

DYIRBAL SONG POETRY

collected, edited and analysed by R.M.W. Dixon and Grace Koch

Sung by:

Paddy Biran
Fred Blackman
Pompey Clumppoint
Lambert Cocky
Lassie Darcy
Daisy Denham
Joe Garbutt
Chloe Grant
Spider Henry
Bessie Jerry
Willie Kelly
Joe Kinjun
Jack Murray
Jimmy Murray
Tom Murray
Alf Palmer
Peter Wairuna
Tommy Warren
George Watson

THE ACCOMPANYING BOOK. This CD goes with the book *Dyirbal Song Poetry*, collected, edited and analysed by R.M.W. Dixon and Grace Koch (xxiv, 367 pp) published by University of Queensland Press in January 1996.

The book contains full transcriptions of 174 Dyirbal songs, the original words in Dyirbal, morpheme-by-morpheme gloss, translation of each line, list of performers and performance details, discussion of the background and meaning, list of special song words, and discussion of the grammar of each song. There is also a general introduction dealing with the five song styles and the social context in which they were performed. Dixon discusses the linguistic features of the songs, and Koch considers the musical features of each style and of each singer. A full musical transcription is provided for 20 songs, and many shorter examples are included in the general musical discussion.

Eighteen of these songs had earlier been included in the anthology *The honey-ant men's love song and other Aboriginal song poems*, University of Queensland Press, 1990 (reprinted 1990, 1994). That volume just had the Dyirbal words and translation into English poetry, with brief background notes (but no linguistic or musical analysis).

The CD includes 77 different songs. For six we provide two versions, for two there are three versions, for one we include four versions and for another five versions - these are sometimes by the same singer and sometimes by different singers.

The choice of what to include on the CD has been motivated by a number of considerations. We have included all those performances for which full musical transcriptions are given in the accompanying volume and almost all of those for which musical extracts were given, in addition to almost all the songs included in *The honey-ant men's love song and other Aboriginal song poems*. (The few omissions are poor quality recordings; we have preferred to include other songs, which were better recorded.) Beyond this, we have tried to provide a representative selection from each singer and for each song-style.

THE DYIRBAL LANGUAGE. Six or more tribes spoke dialects of what we call the Dyirbal language, over an area in North Queensland that began on the coast, from Cardwell to a little north of Innisfail, and extended inland to include Kirrama, Ravenshoe, Herberton, Atherton and Malanda. The songs included here are sung in five dialects: **Girramay**, from Cardwell up to Kirrama station and around the Murray River; **Jirrbal**, around the middle and upper Tully River, from the coastal flats right up to the tableland; **Gulngay**, on the Lower Tully River; **Jirru**, on the coast around Clump Point; and **Mamu**, along the South Johnstone River and its tributaries, including Jordan's Creek. In almost every case a speaker identifies the dialect he is singing in, or we can ascertain it from various linguistic clues. We also include one song from **the Warrgamay language**, spoken immediately to the south of **Girramay**.

For each song there is an indication of where it was recorded; all these locations are in North Queensland, either in traditional Dyirbal territory or else close by.

THE FIVE SONG STYLES. The Dyirbal people had five song styles, each with its characteristic metrical pattern, accompaniment, and subject matter.

Songs in the (**Gama** and **Marrga** styles were performed at corroborees (which several neighbouring tribes might attend). The singer would accompany himself with clapped boomerangs, and one or more women would beat a skin drum stretched across the lap. Corroboree songs deal with everyday topics - the behaviour of an animal or bird, or the odd antics of white people. A Gama song has lines consisting of nine or eleven Syllables, while the line of a Marrga song would normally consist of eight syllables.

Jangala, **Burran** and **Gaynyil** are referred to as 'love-song' styles, or 'Gugulu songs' (after the name for the main accompaniment stick, made of polished hardwood). These styles are used for personal messages - of love, jealousy, sorrow or revenge. A Jangala song has a number of lines, all of six syllables, sung in almost random order. A Burran song has lines of six and three syllables, sung alternately. There was no fixed metrical pattern for Gaynyil, but often a type of alliterative opposition - *yilida/yiliba* or *madal/ngadal*, for example.

A full discussion of the five song styles, their metrical patterns and linguistic and musical characteristics, is in the accompanying book. Each song is there given a reference code: Gama-A

to Gama-Z, Gama- AA to Gama-AZ, and so on up to Gama-CS; Marrga-A to Marrga-K; Jangala-A to Jangala-AD; Burran-A to Butran-AF; and Gaynyil-A to Gaynyil-F. These reference codes are retained in the notes below.

The full Dyirbal words of each song are in the accompanying book. On some tracks we include spoken comments by the singer; these are transcribed below.

ACCOMPANIMENTS. We were told that all songs (except those in the Gaynyil style) would normally be accompanied. Most of the performances included here have traditional accompaniment - clapped boomerangs and often also one or more skin drums for Gama and Marrga styles, a Gugulu stick tapped with a piece of lawyer cane for Jangala and Burran. Sometimes boomerang accompaniment was used for songs in a love-song style. On occasion, singers would improvise an accompaniment, perhaps tapping the fingers or some other object on an empty tobacco tin. On the recordings made by Peter Wairuna and Fred Blackman (in Mount Garnet in November 1963) there are a number of accompaniments (not all in the same rhythm!)

THE RECORDINGS: All the material included here was recorded by R.M.W. Dixon with the exception of the following:

Tracks 17, 21, 75 and 82 were recorded by the late N.B. Tindale (the copyright now belongs to the South Australian Museum).

Track 56 by Jack Doolan.

Tracks 9, 13, 31, 36-9 and 73 by Frank Woolston.

Tracks 24, 25 and 40-3 by Annette Schmidt.

We are most grateful to Jack Doolan, Annette Schmidt, Frank Woolston and the South Australian Museum for permission to use their recordings on this CD.

All Dixon's recordings up to and including 1983 were made on reel-to-reel machines - a Butoba in 1963, and after that various models of Uher.

Tracks 1-4, 6-7 and 10 were recorded at corroborees (the last ones to be held) and have the added excitement of calls from the dancers. All other recordings were recitals for the tape-recorder.

These are all field recordings, and the recording quality varies. Sometimes birds will be heard singing in the background, or there may be a generator running, or a car may drive by. On the recordings by Paddy Biran and Jack Murray (from 13 June 1964), one of Paddy's sons was strumming pop tunes on a guitar in the background. There is wind noise and whistling on some of the Tindale tracks, and a lot of surface noise on the Woolston recordings (this could not be eliminated without also taking away a lot of the music). There is some speed instability on the original recording of Track 52. We seek our listener's patience over these factors.

Terry McGee, of Canberra Stereo Public Radio, transferred all of this material from reel-to-reel

and cassette tapes to digital tape, editing some of the spoken introductions and commentaries and improving the quality of many of the recordings. We owe him deep gratitude for the fine job he did.

1. Gama-A, Drag net (Girramay dialect), Jimmy Murray. 1 minute 27 seconds.

Dancers mime a group of fishermen, pulling in a net in which can be seen a glistening pile of fish.

Third and fourth (of four) performances of this song, with a short commentary by the singer between them: *That mean they pull-him drag-net, they pull-him drag-net, fish, that's it mean, sing it fish, you know.*

Tracks 1-4, 6-7 were recorded at a corroboree at Warrami, Murray Upper, on 26 October 1963. Jimmy Murray, the singer was accompanied by his own clapped boomerangs, and by a skin drum (stretched across the thighs) played by his wife, Mary Ann Murray. For each item the dancers were painted to represent the people, animals etc. described by the song, and they made appropriate dance calls.

The melody of Jimmy Murray's Gama songs can be heard as a three part structure (ABA), with the beginning and end sections the same, repeating the tonic note for at least the length of one text line. A rest divides each section. The middle section consists of only two notes, dropping a minor third. The melody is the same for Gama-A and Gama-B; Gama-E uses an alternate starting section for an introduction, with the melody soaring high, gliding down to the two-note middle section and finishing on the usual A section. Further repetitions of Gama-E do not use the soaring variant.

2. Gama-B, Pelican (Girramay dialect), Jimmy Murray. 53 seconds.

Dancers mime pelicans, circling over the sea and then making a quick swoop down to catch a fish. First (of two) performances of the song.

3. Gama-E, Building a nest (Girramay dialect), Jimmy Murray, 1 minute 53 seconds.

This song describes two scrub-hens (mound-building birds) clapping their wings and talking together as they prepare their nests. First and second (of four) performances, with explanation by the singer; *Scrub-hen, Jarrugan.*

4. Gama-G, Butterfly (Girramay dialect), Jimmy Murray. 34 seconds.

The song and associated dance refer to children playing a game which involves using bushes to knock off butterflies, who are opening and closing their wings. First (of two) performances.

5. Gama-G, Butterfly (Girramay dialect), Jimmy Murray. 28 March 1967 (Warrami, Murray Upper). 40 seconds

The same song performed by the same singer four years later, at a recital for recording. In 1963 each song line had nine syllables but at the 1967 rendition they were augmented to be each

eleven syllables. Notice the change of tempo in the two performances of Gama-G; the later recital piece is approximately a third slower than the 1963 version.

6. Gama-I, The red gown (Girramay dialect), Jimmy Murray. 47 seconds.

First (of two) performances. Then the singer explained: *When they dance, English dance, they wearing dress, they sing that - woman, you know, wearing dress, we call him 'gawun'* (this is a loan word from the English *gown*). In the very early days of contact, Aborigines saw a white girl wearing a red dress with white spots. As she danced with happiness, it seemed to wave, like a flag or the leaves of a palm tree. The dancers mime the movements of the girl.

7. Gama-K, Dragonfly (GiiTumay dialed), Jimmy Murray. 36 seconds.

The associated story tells how children used to shake the dragonfly (which explains the movement he makes) and then he went to hover over the waterfall on the Murray River, the movement of his wings making the wide pool at the bottom of the falls. Later he was turned into stone for making too much noise; the dragonfly stone can be seen today just downstream from the Murray Falls. Second (of two) performances.

8. Gama-K, Dragonfly (Girramay dialect), Paddy Biran. 13 June 1964 (the old mission, Murray Upper). 39 seconds.

Paddy Biran recorded (in Girramay) the dragonfly story and, at the appropriate place in the story he performed the song.

9. Gama-K, Dragonfly (Jirrbal dialed), Tommy Warren. 13 July 1968 (Murray Upper, recorded by Frank Woolston). 26 seconds.

A third rendition of this song. Tommy Warren called the Dragonfly by its Jirrbal name, *wirrinijila*, while both Jimmy Murray and Paddy Biran used the Girramay name, *yirrinijila*.

These three performances (on tracks 7, 8 and 9) show three different melodies of Gama songs. Paddy Biran sings a tune similar to Jimmy Murray, but he uses a soaring variant on all repetitions instead of just at the beginning. Tommy Warren departs even further from Jimmy Murray's melody, expanding the vocal range, especially that of the second section of the melody.

10. Gama-S, Moon (Girramay dialect), Jimmy Murray. 30 November 1963 (Warrami, Murray Upper). 1 minute, 24 seconds

This was recorded at another corroboree, held a month later than the one represented on I-4 and 6-7, with the same accompaniment. The song celebrates the new moon, whose shape is compared to the curve in a human calf.

11. Gama-S, Moon (Girramay dialect), Jimmy Murray. 28 March 1967 (Warrami, Murray Upper). 23 seconds.

The same song repeated four years later by the same singer.

12. Gama-S, Moon (Girramay dialect), Alf Palmer. 23 April 1964 (Palm Island). 32 seconds.

Alf Palmer belonged to the Warungu tribe but he knew several other languages and offered this

Girramay song, explaining its message: *That's about the moon, new moon (Dixon: what were you saying, look at the new moon?) new moon, new moon up there.*

13. Gama-S, Moon (Girramay dialect), Joe Kinjun. 13 July 1968 (Murray Upper, recorded by Frank Woolston). 30 seconds.

Joe Kinjun's own dialect was Gulngay, but here he sings a third version of this Girramay song.

Jimmy Murray's two renditions of Gama-S have different tempos and he uses the soaring variant melody in the second performance. The other two singers have their own melodies, with Alf Palmer extending the three part Gama form to four sections at the end.

14. Gama-AC, Native bee (Girramay dialect), Paddy Biran and Jack Murray (singing in sequence). 13 June 1964 (the old mission, Murray Upper) 39 seconds.

This song describes native bees buzzing around the flowers of the forest red gum tree, collecting pollen and returning to the queen bee and the hive. Paddy Biran and Jack Murray sing the song one after the other in an almost seamless performance. Because their vocal timbres are only slightly different, it takes concentration to tell when one ends and the other begins.

15. Gama-AG, Happy couple (Jirrbal dialect), Alf Palmer. 22 April 1964 (Palm Island). 26 seconds.

Alf Palmer (of the Warungu tribe) offered this as a Jirrbal song. He explained that it is about a man who is with the woman he loves, and they are happy now, even though her previous lover is behaving jealously towards them.

16. Gama-AH, Angel take my spirit! (Warrgamay language), Alf Palmer. 22 April 1968 (Palm Island). 34 seconds.

Alf Palmer performed this in the Warrgamay language (spoken around the Herbert River, immediately to the south of Dyirbal). It is included here because it follows the same metrical and music style as Dyirbal Gama songs. The melody is very much like Alf Palmer's rendition of Gama-S. It is put into the mouth of a man who is dying, who asks the tribal spirits to come and remove his spirit from the body, to take it to the spirit-home in the west. Alf Palmer says: *That's about - angel come down to take that spirit away (in Warrgamay).*

17. Gama-AI, Mangrove Crab) (Mamu dialect), George Watson. 24 July 1963 (Palm Island, recorded by N.B.Tindale). 40 seconds.

The song describes a host of small mangrove (or soldier) crabs on a beach, digging holes for themselves in the sand. This was George Watson's favourite Gama song and we include four performances, from 1963 (when he was about 64 years old) to 1983 (when he was about 84). The vocal syncopations and small "sobs" between some sections of the song give it great vitality. George Watson leaves out one musical phrase in the last two renditions. Tindale provides an introduction to the first performance, referring to George by his Mamu name: *Nyiyija, you 're going*

to sing another song, can you tell me what it's going to be about? George replies: *Them small mangrove crabs.*

18. Gama-AI, Mangrove Crab (Mamu dialect), George Watson. 11 April 1967 (East Palmerston, near Innisfail). 33 seconds.

19. Gama-AI, Mangrove Crab (Mamu dialect), George Watson. 28 June 1981 (Boogan, near Innisfail). 17 seconds.

20. Gama-AI, Mangrove Crab (Mamu dialect), George Watson. 16 May 1983 (Jumbun, Murray Upper). 19 seconds.

21. Gama-AK, Scrub-hen nesting (tablelands Jirrbal dialect), Joe Garbutt. 24 July 1963 (Palm Island, recorded by N.B. Tindale). 47 seconds.

Tindale introduces this performance by saying: *A song by Joe Garbutt; it is about the scrub-hen, Jarrugan.* The song describes this bird building a high mound of leaves and rotting vegetation to incubate its eggs. This melody is somewhat similar to Gama-AI, especially the performances on tracks 17 and 18.

22. Gama-AL, Stop the thunder (Girramay dialect), Jimmy Murray. 22 March 1967 (Warrami, Murray Upper). 44 seconds

It is believed that armpit sweat has special properties. Rubbed onto a sick person it can cure them. And a leaf soaked in armpit sweat, hurled in the face of a storm, may arrest the thunder and lightning. This song describes a thunderstorm rising, follows with a command to throw a sweat-soaked leaf, and then an injunction to the lightning to strike. First (of two) performances.

23. Gama-AS, A storm (Girramay dialect), Jimmy Murray. 22 March 1967 (Warrami, Murray Upper). 38 seconds.

Ancestral spirits are clearing a corroboree ground, using clouds, and then do a dance showing that they are ready to engage in a fight. The storm clouds were heaped up at Girjal (Mount Bronco, near Murray Upper), which is said to be their home. Jimmy Murray varies his melody by syncopating the text and delaying the vocal descent.

24. Gama-AT, A spirit returns. Spider Henry. 27 February 1982 (Jumbun, Murray Upper, recorded by Annette Schmidt). 33 seconds.

This is performed as if sung by the spirit of a recently deceased person who has come down from the tablelands into coastal country and calls out to find where his people are.

25. Gama-AU, Spider's country (Jirrbal dialect), Spider Henry. 27 February 1982 (Jumbun, Murray Upper, recorded by Annette Schmidt, who announces: *The Davidson waterfall one*). 40 seconds.

Spider is singing about his own country, his conception site, it is close to Bandy-banday (the Davidson Falls), where water is thrown out in a very fine spray, looking just like dust. Spider

Henry's melody is a series of soaring vocal phrases incorporating triplet figures. Accompaniment is by the singer's own clapped boomerangs and a skin drum played by his wife, Ida Henry. At the end he comments: *Well, good drums, you know, a man sing better too.*

26. Gama-AV, Trip to the west (Girmay dialect), Daisy Denham. 13 November 1982 (Jumbun, Murray Upper). 27 seconds.

This song describes two men going to a place called Yiluru, on the tablelands, taking with them a spear that has a dead wallaby impaled on it. Daisy Denham's rendition differs from the other singers in that she does not repeat the tonic note for the length of a text line at the end of the song.

27. Gama-AX, Grief for a dead child (Jirru dialect), Pompey Clumppoint. 22 April 1964 (Palm Island). 55 seconds.

The singer provides an introduction: *Mother crying, for little child, in the behind the humpy.* The mother was said to be mourning loudly, in the hope that her dead child might hear her tears and return.

Pompey Clumppoint always starts his songs, no matter what style, with a high vocalisation on one note: this also happens at the second repetition of the melody. Unlike the other singers, his songs are in compound metre.

28. Gama-BB, Flying fox (Gulngay dialect), Pompey Clumppoint. 22 April 1964 (Palm Island). 44 seconds.

The singer says: *Flying fox, I sing him by Gulngay song again.* The song describes a group of the fruit-eating bat called Gugi (flying fox) as they alight on the bend of a limb of a Kuranda satin ash tree.

29. Gama-BE, The women's drums, Pompey Clumppoint. 22 April 1964 (Palm Island). 1 minute, 4 seconds.

Pompey Clumppoint announces: *Now I'm going to sing this woman, big mob tribal woman make a drum for this corroboree, tribal dance - all girl and middle-aged and old people. And they making drum, in the early day.*

30. Gama-BF, Cassowary walking (Gulngay dialect), Pompey Clumppoint. 22 April 1964 (Palm Island). 56 seconds.

In introducing this song Pompey Clumppoint says: *The emu, scrub cassowary, and I sing him now, going for this berry fruit in the scrub, called Gundulu.* This song describes the appearance and gait of Gundulu, the cassowary as it goes through the forest looking for the berries of the creeping candle vine (*Pothos longipes*), lifting its legs high in the air when walking and ducking its crest to avoid hitting it on low branches.

31. Gama-BF, Cassowary walking (Gulngay dialect), Tommy Warren. 13 July 1968 (Murray Upper, recorded by Frank Woolston, with initial fade-in). 26 seconds.

A rendition of the same song by a different performer. Tracks 30 and 31 show a good comparison between the compound metre used by Pompey Clumppoint and the duple metre sung by Tommy Warren.

32. Gama-BI, Baby Cockatoos (Gulngay dialect), Pompey Clumppoint. 22 April 1964 (Palm Island). 41 seconds.

Gayambula, we call him gayambula in the language, white cockatoo in the English. Pompey Clumppoint introduces this song about white cockatoo chicks moving around in their nest, crying out that they are hungry, waiting for the mother bird to return with food for them.

33. Gama-BJ, Sending my body to the graveyard (Gulngay dialect), Pompey Clumppoint. 22 April 1964 (Palm Island). 1 minute, 6 seconds.

Pompey Clumppoint introduced this with: *Big mob of people been crying and worrying over his body. They been send him into the cemetery - father and mother and auntie and grandmother, grandfather and the children all been crying, his body taken down to graveyard.* The song is put into the mouth of the dead man, telling people to mourn and cry all they want over him.

34. Gama-BW, Cassowary, Fred Blackman. 11 November 1963 (Mount Garnet). 25 seconds.

This song describes how the cassowary wiggles its fat behind as it walks. Fred Blackman spoke both Dyirbal and Warungu; it seems likely that this song is basically in Dyirbal, with some Warungu words included. Fred Blackman repeats words in the text, thus lengthening out the line to either ten or twelve syllables. He also uses a smaller vocal range than other singers.

35. Gama-BX, Telegraph wire (Girramay dialect), Lambert Cocky. 6 November 1972 (Sheahan's farm, near Ingham). 22 seconds.

Lambert Cocky was a speaker of the Warrgamay language; he sang this song in Girramay without knowing what the individual words meant. Speakers of Girramay later explained them to Dixon. The singer commented on the meaning of this song: *That's the telegraph, when you ringing up, want to listen, who's that fellow talking somewhere else. That's what he mean.* He stated that when this song was performed (probably around the turn of the century) a rope would be rigged up to simulate the telegraph wire, with a cup for the mouthpiece, and a dance performed around it.

36. Gama-CA, Two echidnas (Gulngay dialect), Joe Kinjun. 13 July 1968 (Murray Upper, recorded by Frank Woolston). 33 seconds.

The song describes two echidnas, one male and one female, who are digging down into the earth next to each other. They dig first with their paws and then with their spines, spreading these out for the task.

37. Gama-CB, Pelican building a nest (Jirrbal dialect), Tommy Warren. 13 July 1968 (Murray Upper, recorded by Frank Woolston). 26 seconds.

The pelican is gathering materials for a nest in which it will lay its eggs.

38. Gama-CF, Look after the orphans' spirits (Jirrbal dialect), Tommy Warren. 13 July 1968 (Murray Upper, recorded by Frank Woolston). 27 seconds.

It is said that when children have no mother or father to look after them their spirits may wander away and even climb a spider web. The song tells people how to help such motherless and fatherless little ones, to stop their spirits climbing in a web, and to look after them.

39. Gama-CK, Showing off a newly-caught turtle (Gulngay dialect), Joe Kinjun. 13 July 1968 (Murray Upper, recorded by Frank Woolston). 54 seconds.

The singer explains: *That's turtle. When a man bogey along a lagoon, and all that, and he get him in a (can't make out word), he show-him turtle altogether in sight.* A hunter, in a lagoon, has just caught a turtle and holds it up in the net, for everyone to see, gripping the woven net by the stick up its side.

40. Gama-CN, Taipan (Jirrbal dialect), Spider Henry. 27 February 1982 (Jumbun, Murray Upper, recorded by Annette Schmidt). 22 seconds.

This song describes a snake moving quickly, when frightened, towards his hole in the ground, and the noise he makes, slithering through the grass. The singer explains: *That's the taipan.*

41. Gama-CP, Echidna digging (Jirrbal dialect), Spider Henry. 27 February 1982 (Jumbun, Murray Upper, recorded by Annette Schmidt). 37 seconds.

Spider Henry explains: *That's that porcupine now (i.e. echidna). 'Banda' means - ('banda' is the name for the sharp spine on the echidna's back, here used metonymically to refer to the animal). He was sinking in the ground. You know, when you find him he 'll go into the ground, that fellow. You got to dig him out with a stick, you know, lift him out. That's the meaning there.*

42. Gama-CQ, Thunder and lightning (Jirrbal dialect), Spider Henry. 27 February 1982 (Jumbun, Murray Upper, recorded by Annette Schmidt). 35 seconds.

Spider Henry explains: *That's thunderstorm, you know, cloud - when the lightning flash you can see the cloud, you know. Like the fish out in the ocean, jurungun they call him.* The message of the song is that flashes of lightning illuminate the clouds, and also enable a fisherman to see the fish he is trying to catch. 'Jurungun' is the name for 'toad-fish'.

43. Gama-CS, Putting up the telegraph wire (Jirrbal dialect), Spider Henry. 27 February 1982 (Jumbun, Murray Upper, recorded by Annette Schmidt). 42 seconds.

The singer introduces the song as being about: *Telegraph wire, you know, them fellows put it up in the pole and that, working on it.* This song probably goes back to the early days of while contact, when the erection of the overland telegraph wire was a source of great interest to the indigenous people whose land it spanned.

44. Marrga-A, Spirit Dancing (Mamu dialect), Willie Kelly. 9 November 1963 (Ravenshoe). 42 seconds.

This song appears to describe a spirit ghost dancing in the Marrga style, and a corpse being carried into the dancing ground. First (of two) performances.

45. Marrga-A, Spirit Dancing (Mamu dialect), George Watson. 28 June 1981 (Boogan, near Innisfail). 29 seconds.

Almost two decades after Track 44 was recorded, Dixon played it to George Watson, who helped transcribe the words. George said that he knew the song, and recorded this version of it.

Tracks 44 and 45 demonstrate the difference in melody used by two singers with the same song. Willie Kelly's richly ornamented version ranges from a fourth to a minor sixth while George Watson mostly undulates between two adjacent pitches.

46. Marrga-B, Hanging out the clothes (Mamu dialect), Willie Kelly. 9 November 1963 (Ravenshoe). 52 seconds.

Another song said to relate to the early days of contact, when the sight of white people washing clothes and hanging them out to dry was thought novel enough to be the subject of a song and dance.

47. Marrga-C, Scrub-hen (Mamu dialect), Willie Kelly. 9 November 1963 (Ravenshoe). 56 seconds. The scrub-hen covers her eggs with a large cone-shaped pile of earth and leaves, which serves to incubate them. It is said that she will often re-use an old nest, putting some new material on top. In this song, the warmth of a scrub-hen nest is compared to that of the sky, with the sun in it.

48. Marrga-D, Yams deep in the ground (Mamu dialect), Willie Kelly. 9 November 1963 (Ravenshoe). 57 seconds.

Willie Kelly explains this song: *That's meaning, a wild yam, when they goes in the ground, and deepity. And they use a sharp-pointed stick, so they can take the yam out of the ground; to eat, feed children.*

49. Marrga-E, Massage the crippled man (Mamu dialect), Willie Kelly. 9 November 1963 (Ravenshoe). 45 seconds.

Willie Kelly said that this was a song about an old man with a sore knee. His knee was massaged to relieve the pain and then he was led onto the dancing ground, to dance a little.

50. Marrga-F, Cassowary (Mamu dialect), Willie Kelly. 9 November 1963 (Ravenshoe). 53 seconds. Willie Kelly says: *That is mean: Gumbugan, mean the cassowary, and that's the meaning of song.* The song describes the cassowary's head and wattle being painted first by a small parrot and then by a large parrot, each transferring some of its own wing coloration to the cassowary. During the instrumental interlude in the middle of the song, Willie Kelly intones *oho oho*, imitating the deep, throaty call of the cassowary.

51. Marrga-G, Making twine for a net (Mamu dialect), Willie Kelly. 6 November 1963 (Ravenshoe). 36 seconds.

When Dixon arrived to record these songs, Willie Kelly was making fine twine with which to manufacture a fish-net. He rubbed the raw string to make it strong and fine, and then twirled it around, to add strength, as described in the song. When the recording was played back, Willie Kelly demonstrated the dance that accompanies the song.

52. Marrga-I, Willy wagtail (Mamu dialect), Willie Kelly. 6 November 1963 (Ravenshoe). 39 seconds. This song is a particular favourite of the Aboriginal people in the Atherton tableland region. It describes the willy wagtail bird, which has a characteristic manner of wiggling his tail feathers as he walks. This is said to be reminiscent of the way people dance in 'shake-a-leg' fashion (keeping their legs in fixed position and wobbling the knees back and forth) and of the way a spirit would comport itself in the spirit land.

53. Marrga-I, Willy wagtail (Mamu dialed), George Watson. 28 June 1981 (Boogan, near Innisfail). 18 seconds.

After George Watson heard Willie Kelly's rendition, he said this was another song he had known from way back, and offered to record it himself.

The Willie Kelly recording of Marrga-I has a recording fault; the tape reel caught briefly as the tape went around. Even so, tracks 52 and 53 allow a good comparison of two singers' styles.

54. Marrga-J, Ghosts calling (Mamu dialect), George Watson. 15 May 1982 (Boogan, near Innisfail). 39 seconds.

This song describes two ghosts who have become separated; one calls out to the other to find out where he is. George said he was taught this song by 'Old Jerry' in Millaa Millaa, who asked George to sing it so that he could dance to it. George Watson departs from his usual two-note Marrga melody in this song.

55. Jangala B, Goondi Hill (Mamu dialect), George Watson. 23 April 1964 (Palm Island). 27 seconds.

A Girramay man has visited Goondi Hill, just north of Innisfail (in Mamu territory) and fallen in love with it. As he journeys home, dawn breaks through the jungle. Through the flapping wings of a giant bird (said to have lived at Innisfail in days gone by), he looks back, with warmth, at Goondi Hill.

56. Jangala-B, Goondi Hill (Mamu dialect), George Watson. Late 1964 (Palm Island). 2 minutes 11 seconds.

Jack Doolan, a white man then working as a clerk at the Aboriginal settlement on Palm Island, had recorded some stories in Mamu from George Watson, to send across to Dixon in England. As Jack says: *Well now, as there's only a little bit of tape left. George is going to sing us a short song, to fill in the rest of the tape. It's a Jirru song, this one.* [George later told Dixon it was in Mamu]. George says: *Good, Mr Doolan,* and proceeds to sing and sing and sing until the tape does run out.

The melody of Jangala songs can be heard as a series of short musical phrases which may be repeated in any order. This can be heard especially well in track 56, where George Watson extends the song to fill up the tape. Jangala songs, like Gama, allow for highly individual melodies, but all musical phrases are generally sung with notes of the same duration except for the extended final notes of each phrase. George Watson often precedes a phrase with an *oo* that emphasises the start of the next line of text.

57. Jangala-B, Goondi Hill (Mamu dialect), George Watson. 10 May 1982 (Boogan, near Innsfail). 28 seconds.

A third version of this song, recorded 18 years later.

58. Jangala-C, Bald-headed man (Girramay dialect), Paddy Biran and Jack Murray (singing in sequence). 13 June 1964 (the old mission, Murray Upper). 1 minute, 4 seconds.

It appears that this song relates to the early days of contact, and an inquisitive bald-headed white man. Notice the soaring introduction by Paddy Biran; when Jack Murray comes in, he stays on the lower pitches of the song.

59. Jangala-D, Destruction of our country (Girramay dialect), Paddy Biran and Jack Murray

(singing in sequence). 13 June 1964 (the old mission, Murray Upper). 1 minute, 12 seconds.

In 1963 the Queensland Government had leased a large tract of traditional Girramay territory to King Ranch, an American pastoral company, and they were clearing the country with bulldozers and dynamite, destroying many traditional sites - places where the people believed their spirits came from when they were born and to which they should return on their death. When Dixon began fieldwork, in October 1963, there was great concern in the Aboriginal community at this desecration of their land, with symbolic associations that stretch far back into the past. Today, more than 30 years later, Aborigines are still denied access to those of their lands that are (in the invader's view) 'owned' by King Ranch.

A translation of this lament appeared, under the title 'Paddy Biran's song' in *The Collins book of Australian poetry*, edited by Rodney Hall (Collins, Sydney, 1983) and acquired considerable fame. Readers now have the chance to hear the song itself, and the power of the singers' sorrow at this governmental act of theft.

60. Jangala-F, A camp tainted by death (Girramay dialect), Jimmy Murray. 22 March 1967 (Warrami, Murray Upper). 39 seconds.

When someone dies all of their possessions and the camp where they were living are said to be *bungalu* 'tainted by death' and thus tabooed. The singer here tells a group of people that their camp is *bungalu*, because of a recent death there, and it is making him feel lethargic and uneasy; they should move on and establish a new camp somewhere else. This song employs a small

vocal range; Jimmy Murray sings with a very tense vocal quality to his voice, accentuated by dwelling on the consonant 'ng'.

61. Jangala-G, She will not go with me (Girramay dialect), Jimmy Murray. 22 March 1967 (Warrami, Murray Upper). 54 seconds.

Jimmy Murray explains: *You've got a sweetheart girl, that girl mightn't like you, he [i.e. she] frightened of you, he don't like come. Well, that's why I sing it.* In the old days marriages were arranged many years in advance; a young girl (from the appropriate kinship class) would be 'promised' to an older man. The song describes a man coming to claim his promised bride. But she, not knowing him at all, recoils in fright, refuses the marriage, and wishes to go instead with the boy she loves (who is not, in any case, in the right kinship class for her to marry).

62. Jangala-H, Dry throat (Girramay dialect), Jimmy Murray. 22 March 1967 (Warrami, Murray Upper). 56 seconds.

Jimmy Murray says: *He had a bad cold in his throat; he can't talk too good, he cough all the time.* The singer thinks he caught his bad cold from the people to whom the song is addressed. His throat is so dry that he can hardly sing, even though he works clay under water with his hands and applies it to his throat as a poultice.

63. Jangala-I, The brave husband (Girramay dialect), Jimmy Murray. 22 March 1967 (Warrami, Murray Upper). 55 seconds.

The singer explains: *When he take his wife, go cross the river, flood time. Swim across and he had her in his arm.* A couple are crossing the river together. The wife cannot swim and the waters are rough and dangerous. At the halfway mark her husband lifts her high and carries her to the far bank, ostentatiously showing off his bravery.

64. Jangala-J, The seagull and the cyclone (Jirrbal dialect), Spider Henry. 10 May 1982 (Jumbun, Murray Upper). 34 seconds.

When the seagull is seen flying towards the inland, away from its normal coastal habitat, it is a sign that the cyclone is coming. The bird is believed to cause cyclones. This song describes the country after a cyclone has been through and ends with an injunction to tie the bird's wing, so that it can cause no more cyclones.

Spider Henry's Jangala style uses a more relaxed vocal quality, but otherwise is much like Jimmy Murray's, with two or three vocal descents followed by vacillating notes a tone apart.

65. Jangala-N, Painted firestick base (Jirrbal dialect), Tom Murray. 15 May 1983 (Mount Garnet). 25 seconds.

This song is about a magical, painted firestick holder, which is carried about, secretly, by a mischievous person who is continually making trouble, sneaking around, using his magical power to get people to do things, perhaps killing people. Tom Murray said that he learnt this song 'in the early days'.

Tom Murray uses a graceful compound metre; notable is his use of a rising third for the first two phrases. As his voice tired, he tended to speak the words rather than sing them.

66. Jangala-O, Jilaymbara mountain (Jirrbal dialect), Tom Murray. 15 May 1983 (Mount Garnet). 51 seconds.

That mountain they call Jilaymbara, they sing it, Tom Murray announces. The mountain (Mount Lang in English) stands in a tract of flat country, where several tribal territories meet. It is called Jilaymbara in Jirrbal, Guyilguyil in Warungu, and Nyangguri by the Gububarra people (who probably spoke another dialect of the same language as Warungu). The message of the song is, essentially, that the mountain has these three names.

67. Jangala-Q, Cutting a track to Cardwell (Jirrbal dialect), Tom Murray. 15 May 1983 (Mount Garnet). 1 minute, 30 seconds.

Tom Murray explains the song: *In early day, before the train line or first motor car come up from south, the cargo they used to bring - boat from England, they used to bring cargo to Cardwell. They used to go down in the pack team to get it, for all these station outback, with a track. So they open it up a bit more in places and cut a few trees down, to make a road right down to the Cardwell. When he get to Cardwell, he couldn't see any other thing, that thing only come in the open sea. They can see right through to them island. And they sing that now.*

68. Jangala-R, Brightly shining star (Girramay dialect), Daisy Denham. 16 May 1983 (Jumbun. Murray Upper). 45 seconds.

Daisy Denham said that she learnt the song from an old man on Palm Island. It celebrates a bright star in the sky (probably the morning star) which was his totem.

Daisy Denham uses a larger range than other Jangala singers, beginning with a rising melody and descending the octave to the repeated tonic.

69. Jangala-S, Insatiable woman (Girramay dialect), Lambert Cocky. 6 November 1972 (Sheahan's farm, near Ingham). 26 seconds.

Lambert Cocky's first language was Warrgamay and he recorded some 'gugulu' (love songs) in that language. Then he said: *Well, Girramay Gugulu different. Girramay this way,* and performed this song about a woman who wanted sex all the time. He sings a richly ornamented melody, full of gliding notes.

70. Jangala-S, Insatiable woman (Jirrbal dialect), Spider Henry. 26 December 1986 (Jumbun, Murray Upper). 39 seconds.

Fourteen years later, Dixon played Lambert Cocky's recording to Spider Henry, who recognised the song but said that it was a bit different from the version he knew: *That Girramay way, that one - Warrgamay, nearly Warrgamay. My way, I'll sing-him my way.* After he had finished singing this song Spider remarked: *Bad song, you know!*

71. Jangala-T, Shifting camp (Jirrbal dialect), Tom Murray. 7 July 1984 (Mount Garnet). 45 seconds.

In traditional times, a young girl was sometimes seized by a man from another tribe and carried off; the song refers to a Mamu girl taken to live with the Yidiny people. She would learn the language of her husband as well as retaining her parents' language, and her children would be taught something of both languages. This is likened to a scrub-hen, a bird that constructs a high mound to incubate its eggs. Tom Murray said that the scrub-hen may not build its nest twice in the same location, moving from one place one season to another the next. After building all day, it will at dusk shake a fig tree to dislodge the fruit. The two parts of the song are linked by the verb *gulingga-l*; this refers to a woman giving birth to a child, and also here to a tree bearing fruit. Tom Murray explained that taking a girl when young is like picking green fruit.

The singer's commentary is: *She's Mamu, that's only through her husband's tribe, Mamu, you see. She talk Mamu but she's Jirrbal.* (He is here muddling up languages. The song he has just sung clearly refers to Mamu and Yidiny.)

72. Jungala-V, Lovesick for that girl (Jirrbal dialect), Spider Henry. 26 December 1986 (Jumbun, Murray Upper). 20 seconds.

Spider Henry explained this song: *I been really lovesick for that girl, eh* (but she wouldn't have him).

73. Jangala-W, Big plain (Jirrbal dialect), Lassie Darcy. 13 July 1968 (Murray Upper, recorded by Frank Woolston). 21 seconds.

This song describes someone showing the plains country, up on the tableland, to another person, so that they can travel across it together. Lassie Darcy uses thirds, either falling or rising, throughout her melody.

74. Jangala-AD, Taking cattle to the stockyard (Girramay dialect), Bessie Jerry. 7 December 1993 (Bilyana, near Murray Upper). 52 seconds.

Bessie Jerry said that her mother used to sing this song, about taking cattle down to the slaughter yard at Townsville. She prefaces the song with: *Sing it this way, Mum been sing it always for us.* Except for the odd extra syllable, Bessie Jerry uses the same rhythmic pattern for each line of text.

75. Burran-A, Into the waves (Mamu dialect), George Watson. 24 July 1963 (Palm Island, recorded by N.B. Tindale). 1 minute 31 seconds.

When George Watson was a young man on Palm Island, he lay on the beach one day, watching nubile young girls play in the foam, jumping into waves and making them 'burst'. He was falling in love with them but, by social convention, he could not go in too. So he composed this song to express his feelings.

This was one of George's favourite songs, of which he made seven recordings; four of them

are included here. For this one, N.B. Tindale provides an introduction: *We are now about to hear a Burran love-song, by Nyiyija, of Jordan Creek, of the Dulgubarra section of the Mamu tribe.* After the performance Tindale asks: *What are the words of the song in your language?* George replies: *'Jaburr banda burul', that's the girls jumping into the water having a swim. 'Bunggu-gu' that's mean that the tide coming in. And 'nayili' means the young girls. And also he was in a-love when he sang that song.*

All Burran songs use basically the same melody, rising gradually to the highest note, then descending and repeating the last note for at least two text lines. The four performances of Burran-A by George Watson that we include here are very similar, except for the short vocalisation at the start of the fourth version and the tempo variations. Peter Wairuna's version (at track 79) retains the general Burran melodic outline, but varies the pitches within each phrase.

76. Burran-A, Into the waves (Mamu dialect), George Watson. 23 June 1964 (Palm Island). 35 seconds.

77. Burran-A, Into the waves (Mamu dialect), George Watson. 10 November 1980 (Boogan, near Innsifail). 42 seconds.

78. Burran-A, Into the waves (Mamu dialect), George Watson. 16 May 1983. (Jumbun, Murray Upper). 27 seconds.

After this performance (at the age of 84, or so) George complained: *Too short-wind* (meaning that he now had difficulty gathering enough breath to sing).

79. Burran-A, Into the waves (Jirrbal dialect), Peter Wairuna. 11 November 1963 (Mount Garnet). 45 seconds.

A slightly different version of the song, by a different singer.

80. Burran-D, His true feelings (Gulngay dialect), George Watson. 23 April 1964 (Palm Island). 31 seconds.

An Aboriginal man has been given charge of the white man's horse. He grabs the bridle and stands holding it, then does a shake-a-leg dance venting his feelings towards the white man, wanting to kill him.

For Burran-D, Burran-E and Burran-G, all singers use a gliding vocal introduction on one syllable. Notice the similarity between Paddy Biran's introduction (track 81) and that of Pompey Clumppoint (track 82).

81. Burran-E, Incest (Girramay dialect), Paddy Biran. 13 June 1964 (the old mission, Murray Upper). 1 minute 30 seconds.

This is a song about a man who has impregnated his own daughter - she is now carrying her own father's child. Paddy Biran chats to his friend Jack Murray before starting on the song: *You going to follow-him me? Or you just going to hit-him stick? Well, you hit-him stick now, and I'll sing-him for you.*

It is a characteristic of singing in the Burran style that the voice will suddenly increase and then decrease in loudness, without any shift in pitch. This happens several times during this performance (compare the voice with the stick-beats, which maintain a constant loudness).

82. Burran-G, A boat called 'Rover' (Jirru dialect), Pompey Clumppoint. 14 July 1963 (Palm Island, recorded by N.B. Tindale). 58 seconds.

Pompey Clumppoint said that his uncle used to sing this song; it concerns a boat fishing for beche-de-mer (for the China market) from an island on the Great Barrier Reef. It is, as Tindale announces: *a Gugulu* [love-song] *of the Jirru tribe*.

83. Burran-I, A lamp burning (Jirrbal dialect), Chloe Grant. 10 August 1964 (Yaboon, Murray Upper). 41 seconds.

Chloe Grant said: *That mean, when Old Morty used to be on the Mission Beach, you can see the lamp shining over the other side. And, it's moving about.* She later explained that from his home on the beach, Old Morty (an Aboriginal man) would see a light moving around on one of the islands opposite, and he made up a song about it.

84. Burran-M, Sugar Train (Jirrbal dialect), Peter Wairuna. 11 November 1963 (Mount Garnet). 1 minute.

This song describes a narrow-gauge sugar train hauling cane to the sugar mill from Mundoo, just outside Innisfail. Listen for the Dyirbal word *riluway* (a loan based on English *railway*).

85. Burran-M, Sugar Train (Mamu dialect), George Watson. 13 July 1984 (Boogan, near Innisfail). 23 seconds.

When Dixon played Peter Wairuna's recording to George Watson, 21 years later, George remarked that it was a song he knew and offered his own version.

86. Burran-O, The dwarf (Mamu dialect), George Watson. 12 May 1982 (Wangan, near Innisfail). 35 seconds.

Dyirbal has a word, *mirru*, referring to a child that never grows to adult stature. It was believed that such a condition could be due to a sorcerer 'singing' at his victim. Dwarfs were often laughed at - but in this song the dwarf has the last laugh, describing the sorcerer who sang about him as being like a scrub locust.

87. Burran-Z, Putting up a fence (Mamu dialect), George Watson. 13 July 1984 (Malanda). 26 seconds.

This song describes the time when George Watson and another person were fencing off land for their white employer.

88. Burran-AD, Song to make her grow (Jirrbal dialect), Tom Murray. 13 February 1988 (Mount Garnet). 1 minute.

A man may claim his 'promised' wife when she is about ten and take her to live in his camp. But

he may not sleep with her until she reaches puberty. A man sang this song to his child bride to make her grow quickly.

As soon as the song was finished, Tom Murray began to explain it: *Now they give the little girl, must be about - say about ten or eleven, they rear the girls up, there, they can't take them away, they sort of swap in those days, they can't break the rule. So he - burmbil, yanggu yanggu ngaja, burrandu, bilbaymali burmbil, bayali - he sing-him with that song, trying to make her grow up quick.* Suddenly, Dixon understood the message: *Oh, I see, yes, yes. He gets a wife when she's too young to really be a wife, and tries to sing her to grow up quick, yes.*

89. Burran-AE, The mill wants more cane to crush (Girramay dialect), Bessie Jerry. 3 February 1988 (Bilyana, near Murray Upper). 18 seconds.

This is a song about the sugar cane mill at Mourilyan, just south of Innisfail. When it toots its horn it is said to be anxious, wanting more sugar cane to crush. The verb *walnggarra-y* usually has a human subject and refers to someone having strong feelings about another person - a mother worrying about her child, a person wanting their lover. Here it is used of the sugar mill, describing how it wants more cane to crush.

90. Gaynyil-A, Fishing for shrimps (Mamu dialect), George Watson. 11 April 1967 (East Palmerston, near Innisfail). 41 seconds.

This song describes a man watching a girl go down to a creek and catch shrimps by dragging a net through the water. As he watches her, with lowered head, he finds himself falling in love. (When he was about fifteen years old, George Watson heard an old man called Jerry sing this, at Jordan's Creek, and learnt it from him.)

Gaynyil melodies differ from text to text. Usually there are repeated syllables that appear as a sort of refrain, such as *duban/duwan* here.

91. Gaynyil-A, Fishing for shrimps (Mamu dialect), George Watson. 12 September 1978 (Boogan, near Innisfail). 20 seconds.

Another version of this song, recorded eleven years later.

92. Gaynyil-C, At sea with a white man (Mamu dialect), George Watson. 23 April 1964 (Palm Island). 34 seconds.

George Watson introduces this song: *That's a Gaynyil (song-style), singing about salt water.* It describes floating on the sea in a boat with a white man, and the boat hitting the waves, pushing them apart.

93. Gaynyil-E, To make her dream of me (Mamu dialect), George Watson. 15 May 1982 (Boogan, near Innisfail). 25 seconds.

This describes the singer being in love with a woman and 'throwing' the song at her, as she sleeps, so that she will dream of him.

94. Gaynyil-F, Woman dancing (Mamu dialect), George Watson. 7 November 1982

(Boogan, near Innisfail). 35 seconds.

This song describes a woman dancing, in an up-and-down mourning style, on a small island in the river where there is lots of shade.