or aggression into a socially sanctioned ritual context. The kind of ritual opposition expressed during the Ɔa:wajil is never destructive or truly divisive, and, overall, a spirit of cooperation between members of the two sides is always present, which is essential if the ritual is to succeed in bringing rain.

As has been already noted (page 115), the Ɲa:wajil is believed to suceed only if all the participants have 'good feelings in their stomachs' and this happy state is impossible if there are serious interpersonal or intergroup conflicts during the course of the ritual. Significantly, during the crucial ritual activities that take place at the bush ground the generation level division is least obvious and has least effect on what is happening there.

Like most other rituals, the Ɲa:wajil consists of a distinctive set of songs and dances (based on the alleged activities of certain ancestral beings during the Dreamtime, which is when the ritual is said to have originated), ritual behaviour, body decorations, ceremonial grounds and certain distinctive sacred objects. In general form,the songline and dances are not radically different from those associated with other rituals, such as the contemplation, discussion and anointing of sacred objects. While the actual body design, the lightning-type pattern, is unique to the Ɲa:wajil, the materials used (charcoal, white ochre) and many of the accompanying decorations (hairbelts, pearlshells, arm and neck bands) and objects (e.g. the boomerangs,used in pairs to provide a clicking accompaniment to the songs and dances) are shared with many other rituals. The use of blood as a fixative, the use of eaglehawk down,the drawing of blood from the arm and penis, and the ritual drinking of blood are already known to the

Jigalong Aborigines from their occurrence in other rituals.

The alleged undertaking of dream-spirit journeys, an integral part of the Ɲa:wajil which is said to facilitate the bringing up of rain, is an activity well known to the local Aborigines, although it does not necessarily occur within the context of a particular ritual. As I have argued elsewhere (Tonkinson, 1970b: 277-291), these dream-spirit trips play a very important role in the maintenance of the Aborigines' ties with their original desert home areas, especially in regard to the continued 'performance' of increase rites, and the composing of new rituals (see page 41). There is of course a totemic element to the Ɲa:wajil, in common with all Aboriginal rituals, in that the rainmaking ancestral beings were both men and snakes and are said to exist still in snake form. Many secret-sacred dances in the ritual enact exploits of the beings as snakes, while in those where the dancers represent them as men, they are said, at the same time, to be snakes. All non-secret dances represent the movements of the two rainmaking birds, wijur and gidir, and during the singing sessions while men make the calls of these two birds, women imitate frog calls. It should be emphasized, though, that role allocation in the Ɲa:wajil is a concomitant of ritual status, not of totemic affiliation, which is irrelevant to the proceedings.[1] This characteristic of the Ɲa:wajil is shared with all others performed at Jigalong.

[1]The only possible exception to this occurs in the selection of senior female food preparers. Several of these women claim Winba as their ancestral totem (djugurba), and this could have been a factor in their being selected, since by virtue of their totemic affiliation they are said to 'know' the rainmaking snakes.

In Chapter 2 it was noted that there are initiatory and educational aspects to almost all Jigalong rituals, and the Da:wajil is a good example of these, for among the express purposes for its performance are the initiation of novices into the ritual, and the elevation of those already initiated into higher status categories where this is possible. Such activities always involve certain revelations of knowledge that further the individual's religious education. It is in the treatment of novices that the Da:wajil can be seen to conform to what appears to be a basic ritual form in Aboriginal Australia, what Stanner (1966:135) describes as a "ritualized dialectic of setting apart, withdrawal, transformation and return".[1] Fundamental to the performance of the Da:wajil are certain activities, pertaining to novices, that exemplify this dialectic; these were detailed in the previous chapter. The novices, male and female, are always differentiated from the other participants, and are spatially segregated. The males withdraw from the rest of the society by being taken to the secret bush ground, where they see new dances and sacred objects and are thus believed to be transformed by the acquisition of this new knowledge, before returning to society (the Camp area). Unlike circumcision and subincision novices, their seclusion period is minimal, and the whole cycle is repeated several times, so that in this sense their transformation can be said to be a

[1]Stanner acknowledges his indebtedness to Van Gennep (1908/60) who was the first writer to outline the characteristics of <u>rites de passage</u> and discern common themes.

gradual one. Change of ritual status within the Ɔa:wajil hierarchy is clearly signalled as a transition stage, for with it comes a new status name, new obligations and responsibilities, new insignia of rank and the imparting of further knowledge by the ritual leaders. The theme of spiritual death and rebirth, which is so clearly developed in the whole complex of rites and activities associated with circumcision, is scarcely discernible in the Ɔa:wajil.

The ritualized dialectic is much less obvious in the case of female novices, yet their sequestration in the creekbed, their later decoration by local female initiates, and the selection of new cooks from the ranks of those already initiated indicate that transformations are occurring with a status hierarchy (see page 138) albeit one much less developed than that of the men. The return of the females to the boughshed and ground each afternoon parallels that of the males and signals their return to society. It appears then that the Ɔa:wajil shares in basic structure these four processual elements in common with all major rituals that involve at some stage the initiation of novices.

Few writers since Van Gennep appear to be concerned with the actual nature of the change or transition that takes place as a result of ritual participation.[1] In the case of transition

[1]Geertz (1966:38) for instance, notes: "Having ritually...'slipped' ... into the framework of meaning which religious conceptions define, and, the ritual ended, returned again to the common-sense world, a man is - unless, as sometimes happens, the experience fails to register - changed", but he does not elaborate on this observation.

rituals, one obvious kind of change is that which occurs in the novice(s)' social status, which is closely linked to the concept of role. It has been suggested (Gluckman, 1962:1-52) that the reason why status changes are so often ritualized lies in the effect ritual has of separating out one particular role from the intrusion of others, especially in small-scale societies where roles are so intertwined that failure in one is likely to affect relationships involved in others. But at the same time that ritual segregates one role from the rest, it throws them into relief in such a way that an individual is better able to comprehend what these other roles involve and therefore what his place in society is. This is what has been called the unitive aspect of ritual,[1] which is largely ignored in most discussions of religion because the unifying functions of ritual participation are more obvious to the observer.

Ritual experience is unitive in that it brings a person's varying roles into focus, evoking them at the same time. A man's relationships to others, as male, kinsman, husband, father, generation level member, ritual status hierarchy member, coreligionist, and so on are highlighted at various times during the course of the ritual. Participation in ritual is thus in part a kind of exercise in self-awareness; a person gains a clearer idea of himself as an individual because of the juxtaposition of these varying roles. Stanner (1966:164) alludes to the distinctiveness of the individual in Aboriginal society when he notes that even

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[1] See Burridge, n.d.

people who are in some sense the same (e.g. siblings) are distinct in other senses:

> they can cohere, or lose identity, only for purposes for which they are the same, which are the purposes settled on their clans as sacred corporations. In other matters they are distinct identities so that there must be restraint or tension between them.

In the case of people who are distinct and opposed: e.g. members of opposing generation levels, they cannot cohere or lose identity at all, but they must associate since they are dependent on each other for many things. Their association, however, must be marked by symbolized or actual hostility. In the Ɔa:wajil, the ritual opposition that is regularly expressed between the generation level groups illustrates Stanner's point, and indicates that differences are being recognized and dealt with, but within a framework that emphasizes unity for the common good.

Besides an increased self-awareness, Aborigines must also learn something in addition to songs, dances and mythological information, as a result of ritual participation. They cannot or do not articulate exactly what it is that they have learned, either because this is apprehended but not comprehended or because it remains inarticulate because the observer is not asking the right questions. In the case of the Ɔa:wajil, as with most Jigalong rituals, the participants at the very least learn something about responsibility during their experience as participants.

As a member of a status hierarchy, each individual has well defined tasks to undertake and is therefore responsible to the others involved and to the ancestral beings whose cooperation is being sought. Collectively there is a responsibility to make the Da:wajil self-sustaining, so that it can be performed each summer despite changes in the personnel engaged in it. Because of the ritual's significance as a unitive situation for an individual, his participation gives him a better understanding of all the parts of the overall responsibility, as he sees himself in all of his varying roles. From his ritual experience, it is inevitable that a person will learn more about himself vis-a-vis others and in relation to the ancestral beings.

Beyond a heightened sense of responsibility, ritual involvement brings men closer to the spiritual realm and to an understanding of the roots of being, of knowing what and who they are, of their place in the total cosmic order. Although the Aborigines are probably not aware of what is happening and cannot therefore verbalize the experience they undergo in a ritual situation, it is possible that, by their exertion of responsibility they are mastering conscience rather than being enslaved by it, and so it is through ritual that they can create a new type of conscience or consciousness (cf. Burridge, unpublished article)

To return to the comparison of the Da:wajil with other rituals, there are certain aspects of the rainmaking ritual which at first sight appear to be quite esoteric, yet upon closer examination are seen to have parallels in certain other rituals. For example, the

'loading' of the novices with invisible bunu rods as a protective measure against possible attack by ritual killers (see pages 152,193) is in principle very similar to a local rite in which young men are 'loaded' with invisible stone knives, 'taken' from inside the bodies of older men who are skilled surgeons, so that these young men will in turn be skilful when they are called upon to perform circumcision and subincision operations. In both cases magical power is drawn from the bodies of older men and inserted into younger men who, in view of their partially initiated status,are thought to be lacking in it.

This concept of power is basic to all Aboriginal rituals, and underlies their entire cosmology.[1] As the Aborigines see it, the ultimate source of all power is the Dreamtime, and it lies in the hands of the ancestral beings. Because the Dreamtime is simultaneously of the past and of the present, the powers immanent in the many places where the great happenings of the creative period took place are still available to Aboriginal man (Stanner, 1966:164). Through the performance of rituals, the undertaking of dream-spirit journeys, acts of revelation by spiritual intermediaries, the touching and contemplation of highly sacred objects, and so on, man can enter the spiritual realm and tap this reservoir of power. Although men of mystical ability, such as most native doctors, obtain special powers from the existent Dreamtime, all

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[1] According to some writers (e.g. Burridge, 1969a:5), it is through religion that man attempts to control and order different kinds of power, but particularly those kinds of power that he considers to be markedly beneficial or dangerous. Questions of power and of communication and reciprocity appear to be important aspects of all religions.

Aborigines may draw strength from it, since anyone can undertake dream-spirit journeys and is thus susceptible to revelations originating from Dreamtime beings. In all their rituals, then, the Aborigines are attempting to obtain the cooperation of Dreamtime beings and thus draw power from them in order to ensure their continued survival.

For their part, the Aborigines are using the Ɔa:wajil and all their other rituals to demonstrate their sense of responsibility towards, and awareness of, the ancestral beings from whom they believe their culture to be derived. The Aborigines conceive of ancestral beings as older, revered kinsmen who have kinsmen's interests in the welfare of their human descendants and are therefore amenable to gestures of reciprocity, as concomitants of the moral relationship that is held to obtain between man and the Dreamtime beings.[1] The Aborigines are quite explicit about the need for continued reciprocity between themselves and the ancestral beings; if they do not perform their rituals and obey the Law, they say, the ancestral beings will observe all this and cease to reciprocate, and by their withdrawal from the relationship will leave the Aborigines helpless and unsupported.

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[1] cf. Beattie (1964:233), "Very often ghosts and spirits are thought of as being dependent on men, as men are on them; there are rights and obligations on both sides. In such cases the relationship, like so many social relationships, is thought of as involving reciprocity or exchange. Just as man needs the good-will and protection of the spirits if he is to prosper, so a spirit is thought to need attentions of men if it is to be remembered, and to be given the opportunity to manifest itself.....in the human world."

B. The Da:wajil Contrasted With Other Rituals

There are several respects in which the Da:wajil differs noticeably from all other rituals performed at Jigalong, despite all the points of similarity noted above. Although an informed observer would have little difficulty in identifying it as a Western Desert ritual in general form, it exhibits some unique features, which will now be discussed.

No other Jigalong ritual approaches the complexity of the Da:wajil; (a) it requires the organization and carrying out of several different kinds of activity simultaneously during much of its performance; (b) it involves at times the entire community, as well as visitors from other Law centres; (c) it is characterized by the existence of a well-defined ritual status hierarchy, with a much larger number of grades (five male and four female) than any other ritual known to the local Aborigines. These characteristics - organizational complexity and elaboration of status hierarchy - are obviously closely linked. It is suggested here that the desirability of an effective ritual division of labour in order to cope with the multifarious activities in both Camp and bush locales may have given rise to the atypically large number of ritual statuses that operate in the Da:wajil. Certainly the Da:wajil shares many of its component elements with other rituals, but none of them combine as many elements in the one complex of rites, and none of them involve at any stage the requirement that the entire community be present at the one place, or that all the

people must be fed daily as part of the ritual procedure. The task of providing for and organizing the feeding of roughly 500 people on several consecutive days alone entails considerable organization of resources: food must be bought and stored, divided and cooked, water and firewood must be collected and transported from a considerable distance, and different categories of people must be fed at different times. This is but one facet of the Ɲa:wajil, and is peripheral to the central concern which is ritual activity aimed at bringing up rain and initiating large numbers of novices into the ritual. The more typical ad hoc organization and laissez-faire procedures that appear to characterize most other rituals would spell disaster for one of the magnitude of the Ɲa:wajil. It thus seems reasonable to presume that some kind of hierarchical division of labour, both between and among the sexes, would provide the most convenient solution to the logistic problems inherent in a ritual of this complexity.

In most rituals, clear hierarchical distinctions are difficult to discern, because there is generally only a division between the few men who are the locally acknowledged bosses or 'masters' of a given ritual, and the rest of the participants, with novices, if they are present, forming another distinct category. This division of labour is purely situational, in that today's bosses will probably be tomorrow's followers if a different ritual is performed. In any case the categories so formed are never named (except for the novices, who are usually called ɲurba) and the particular bosses are often difficult to recognize because

most of their behaviour differs very little from the other participants. Aborigines are not given to flamboyance in displaying authority or in giving orders of any kind. Generally, although this is not in fact the case, no one appears to give any orders or select the dancers or choose which dances are to be done; things just happen, or so it seems, and everyone knows what is expected of him without being told (with the exception of the novices, who are given explicit directions at times).

In the Ɲa:wajil, not only are the status categories named and distinguished by differing insignia and modes of behaviour, but each group has certain well defined activities that it must carry out, and each must answer for its actions to groups above it in the hierarchy, including, at least in theory, the true heads of the ritual at Moolyella (and perhaps Yarrie) who are still said to be the final authorities in matters pertaining to the Ɲa:wajil. In practice, the Jigalong heads act as final authorities during the actual performance of the ritual, in the absence of any of the Moolyella bosses. During the 1964-65 Christmas meetings at the settlement, one of the northerner leaders, who had come to supervise the construction of the first ninjingaɲu boughshed, was in fact consulted during the Ɲa:wajil by the local heads and took an active part in the explanation of the sacred objects to all the men present. The hierarchy reflects the authority inherent in shared 'ownership' of the ritual (the prerogative of those

northerners to whom it was 'given' by the old rainmakers of the Percival Lakes area) and in seniority of status within it. Thus the northern headmen chose the members of the top two statuses at Jigalong, and gave the latter the power to initiate others and induct them into the lower ranks in the hierarchy. Their desire to maintain some degree of control over the Ɲa:wajil is what probably led the northern leaders to forbid its movement south beyond Jigalong. Their role as the ultimate Ɲa:wajil authorities plus their veto on performances of the ritual anywhere south of Jigalong have very significant implications for the place of the Ɲa:wajil at Jigalong. This feature will be discussed in the following chapters in the context of intercommunity politics and their effect on this ritual.

To return to the discussion of other unique features of the Ɲa:wajil, certain of the associated sacred objects are found only in conection with this ritual, particularly the various types of lightning rods and the smaller thunder and frog stones. Their arrangement into the two piles is also distinctive, as are their 'feeding' and decoration, and the use of hairstring and pearl-shells on the piles. Both ceremonial grounds are used only for the Ɲa:wajil, and the ninjinganu boughshed is the only one of its kind constructed for extensive use during a ritual. Although many of the objects used in the ritual, such as boomerangs, pearl-shells, axes, hairstring and feather bundles, are also used in other ritual contexts, they are 'made unique' to the Ɲa:wajil, as it were, by the bestowal on them of secret and sacred names which

connote their significance to this and only this ritual. Likewise the decorations used in the dances are quite distinctive, and the format of the dances themselves, and their associated objects, are unique. This is not to imply that some of the alignments of dancers and sequences of movement are not basically similar to those of some other rituals; obviously, there is a fairly limited repertoire of alignments: inevitably lines and circles are oft-repeated patterns,[1] as are foot-stamping movements. But the Aborigines give to each ritual's dances some special movements. In the Da:wajil the furtive head-turning, the undulating up and down movement of the top halves of the dancers' bodies, the collapse onto their backs at the conclusion of certain dances, and the accompanying noise sequences - all are peculiar to this ritual.

As has already been noted, the active expression of opposition is a common feature of all rituals that involve a division of

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[1] Stanner (1966:67) in his analysis of spatial forms in Aboriginal ritual, suggests that the "circle is a naturally-based conventional sign with probably the ultimate meanings of unity or continuity, the line is the same type of sign with, probably, the ultimate meanings of action or change, and...the spatial, gestural aesthetic, linguistic and religious symbolisms raise on them other meanings appropriate to each system". Aboriginal ritual is notable for its narrow range of spatial patterns used in dancing, the limited variety of actual steps, and the relatively few materials chosen for decoration and adornment.

personnel into alternate generation levels, but only in the Ɲa:wajil is such opposition expressed in part through water-throwing activities. Besides bringing its victims welcome but temporary relief from the heat, water-throwing provides those who participate with a great sense of enjoyment, and in no other ritual does the level of excitement and laughter attain the heights it reaches during the Ɲa:wajil, especially at the boughshed when everyone is assembled and both sexes participate. During the water-throwing, the amount of horseplay and physical contact between opposing generation level members of the same sex is greater than in any other rituals, where such boisterous behaviour is not normally a part of the proceedings and opposition is confined mostly to verbal exchanges.

There are certain other distinctive features of the Ɲa:wajil, such as the purchase, division, preparation and cooking of food on a generational grouping basis, and the unique curative ceremony (see page 182) that took place during the 1970-71 Ɲa:wajil, but these appear to be of less significance than the ones discussed above.

C. Symbolic Aspects of the Ɲa:wajil

It was noted in the introduction to this chapter that Aboriginal culture is notable for the lack of philosophical speculation on the part of its bearers. For Aborigines, ritual is indeed something to act out rather than talk about objectively or analytically: as Stanner (1966:20) notes, "a sustained intellectual detachment

is rare, and only now and then do the cryptic or implicit elements of the ceremony come under discussion". During ritual performances, young initiates are not usually forbidden to ask questions, but they never do so, because this would be out of character with the ritual atmosphere. Novices see all but stay silent, and learn what the ritual is about over a period of time, through repeated participation.

There are clearly several levels of awareness of Aboriginal ritual symbolism, and though participants are conscious of the fact that many elements in ritual have referents in the natural world, most rituals are performed without any clear recognition of their symbolic character (Stanner,1966:61). In fact, Maddock(1969:285), in his recent thesis on Aboriginal religion, contends that many rituals and myths are not symbolically comprehended by the Aborigines.[1] This contention appears to accord with the Jigalong situation and as a consequence it is maintained here that the burden of symbolic interpretation must fall heavily on the observer. In the case of the Aborigines, the outsider who limits himself to native exegeses would be unable to proceed past a bland description of somewhat obvious symbolic analogies.

The approach to symbolic analysis, which has been developed to a high level of precision by scholars such as Turner(e.g. 1967,1968,1969a, 1969b),may not be acceptable to anthropologists opposed to the interpretation of uncomprehended symbols (cf.Nadel,1954:108; M.Wilson,1957:6). In the study of Aboriginal symbolism,however, some subjective interpre-

[1]Apropros of this contention,Maddock(1969:287),taking a rather extreme view,rejects the notion that anything can symbolize anything. He believes that the nature of Aboriginal tradition closely limits symbolic possibilities, especially when tradition is as historically circumscribed as that of the Aborigines. Maddock notes that among the Aborigines (and this is surely true of most peoples),the symbolic relation is commonly one of analogy; things are brought together on the basis of perceived similarities in form or process.

tation is vital if any useful information is to be obtained. With this approach, once the meaning of a given symbol is established, the purpose of its use can be inferred. Turner (1969b:11-13) maintains that symbols have three major dimensions of significance: exegetic, operational and positional. In cultures such as that of the Aborigines, where the exegetic aspect of meaning is not strongly elaborated, the observer must rely more heavily on the operational (observing what is done with symbols in a social organizational context, as well as the ostensibly affective quality of these acts) and positional aspects. In the positional dimension, the meaning of a symbol is seen as deriving from its relationship to other symbols in a specific gestalt of symbols whose elements acquire much of their meaning from their position in its structure and from their relationship to other symbols (Turner, 1969b:12). In this dimension, a symbol often becomes meaningful only in its relationship to another symbol in terms of binary opposition or complementariness. It is the positional dimension of symbolism that is of most vital concern to Lévi-Straussian structuralists, who adopt what is basically a mathematical - logical approach to the interpretation of symbols (Leach, 1971:23) and are concerned less with the content of symbols than with their

positioning and structure.[1]

Later in this discussion of symbolism I abstract from the Da:wajil the kinds of correspondences and relationships that the approaches favoured by Turner and Levi-Strauss (e.g. 1964,1971) would seem to demand. But my analysis does not proceed very far or very deeply, largely because material was not collected with these frameworks in mind when field research was carried out. It should also be noted that there are some problems with structuralist approaches to religion. Spiro (1969:210), for instance, alludes to the problems of definition of the word 'symbol', especially when a (typically) broad definition fails to:

> distinguish objects and events, which are symbols, from objects and events, which can, in certain contexts, be used as symbols; nor does it distinguish between objects and events which are symbols (or which are used as symbols), and other objects and events which, though not in themselves symbols, may have or acquire important symbolic dimensions; nor, finally, does it distinguish between the symbolic and the instrumental meanings of the same objects and events.

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[1] Two scholars of Aboriginal religion have been particularly interested in symbolic analysis. Stanner (1966) adopts what he calls an operational-transactional approach which allegedly accords closely with social reality. He compares the design-plans of several Murinbata myths and rituals, by taking a restricted field of religious transactions and exploring the interplay between operational roles,operations, situations and objects of life. He finds a relatively invariant structural plan, with highly variable concrete manifestations. Maddock (1969) structurally analyses ritual and myth in the Jabuduruwa cult in the Northern Territory. He concludes (1969:280-282) that there are a limited number of elements in myth and ritual, recurring in the same or different patterns. Discrete elements appear in combinations, but many possible combinations are not used, so Maddock suggests that existing rituals were probably arrived at by arranging elements from the total stock, and changes in ritual are then effected by rearranging the elements in both cases subject to recurring associations and dissociations.

In addition, as Egan (1969) notes, it is impossible to compile all possible referents of a given symbol, since the outsider cannot have an encyclopaedic knowledge of the culture concerned. In other words, selectivity of some kind becomes essential to this approach, yet its methodology to date does not contain a clear procedure for selecting from all the potential meanings a symbol might have, the meanings it does have in a particular context. However, the main reason for not pursuing a structuralist symbolic approach in greater detail or depth in this thesis is that, in terms of the question posed at the outset, it is of peripheral importance when compared to, say, political considerations affecting the retention of the ritual at Jigalong.

In connection with general theory of ritual symbolism, some comments are made in the following paragraphs about Turner's assertion (1967:28-29, 54-55; 1969b:9-10), as a result of his analysis of dominant ritual symbols among the Ndembu, that these symbols tend to exhibit the property of polarization of reference; i.e. that important ritual symbols can be divided roughly in a binary fashion between those which refer frankly to physiological objects and processes and those which refer to ideas, notions conceived by the mind, ideals, rules, conceptions of reason, etc.--in other words, to cognitive, moral and ideological factors and

influences (Turner, 1969b:9). My interest here is in the possible applicability of Turner's theory in the light of the major Da:wajil symbols.

In his discussion of ritual symbolism, Stanner (1966:15) notes that at the empirical level, the observer is confronted by a complex and involuted mass of material, myth, song, dance, mime, social organization and institutional practice, which are interposed begween the observer and the underlying symbolism which links together basic religious conceptions and their expression. Stanner suggests that the intellectual process at work in both ritual and mythology is one that selects familiar things from the physical environment, then these things provide shapes for the arrangement of ritual conduct and mythological episodes. In the case of the Da:wajil at Jigalong, most of its associated secret-sacred objects have at least one symbolic referent that is acknowledged by initiated Aborigines. Many referents are to various weather phenomena, while some others are to a part of the human body, and the Aborigines can readily verbalize about the connections that they believe to exist between these things.

With this type of symbolism, the difference between the symbol as 'standing for' or as 'being' the thing symbolized is difficult to discern. The Aborigines are well aware that a feather bundle is not sheet lightning, eaglehawk down is not a cloud, and blood is not rain, but the reverse does not therefore hold. To them, some kinds of sheet lightning <u>are</u> feather bundles

being waved by the Jaḍaŋgal beings, clouds are made of down, and rain is the blood of the Jaḍaŋgal which turns to water as it falls to earth.[1] Similarly, isolated cumulonimbus clouds with their moving curtain of rain are perceived by the Aborigines as being the actual bodies of the Jaḍaŋgal as they run across the countryside. The Jaḍaŋgal themselves are rainmaking men and at the same time are snakes, just as Winba and the other rainmaking ancestors were both. To the Aborigines it is not inconsistent that such beings are of the essence of two or more different things.

In the same way, rainmaking stones that bear the generic name of buṇu represent snakes (in the sense that within each a spirit-snake is said to dwell), lightning (in the sense that each buṇu is a metamorphosed bolt of lightning) and penis, in that the stone is said to be the penis of the Jaḍaŋgal from which the lightning bolt emanates when it is thrust into the ground. Likewise, lengths of hairstring (juŋgujuŋgu) 'become' snakes which have the power of flight and take people astride their backs to the rainmaking centres in the Percival Lakes area, but they may

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[1]Maddock (1969:285), discussing the problem of what is symbolic of what, notes that believers in ghosts, totems, etc. regard these as real, not symbolic, entities. They may produce symbolic representations of what they believe to exist, but, in Maddock's view, to say that a supposedly real entity can be symbolically represented is not to say that it is a symbol. Similarly, Firth (1964:245) notes: "In using a symbol-carrier, say an oath, people do not necessarily use the symbol. Yet how often in speaking of a primitive religion do we not make inferential statements about symbolic behaviour because we see some people carrying or handling objects which others have stated are symbolic!"

also be seen in the sky as long, thin horizontal clouds that usually precede rainclouds.

Since all the objects in use are believed to have been carried and used by the rainmaking beings during their Dreamtime travels, they have a referent to this period which explains their origin and connection with the Ɲa:wajil, e.g. feather bundles as head-shades, pearlshells as pubic pendants and food dishes, axes as sacred boards, walumalinj rods as firesticks, thunder stones as food pounders or rainmakers' testicles, and so on. This necessary connection with the Dreamtime must be established if the ritual objects are to be convincingly conceptualized as repositories of the power or life-essence on which Aborigines still believe their continued existence depends. The source of this power lies with the Dreamtime rainmaking beings, but its key appears to be the alleged presence of the snakes inside the rainmaking stones, because when the snakes are for some reason stolen from the piles, the Aborigines believe that rain cannot come. The snakes thus appear to be essential intermediaries between the actors in the ritual and the rainmaking beings in the Percival Lakes area.

To the Aborigines, the power reposing in the rainmaking objects is not a constant; instead, like energy, it can seep away and be lost, or is expended during the bringing of rain. For this reason the Ɲa:wajil must be performed every summer, for the piles need to be anointed, 'loaded', danced around and so on, to

infuse fresh power into them. In explaining this, many Aborigines have an analogy to batteries and the storage of electrical power in mind, and they use the word 'charge' to describe the re-infusion of rainmaking power into Ɲa:wajil objects. Thus they make a distinction between 'live' (i.e. powerladen) and 'dead' bunu rods, and they consider the latter to be useless until recharged by performance of the ritual.

It is clear to both initiated Aborigines and observer alike that a number of broad correspondences exist between the various natural phenomena associated with the Ɲa:wajil and certain other relevant cultural elements. These are summarized in Table 2 (overleaf) which, using the natural phenomena as a baseline and reading from left to right, lists correspondences under the headings of: artifacts, body parts and activities, mythological beliefs and social activities. The correspondences in columns 2-4 (except for those items followed by question marks) are recognized by most initiated men. The social activities listed in the last column are drawn mainly from the outsider's observations, and the items question marked in columns 2-4 represent my perception of certain correspondences inferred from available data.

Table 2 is an attempt to make sense of certain important structural features of the Ɲa:wajil in synchronic terms, using a combination of exegetic and observational-interpretive material. Both types of material are necessary for adequate comprehension of the Ɲa:wajil, for while observation alone will reveal the many

TABLE 2 SYMBOLIC ELEMENTS OF THE ŊA:WAJIL

WEATHER PHENOMENA	ARTIFACTS	HUMAN BODY & ACTIVITIES	MYTHOLOGICAL BELIEFS	SOCIAL ACTIVITIES
CLOUD	down; hairstring; boomerang; certain sacred stones; forehead band; pearlshells; djandura object; certain body decorations on women and children.	head and pubic hair?	head and body of Jadaŋgal; rainmaking ancestors' sacred objects; hairstring; snake.	initiated men singing and dancing.
THUNDER	certain sacred stones; boomerangs?	hard clicking of boomeranges; certain noises and stamping of feet during dances; male orgasm?	sound of rainmaking beings firing lightning bolts while hunting or attacking enemies.	initiated men singing; initiated men and at times, novices, dancing.
SHEET LIGHTNING	feather bundles; djandura object; body designs of lower status men.	female loins?	Jadaŋgal women dancing and lighting up the sky; headdresses of rainmaking ancestors.	initiated men singing; newly initiated men; all women?
FORK LIGHTNING	most of the sacred rainmaking stones; body designs of higher status men; boomerangs; Ŋa:wajil axes.	penis	rainmaking beings firing their weapons at objects.	initiated men singing; certain secret-sacred dances; senior women attempt to chase it away by embarrassing the Jadaŋgal who bring it.
HAIL	certain sacred stones.	testicles	Winba's food pounders.	senior women and men attempt to chase it away; considered to be dangerous.
RAIN	blood from arm and penis; water.	blood; semen? water (and saliva) thrown or spat onto others.	the blood, sweat, legs and semen? of the rainmaking being.	initiated men singing; water-throwing activities, involving the entire community; certain secret-sacred dances.
RAINBOW	pearlshells; boomerangs? certain body decorations on women and children.		rainmaking beings in snake form.	
SNAKE	sacred rainmaking stones.	penis?	all rainmaking ancestors were snake-men who finally assumed watersnake form.	initiated men singing; dances of senior status men; all men who have been 'loaded' with bunu rods.
BIRDS		birdcalls, made by men.	these birds, as assistants to rainmaking beings, 'hunted up' the rain, and acted as hunters for them.	initiated men singing; generation level division of whole community; initiated men, and at times novices, dancing.
FROGS	certain sacred stones.	frog noises, made by women	frogs sang out in anticipation of rain.	women make frog noises during Ŋa:wajil singing and dancing.

obvious symbolizations (e.g. down as clouds, blood as rain), the inter-connection between the other elements and mythological beliefs can only be discovered by conversations with informants. On the other hand, certain seemingly crucial correspondences are either uncomprehended or never verbalized upon the Aborigines, yet they warrant serious consideration in view of their possible significance.

The exegetic material indicates a low level of abstraction that is typical of Aboriginal explanation. The link between Da:wajil natural phenomena and associated artifacts is in most cases based upon obvious similarities in form; eaglehawk down is white and fluffy like most clouds, the iridescence of pearlshell is like the colour spectrum of the rainbow, blood and water being poured onto the rainmaking piles are like rain falling, certain sacred stones resemble lightning in shape , and so on. Likewise, most Aborigines can describe the how and why of these natural phenomena by reference to the Dreamtime and the alleged characteristics and activities of the rainmaking ancestral beings, but informants never attempt to go beyond this point. The present is explained largely in terms of the past (the Dreamtime), but explanation of the past is impossible because man was not yet on earth then, and besides, who is he to impute underlying motivations to the behaviour of the ancestral beings or to guess at the wider significance of their activities during the creative period? The Aborigines never engage in philosophical speculation about the life and work of the ancestral beings, because the life-design laid down

by the latter is itself a given, a solid baseline from which man must operate. Thus the Ɲa:wajil is performed because the rain-making ancestors left it behind as a means of guaranteeing the coming of rain every summer, but as to why it must be performed this way and not another, or why these songs and not others are sung, such questions are never raised by Aborigines involved in the ritual.

Considering the number of analogies to body parts, including penis and testicles, what seems at first sight remarkable is the absence of any reference to semen in the Aboriginal exegesis. However, in view of the Aborigines' strong denial of the role of semen in physiological paternity, and the strength of the tabu on mention of either semen or menstrual blood among men, their ignoring of semen as a symbolic referent is not surprising. Nevertheless, it appears that semen could be an important symbolic referent in the Ɲa:wajil and for this reason it is included in Table 2, columns 3 and 4, followed by a question mark to indicate that it is part not of the Aboriginal explanation but of the observer's interpretation.

According to the Aborigines, rain is really blood from the armveins and penises of Jaḍaŋgal beings (and perhaps their sweat) which turns to water as it falls from within clouds. Fork lightning is produced by the action of Jaḍaŋgal thrusting the <u>buṇu</u> rods on the end of their penises (the rods probably <u>are</u> their penises) into the ground,then 'firing' a lightning bolt which travels underground then back up into the sky where it ap-

parently helps rain fall. Jaḍaŋgal bring rain in response to the entire performance of the Ɲa:wajil, but more specifically in return for the blood, food and water which is 'fed' to the rain-making snakes both in the piles and in the Percival Lakes area to which the piles are thought to be connected via underground channels. The Aborigines also affirm that rain makes the soil fertile and brings up fresh flora, which in turn support fauna, and since man lives off both flora and fauna, rain is crucial to his continued existence in a semi-nomadic state.

If, in the case of lightning and rain, semen is added to, or substituted for, blood as a symbolic referent, the explanations just given should become clearer. Semen, which suggests male power and fertility, falls from the penises of the Jaḍaŋgal, and enters, or 'impregnates' the ground as either rain or lightning. In this context, thunder, which is explained by the Aborigines as the noise of the bolt being fired, could signify the accompaniment of orgasmic release. The earth, now impregnated, soon gives birth to plant life, on which mankind ultimately depends. Each year, the Aborigines restart the cycle by the performance of the Ɲa:wajil. This argument would probably be strengthened if the earth had for the Aborigines some connotation of feminine gender (as receptor of the semen and incubator of plant life), but to my knowledge no such connotations exist among the Aborigines at Jigalong.

It is clear, however, that the Aborigines could not formulate the explanation just suggested without calling into question their

spiritual explanation of conception and perhaps also their beliefs in increase rites as the major means of ensuring continued food supplies. It is not known whether at some stage Aborigines further north consciously substituted blood for semen as a major symbolic referent (or simply deleted semen as a co-referent), but if at some level there is among them an awareness of rain and lightning being semen, this could help explain the great importance of the Da:wąjil to them. In the north of Australia where the Rainbow Snake is a major mythical figure, an associated connotation of fertility (of man, plants and animals) is well developed in ritual and mythology.[1] Its absence from the Da:wajil is probably due to the resistance offered by strongly entrenched dogma denying the role of semen in human fertility, in favour of spirit child beliefs.

If the foregoing interpretation appears to be too abstract to be plausible, a less tenuous alternative explanation could be offered at this point. It may not in fact be necessary to interpose semen as a major symbolic referent when the role of exuviae is examined more closely. In mythological beliefs associated with the Da:wajil, exuviae from the ancestral beings (particularly blood and sweat,and in the case of certain winter rain, urine from ancestral females) is seen to be of great importance as a mediating category between these beings and man. Such exuviae are at the same time of the beings yet apart from them, yet in relation to

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[1]For a list of references to the Rainbow Snake, see page 73.

man they are purein that they become fresh rainwater and are laden with ancestral power, or life-essence (cf. Leach, 1962:92).[1] Given, then, that several different kinds of exuviae are replete with power,[2] it is thus not necessary to posit a strong or sole semen-fertility link, since all these exuviae can be viewed as promoting fertility when they enter the ground.

To return to Table 2; some other items (question-marked) need further explanation. In column 2, boomerangs are listed next to thunder because they are clicked together hard whenever dancers 'fire' bolts of lightning into the ground; and they are listed next to rainbow, because of the analogy in shape. In the third column, head and pubic hair are suggested as having a connection with clouds because the tops of some clouds are identified as the heads of the Jaḍaŋgal (especially the crowns of rainbearing cumulonimbus clouds), and in certain dances, performers put eagle-hawk down in both their head and pubic hair, which indicates these areas as clouds. In the latter instance dancers spatter their

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[1] Other kinds of exuviae, such as hair from the head, beard and pubes, and falling body decorations, such as down, feathers and ochre, all figure prominently in Jigalong mythology, in connection with the origin of spirit-children, who are themselves essential mediators between man and the ancestral beings of the Dreamtime.

[2] This is particularly true of blood, which on the occasions when it is drawn from the arms and penises of initiated men, is considered to be sacred and full of power. This blood, which may be drunk, poured copiously over novices or dancers, or is used as a fixative for body decorations, has strong connotations of strength and of life-giving power. Those who drink it or have it poured over them are thus made stronger, are better protected against malignant beings, and are brought closer to the spiritual realm in a kind of communion with the beings of the Dreamtime. In Ɲa:wajil mythology there is clearly a correspondence between loss of blood, loss of strength, transition into snake, and rainbringing powers of the rainmaking-men-become-snakes.

thighs with blood from their penises; thus pubic hair-penis-blood equates with cloud-lightning-rain and the symbolism is self-evident. Female loins are suggested as corresponding to sheet lightning because in the mythology this type of lightning is said to emanate from the insides of the thighs of female Jaḍaŋgal as they dance, to light up the sky for the travelling rainmakers. Sheet lightning is associated with both women and newly initiated men because its power is thought to be minimal and diffuse compared to the strong, concentrated bolts of fork lightning that are associated with the most senior rainmaking men. Penis is listed as the part of the human body corresponding to snake because throughout the Ɲa:wajil snake, bunu rods, lightning and penis are conceptualized as more or less the same thing. Semantically, penis (wilu) and lightning (wiluḍjuru)[1] are very closely linked.

Mention of natural and physiological phenomena and processes leads us to a consideration of Turner's contention, mentioned above, concerning the polarization of referents in dominant ritual symbols. These symbols, he asserts, possess two clearly distinguishable poles of meaning, the sensory or orectic and the ideological or normative, and he suggests that this kind of polarity is a universal feature of ritual symbols of any semantic complexity. At the sensory pole are mainly natural and physiological phenomena whose meaning content is closely related to the outward form of the

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[1]The suffix -ḍjuru is not used in the Jigalong dialects, but may mean either 'pertaining to' (cf. -ḍjara at Jigalong) or 'coming from' (cf. ḍjuṇu).

symbol, while at the normative pole are clusters of elements that refer to components of the moral and social order of the society, to social organizational principles, different kinds of corporate groupings and to the norms and values inherent in structural relationships. For instance, dominant Ndembu symbols, at their orectic pole of meaning represent such themes as blood,male and female genitalia, semen, urine and faeces; the same symbols, at their normative poles of meaning, represent the unity and continuity of social groups, primary and associational, domestic and political (Turner, 1967:29)

To a certain, but limited, extent, a similar kind of polarity can be seen in the symbols that are central to the Ɔa:wajil. At the orectic pole are most of the associations listed in columns 2 and 3 of Table 2, while the social activities listed in the fifth column belong at the normative end of the continuum, because their further interpretation reveals similar kinds of significances to those reported by Turner for the Ndembu.

In the Ɔa:wajil, most of the social activities having symbolic correspondence with the natural phenomena listed in column 1 are singing and dancing, performed by the men as an essential part of the ritual. Many songs make explicit reference to the various weather phenomena and to symbolically associated ritual objects, while the majority of the secret-sacred dances depict rainmaking ancestors carrying clouds and bringing rain and lightning. The burdens of organizing and carrying out the Ɔa:wajil fall mainly

the initiated men, and the responsibility for attempting to control potentially harmful phenomena such as flooding, fork lightning and hail are concentrated in the hands of the most senior men and women in the ritual status hierarchy. Nevertheless, the success of the ritual is thought to depend on the continuous cooperation of the entire community (including all visitors) for the duration of the ritual activities, and in this sense the Da:wajil can be viewed on a broader level as a major unifying force.

The rainmaking birds (oriental pratincole and fork-tailed swift) symbolize the division of the entire society into two ritually opposed generation level groupings. Yet this division could be seen as promoting unity because the opposition expressed is exsentially a jocular one, and the groupings themselves transcend potentially conflict-oriented intracommunity schisms and intercommunity divisions that could prove disruptive. During the ritual, the significant divisions are not between different linguistic or regional groups, but between the sexes, the novices and initiated, the generation levels and the Da:wajil statuses. Conflicts are forbidden for the duration of the ritual and the emphasis at all times is on the need for everyone to have a positive feeling about the role they are playing and the likely success of their efforts.

Success in this undertaking depends on an essential unity of purpose, so at their normative poles of meaning the symbols dominating the ritual are associated with the values of cooperation

and unselfishness that are held to be major components of the social and moral order of Aboriginal communities. Participation in the Ɲa:wajil involves the kinds of positive interpersonal and intergroup relationships that are held as ideals by the Aborigines where each individual submits to the will of the group for the ultimate good of all while at the same time enhancing his self-image as a useful member of society.

It must be conceded, however, that the fit between the Jigalong data and Turner's theory is at best a loose one. The point of Turner's analysis of bipolar symbols is that the symbols mediate between the two poles. In the case of the Ɲa:wajil, some symbols probably represent body parts, but there is no explicit connection between particular symbols and the values of cooperation, only a link because of their association within a rite which emphasizes cooperation. The difference between mediation and association appears to be confused at times in Turner's analyses, but it is nevertheless clear that for him the dominant symbols are mediators between the two poles of meaning, and are not merely linked by association.

D. Interrelationship of Myth, Ritual and Songline in the Ɲa:wajil

My intent in this section is to examine rather briefly the interrelationship of myth, ritual and songline in the Ɲa:wajil in the expectation that it will point to the existence of dynamic elements within traditional Aboriginal religion.

R. Berndt (1951:xxvi) has noted that "Aboriginal sacred ritual

is the acting out of mythology, and mythology, in turn, is recorded in elaborate and detailed song cycles which enshrine the meaning and significance of the ritual". In other words, conclusions about Aboriginal religion can only be reached after consideration of all three aspects; ritual, mythology and songline. Another important factor to be borne in mind in assessing the interrelationship of these three elements is the status of the Ɲa:wajil as an import, since the relative recency of adoption is a major variable.[1]

My interest here is not in the question of the primacy of one or other of the elements. This whole question was long debated in anthropological literature, until Kluckhohn (1942:45-79) laid the matter to rest by demonstrating the futility of the controversy. He showed that neither myth nor ritual can be postulated as primary, since what is important is the intricate interdependence of myth with ritual and many other forms of behaviour. Taking a more extreme view, Leach (1964:13-14) considers that myth and ritual are one and the same, in that "myth regarded as a statement in words, 'says' the same thing as ritual regarded as a statement in action". But this view of myth and ritual as different codes for the communication of identical messages has recently been contradicted by Munn (1969:178-207) in her discussion of Murngin religion. She sees them instead as dialectically interdependent institutions,

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[1] For instance, it may be argued that the fragmentary nature of Ɲa:wajil mythology at Jigalong and the looseness of fit between myth and ritual are merely functions of the recency of introduction of the ritual. But as I will show later in this discussion, such assertions would be an oversimplification of the situation.

in which rituals operate on the events of the mythical past to transform body destruction images (of which myth is a reservoir) into health and well-being (cf. Turner, 1969b:20).

Several scholars of Aboriginal religion have commented on the nature of the interrelationship of myth and ritual, and some of their assertions are germane to this discussion. Roheim (1945:6-7) makes some interesting observations on the subject in his psychoanalytical study. He notes that some central Australian rituals are based on a myth, while others are based on the dreams of living people. These dreams are often about the Dreamtime and in these cases the dances in a ritual may be based on a dream and a mythical text. To Roheim, the obvious explanation would be that ritual itself was derived from dreams; men were so impressed with their dreams that they acted them out for their fellows. But then he rejects this theory since it fails to explain either the standardized and conventional aspects of ritual or the songs. At Jigalong, as was noted in Chapter 2, important rituals are composed from the dream-experiences of individuals, who have both songs and dances revealed to them, and they later pool their individual experiences to arrive at a standardized set of dances and associated objects, a tune and an overall format for the ritual. As Maddock (1969:282) notes, the basic sets of elements are already in existence, so it remains only to select from among the possible combinations and derive a unique sequence.

Stanner (1966) views myths as allegorical statements about reality, and rituals as acts towards whole reality. He uses the fact that some myths are attached to rites, plus the probability that all rites could be ranged into historical series, to suggest that the span of the total body of myth was the measure of the depth of ritual development; i.e. cults may come and go, but the insights they afford linger on in the mythology, which thus has a longer life than ritual. His Murinbata data point to a succession of cults and a probability that change and decay had been continuous in Murinbata life for a long time.

Stanner's finding, from his structural analysis, that there are distinct correspondences in form and symbolism between rituals and myths, and that both rituals and myths have a structure or design-plan of a progressively integrative or dialectical character (1966:167), seems to have prompted Maddock (1969) to explore this aspect of myth and ritual using his Jabuduruwa data, which contain many distinct myths and rites. After a detailed analysis of relations between different rites, different myths and sets of rites and sets of myths, he concludes (1969:259-262) that there is no close relation between myth and ritual in the Jabuduruwa and no case can be posited for the primacy of either. The rites do not appear to be the acting out of mythological episodes, and the myths are little more than records of journeys. The two elements are linked in a network whose points consist of the names

of characters plus mythological references to items of paraphernalia used in the rites. Maddock notes that many ritual episodes appear to be without even permutated counterparts in the myth, and vice versa, so a degree of autonomy must be attributed to both myth and ritual. As will be seen, these findings accord closely with the situation at Jigalong.

In the important matter of flexibility in myth, it appears that Robertson-Smith (1889/1956:18) was correct in his assertion that myth is more variable than ritual forms. R. Berndt (1952:52) has noted that "Mythology presented verbally in story or song, no matter how conventional the structure of the society, shows a certain amount of flexibility, since the only means of presenting, and thus of preserving it, must be the individual members of that society".[1] Stanner (1966:84-85), when comparing different versions of long and elaborate myths, fails to find a high consistency between them and no indication of any accepted or enforced consensus. This leads him to think that myths have inspirations and a logic of their own, and more importantly, considerable dramatic potential: "Every myth deals with persons, events and situations that, being less than fully described, are variably open to development by men of force, intellect or insight". This insight, which concurs with

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[1]This is not to say that there is no concern for correctness at all. R. and C.Berndt (1970:16) point out that there are three major considerations:the sex, age and affiliation of the teller with the ancestral beings and stretch of country under discussion. But within a certain range, some variation is accepted almost without comment.

the nature of myths told by the Aborigines of Jigalong, is valuable because it explains why mythological protagonists are so often such seemingly vague and ambiguous characters. Because of this characteristic variability in virtually all longer myths, there can be no one correct version, and perhaps only a general consensus with regard to the most important events of the myth.

Turning now to the Ɲa:wajil, the reader should note that a list of all songs recorded is given in Appendix A, together with whatever translations or explanations were ventured for each song. Many informants gave what appear to be rough guesses as to what the songs might mean, because all are in Djiwalinj or Maŋala dialects, not spoken by Jigalong Aborigines. The songs are similar in their patterning: they average about 4.5 words each, with certain words often repeated in the same song, and they range in length from two to eight words. In a sequence, which lasts an average of fifty seconds, the song is repeated six times, then after a break ranging from a few seconds to a minute or more, the sequence is repeated, usually two or three more times, before the next song is begun. This means that the same few words that comprise a song may be repeated at least 18-24 times within the space of about five minutes and the songs are thus learned very rapidly. The song corpus numbers at least eighty; no strict sequence is followed during a Ɲa:wajil performance and at any given session many songs will not be sung. The choice of songs is in the hands of senior status men

who lead off the singing each time.

According to informants, there are only a few songs that are sung exclusively at the bush ground and never in the hearing of women and children. It is assumed that women do not understand the real meaning of the songs and are thus unaware of which words connote secret-sacred objects; the word bunu, for instance, occurs in common usage, meaning 'thicket', so women hearing the word in a song would take this as the meaning, since they presumably do not know of the rainmaking stones that also bear this name.

Virtually all secret-sacred objects used in the Ɲa:wajil are named in the accompanying songline, and it appears that the names are in fact derived from the verbal material that is presented in the songs, which mostly concern weather phenomena and Winba's activities. Almost all sacred stones, as well as the boomerangs, pearlshells, feather-bundles, axes and objects used in dances are referred to by their secret names in the songs. Likewise, all dances take at least one of their common names from words of the particular song (in some cases, there may be two different songs that can be sung to accompany a dance) that is sung during the dance. In this rather superficial sense, a close tie can be posited between the songs and the names of Ɲa:wajil objects and secret-sacred dances, but the words of the songs that accompany the dances reveal little that would aid an observer in interpreting the actions being performed. Men generally describe what is happening or is signified in the dances without reference to the accompanying songs:

i.e. the dance gives the song its title, and may include the name of the object in use, but tells very little else, which is understandable in view of the brevity of the Da:wajil songs.

Less than a quarter of the total number of songs recorded were cited by the informant who supplied the detailed account of Winba's travels (see pages 89-93) during the course of his telling of the myth. It was not until the meeting between Malu (Kangaroo) and Winba, which occurred on Winba's journey to his homeland, that a song was given in support of the incident. This song:

i: bunu nja bunu ŋadjinja ŋadji juwanji juwa

rainmaking stone me me give me give

is said to signify Malu asking Winba to give him some bunu rods, yet when I first recorded it in 1963 the explanation given cited Winba and Garbadi, another rainmaking ancestor, as the two principals involved in the transaction. The significance of this discrepancy is discussed later (see page 246.)

After this point in the myth, the informant cited a further eighteen songs to give added weight to the events he was describing. It was clear that most songs referred to the latter part of the myth, when Winba was back in his own home area, searching from one waterhole to the next for the other rainmakers. Many songs mention names of waterholes and the words of most are less esoteric and therefore more easily translated by the Jigalong men, which appears to account for their being mentioned in the myth. It is only for

songs dealing with Winba's travels in the Percival Lakes region that the men appear to follow some kind of sequence, as if the songs did relate to chronological events and can therefore be more closely tied to the myth. With most other major rituals, such as the Njungunj and Walawalaŋu (briefly mentioned on pages 45-46) the songs are sung in sequences and accord closely with the chronology of events depicted in the associated mythology. The tie between myth and songline is much closer and more obvious in these well-established rituals. Nevertheless, even a cursory comparison of the content of the Ɲa:wajil myth and songline reveals clear thematic similarities, and on this basis the verbal elements of the Ɲa:wajil, i.e. mythology and songline, could be considered as more closely allied than either of them is with concrete ritual activities such as dances.

There appear to be no direct correspondences at all between the Ɲa:wajil dances and the myth detailing Winba's exploits, and this is atypical of most Jigalong rituals. The dances mostly depict rainmaking activities and associated weather phenomena that are typical of Djaṛamara beings during their Dreamtime wanderings, but they are not re-enactments of specific incidents occurring at named localities and involving a given ancestor. This contrasts with most other rituals where the dances are usually recreations of specific dramas during the travels of ancestral beings. In the latter, a place name is generally given, the ancestor concerned is named (or is known to all), and the incident depicted is prominent in the associated myth. Neither the Ɲa:wajil song nor the myth is

so informative in relation to a given dance, and if there is a common element linking song to dance, it is merely semantic, pertaining to the name of the dance and the objects used in the dance, but giving no clue to events in the myth. Even in the case of the two dances said to have been exchanged by Winba and Malu during their meeting, the accompanying songs indicate nothing of the meeting itself, and most informants telling the myth do not mention the dances in the list they invariably give of the items exchanged.

In other words, if a strong myth-songline-ritual link is defined as the existence of close and consistent correlations between a given mythological incident, a song concerning this incident and a dance re-enacting it, and this holds true for most of the ritual, then no such strong link can be posited for the Da:wajil. Yet there is one sense in which its dances and songline have more in common than either has with the mythology, and this has to do with the nature of cultural transmission of these elements. It appears that songline and dance are handed on and reproduced more accurately than associated mythological information, whenever transmission of a ritual from one Aboriginal group to another takes place. The songs are easily learned (more so than the sequences in which they are embedded) and the dances are relatively simple and highly formalized, giving relatively little opportunity for individual embellishment. It is essential that both songs and dances be reproduced faithfully if the ritual is to succeed in its given aims. Mythological information, in contrast, is not transmitted in public per-

formances and is more susceptible to individual interpretation, which is aided by the usually vague and ambiguous nature of character delineation. The fragmentary nature of local Aborigines' knowledge of the Ɲa:wajil mythology has already been discussed, and the marked degree of individual variation in the amount of this knowledge is in striking contrast to the uniformity of the songline and dances. But this still does not explain the considerable degree of independence that much of the Ɲa:wajil myth exhibits in relation to the songline and concrete activities of the ritual. In part, this looseness of fit can be explained by the recency of the adoption of the Ɲa:wajil at Jigalong, and it could be assumed that as time passes local Aborigines will gain a much clearer idea of the mythological background, which may eventually prove to be much more closely linked to the songline and dances than at present appears to be the case. Nevertheless, it appears certain that the myth will retain a degree of independence, for very important reasons outlined below.

All ancestral beings are said to have left behind, along the routes they took, many sacred objects which turned to stone and remained, either buried or on the surface, for man to discover later, contemplate and draw spiritual strength from. The greatest 'evidence' of their wanderings are all the prominent physical features of the landscape, but they also left behind small sacred objects. Many were buried, to await revelation to man through the mediation of spirit-children which lead men to the objects during dream-spirit wanderings or even in day-dreams. The discovery of

such objects and their later identification (usually made by native doctors and elders who have the most detailed knowledge of which ancestral beings travelled where in a given area) are regarded as definite proof of them having been left behind by the ancestor concerned.

Now since bunu rods are unique to the Da:wajil and are thus attributable only to rainmaking ancestors, particularly Winba, who is known to be the only extensive traveller, their discovery in many different areas poses problems of explanation. A few bunu, usually those that are damaged after being 'fired', are said to have been left behind by Jadangal beings during their hunting expeditions. Many others that have been discovered were attributed to recently dead rainmaking masters whose spirits had scattered their stones, to be later found and used by living Aborigines. But in certain locations, west, south-west and south of Jigalong, even beyond Wiluna large bunu rods have been discovered by men who had been initiated into the Da:wajil and thus recognized their significance. These stones were secretly brought to Jigalong and hidden near the bush ground. Da:wajil leaders examined them and reasoned that such magnificent stones could only have been left by Winba himself, so Winba must have passed through their places of discovery. As this knowledge came to hand, it was incorporated into their accounts of the Da:wajil myth. This appears to be the reason why the 1970 version I recorded was much more detailed in its early sections dealing with Winba's travels in the area south of Percival Lakes

than a 1963 version collected from the same informant.

If the myth were closely tied to both the songline and the dances of the Ɲa:wajil, there would be much less opportunity for the incorporation of more details arising from knowledge gained by further discoveries of major sacred stones. The fleshing out of the part of the myth dealing with Winba's movements in the southern area, where by far the most important ancestral being is Malu, would account for the change in connotation of the song, quoted earlier, that concerns Winba's gift of bunu rods. The earlier connotation was that Winba was giving them to his fellow rainmaker Garbadi, when they feasted together before turning into snakes. Today the exchange is said to have been between Winba and Malu, though significantly the actual place of meeting is not known. All important ancestral beings who travelled far are said to have encountered others whose tracks they crossed, so since Winba must have travelled well to the south, the Aborigines assume that he would have met Malu, and they use the song (as well as the attribution to the pair of two Ɲa:wajil dances) to help authenticate the supposed meeting. Likewise, although there is no specific mention of it in the Ɲa:wajil myth, Winba is said to have met up with Wadi Gudjara, the most important creative beings in the mythology of the Aborigines now at Jigalong, and I recorded a separate myth that told of the meeting.

It seems likely that the Ɲa:wajil myth, or at least that section of it concerning Winba's movements in the area south of the

Percival Lakes, will continue to be enlarged as long as the ritual maintains its current importance. Also, more of the songs that have no place-name referents may perhaps be used to substantiate aspects of this section of the myth. This myth-enlarging process seems to be an important element of internal dynamism in the traditional religion, and it is to this topic that I now turn.

The prevailing view of Aboriginal religion has been, until comparatively recently, one that characterizes it as static and unchanging, both ideologically and in reality. Such a stereotype is a reflection of the belief that Aborigines are extremely culturally conservative. This viewpoint notes the strong emphasis placed by the Aborigines on the maintenance of the design for life laid down in the Dreamtime, which was to be followed to the letter by later Aborigines to ensure continued fertility and general well-being of man and all other living creatures.

To cite an extreme example of this view, T. Strehlow (1947:6) talks of the mental stagnation and apathy of the Aranda, among whom he grew up, and attributes these negative characteristics as follows:

> The thoroughness of their forefathers has left to them not a single unoccupied scene which they could fill with the creatures of their own imagination. Tradition and the tyranny of the old men in the religious and cultural sphere have effectually stifled all creative impulse; and no external stimulus ever reached Central Australia which could have freed the natives from these insidious bonds. It is almost certain that native myths had ceased to be invented many centuries ago. The chants, legends,

> and the ceremonies which we record today mark the consummation of the creative efforts of a distant, long-past age. The present-day natives are on the whole the painstaking, uninspired preservers of a great and interesting inheritance. They live almost entirely on the traditions of their forefathers. They are, in many ways, not so much a primitive as a decadent race.

These remarkable assertions have been quoted at length because in general they represent the prevailing view, in spite of the writings of others such as Elkin and the Berndts, and this view lingers to the present among some observers; e.g. Lommel (1970:233), who asserts "The typical Australian characteristic seems to be the incapability to change and to assimilate".

Hand in hand with the belief that Aboriginal religion was essentially non-innovative and non-changing goes the equally common claim that the changes that have occurred in the religion are almost always in the direction of breakdown and disintegration, and are always the result of contact with the vastly more powerful wider European society (or the Australian variant thereof). Thus, in this view, change in religion and culture is explainable almost always in terms of external influences.

Any competent observer of tradition-oriented Aborigines cannot fail to notice how frequently they stress the necessity of following exactly the ritual procedures said to have been instituted by the ancestral beings when they created Aborigines, their culture and their physical environment. Alien influences, seen in such peripheral aspects as the materials used in the making of certain ritual paraphernalia, are openly acknowledged, but for

the Aborigines, ideally and ideologically their religion in its essential aspects has not changed since it came into being during the Dreamtime. What many observers seem to have confounded is the crucial distinction between a stated ideology of non-change and the reality of a dynamic social life in which some changes are inevitable and new knowledge is continually being received or passed on as part of the continuing process of cultural transmission between contiguous Aboriginal groups. In a culture without written history and no concern for history as chronological development, today's innovations are easily attributed to the action of Dreamtime beings at some not too distant time in the future, or else they are acknowledged as having been revealed to man from the ancestral beings through the mediation of spirit-children encountered during dream-spirit journeys.

It should be noted here that two scholars, Stanner (1966) and Maddock (1969) have recently presented evidence to dispute the common notion of a static Aboriginal traditional religion. Virtually all Stanner's Murinbata evidence contradicts the static model. Addressing himself to T.Strehlow's assertions, Stanner (1966:85) acknowledges that there is painstaking adherence to tradition, but the traditions themselves are a continuous inspiration, and are adhered to with enthusiasm rather than disinterest. There appears to be a fundamental theme in Murinbata myths and rituals of change within stability. For Stanner, it was probably the power of Murinbata ritual symbolisms that led

them to fit change to the forms of permanence, with the result that change resulted, not in the evolution of an open society, but in the further involution of a tradition-oriented society (1966:139). In this sense, Murinbata tradition can be seen as the product of a continuous art of making the past consistent with an idealized present.

Following Stanner's lead, Maddock (1969:287) notes that internal changes in Aboriginal religion have been largely ignored by anthropologists, so he lists some processes of change that were at work among the Aborigines he studied. He briefly mentions local innovation, the creation of new dances and songs inspired by men's dreams, and considers four processes operating as aspects of diffusion, as new elements are added through visits by outsiders and by the emulation of practices of other groups with whom these people are in contact. These processes are: elaboration, systematization or integration (by the development of more comprehensive formulations; e.g. the adoption of the subsection system), differentiation, and its complementary process, coalescence. He notes that the latter two processes occur on both inter- and intra-cult levels.

In this study, three aspects of internal dynamism are considered: diffusion via cultural transmission of new rituals, songlines and associated sacred objects to and from various Law centres in the Western Desert area; local innovation in the form of new songlines, rituals and ceremonial objects arising from alleged dream-spirit journeys undertaken by local men; and the

revelation and discovery of highly sacred objects said to have been left behind by ancestral beings themselves. All three aspects of internal dynamism have been alluded to at some stage by anthropologists writing about Aborigines, but the implications of the second and third elements just cited seem to have been overlooked.

It is suggested that these elements of internal dynamism always involve the acquisition of new religious knowledge, which often raises problems of incorporation into what is ideologically a fairly static cosmology. One important way of resolving such problems is incorporation via mythology, which is discussed above in reference to the Ɲa:wajil mythology. For this kind of coalescence to take place effectively, there must be some plasticity in myth (and the evidence for this is bountiful) and there must also be a certain degree of autonomy between the elements of myth and ritual - as both Stanner and Maddock have posited, but without really suggesting any possible reasons for this. The development of the Ɲa:wajil complex at Jigalong affords an excellent example of a relatively loose fit between myth and ritual, and illustrates the ways in which the degree of independence of these elements can be exploited to permit the incorporation of newly acquired knowledge.

The dynamic character of the religious life of Jigalong's Aborigines is still largely maintained through the operation of diffusion and cultural transmission. The consequences of this

for intercommunity relations, for the Jigalong Aborigines' resistance to acculturative pressures, and for the persistence of the Ɲa:wajil are discussed in the following chapter.

Chapter 7. The Da:wajil and Intercommunity Relations

The Da:wajil is an imported ritual, so it is necessary to examine it in the context of intercommunity cultural transmission. Through an understanding of the current tenor of relations between Jigalong and her northern and southern Aboriginal neighbours, the felt responsibility of the Jigalong people for the continuance of the Da:wajil and the bringing of rain can be appreciated. Earlier in this study (see pages 53-60), the main features of intercommunity contacts and cultural transmission were outlined, in the context of the religious life at Jigalong. The point was also made that the settlement, by virtue of its relative isolation and the circumstances of past missionary activities, has been less affected by acculturation pressures than virtually all other centres on the western fringe of the desert. This fact is of crucial importance in the discussion that follows.

A. The Northern Neighbours

The northerners withwhom this discussion is concerned are the 'company mobs' of the Marble Bar-Moolyella area, who take their name from their involvement (together with Port Hedland Aborigines) in mining activities, organized in the early 1950s by a white, Don McLeod. The Pindan movement, as it came to be known, has been studied by anthropologists, some of whose findings are available (J.Wilson, 1961; K.Wilson, 1961; 1964:133-142; 1970;333-346). It is among the Moolyella Aborigines that the ritual leaders and final authorities for the Da:wajil are found; these Aborigines intro-

duced it to the Jigalong people and later chose the present Ŋa:wajil leaders at the settlement.

The Pindan movement centred on the Port Hedland-Marble Bar region (see Figure 1) and attempted to bring together into a co-operative Aborigines from two different cultural traditions, desert and coastal. This area has a relatively long history of white settlement, and most coastal Aborigines (many of whom are mixed-blood) have long since lost most of their traditional religious life. As fairly sophisticated town-dwellers they in turn, being the best educated and most vocal Pindan members, have exerted pressure on the less acculturated desert Aborigines to abandon many of their traditional customs in favour of a 'new Law', which its proponents consider to be better suited to the realities of the acculturation situation. Their cause has been greatly boosted by incredible iron ore mining developments that have taken place in the area over the past few years. Port Hedland has already become the world's fifth busiest port (Time magazine, May 24, 1971) and is expected to become Australia's largest northern town.

Several times since the 1950s, Pindan members have attempted to recruit Jigalong Aborigines for their cooperative, but with little success. Their failure can be attributed largely to a growing ideological rift between ritual leaders of the two areas, which dates from the early days of Pindan when its headmen began pressing for changes in the Law. As soon as they became aware that the northerners were modifying certain traditional ritual practices

and were instituting social organizational changes in the direction of a relaxation of marriage and kin behavioural rules, Jigalong leaders began to object. They were much more tradition-oriented than the company people, and in their isolation they were not subject to the kinds of acculturational pressures that are engendered by close and prolonged contact with a substantial number of whites.

K. Wilson (1970:338-341) details some of the most important changes that occurred in Pindan society. Its members adopted the section system terminology of the Njaṇumaḍa linguistic group, which was numerically the strongest of the desert Aborigines represented in the movement. They permitted de facto wrong marriages to continue to exist, and adjusted the kin terminology for children of such unions according to the relative strengths of the families concerned. They relaxed the hitherto strict avoidance rules, so that people so related could travel together on the back of the same truck, and they classed mothers of actual cross-cousins as walgawalga ('aunty') in order to remove an avoidance relationship. At one stage the Port Hedland people allowed their boys to be circumcized in the local hospital (K.Wilson 1970:341), much to the disgust of the Jigalong Aborigines, who still talk about this with disbelief. However, this practice was later discontinued, probably as a result of the loud protests of the Jigalong people and other less acculturated desert Aborigines, who consider such a modification unacceptable and clear evidence that the northerners

were intent on abandoning the Law, and on going the white man's way instead. But many changes did nevertheless take place among the Pindan people, and as K.Wilson (1970:343) points out, an important part was played by Law leaders in securing and sanctioning social change. In the opinion of the Jigalong elders, this was nothing less than a sellout on the part of the northerners, because a Law that was instituted in the Dreamtime by the great creative beings cannot be changed at will by man without dire consequences for the future of all Aborigines.

From what the Wilsons have written, and from reports by Jigalong men who have visited northern Law centres, and official Native Welfare documents, it is clear that the fears of the Jigalong people may be justified, because in the Moolyella-Marble Bar-Port Hedland area there has been a marked decrease in ritual activities and an increase in drinking and gambling activities, wrong marriages, refusals by younger men to obey their elders, and a disinclination among ritual leaders to organize and hold annual big meetings at their centres. Among the older men who still want to maintain their Law and impart its mysteries to the younger people, the intent is usually still there, but it becomes a matter of a great deal of earnest talk and preparation, but no actual activity as the community becomes gripped by lethargy.

This ideological breach between the more conservative Jigalong community and the more acculturated northerners grew in seriousnes from the time that the latter first began suggesting to the Jigalong

Aborigines that it was time that they too adopted the new Law and came into line with their neighbours. The resulting arguments led to refusals by members of both groups to attend each other's big meetings en masse, despite the continuing use of traditional summonses, which in precontact days could never have been refused without incurring the grave hostility of the hosts.

The implications of this conflict have been serious, for it meant that a break was occurring in the chain of cultural transmission along which new rituals, songlines, objects, etc. flow from area to area around the Western Desert perimeter. Severe cultural breakdown in the South Kimberleys had long since already stanched much of the cultural flow from that area, and the effects of prolonged mission activity in the area north of Port Hedland were reflected in a lessening of ritual activity and consequent decline in the amount of material being transmitted from there. In recent years groups from Jigalong and La Grange, a centre north of Port Hedland, have exchanged visits and some ritual knowledge in an attempt to maintain the chain of interarea cultural transmission, but the distance involved poses communication problems and it remains to be seen whether or not such a link proves to be viable.

In the past decade, the only important ritual to be handed on to Jigalong from Moolyella has been the Ɲa:wajil. It is primarily in matters pertaining to this ritual that groups of Jigalong men have maintained contact with some of the Moolyella ritual

leaders, and visits by small groups of men have been exchanged from time to time. So in a way the Ɲa:wajil has been the only ritual lifeline in existence between the two areas which are otherwise divided by strong differences of opinion as to the permissible limits of social change. Jigalong people remain very receptive to new elements that fit into their existing system while continuing to oppose any innovations that appear to suggest a weakening or breakdown of the Law as they interpret it. On this basis the Ɲa:wajil has been the only recent cultural element from the Moolyella area that is clearly acceptable at Jigalong, because of its Dreamtime validation and its many familiar features. Were it not for the Ɲa:wajil, then, transmission of ritual elements between the two centres would probably have ceased completely.

The exchange of visits between Moolyella Ɲa:wajil leaders and Jigalong men seems to have been prompted by a strong desire on the part of the Jigalong men to obtain all the known Ɲa:wajil dances, songs, paraphernalia, etc., and permission to build all the necessary grounds so that they can perform the full ritual without further reliance on the northerners. The cooperation that Jigalong men have received from Moolyella leaders in this endeavour suggests that the Moolyella Ɲa:wajil headmen are in favour of this development, probably because they too realize what is happening to the Law in their home areas. Conversations with some of these northerners confirms this suggestion; they claim to be still caring for the grounds and paraphernalia of the Ɲa:wajil, but it appears

that Da:wajil performances on any sizeable scale are confined to occasions when groups of Jigalong headmen visit the area for the purpose of obtaining more dances, songs, etc. and to discuss the ritual with the Moolyella guardians. Full-scale performances of the type held annually at Jigalong may well have ceased altogether.

If this is in fact the case, it is not difficult to understand why the Aborigines at Jigalong now feel largely responsible for the full performance of the Da:wajil. As they see it, their pessimism about the future of the Law in neighbouring centres to the north is well founded. They remain strongly ethnocentric about their overall obedience to the dictates of their Law, and what they see happening in town areas strengthens their conviction that they adhere more closely to the Law than do any of their neighbours, southerners included. To them, the abandonment of the Law means ceasing to exist as Aborigines, and since the most visible manifestation of what is uniquely theirs - vis-a-vis the aliens - is ritual activity, participation in the religious life is the most tangible and rewarding mode of commitment they can have.

In their disputes with the northerners to date, the Jigalong people have successfully combatted attempts to persuade them to make what they see as drastic changes in certain aspects of the Law. On several occasions groups of Pindan men have made special trips to the settlement to enlist the support of Jigalong Aborigines, both physically and financially, but they have not been successful. For the Pindan leaders, Jigalong is tempting as a potential source of labour for the tin mining fields near Moolyella,

and although the locals have been somewhat in awe of their more sophisticated and progressive neighbours, and regard Don McLeod as somewhat of a living legend, they have continually refused to accept political domination by outside Aborigines; i.e.those who do not belong to the Jigalong community. The local headmen say that they would never try to tell the northerners how to run their affairs, so the northerners in turn should not try to 'boss' them. These same Aborigines take heed of Government edicts, then will ignore their implementation until direct and continuous intervention, which is extremely rare, occurs to enforce such measures. They likewise ignore summonses from the northerners to visit them en masse, partly because the northerners do the same thing to them, but largely because they want no part of any so-called new Law as proposed by the Pindan people. At the time of my last research in 1970 the Ɲa:wajil was the only ritual with any kind of unifying influence on the religious leaders of the two areas.

Perhaps the clearest indication of an ideological rift between Jigalong and the Moolyella-Marble Bar mobs is that in the past decade virtually no new rituals have been passed on northwards from Jigalong, despite a great deal of cultural transmission between the settlement and Law centres to the south. As I have noted elsewhere (Tonkinson, 1970a:4), during the 1969-70 annual big meeting at Jigalong, there appeared to be so many rituals to choose from that at times the elders had difficulty in deciding on which to organize next, and many of these lines were of southern origin.

In their own words, the Jigalong elders have been refusing to hand newly acquired rituals on to the groups further north because they no longer trust the northerners to continue to perform these rituals in the proper manner every year and ensure that novices are initiated into them. However, individuals or small groups of interested men from centres to the north who come down to Jigalong are assured of initiation into all rituals being held during their stay. Virtually every summer a few northerners visit Jigalong, and among them are young men desirous of being either circumcised or subincised, but all these people come as individuals who are interested in the Law and in acquiring greater ritual knowledge. Not since about 1966 when a large group of Da:wajil leaders from Moolyella and Yarrie visited Jigalong to choose local men for the top two statuses of the ritual has any sizeable number of northerners been at Jigalong, to my knowledge.

The rift between leaders of the two areas clearly does not extend to the individual level, because any northerner who visits Jigalong is assured of hospitality and an entree into the religious life. Whoever he is, he can find a local family with whom he has kinship links of some kind, and he will be fed and looked after by them while at the settlement. The longstanding ties of friendship and the sharing of a common culture continue to bind people of both areas together, whatever differences of opinion separate them at the wider, intercommunity level.

B. The Southern Neighbours.

There are several reasons why relations between Jigalong and Wiluna are noticeably different from those described above. In the first place, a sizeable number of Wiluna people are of the same linguistic groups as those at Jigalong (Mandjildjara, Gadudjara and Gijadjara in particular) and are in fact closely related to them, often at the sibling, aunt, uncle and cousin level. Many separated in the desert when some opted to leave the Stock Route and head for Jigalong while others followed the Route to its southern terminus, which is the railhead at Wiluna. Secondly, whereas Jigalong men very rarely seek station employment anywhere north of Nullagine (see Figure 1), many work in the Wiluna-Meekatharra area and even further south. For many of these workers, Meekatharra and Wiluna become social centres during the working year, and they attend rituals in Wiluna whenever enough Aborigines are assembled in the town. For the annual big meeting in Jigalong, many families who live and work on stations in the south gather in Wiluna and accompany the southerners on the long trip. It should be stressed, though, that all these men retain their identity as members of the Jigalong mob, even if they continue to camp with the visitors during the meeting. And every year, large numbers of Jigalong people make every effort to attend the Race Meetings at Meekatharra and Wiluna to visit their many relatives and participate in social and ritual activities that take place at those times. At such

times, and later, if Jigalong people travel south for big meetings in Wiluna prior to the Jigalong gathering, both men and women are initiated into new rituals, which are often entrusted to them for later introduction to Jigalong. For this is the primary intent of big meetings: the transfer of new ritual knowledge and paraphernalia, and the initiation of novices, in an atmosphere of excitement and heightened sociability that makes the new revelations and transitions truly memorable events, to be repeatedly thought upon during the quiescent periods of work and waiting in between.

Wiluna is centrally located between Jigalong and the large Aboriginal population centres at Laverton and Warburton Ranges Mission, where traditional religious life is still relatively strong despite missionary activity. From the Warburtons the line of cultural transmission to Aboriginal settlements in South Australia and Northern Territory remains intact and fully operative. Once a populous mining centre and railhead, Wiluna is now a skeleton of its former self, and its Aboriginal inhabitants are in the majority. The Mission[1] there appears to have had more success than the one at Jigalong, yet the Aborigines report very few backsliders to Christianity, and they are still mainly tradition-oriented in their religious proclivities. There is a large Native Reserve there, where they are free to carry on ritual activities without outside interference.

From the point of view of the Jigalong people, the main disadvantage of Wiluna in respect of the traditional religious life

[1] Seventh Day Adventist.

is the ready availability of liquor and the large amount of gambling that allegedly occurs on the Reserve. There are other perturbing signs, to Jigalong observers, that acculturation pressures are greater in Wiluna. They note that there are many more cases of wrong marriage among the Aborigines there, and that young men sometimes run away from being circumcised or subincised and have later married in that uninitiated state - things that have never occurred at Jigalong. While these alleged defects do not seem to have been voiced openly to the Wiluna people by the Jigalong Aborigines, and no major rifts have occurred between the two communities, their existence is taken by many at Jigalong as further evidence that their adherence to the Law is closer and stronger than that of any of their Aboriginal neighbours.

During the 1969-70 meeting at Jigalong, a rumour, supposedly originating among the Wiluna visitors, suggested that the Jigalong people intended to adopt the white man's way with respect to voting procedures and the election of members to a camp council. Angered by this slur, the Jigalong elders called a meeting with the visitors and the Gadudjara camp boss, in vehemently denying that any such innovations were intended, pointed out very deliberately that the men of Jigalong are all good Law-carriers, who are their own bosses and have always opposed attempts by the northerners to make them weaken this Law. With an obvious insinuation, he reminded his visitors that no Jigalong men have ever accepted Christianity, and that the Mission had in fact retired in defeat. He left unstated

the fact that some Wiluna men have gone over to the Mission on occasions, that a few are still professed Christians, and the Mission is still operating there. The rumour quickly died away after this meeting.

Such minor differences aside, relations between the Jigalong and Wiluna communities are mostly cordial and the volume of cultural elements passing between them, especially new rituals coming from centres to the south and east of Wiluna, remains considerable. With regard to actual rituals, the balance seems to be in favour of Jigalong, for in the past few years it has handed on fewer new rituals than it has received. Since 1964, the most important ritual to be made known to the southerners has been the Da:wajil, but permission for its performance in Wiluna or anywhere south of Jigalong has been withheld by the Moolyella headmen. They have decreed that the grounds needed for the full performance of the ritual are not to be built south of Jigalong, so that any southern Aborigines who wish to be initiated into the ritual must make the trip to Jigalong every year for this purpose. This decree appears to be unique and the reasons for it are unknown to me, but its great significance for the role of Jigalong as a major Law centre is quite clear. From what the local Da:wajil leaders say, it seems that the Moolyella headmen may not want the ritual to move too far beyond their ultimate control. During the 1969-70 Da:wajil, at a session at the bush ground, a Jigalong man of top ritual status warned the visitors against attempting to make a similar ground

further south, apropos of the punishment just meted out to a man who had attempted to do just this in Laverton. Pointing south, the leader said, "No more baljbara down that way. You must all come up to here. This ground will be here forever. There are no bad feelings with this one; it's for rain only." And another man added, "If anyone makes big trouble here, the Company people will come down and shift the rods right away from Jigalong", by way of emphasizing the need for peace and harmony during the Ɲa:wajil performance, lest the northerners exercise their authority and remove the sacred rainmaking stones. Such a happening is highly unlikely in view of the current tenor of relations between the two areas, but the ideal of the northerners as the final authorities in matters pertaining to the ritual continues to be voiced.

As was made clear in Chapter 5, which outlined an actual full performance of the Ɲa:wajil, participation in the ritual once is only the very beginning, and it is necessary for a man to be put through the line many times in order for him to be elevated in the five-level status hierarchy that characterizes the Ɲa:wajil. At the conclusion of each year's major performance, the visitors, when presented with small rainmaking objects to take away with them, are exhorted to come back again the next year, so that if they prove to be good men and willing workers during the course of the ritual, they will receive bigger and better objects to look after. Few need any second bidding, especially since they are summonsed each year by a group of Jigalong men of the walumalinj ('traveller')

status who travel to Wiluna for this express purpose. Most participants say that they really enjoy the Ɲa:wajil with its many different activities, its feasts and the fun of the waterthrowing sessions, and while some consider the songline to be less interesting than others, most informants rank the Ɲa:wajil as one of the 'biggest' ones.

It remains to be seen whether or not some of the senior Wiluna men will be officially elevated to the highest Ɲa:wajil ranks at some future time. At present the oldest Wiluna men are treated by the Jigalong leaders as de facto members of the highest status, in deference to their age and their prominence in the ritual life in their home area, but the Jigalong leaders may be reluctant to do any official appointing in the absence of directives from the Moolyella headmen. However, since the main task of the top status men is the guardianship of the bush ground and its paraphernalia, and no such grounds can be built at Wiluna, there is no cause for the election of Wiluna men to the status of malgarara or 'master'.

C. Sociopolitical Pressures.

The intention of the discussion in the first two sections of this chapter has been to indicate that the Ɲa:wajil must be seen in a much wider context than its supposed efficacy in bringing rain if the reasons for its present importance at Jigalong are to be clearly understood. Certainly, at the exegetical level, its annual performance is explained almost solely in terms of its rain-bringing ability as a major increase rite. But the fact is that

all these Aborigines live at white settlements and draw their water supplies from the white man's windmills and wells most of the time, and the possible lack of drinking water is no longer the spectre it may once have been in the desert during periods of prolonged drought. Admittedly, many Aborigines say that if they do not perform the Ɲa:wajil then no rain will come and eventually the white man's windmills will dry up and his sheep and cattle will die, so the holding of the Ɲa:wajil is still for them an imperative. For all this, Jigalong Aborigines feel pressures on them to assume a major responsibility for the Ɲa:wajil, and these pressures have little to do directly with the bringing of rain.

In their relations with the northerners, the Jigalong people sense that the continuance of the Law as they know it is in jeopardy in these areas, where the white man's way is gradually triumphing and the ritual life is consequently being eroded away. The few Moolyella men at present entrusted with the greatest authority in the Ɲa:wajil have made it clear by their encouragement of its performance at Jigalong that they regard the Aborigines there as the most suitable heirs to the ritual. They have openly expressed their concern for its future at Moolyella and in so doing have further convinced the Jigalong leaders that they must take the responsibility for perpetuating the Ɲa:wajil. Because of their relative isolation and ethnocentrism, the Jigalong people have readily accepted this responsibility, for with it comes a sense of

pride in their continuing adherence to the Law, in contrast to Aborigines in some other areas who would abandon it and thus destroy themselves. It cannot be stressed too strongly that Jigalong Aborigines equate the Law, and particularly its ritual aspects, with their continued existence; as they put it, "If we throw away the Law, (coming) from the Dreamtime, we are all finished". They feel this commitment intensely, and talk about it frequently, because they are aware of how it can be threatened, especially by liquor and gambling, which most cite as the two biggest enemies of the Law.

The northerners' edict that the Ɲa:wajil cannot be handed on to areas south of Jigalong is the second major factor influencing the strength of commitment of the Aborigines there to the Ɲa:wajil. Because of this stricture, Jigalong people have the responsibility of seeing that all interested southerners are initiated into the ritual, and this requires repeated annual performances to be successful. News of the power and importance of the Ɲa:wajil has already spread deeply into the Western Desert area and its name is known at least as far as S.W. Northern Territory and N.W. South Australia. Aborigines from as far away as the Warburton Ranges have visited Jigalong and are now partly initiated. To repay the Jigalong people for having initiated them into the ritual, these southerners are passing on new rituals to them, thus further enriching the religious life of the Jigalong community. The Ɲa:wajil will continue to attract Aborigines from southern Law centres and in so doing will further widen the boundaries of interarea movement, since Aborigines with their own vehicles are venturing further from home to participate in the annual big meetings. Of course, the

Ɲa:wajil is never the sole reason why people journey over long distances to attend big meetings. It is one of many rituals performed at such times, and circumcision and subincision ceremonies and associated rituals always occupy an important place in the proceedings. But the Ɲa:wajil seems to be the main attraction at the present time for people from areas south of Wiluna, and so it necessarily ranks as one of the most important rituals to be performed each summer, in the opinion of both locals and visitors.

It is clear then, from the foregoing paragraphs, that the nature of intercommunity political relations is an essential factor in any adequate explanation of the rise to prominence and the persistence of the Ɲa:wajil at Jigalong. In the previous chapter some of the many functions that the ritual appears to fulfil were alluded to, and any or all of these could obviously contribute to the persistence of the Ɲa:wajil. For instance, the ritual persists because, in the view of the Aborigines, it succeeds in its stated aims - it brings rain. It persists because it supports prime social-spiritual values, such as cooperation and unity, and because of its great entertainment value, its embracing of all community members at some stages of its performance, its promotion of both in-group and intergroup solidarity by overriding potentially disruptive factionalism, and so on. All these points are undoubtedly valid ones, but all are in fact shared with other rituals performed by the Aborigines of Jigalong, as was made

clear in Chapter 6 by the comparison of the Da:wajil with these other rituals. It is only when the ritual is considered in the light of intercommunity political relations that its distinctiveness emerges and a new dimension of significance and importance is added to it. The observer is thus much better able to perceive how it is that an increase rite, albeit an exceedingly complex one, could achieve such prominence - especially in view of the Aborigines' current heavy dependence on the whites' water supplies.

D. Aboriginal Law as Defence

In an earlier work (Tonkinson, 1966:23), I hypothesized that when traditional religious values and cosmological beliefs underlying an indigenous legal system are surrounded by a dominant alien culture, their retention constitutes a defence against possible social anomie, the loss of cultural integrity and total disruption of political cohesion. In the Jigalong situation, then, the Law operates as a force that maintains and reinforces the group solidarity and cultural identity of Aborigines in the face of conscious and unconscious pressures towards change, brought about by representatives of the politically dominant Australian-European culture and also by more sophisticated Aborigines in neighbouring areas.

As an hypothesis, the above is obviously too broad and is therefore untestable, but as an integrative theme it nevertheless has some value, and in the light of more recent fieldwork, especially in relation to the place of the Da:wajil at Jigalong I would still maintain that it has some empirical merit. For the

Aborigines at Jigalong, their Law, particularly its ritual aspects, remains their most important concern, since they believe it to be vital, to their continued well-being and their very existence. So far, they have been largely left alone to carry on their ritual activities and maintain their traditional social organization (except for their local organization, which they abandoned) and kinship system, and these remain the traditional forces that induce in them a feeling of possessing a unique life style, validated by the Dreamtime and therefore full of intrinsic value to them. Men spend a great deal of time and energy in discussing, planning, organizing and participating in the religious life, and all this activity gives them a strong feeling that they are able to control their own internal affairs.

In reality, this seemingly autonomous control is an illusion, since government decree could put an end to their present way of life and enforce drastic changes at short notice. But to date nothing of this sort has happened, intervention has been minimal and manageable, and the Aborigines thus have a pragmatic and realistic basis for feeling that while they remain at the settlement and follow the dictates of their Law they do in fact control the powers of self-regulation and self-determination. As long as these Aborigines continue to associate their future well-being with observance of the Law they will resist attempts by other Aborigines and whites to persuade them to compromise it, and they will continue to be wary of the kinds of activities that turn

people's heads away from the Law. To an observer, the Aborigines' judgment in this matter is entirely correct, for their self-pride, which remains strong, lies in their possession and pursuit of a distinctive set of beliefs and practices. If they abandon these beliefs and practices, they must inevitably lose their self-pride, and if this happens, they lose their capacity to survive as a viable cultural minority.

In this context, the Ɲa:wajil, as a rainmaking ritual, gives the Aborigines who perform it at Jigalong a considerable feeling of power, for they believe that they alone, and not the white man, are capable of bringing up rain, since only Winba and the rainmakers, and not Jesus or God, are responsible for bringing summer rain to the continent of Australia. In 1962, there was a big dispute between the local Aborigines and the missionaries (alluded to on page 123). This occurred during a period of drought at Jigalong, and when the Aborigines walked off the Mission in anger, they told the missionaries that they would not make any rain on Mission property, so if the missionaries wanted rain they could pray to their Jesus and see how they fared. As it happened, the missionaries' prayers for rain were not answered. When the Aborigines returned a few months later they informed the missionaries that since Jesus had not brought rain, they would perform the Ɲa:wajil and end the drought. Sure enough, the performance of the Ɲa:wajil was followed shortly afterwards by heavy rain. (One of the missionaries was allegedly so upset about this that he prayed,

without success, to have the rain stopped). Needless to say, nothing would convince a Jigalong Aborigine that Winba is not responsible for the arrival or non-arrival of summer rain.

Despite the relative isolation of their settlement, the Aborigines of Jigalong are inevitably being drawn into more intense contact with the wider society. Increasing acculturational pressures are evident; governmental representatives try to persuade the Aborigines to change certain aspects of their culture to conform more closely to the norms of the wider society. With regard to physical conflict involving traditional weapons, for instance, the police take action against Aborigines who spear or seriously wound others, in an attempt to halt the use of such violence in the settlement of disputes. The Aborigines react to this by concealing such conflicts and the resulting wounds, but they are not always successful and men periodically get put in jail as a result. Recently, the local people have been encouraged to institute voting procedures as a democratic means of decision-making, but they appear to have rejected such innovations. The Native Welfare Department, since taking over the settlement after the departure of the missionaries, plans to encourage Aboriginal participation in the planning and running of the settlement as a commercial enterprise. If this is so, it is clear that the Aborigines are going to be increasingly involved in the task of communicating and coping with government bureaucracy and its local representatives.

In general, however, Australian Aborigines have not been successful in coping effectively with acculturational pressures.

and the result, in most areas of the country, has been rapid cultural breakdown and loss of tradition-orientation, but without a corresponding improvement in adjustive or assimilative capability. One significant reason for this failure appears to be the egalitarian nature of traditional political organization and authority structure. In traditional Aboriginal society, with its kinship statuses and familistic basis, leadership structure was nowhere highly developed. Apart from the generalized authority of old over younger, males over females, there was no clearly institutionalized hierarchy of responsibility wherein certain members consistently directed the activities of others of lower status. Outside the ritual context, the classificatory kinship system with its associated kin behavioural patterns has always militated against such arrangements, and even within the religious life, the organization of ritual activities must frequently take cognizance of kin distinctions. Even had they wanted to, the colonizing whites who were confronted with egalitarian Aboriginal society found no hierarchical structure on which to graft their own strongly entrenched pyramidal authority structures.

With this incompatibility in mind, we can examine the structure of the Ɔa:wajil and suggest some of its interesting possibilities. This ritual could prove to have an extremely important function in the future adjustment of the Aborigines of Jigalong to increasing pressures on them to adapt their social forms to the

realities of the acculturative situation. For the first time, the Aborigines have in a ritual a relatively complex status hierarchy, with vertical stratification and a division of labour that enables them to organize and handle several different kinds of activity simultaneously. Here then is a symbolic model, otherwise absent in their predominantly egalitarian society, for the kind of hierarchical ordering and division of responsibilities that will eventually be necessary if the Aborigines are to cope successfully with the wider society. Because of the highly situational nature of Aboriginal leadership, I am not suggesting that the current or future Ɲa:wajil leaders will automatically lead the community, only that the ritual provides them with an apt structural model on which to base their future political organization. Kinship considerations, of paramount significance in any tradition-oriented Aboriginal society, may continue to be a stumbling block, but the Ɲa:wajil undoubtedly offers the Aborigines of Jigalong the best working model they have had to date for the possible evolution of their political relations with the outside world. Only time will tell if they have the opportunity or the inclination to make use of it.

Chapter 8 Conclusion

The major question posed at the beginning of this thesis concerned the reasons for the importance of the Da:wajil in a contact situation where Aboriginal survival no longer depends on rain falling in a particular locality. In order to answer this, it has been necessary to examine this ritual in the context of social and religious activities at Jigalong, and also in the wider political context of intercommunity relations and cultural transmission. The intention of this final chapter is to summarize briefly the main points made in the study and to discuss some of the implications.

A. The Da:wajil as Increase Rite

The principal intent of this thesis has been to present a detailed ethnographic description of a rainmaking increase rite, which a survey of available literature for Aboriginal Australia has shown to be, in its complexity and its current importance, probably unique. In Chapter 3 it was concluded that rainmaking rites appear to have been widespread in Australia, but they were rarely reported in any useful detail and apparently disappeared fairly rapidly after contact with whites took place. Whether or not this was because of the Aborigines' increasing reliance on water supplies provided by whites is difficult to ascertain, but it seems that in most areas rainmaking rites, when they existed, were discontinued along with many other rituals as part of a general breakdown in traditional Aboriginal culture. Jigalong has experienced no such disintegration, and despite the heavy reliance of its inhabitants on the whites' windmills, the Da:wajil, an

imported ritual, has thrived in its new environment.

It was noted in Chapter 2, during the discussion of the religious life at the settlement, that some of the major rituals performed every year have, as one of their subsidiary functions, an increase intent. Their central concerns, however, are with aspects of the initiation process; the possibility that their performance can bring about an increase in certain species is incidental to their central themes of transition and entry into a new status. Throughout the continent, traditional rites which had specific increase intent were essentially shortlived and simple ritual acts initiated by small groups of men who had the responsibility of taking care of the site and of ensuring the annual proliferation of its associated species. Although no longer performed at its site of origin, the Ɲa:wajil is by definition an increase rite because its specific intent is to bring about heavy falls of rain each summer. The annual initiation of novices into the Ɲa:wajil is secondary to this intent.

As an increase rite, then, and as a rainmaking ritual (and if the available literature on Aboriginal rainmaking rituals is any reliable indicator of their characteristics), the Ɲa:wajil, by its very complexiity, its multifarious activities and its involvement of the entire body of Aborigines present at the time of its performance, is atypical and possibly unique. It may well be the only major rainmaking ritual still being performed in Australia. Physically, to an observer, the rite has been severed from the desert sites of its original performance, although the grounds and sacred

objects used in it are apparently very similar to those utilized traditionally. But, as was made clear in Chapter 4, the Aborigines allegedly visit desert rainmaking centres in dream-spirit form during the course of the Ɲa:wajil's performance, and they consider such visits to be an essential element in the successful pursuit of their aim to induce the rainmaking beings to bring up rain. Dream-spirit trips are also said to be made by groups of Jigalong elders to other desert increase centres (cf. Tonkinson, 1970b: 277-291), so this would support the classification of the Ɲa:wajil as an increase rite.

The reasons for the development of the Ɲa:wajil from what probably was a typically simple increase rite into a large-scale complex of activities can only be guessed at. But the over-riding importance of rain to the desert Aborigines may have been a factor in the development of this ritual and its later attraction of people from widely separated areas and differing linguistic groups to the Percival Lakes area every summer. The fact that the Aborigines still consider that they alone can bring up summer rain is certainly a major reason for the continuing importance of the Ɲa:wajil despite their heavy reliance on windmills, wells, etc. From this belief they derive obvious satisfaction because it indicates that the white man is ultimately reliant upon them for his continued existence in the area. This conviction contributes greatly to the

Aborigines' pride in themselves.[1]

B. Symbolism in the Da:wajil

In this ritual, the participants are concerned with the ordering and control of certain personified natural powers, particularly lightning, clouds and rain, which emanate from the rainmaking ancestral beings, ideally in response to specific ritual performances by the Aborigines. These natural powers are symbolized by a number of sacred objects, all originally the property of ancestral rainmakers, having obvious analogies in form or function to the phenomena they represent; e.g. bird-down as clouds, rods as lightning. These powers are also symbolized by certain body parts through similar kinds of analogy; e.g. blood as rain, penis as lightning. These natural andphysiological phenomena belong at what Turner (1967:28-29, 54-55) refers to as the orectic or sensory pole of meaning, while at the more abstract level of meaning, the normative or ideological pole, the same symbols are associated with the core values of co-operation and unselfishness that the Aborigines hold as social and moral imperatives. In a very loose sense, the Da:wajil data can be taken as according broadly

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[1]According to T. Strehlow (1970:111), Central Australian Aborigines attribute prolonged droughts and economic ruin to the whites, who brought about the destruction of traditional ritual activities. He quotes Aborigines as saying: "The old men always said that the rains would fail to come, that the animals and trees would die, and that men and women would fall ill, if the sacred songs were no longer sung and if the sacred acts were no longer performed. And what they said has come true. We young folks who know nothing about the old traditions are helpless to save the country; and the white people are just as useless."

with the distinction made by Turner between sensory and normative poles of meaning of dominant ritual symbols, but at a simpler associational level rather than as mediating categories, (see page 234)

It was suggested that if semen were considered along with blood or sweat as the major symbolic referent for rain, the Ɲa:wajil could logically be regarded as a fertility rite, since rain makes the earth produce fresh plant life on which the Aborigines and the fauna they consume as food ultimately depend. It was noted that over much of northern Australia mythical snakes are closely linked with fertility rites. At Jigalong no mention of semen is ever made in relation to the Ɲa:wajil, so it is assumed that its absence reflects the strength of spirit-child beliefs and the denial of physiological paternity among the local Aborigines.[1] If this surmise is correct, the blood that falls from the penises of the Jaḍaŋgal rainmakers (who ride in the clouds) and later turns to rain, could be thought of as semen which impregnates the earth as man impregnates woman. It will be remembered that when the Jaḍaŋgal fire lightning bolts, they thrust their penises into the ground before they release the bolt. This could reasonably be interpreted as being symbolic of orgasmic release, so the lightning bolt too represents semen. Alternatively, it was suggested that when the

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[1]Similarly, Meggitt (1966:23), in his discussion of the Gadjari cult among the Walbiri, suggests that the Walbiri have grafted elements of an imported Gadjari cult onto a typical indigenous hero myth and in doing so have dropped the Mother concept from the former, because it would clash with Walbiri society's marked and clearly expressed bias towards preserving the superior status of men vis-a-vis women in sacred situations, as well as in most secular ones.

mediating functions of body exuviae in Aboriginal mythology are considered, it is unnecessary to single out semen as the fertilizing symbol, since all exuviae can be viewed as inducing fertility when they enter the earth. These are of course strictly an observer's interpretations, but to confine oneself to the Aboriginal exegesis of symbolism would be too limiting an approach since so many elements of the religious life do not appear to be symbolically comprehended by the people themselves. As Burridge (1969b:422) notes: "The objection that such a procedure is merely a 'reading into' the situation is countered by the reply that a particular kind of 'reading into' is what any investigator undertakes to do."

C. Internal Dynamism

In this study I have emphasized the existence of an internal dynamism in Aboriginal religious life to counter a tendency in Australian Aboriginal literature to accept as fact the static nature of the traditional religion, and to attribute whatever changes do take place solely to the effects of acculturation. It was suggested that this view arose because observers confused a stated ideology of non-change and non-innovation with an on-the-ground situation that, involving as it does oral cultural transmission and considerable interaction between different groups, must inevitably allow both processes to occur. Certainly such changes were probably never radical in scope, and were always made within the existing religious framework for action, so that no great accommodations had to be endured by the Aborigines; as Stanner (1966:168) puts it, they welcomed change insofar as it would fit the forms of

permanence. This explains why the Jigalong people are so receptive to new rituals and religious knowledge gained through their contacts with Aborigines of neighbouring areas, and so resistant to the kind of Christianity that has been offered to them in the past, and to other alien social forms that are incompatible with their own.[1]

In an attempt to throw light on certain aspects of internal dynamism in the traditional religion, the interrelationship of myth, ritual and songline in the Na:wajil was discussed in Chapter 6. The Na:wajil provides a suitable example to demonstrate that a certain degree of autonomy must must exist between a ritual, especially one of recent introduction, and its associated mythology so that the Aborigines can exploit the looseness of fit to incorporate new knowledge into the myth as it is acquired through further cultural transmission and through relevations from the ancestral beings, using spirit-children as their intermediaries. Stanner's contentions (1966:159) about the plasticity of Aboriginal myth, and Maddock's conclusion (1969:259-262) which attributes a degree of autonomy to both myth and ritual are both supported by the Na:wajil data.

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[1] It is ironic that although some of the prime Aboriginal values have much in common with some of those of Christianity, local missionaries by their words and behaviour often exhibited the very antithesis of values such as generosity, love, compassion, tolerance, selflessness, and so on. They were much more intent on prohibitions - against smoking, drinking, swearing, sex - and were thus categorized as 'Christians' by the Aborigines, who viewed them as an aberration, a group like no other whites they had ever encountered since leaving the desert.

Much of the internal dynamism that has been posited for traditional Aboriginal religion in this study is grounded in the ability of the Aborigines to integrate newly acquired religious information, gained largely by dream-spirit journeys, the discovery of new sacred objects and by intercommunity cultural transmission, into the social dimension of their total cosmic order. Mythology, with its tolerance of individual variation and elaboration, is an ideal medium for this incorporation of additional knowledge. In the case of the Ɔa:wajil, the considerable elaboration of the rainmaking myth between 1963 and 1970, and its changing emphasis to take into account new discoveries in areas south of Jigalong (and consequently, to attribute to the south's major ancestral being, Kangaroo, an important reciprocal relationship with Winba) are excellent examples of this use of myth as the platform on which to build a broader framework of knowledge.[1] This can be successfully achieved without ideological conflict precisely because of the looseness of fit obtaining between the myth and the Ɔa:wajil ritual, and also because the Aborigines contend that the ancestral beings continue to reveal new knowledge as part of the relationship of interdependence between the ancestors and all Aborigines who show concern for the Dreamtime. This is why the Aborigines are able to maintain simultaneously an ideology of non-change and

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[1]Cf. Burridge (1969b:417) who says of Tangu myths: "Not only do the Tangu use their narratives to think with, and think from, but in their narratives new thoughts are deposited."

the reality of gaining new religious knowledge. Once incorporated, new knowledge quickly becomes old knowledge in a culture with no written traditions and a non-chronological view of history. This fact, plus the transmission of most new rituals to other areas, suggests that dream-spirit rituals (badundjaridjanu) probably soon become conceived of as Dreamtime-rituals (djugudanidjanu) in the sense that their origin is eventually placed in the creative period itself and the role of individual Aborigines in their 'discovery' is forgotten. The Jigalong data suggest that the origin of most rituals lies in shared dream-spirit experiences, and the sequence of ritual development probably resembles closely that outlined briefly in Chapter 2 (page 41) in the case of the Jigalong Djaramara dream-spirit ritual.

The Da:wajil, an import to Jigalong, exemplifies the great significance of intercommunity cultural transmission as a proof of internal dynamism. This element of dynamism is well known to scholars of Aboriginal culture, and its prominence, especially in the Western Desert region, has been noted frequently in the literature (e.g. T. Strehlow, 1965:131; Gould, 1969a; R. Berndt, 1970:222-224). The other two elements of internal dynamism mentioned in this study are less well known and for this reason have been discussed in some detail, since their existence could have important implications for the future of the traditional religion at Jigalong. The creation of entirely new rituals (including dances, songlines and paraphernalia) from the dream-spirit experience of local Aborigines was cited as a major source of in-

novation within the Aboriginal community; and dream-spirit journeys, it was noted, are believed to play an integral part in the successful performance of the Da:wajil. A third element is the discovery of sacred objects allegedly left behind by ancestral beings during their wanderings, which raises the kinds of problems of interpretation and explanation alluded to above and in Chapter 6 (see pages 245-247).

The importance of dream-spirit rituals to the religious life at Jigalong has been detailed elsewhere (Tonkinson, 1970b:287-290), so only the main points arising from that discussion need be mentioned here. The Jigalong community is a new type of social group that has arisen in response to the shift from the desert to a different physical and social milieu. It is much larger than the traditional horde or local descent group and is made up of members of several different linguistic groups from widely separated areas, all sharing in broad terms a common culture but co-existing in a situation where old loyalties can quickly align people into potentially and actually conflicting groups. But the shared religious life transcends these divisions, and the co-operation involved in the creation and performance of dream-spirit and other rituals serves to reinforce the growing ethnocentrism and in-group solidarity of the community that now refers to itself as the 'Jigalong mob'. Since leadership structure traditionally tended to be localized and situationally defined, it has not been a suitable rallying point in the changed situation, so the new entity emphasizes its unity through ritual activities, a traditional

element of social organization, and these activities are its primary foci of integration.[1]

In the same paper it was suggested that, given the possibility that Jigalong's cultural isolation from other Law centres may increase as the latter are increasingly influenced by the alien culture, the settlement may become the last bastion of traditional religion and social organization in the Western Desert, and the flow of cultural transmission will eventually lessen and may even dry up completely. Should this occur, internal dynamism, in the form of the creation of new dream-spirit rituals, and new inspirations provided by the continuing discovery of sacred objects (with augmentation of existing mythology as a possible consequence), would come to play a major innovative role. Admittedly, the Aborigines would still have a large stock of rituals to draw upon, but they seem to desire the periodic influx of new and fresh rituals as continuing evidence of the power and relevance of the

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[1] In a recent article, T.Strehlow (1970:92-140) criticises Meggitt (1962) for his comments on the absence of effective secular leadership among the Walbiri. Meggitt maintained that there was little need for secular leaders, since the norms of the religious and kinship systems constituted an enduring master-plan, which met most contingencies and to which there were few approved alternatives. Strehlow contends that among the Aranda there were in fact ceremonial heads whose authority was very powerful and extended into secular realms, but was bounded by considerations of geographic and totemic affiliations. Strehlow may be right, despite the dubious nature of his anecdotal 'evidence', but at Jigalong, Aboriginal leadership structure accords closely with what Meggitt contends is the case for the Walbiri, and there is little evidence to suggest that it was otherwise traditionally in the sense of being anything other than situationally defined, and overridden in secular situations by considerations of kinship.

Dreamtime and its beings. As long as they retain the power to undertake dream-spirit journeys they can maintain links with both their desert areas of origin and their ancestral heroes. Such spiritual experiences ensure their continuity with what R. Berndt (1970:243) calls the sacred-past-in-the-present, and affirm their faith in the reality of the Dreamtime.

Just as spirit-children allegedly lead men to the discovery of new songs and dances during dream-spirit journeys, the same beings indicate to men the location of highly sacred objects, often metamorphosed parts of the bodies of ancestral beings (cf. R. and C. Berndt, 1945:136-140; Munn, 1970:148-149), thought to have been left behind to await their eventual revelation to man. These objects usually become a very important part of rituals which involve the same beings that allegedly left them behind, and are prized as definite proofs that the ancestral being(s) concerned wandered far and wide across vast stretches of the continent. As major repositories of life-essence they constitute yet another direct link between man and the creative powers emanating from the spiritual realm of the Dreamtime. The finding of big new rainmaking stones (see pages 244-245) was shown to have had important effects on the substance of parts of the myth detailing Winba's travels. The discoveries of these large stones led to an addition of details to the Da:wajil myth, and it was suggested that this process of myth enlargement would probably continue as more discoveries are made and as more information filters down from the north.

These processes of cultural transmission and the revelation of new rituals and sacred objects indicate not only the ability of the Aborigines to accept changes in their religious life but also, and more importantly, to accommodate these changes while continuing to maintain simultaneously an ideology of non-change and a cosmology that centres on the Dreamtime, wherein was fixed permanently the life-design for all that followed. The Aborigines see no contradictions in this, provided they remain convinced that the ultimate source of all religious knowledge rests with the beings of the Dreamtime. This conviction indicates why so many of the major events occurring in the creative period and depicted in myth, song and dance are understood by the Aborigines as models for present-day behaviour.

In the development of the Ɲa:wajil myth, for instance, details of Winba's travels in the area south of Jigalong have been amplified, and Winba's alleged meeting with Kangaroo, the great southern ancestral hero, appears to have been accentuated. When these two ancestral beings met, they, like most others who did not regard one another as enemies, ate together and exchanged valued objects and dances as tokens of friendship and goodwill. In the same way, Aborigines from different areas who meet must show their good intentions and their sense of brotherhood by exchanging objects and rituals, and by feasting together in an atmosphere of unity and peace, transcending for the moment whatever potential conflicts and divisions exist among them. If some of the actions of the creative beings exemplified a capacity for great wickedness,

many others were essentially moral acts, and it was in these that the Dreamtime beings demanded that the Aborigines follow their good example. Many small myths that involve a treacherous act on the part of an ancestral being end with a statement saying in effect that such behaviour belongs to the Dreamtime beings only and is not for man to emulate. The roots of man's social and moral order, then, are to be found in certain, but not all, of the activities and pronouncements of the creative heroes.

In a recent paper, R. Berndt (1970:216-247) has addressed himself to the problem of defining ethics and morality in Aboriginal religion. His concern is with myth as the most likely source of moral statements, and he examines a Western Desert mythical tradition, called the Dinari. He concludes that the Dinari, as a total ethical system, covers both the moral and the immoral viewed as the natural condition of man, as an accepted constant of desert living. In reference to the myth, he notes:

> What we have is a statement of the total life situation, in which these mythic characters demonstrate by their own actions that there is both good and bad within it; that they are part of the inevitable and irreversible framework of existence, and that wrongdoing will almost certainly precipitate its own disastrous results. (1970:244)

Berndt's conclusions would certainly apply to Jigalong Aboriginal mythology, which is always a mixture of both immoral and moral acts, and in this sense is a true reflection of reality. Acts of evil tend to predominate, probably because, as Berndt suggests, wrong actions highlight the desirability of those that

are good; they also sharpen realization of inherent dangers, and they hint at the vulnerability of man.

D. The Persistence of the Ɲa:wajil

This thesis concludes with a summary statement of my answers to the question asked at its outset, concerning the reasons for the rise to prominence and persistence of the Ɲa:wajil.

The initial acceptance of the Ɲa:wajil at Jigalong is easily accounted for in terms of the long tradition of cultural transmission between contiguous Law centres throughout the Western Desert region. It was readily accepted also because it is typically a Western Desert ritual in terms of its component parts and the general social functions it fulfils. Considered element by element, most parts of the Ɲa:wajil have parallels in other known rituals, but in terms of the arrangement of elements and the scale of the total ritual, the Ɲa:wajil is undoubtedly the most complex ritual yet performed at Jigalong, and much of its appeal may well lie in this complexity, plus the fact that as a totality it is quite distinctive. This observation seems to accord with Maddock's contentions (see footnote, p. 219) concerning the component elements of Aboriginal ritual. The striking feature of the Ɲa:wajil is the large number of elements involved, which is perhaps more distinctive than its arrangement of activity sequences.

From the viewpoint of the Aborigines, the Ɲa:wajil is of major importance and they continue to hold it because its per-

formance is a religious imperative and because it works. Many Aborigines have transistor radios and they often listen to news broadcasts, so they are aware that rain always falls somewhere in Western Australia after they have performed the Ɲa:wajil. This is for them sufficient evidence of the efficacy of the ritual, even if it does not succeed in bringing up rain precisely to Jigalong.. Since periodic rains are essential to the well-being and ultimate survival of everyone, black and white, in the drier regions in particular, and since the Aborigines believe that summer rain can be produced only through the combined results of performances of the Ɲa:wajil and dream-spirit journeys to Djaṛamara country, they feel that it is vital that the ritual be held, properly and in its entirety, every summer.

In addition to its rainbringing powers, the Ɲa:wajil, when seen as one of the many rituals performed each year at Jigalong, has many functions in common with these other rituals. To an observer, perhaps the most obvious aspects of ritual are those relating to entertainment, social control and the maintenance of solidarity vis-a-vis less traditionally-oriented Aborigines, and all whites. But these functions are not likely to be cited by the participants in explaining their motives for engaging in ritual activities. The Aborigines say that they perform the Ɲa:wajil to bring rain, but they also frequently mention the educational and initiatory aspects of the ritual. Novices must be 'put through' so that they

will deepen their ritual knowledge, the better to understand their relationship of interdependence with the ancestral beings. Ritual, and also dream-spirit journeys, as experiences of self-transcendence, take the Aborigines as close as they can ever go (while still alive) to the source of their power and the source of their being: the spiritual dimension of the Dreamtime and its constituent beings.[1]

Aboriginal ritual is not just the principal method of communicating with ancestral beings to activate their reciprocal obligations. It is the means by which the Aborigines can actually enter the spiritual realm and come into direct contact with the great powers of the Dreamtime. As pre-existing spirit-children Aborigines were all once part of that realm, and as spirits after death they will ultimately return there, but during their lifetime as human beings they must also have access to it if they are to maintain their strength and their faith. Thus a dancer is not imitating the activities of a given ancestral being; for the duration of his dance he transcends himself and <u>becomes</u> that being, entering into the spiritual realm and remaining there until, at the end of his performance, he is tapped on the shoulder to bring him back

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[1]Cf. R. Berndt (1970:238), in his discussion of ritual as the way through which contact can be made with ancestral beings to ensure that their power is brought to bear on social living; he states: "...within the ritual sphere men particularly, and women also, are brought close to the essence of things." Man does not have to urge the release of ancestral power by supplication or exhortation; "it is transmitted to him through ritual performance by his identification with those (ancestral) characters themselves."

into the physical world. Likewise, Aborigines take care never to waken abruptly a sleeping person lest his or her dream-spirit is abroad and is not given sufficient time to return safely to its owner's body. Whatever the ritual, Aborigines attempt to become one with the Dreamtime, to draw power from it and in so doing to comprehend more fully their place in the cosmic order. From such experiences they learn, and through them they change, as a result of knowing more.

It was suggested in Chapter 6 (pages 206-7) that through ritual participation the Aborigines learn something about themselves in relation to others with whom they interact. In addition to the more obvious unifying aspects of ritual, which are so pronounced in a large-scale ritual like the Ɔa:wajil, ritual experience has a definite unitive function for the participant. By this I mean that it focusses his many different roles into a constricted time-space framework, thus enabling him to perceive more clearly exactly where he stands as an individual in the wider Aboriginal society. It was suggested also that through participation in ritual a person gains a heightened sense of responsibility, especially in a ritual such as the Ɔa:wajil where so much depends on the status hierarchy with its division of labour. It is a matter both of individual responsibility, since each person has certain allotted tasks which must be carried out, and collective responsibility since the Ɔa:wajil must be made self-sustaining so that its continued performance is assured every year in spite of any personnel changes that inevitably occur over time.

It was noted in Chapter 6 that no other Jigalong ritual has either the complexity of the Ɲa:wajil or such a well-defined ritual status hierarchy with its five male and four female grades. It has been suggested that the very complexity of the Ɲa:wajil demands a more elaborate hierarchical division of labour than in other rituals commonly performed by the Aborigines of Jigalong. This hierarchy reflects the essential features of the divisions inherent in Aboriginal society: the sexes, the generation level groupings, old over young, initiated over novices, secret-sacred as against sacred and secular. But, significantly, this ritual hierarchy transcends other potentially disruptive divisions: local and linguistic group affiliations, and current community affiliations. Throughout the performance of the Ɲa:wajil the emphasis is on the maintenance of a general harmony and unity to ensure success in bringing rain. In other words, the ritual exemplifies and supports fundamental community values, and this is surely one reason for its persistence.

Whatever the actual reasons for the elaboration of the ritual status hierarchy that distinguishes the Ɲa:wajil from all other major rituals, its successful functioning year after year proves to the Aborigines of Jigalong that they are capable of co-ordinating many different kinds of activities at different venues simultaneously and fairly efficiently. It was suggested in the previous chapter (see pages 274-5) that, should increasing acculturational pressures force the Aborigines to alter drastically

their present political organization, these changes, to be effective at all, will require some kind of hierarchical ordering with a definite chain of command and clear-cut division of labour. For such a structure, the Ɲa:wajil could serve as an appropriate symbolic model. This is, of course, only conjecture, but it is clear that the elaborate Ɲa:wajil status hierarchy does work, and with a minimum of conflict. Aboriginal ethnocentricity plus the firm belief that the system was instituted by the creative beings themselves increase the likelihood that the Aborigines will look to their religious life for a suitable basis for action. If it became a matter of deciding between an alien-imposed system and one of their own choosing that could prove acceptable to whites, the Aborigines would almost certainly opt for the latter, given their continuing determination to maintain a maximum of independence to run their own internal affairs.

If, as I have suggested, the Law is the Aborigines' principal defence against cultural disintegration and anomie, they will continue for as long as possible to draw strength and inspiration from the givens of the Dreamtime, a unique reservoir of power which is accessible to them and them alone. The ultimate survival of these people depends largely on the continuance of their sense of racial pride, which is in turn rooted in the distinctive heritage symbolized by the Dreamtime concept. They therefore feel that if they ignore the Dreamtime in deciding future strategies (as they accuse the northerners of doing) while accommodating to

the contact situation, they will not survive as a distinct people. This is why their models must come from within, and it is in the organization of their ritual life, particularly the Ɲa:wajil,that the best working models exist.

The potential of the Ɲa:wajil as a symbolic model is only one of the political values inherent in this ritual, and the conclusion reached in this thesis is that the Ɲa:wajil persists largely because of certain political factors. As was pointed out in the previous chapter, collective responsibility is a crucial aspect of the Ɲa:wajil, particularly at the level of intercommunity relations. The Jigalong Aborigines, as conscientious upholders of the Law, feel a strong sense of moral obligation with respect to the continuance of this ritual, for at least two major reasons. One is that the northerners from whom they obtained the ritual appear to be abandoning much of their traditional culture, especially their once active ritual life, and the future of Ɲa:wajil performances in the northern area is consequently in doubt. This is probably why the Moolyella Ɲa:wajil leaders were so willing to hand on the ritual,supervise the construction of the proper ceremonial grounds, and select men from the Jigalong community to occupy the two highest Ɲa:wajil statuses and organize and co-ordinate the annual performance of the ritual.

A second important reason why Jigalong men feel politically bound to maintain the Ɲa:wajil stems from the ruling that the ritual is not to be performed at Law centres south of Jigalong. This means in effect that southerners must journey to Jigalong to

be initiated into the ritual, so the Jigalong Aborigines are obliged to stage a full performance whenever groups of southern visitors arrive during the hot season to attend big meetings there. Thus for very different reasons political pressures are being exerted from both contiguous Law centres, north and south of Jigalong, for the local people to maintain the Ɲa:wajil in its most complete form.

It is clear, then, that the Jigalong Aborigines could not abandon the Ɲa:wajil without turning their backs on their southern neighbours, upon whom they rely for a considerable volume of cultural transmission, and admitting to the northerners that they too are allowing their traditional culture to disintegrate. Someone must make sure that the ritual is performed each year, or else the summer rains will cease to come, according to the Aborigines; if the northerners are indeed failing in their responsibility, it behoves the Jigalong people, as good Lawmen, to come to the rescue. Also, in a time of considerable strain in political relations between the Jigalong and Moolyella communities, the Ɲa:wajil has been the only important ritual linking interested people of the two centres together and forming the raison d'etre for continuing intercommunity visits by groups of initiated men. This is admittedly a rather tenuous link, but the lines of communication nevertheless remain open because of it.

What is of crucial importance here is the fact that these political factors are unique to the Ɲa:wajil. As was pointed out in the previous chapter, many aspects of the Ɲa:wajil can be con-

sidered as contributing to its persistence; e.g. its entertainment, educational, initiatory, social control, solidarity-promoting, unifying and unitive functions, to name some of the major ones. But all these functions are shared with other important rituals performed at Jigalong, so they cannot be used to explain why this imported increase ritual has become so prominent and seemingly imperative to the religious life of the local Aborigines. Only when the political factors discussed above are added can convincing reasons for its persistence be posited.

To the Aborigines, the essential purpose of the Ɔa:wajil is to bring up summer rain. To an outsider, however, it has much wider significance, as I have attempted to show in the foregoing discussion. In common with other major rituals, the Ɔa:wajil involves its participants in processes of transition, change, learning and an increased self-awareness and self-understanding that come from entry, however temporarily, into the realm of the spiritual, be it through singing, dancing, contemplation of sacra, dream-spirit experience or whatever. All such activities are potentially efficacious for the achievement of self-transcendence by those participants whose enthusiasm and commitment to the religious life are sufficiently strong. From their participation in the religious life the Aborigines gain many things: enjoyment, satisfaction, a sense of control of their own destiny, and so on. But above all, it is ritual that embodies the core of their Law, the maintenance of which ensures their uniqueness and provides them with the conviction that their way of life remains for them the only correct one.

Seen in a wider theoretical perspective, the foregoing conclusions regarding the persistence of a given ritual lead me to question the validity of ecological determinism as an explanatory device. The adoption of an ecological framework would appear to be of little value in attempting to explain the prominence and persistence of the Ɲa:wajil at Jigalong. It should be quite clear from this thesis that sociological survival factors, particularly those relating to intercommunity political relations, far outweigh the rainmaking function of the ritual. The Ɲa:wajil has long since been removed from its area of origin, and it must be considered apart from its origin ecological setting if an understanding of its persistence is to be gained. It thrives now in a sociocultural environment that is radically different, and it is this new environment that has given it a greatly altered significance.

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Appendix A Ŋa:wajil Songs

Ŋa:wajil Songs, sung at Jigalong, October 10th, 1963.

1. i: walilimbir mana namba i: mana namba
water flowing, collecting debris and washing it away

2. i: walurmalinj walurmalinj garbuŋga garbuŋga miŋanbula ŋarindja jana

rainclouds (approaching) during day (at) Miŋan. (PN)*. (Clouds like sacred boards lying across Winba's chest as he travelled).

3. i: jaju jaju jabidiŋga jaju jaju

(Winba) standing in water at Djaramara pool. (Jabidiŋga translated as (a) headband (b) water filling up (as when soak is dug)).

4. i; gilidjimbiri ja ŋaru ja ŋambulgaraja njinaja

clouds - resting all around pool, put there by Winba. (Long line of clouds in the early morning).

5. i: djidimbal djidimbal gajini buŋu djidimbal djidimbal

rain hitting ground from north

6. i: wilija bungal ganinjba djurgalmari

winter rain falling down and hitting ground

7. i: wabuna gumbuljumbulju wabuna gunanbinja

(Winba's) headband small string (tying band) white ochre

8. i: galindir maramara wabuna jirirmara

frog frog headband rainmaking stone

9. i: ŋajinjanginja gumagumagu wilbindja wira
whirlwind, wetting the ground every way, whirlwind

10. i: diŋgidiŋgina wanbulj buŋganja diŋgidiŋgina

pearlshell wind rain falling, ceases, then begins again other way.

*PN - Place name

11. i: ḍawira wilwil baṇan gilawalu wandinja

ground PN (Winba camped there).

12. i: ḍunmariṇgarana ṇalbibalanda ḍunmariṇgarana

big spinifex seeds

13. i: gundja ṇaruṇaru gundja ṛabandji ṛabandji

(Winba's) stone axe newly formed cloud

14. i: gundjal mara jabilindji gundjal mara

(Winba's) stone axe big tree

15. i: muṛinjinji ja waljdjaṇga muṛinjinji

hairstring (snake?) own (Winba's). (This is associated with a dance).

16. i: baṛambaṇuna minjina bandinja bandinja

PN (Soak) odour (from <u>baṛa</u>) smells (Winba smells it). (Gudalj smelled odour of women; the other <u>ḍjila</u> had all got wives).

17. i: baṛa djinbidjinbija i: djinbidjinbija

penis incisure small snake (Winba was scared that the snake might bite his penis).

18. i: djinbadjinbaja maṇu djinbadjinbaja maṇu

cradled in crook of arm; carried sacred rainmaking object

19. i: buṇunja buṇu ṇadjinja ṇadji juwanja juwa

lightning stones 'give me back' give me (Winba and Garbaḍi met and swapped stones; two each).

20. i: buṇu wiṛinbuṇu wiṛinbuṇu

Winba and Garbaḍi swapping the rainmaking stones. (Small clouds being thrown up over the horizon, a bit at a time).

21. i: bunu bangadji bangadji ṇilbilu jawiru buṇu

rainmaking stones women threw water

22. i: balguda balguda jalangan bana wawirin binja

water flowing along dirt and debris deposited at bends

23. i: djinangalanja jam gul majirinu djinangalu

water covering up Winba's tracks behind him as he goes along (Rain tracking earlier lot of rain as it moves along).

24. i: djinbidi djinbidina gajilina wijur wandinja

flying around and around north-side birds calling out

25. i: linmalinma luwina linmanda gari

sacred object (pearlshell)

26. i: bandjil nara unana bandjil nara

(Winba) tired from travelling (Taking water away with him)

27. i: badjiwiriwiridjana wijurdjabadinja

big black rainmaking birds ditto

28. i: maruranandji ja gidirdja marurnandji

big black and white birds leading the rain along (rainclouds being led)

29. i: bibilargalargadjana wijurdjabadinja

sacred objects rainmaking birds

30. i: njimarma njimarma gajilingana njimarma njimarma

whirlwhind, with rain, coming from the north (Distant lightning)

31. i: burululu maraja majija burululu mara

grass or tree seed pick up food (Snake wants to throw bushtucker fruit everywhere like a seed; he wants to grow it up).

32. i: djingurunguruna garinja djingurunguru

water falling - slow light rain coming down

33. i: naba djinnandjinandjinnan naba djinnandjinnan

light drops of rain falling, gently

34. i: djiḷdjiḷgurunŋgu jawunaŋga djiḷdjiḷgurunŋgu jawunaŋga

rain falling onto the ground

35. i: ŋaliwirina gunmaḍamaḍa ḷirbina baṇa mara

feather headdress PN (soak) light cloud (axe?) ground pick up

Ña:wajil Songs, sung at Jigalong, December 30th, 1969

36. i: jandjalala na wawabinja windirguṛalu

Winba returning from hunting

37. i: wabuna gumbuljunbulju wabuna ŋunanbinja

38. See No. 8 above.

39. i: bidjinba jaju na wabuna bidjinba jaju

40. See No 34. above.

41. See No. 26 above.

42. i: djinaŋgal marindji

Winba saw the tracks of men out hunting

43. i: djinaŋgalana jangulmirinu

44. i: djiḷbidi djiḷbidi nan gajili na wingur wandinja

Winba, hungry and tired, coming back towards the south

45. See No. 30 above.

46. i: njimu wandinjan gajilina njimu wandinjan

Winba returning towards his home country from the north

47. i: danmal wandinja ja waḷaŋga danmal wandinja

Winba put hairstring around necks of Djaṛamara beings, north of his home area.

48. See No. 5 above. (Rainmakers see clouds preceding Winba).

49. i: barbar barbar djuna wabumiraŋga jiṛiri jiṛiri jiṛi

The rainmakers see Winba making lightning to the north.

50. walu barbagu walu barbargu walu ŋinji ja

The rainmakers see feather-bundle on Winba's head making the lightning

51. See No. 3 above

Winba made rain fall on the ground and named it <u>jabindi</u> (groundwater).

52. i: biril biril baṇa garabudana biril biril

Dust carried ahead of rain from the west

53. i: buljbara buljbara jabiḷinbaṇa buljbara buljbara
wind (name of Djaṛamara waterhole north of Winba)

54. See No. 14 above
An old Djiwalinj-speaking man turned into a snake

55. i: gundjal ŋaṛu ŋaṛu gundjal ŋaṛu ŋaṛu rabandji rabandji

56. See No. 34 above.

57. i: lirdji lirdji na ŋanganga gunma gunmaṛu jagiri

rainstones from Winba's stomach in the sky clouds

58. i: bibiljarga djaṇan gawaja wajur wandinja

Sacred object carried by Winba

59. i: wilburŋuṛu ja gundu wilbirŋuṛu
lightning (fork)

60. i: djabinga ja wuṇa djabinga
Winba at Djabinga waterhole

61. i: djabinga ja wuṛu djabinga
Winba at Djabinga waterhole

62. i: dalili ja winba dalili

Winba standing on a sandhill near to Winba, his home pool

63. i: winba wandjani wandjani galiṛwara wandjani wandjani
Winba asking where all his rainmakers are

64. i: winba wandjani wandjani marinura

Winba asking where the Milanga-Burunu rainmakers are.

65. i: wandjuluja gadal wandjulu

Winba, tired, lies down; i.e. goes into the water

66. i: wadjuluja bidur wandjulu

Winba puts a huge rainmaking stone (bidur) into the ground, and water gushes out

67. i: marurnandji ja gidir dja marurnandji

Banaga-Garimara birds

68. See No. 27 above

Milanga-Burunu birds

Na:wajil Songs, sung at Jigalong, January 4th, 1970

69. See No. 4 above

70. i: dingidingi na wanbul bunana
pearlshell pearlshell

71. See No. 36 above

72. See No. 39 above

73. See No. 27 above

74. See No. 58 above

75. See No. 49 above

76. See No. 65 above

77. i: bidurdja muna bidurdja

Winba putting rainstone (bidur) into the ground

78. i: wandjulu djadan wandjulu

79. i: janbadu ja gurubidi janbadu ja ja gudunuru

Winba put <u>bidir</u> rainstones inside every Djaramara pool

80. i: wadirmi ja lirbi wadirmi

81. See No. 15 above

82. See No. 62 above

83. See No. 61 above

84. i: djinbi djinbi ja manu djinbi djinbi

Winba carrying sacred stone <u>jirirmara</u>

85. mildjida ja wuru janbana ja

A large lone cloud

86. i: njirindindi ja waranga

A big rockhole with a pool in it

87. See No. 15 above

88. i: wanadjinbidi ja gudunga

Appendix B Glossary of Aboriginal Words

badjiwiriwiri	Bird (probably the fork-tailed swift) associated with the coming of rain, and with male members of the Buṛuṇu and Milaṇga sections during the Ɲa:wajil. Also known as wijur (ba)
baḍundjari	Dream-spirit, which is believed to sometimes leave the body and travel away, during dreams.
baljbara	Ceremonial ground, in the bush, where the secret-sacred Ɲa:wajil ritual activities are held.
Banaga	Name of one of the four section categories existing at Jigalong. See also Buruṇu, Garimara and Milaṇga.
barbar	Sheet-lightning
bidinjaṇu	Senior female Ɲa:wajil status. These women prepare the flour dampers for wanaburga feasts. The term is also used to refer to the older men of jirgiliwindi status (S.III) who supervise the cooking activities at the boughshed during the ritual.
binjdjabinjdja	Small slivers of pearlshell, worn by both sexes as body decorations; they have rain-making connotations.
binmal	Storehouse (usually well away from the main Camp, in 'men's country') where secret-sacred carved wooden boards are stored.
buṇaṇa	Pearlshell pubic pendant; also the name given to an initiation grade, which is marked by the presentation of a buṇaṇa shell to the novice.
buṇu	Generic term for the secret-sacred stone rods that are associated with the Ɲa:wajil.
Buruṇu	Section name.

djabija	Increase centre (s), believed to be the source of supply of a particular plant or animal.
djandura	Semi-circular object, representing clouds and sheet-lightning, used in a Ɲa:wajil dance that bears this name.
Djaramara	Generic term pertaining to rainmaking, including the Percival Lakes and other pools believed to have been left by the rainmaking beings, and as a reference to the beings themselves.
djidjigargal	Spirit-children. These are said to act sometimes as intermediaries between ancestral beings and man.
djinagarbil	'Feather-feet'. Ritual killers, greatly feared by the Aborigines. So named for the feathered moccasins they wear to hide their identity.
djugudani	Pertaining to the Dreamtime and the ancestral beings.
Garimara	Section name.
gidirba	Bird (probably the oriental pratincole) associated with the coming of rain, and with the Banaga-Garimara alternate generation level grouping that is a feature of Ɲa:wajil dual organization.
gundjalmara	Stone-axe that Winba is said to have carried; name of one of the secret-sacred Ɲa:wajil dances.
Jadaŋgal	Rainmaking being, believed to travel in clouds and release lightning from its penis, and blood and sweat which turn into rain.
jiliwiri	Feather-bundle (usually cockatoo feathers) worn on the head by men of senior Ɲa:wajil status. see ŋaluwiri.
jiljba	Name of a secret-sacred Ɲa:wajil dance.

jinara	Egocentric term referring to members of the opposing generation level grouping; thus Banaga-Garimara members refer to Milanga-Burunu members as jinara, and vice versa.
jirgiliwindi	One of the named Na:wajil statuses (S.III).
jundiri	Term used to refer to someone who is angry in a sulky manner; someone who has 'bad feelings' in his stomach towards whoever has upset him.
junga	An activity associated with the Na:wajil during which protective rainmaking rods are 'inserted' into the bodies of novices.
jungujungu	Length of hairstring, with in most cases a small binjdjabinjdja pearlshell affixed to one end; is used during the jiljba dance, and is wound around the rainmaking piles. During dream-spirit journeys it is said to turn into a snake, along the back of which people ride during their visits to Djaramara country.
limbi	The black-fronted dotterel, a water bird associated with the coming of rain.
maban	A native doctor; also the name given to the magical stones he carries in his stomach and can withdraw at will to aid him in his curative and divinatory activities, or perhaps to perform sorcery.
madinjanu	One of the named Na:wajil statuses (S.IV).
malgarara	The highest Na:wajil status (S.I.)
manun	Pertaining to the Dreamtime and its ancestral beings.
marira	Egocentric term referring to other members of one's own alternate generation level group; used in contrast to jinara (see above).
midajidi	Ritual feast, associated mainly with activities at the binmal storehouse.

Milaŋga	Section name.
ŋajigala	'Blood damper'; coagulated blood, taken from arm-veins, which is drunk during certain rituals, including the Ɲa:wajil, by initiated men.
ŋaluwiri	Secret-sacred name for the jiliwiri (feather-bundle (see above).
ŋuralaŋandji	The ceremonial ground surrounding the bough-shed, at which most of the non-secret Ɲa:wajil activities take place.
ninjinganu	The Ɲa:wajil boughshed.
ṛedji	Large pearlshell, usually worn as a male pubic pendant.
walumalinj	One of the named Ɲa:wajil statuses (S.II); firestick carried by Winba; name of rain-making stone, and of Ɲa:wajil secret-sacred dance.
wanaburga	Ceremonial feast associated with the Ɲa:wajil.
wanigi	Thread-cross; an object secret-sacred to initiated men and used as a dancing ornament; it can only be used once each time, then must be dismantled.
wijurba	See badjiwiriwiri(above); associated with the Milaŋga-Buruŋu alternate generation level grouping that is a feature of Ɲa:wajil dual organization.
wiludjuru	Fork-lightning
Winba	The principal rainmaking ancestral being, on whose travels and activities the mythology associated with the Ɲa:wajil centres.