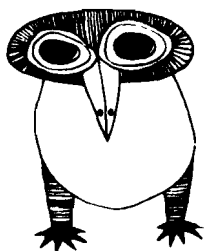


**BULLOCK  
CORRO  
BOREE**

# ANDAGARINJA

Children's Bullock Corroboree

by C. J. & A. M. ELLIS



PAPUA POCKET POETS

Port Moresby 1970

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Cover design by Georgina Beier

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**ANDAGARINJA**

## THE ANDAGARINJA CHILDREN'S BULLOCK CORROBOREE

In any community, children's songs are very important for the understanding of adult music. There are two distinct types of children's songs - those sung by adults to children, and those made and sung by children amongst themselves. There seem to be quite clear musical differences between these two types of songs, both in our own community, and that of Aboriginal Australia. Probably this difference can be stated as follows: those songs sung by adults to children use embryonic structures which can be expanded and matured in adult music making; those sung by children for children's ears only, use simple structures which the performers themselves will soon find immature and unsatisfactory. One contains the potential for musical development and the other does not.

Songs made and sung by the Western Desert Aboriginal children may be on any topic of interest. The structure of the songs is quite simple. The songs sung by Western Desert Aboriginal adults to their children use all the techniques found in adult music of the area, particularly the method of conveying a story through a number of short verses. Each of these verses describes one small event; the story is pieced together, verse by verse, until the total picture is clear. The melodic contour remains the same throughout the series of verses, while the rhythm is changed with changes in text.

One popular form of children's corroboree is that which adults make up to entertain children or to sing when the children dance. These songs are not secret.

They describe everyday events, and can be quite modern in content - perhaps a description of a truck leaving a dust trail on a calm day, or cattle drinking at a dam or water trough. The one presented here, which we recorded in 1969, tells a complete story in the same form as the adult history songs. The adults sing and the children dance; one small boy is the principal performer and represents the small boy in the story; other children play the part of children and yet others take the role of bullocks. The miming of animal parts by native performers is very realistic indeed, and this skill is first learned in these children's corroborees.

The story is told through the singing of 9 different verses of this song. The detail here is taken from the general explanation of the verses as they occur in the song. This explanation was given to us by a number of people in different camps; we were unable to obtain information from the composer himself because he was living in another area at the time.

The little boy is travelling and he sees the bullocks. There are a number of children who see the bullocks leaving the watering place; they see by the tracks that many bullocks have been there. The children move around waving their arms; they look like gumtrees blown by the wind. The children paint themselves with a design representing the track of a goanna, and dance around the water hole, which has green scum on its surface; they watch the scum as they go around the water. The bullocks are on the edge of the water hole kicking dust behind them. The children dance among the wild flowers, following one another. The small boy sees a man

arrive; this man chases the children away. They then see a burrow with a goanna in it and they throw something at it. They dance at Hamilton Creek, from where they can see Pitjiri, which is their camping place near Arkaringa. The song of the magpie calls them back to their camp because he does not like their present stopping place.

The performance we recorded lasted a little over 15 minutes; every verse was repeated at least once. There is talking between items, which is usual performance practice. The time gap between verses always depends on the complexity of the rhythmic structure to be presented next. As the complete song has very interesting musical structure brief comments on each verse are given to enable the reader to appreciate the compositional techniques in use. They are important because they illustrate in a simple form the system used in adult performance.

### Musical Structures

The first verse describes the little boy and the other children seeing many bullocks and the tracks that have been left in the mud as these bullocks leave the water hole. The rhythmic pattern on which it is built has two sections, each repeated. The sections are almost identical. The first is



which is repeated. This repeat is followed by the second section of the rhythm



which is also repeated. When this cycle is completed, the entire rhythmic pattern, or part of it, can be repeated again to fit the needs of the melody.

In performance verses may be sung once only, they may each be repeated once (that is, each verse sung twice), or there may be irregular numbers of repetitions of each verse. The melodic structure of repeated verses is not necessarily identical, but is always similar in contour. The rhythmic pattern is maintained without alteration.

Verse 2 describes the child performers running along waving their arms above their heads. The rhythmic pattern, regularly repeated throughout the verse, is very slightly different from that of verse 1. The first section of the rhythm of verse 1 is retained unaltered; in the second section one crotchet is substituted for 2 quavers. Similar to adult songs, normal speech accentuation is distorted in the song texts. This is done deliberately in adult songs to obliterate the meaning of the texts of secret songs. Here we see the process being taught to children.

Verse 3 describes the children dancing around the water hole looking at the green scum on the water. The rhythmic pattern sounds deceptively like the previous two, even though in transcription to musical notation it appears to be quite different. The accentuation of the first two patterns conformed with our 2/4 time signature, but in verse 3, there are 3/8 bars. This gives a syncopated effect, because the clapping falls after some accents. Verse 3 is quite difficult to perform, and has been introduced to the children through the careful grading of complexity in verses 1 and 2.



Verse 4 describes the bullocks on the edge of the water hole, kicking dust behind them. The verse has the same rhythmic structure as the other verses but, because both sections are rhythmically the same, there is no need to give the pattern two sections, since the one half-pattern is being repeated. Whether the singers are singing pinapiti tjarai kanturai ngarangai or malakukuturai ulpurai waningai, the rhythmic pattern is the same as the second section of verse 1.

<u>Section 1</u>	pi	na-pi-ti-tja	rai kantu	rai nga-ra	ngai
	-	-	-	-	-
<u>or</u>					
<u>Section 2</u>	ma	la-ku-ku-tu	rai ul-pu	rai wa-ni	ngai
	-	-	-	-	-
	♪	♪	♪	♪	♪
	-	-	-	-	-
	♪	♪	♪	♪	♪
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	♪	♪	♪	♪	♪
	-	-	-	-	-
</					

Verse 5 describes the children following one another through the wild flowers. The rhythmic pattern again has two sections, the first the same as verse 4, the second arising out of the first section of the pattern of verse 1. Through rhythm the musical form is gradually being tied closely into a complete work.

Verse 6 tells about the small boy seeing a man arrive to send the children home. The text is structurally similar to previous verses, but because of alteration of the metre a new rhythmic development is necessary. This is most noticeable where the elimination of one quaver shifts the accentuation of the remainder of the pattern by one quaver; this also happened in verse 3.

The text of verse 7 describes the children seeing a rabbit hole. The melodic contour, you may have already noticed, remains the same for every verse (its structure is described at the conclusion of the analysis of verse 9) but the rhythmic patterns are becoming more complex as the composition proceeds. They continually refer to earlier rhythmic forms which helps the learning of more difficult structures.

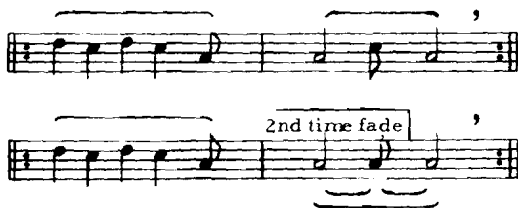
Verse 8 describes the children dancing at Hamilton Creek; they look at their camping site which is some distance away. The rhythmic pattern is in two sections, both of which have been used previously, but not together as presented here. Half of the rhythmic pattern of verse 8 was present in verses 1, 2, 4 and 5. The other half of the pattern was present in verses 6 and 7, which were closely related to verse 3. In verse 8, then, we see the drawing together of different rhythmic structures.

The text of verse 9 tells of the magpie calling the children back to their camp. It is rhythmically identical to verse 4; that is, it has one section in the rhythmic pattern, which first appeared as section two of verse 1, and most recently as half of the pattern of verse 8. In adult songs this cross-reference to the rhythmic patterns of other verses becomes much more complex, and, as in verse 9, is important for climax building.

### Melodic Contour

For the sake of simplicity the melody has been stripped of its rhythmic structures to reveal a skeletal framework which we prefer to call the melodic contour. This contour is consistent in every verse. However, the verse does not have to start at the beginning of the contour, although it must conclude with the last section of it. The length of the verse can be varied by an indefinite number of repeats of the first section but will then be concluded by performance of the last section.

#### Melodic Contour of one verse -



## Song Texts

To the unsuspecting it may seem that the least confusing aspect of communication through Aboriginal music would be that which is conveyed through the song text. Although this may be true, the method of communication here is not as easily understood as might be expected. In fact, translation and explanation of Aboriginal song texts always lead to considerable confusion. The explanation of any text may not be obvious from its actual translation; where a translation is sought from a person not present at the performance from which a recording has been made, it is often necessary to explain to the translator where the song was performed, and under what circumstances. There are a number of reasons for this.

A song text may be a general description, for example, of a creek bed; it takes on specific meaning in the history songs, which recount the travels of the original totemic ancestors of that area, only when the sequence within the total performance is known. In these history songs, events in the lives of the ancestors are recreated in the order they were supposed originally to have occurred; only those events of an ancestor's life which took place within a certain locality may be performed by any one local group, and even then they must be performed at the correct site within that locality. However, in the course of the total life of the ancestor, which will be recreated in a very large song cycle, parts of which are performed at a number of different sites, many creek beds similar to the original may require description. In such cases exactly the same verse may be used, but the significance may be quite different on each occasion.

The actual translation will remain a very brief description of a creek bed, but provided that all the necessary information on place of performance, the stage of proceedings, and performers themselves is known, the explanation may be quite long and complex. It conveys its actual significance only by presupposing an intimate knowledge of the background of the total history which it is recreating.

The texts themselves are at times deliberately ambiguous. Not only are the syllables misplaced in such a way as to be unintelligible to those not familiar with the method of encoding, but once decoded they sometimes use grammatical structures which give rise to double meanings. In such cases (see 'Aboriginal Music Making' by C. J. Ellis, Adelaide, Libraries Board of South Australia, 1964, p 56) the intended meaning can again only be discovered from the nature of the performance.

The poetic metre is of great importance in the music of the songs, but here again we do not deal with simple interrelationships. (The complexity of this aspect has been discussed by C. J. Ellis in 'Structure and Significance in Aboriginal Song', Mankind, Vol. 7, (1969), pp. 3-14).

### Translations

In the Bullock Song presented here, the text does not present many problems of interpretation. At the top of each page the song text for the verse is given with interlinear translation. These are followed by an

English version conveying the same meaning, but retaining the same metre as the original song text. These English texts can be used for performance with the musical notation, which itself shows the placement of the original Pitjantjara text. The translations, and the transcription of the song text and music have been done by A. M. Ellis.

It is our hope that this presentation of the comparatively simple structure of an adult song made for teaching children will awaken the interest of readers in the very complex forms skilfully used by Western Desert performers in their traditional songs. The original collecting of the material (by both authors) was possible through a grant from the Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies.

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The University of Adelaide,  
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## CHILDREN'S BULLOCK CORROBOREE

### Verse 1

tjitji	tjukutjuku	pilukaku	yanai
children	small	bullocks	gone away
ampaka	tjuta-ngkai	minarai	(ri)yanai
tracks	many	water	gone away

The little children watch as the bullocks depart.

The bullocks leave their tracks, many tracks, by  
the dam.



Beating  
tji tji tju ku tju ku pi lu ka ku ya nai tji



tji tju ku tju ku pi lu ka ku ya nai tji tji tju ku tju



ku pi lu ka ku ya nai am pa ka tjutang kai mi na



rai ri a nai am pa ka tjutang kai mi na rai ri a



nai am pa ka tjutang kai mi a rai ri a nai tji



tji tju ku tju ku pi lu ka ku ya nai tji tji tju ku tju



ku pi lu ka ku ya nai tji tji tju ku tju ku pi lu



ka ku ya nai am pa ka tjutang kai mi na rai ri a nai...



Verse 2

lakutakutalai    miyarai    wananai  
run along        arms        following

tjilyariri        tjarai        wanarai        nawa  
gumtrees        some        throwing        look!

They're throwing both their arms round and round,  
round and round.

The trees are moving too back and forth, look! now!

Beating

la ku ta ku ta lai wa na rai wa na nai la

ku ta ku ta lai mi ya rai wa na nai la ku ta ku ta

lai mi ya rai wa na nai tji lya ri ri tja rai wa na

rai naw rai tji lya ri ri tja rai wa na rai naw rai tji

lya ri ri tja rai wa na rai naw rai la ku ta ku ta

lai mi ya rai wa na nai la ku ta ku ta lai mi ya

rai wa na nai la ku ta ku ta lai mi ya rai wa na

nai tji lya ri ri tja rai wa na rai naw rai tji lya ri ri tja

Verse 3

nyinta nyinta	paluru	kuriri katinai
track-like a printi	he	going round and round
multjantutjara (na)	wirkara	nyanga
scum having	come	see

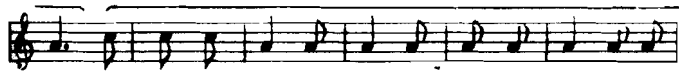
The children run round the water's edge, the  
water's edge.

A scum is floating on the water, come and see!

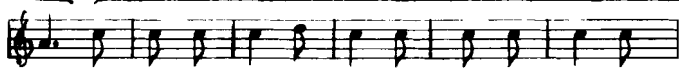


Beating

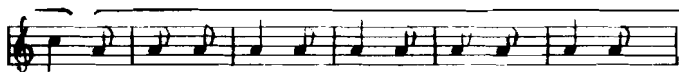
ku ri ri ka ti nai nyin ta nyin ta pa la



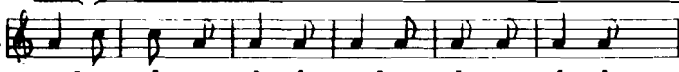
ru ku ri ri ka ti nai nyin ta nyin ta pa la



ru ku ri ri ka ti nai mul tjan tu tja ra



na wi: ir ka na nya nga mul tjan tu tja ra



na wi: ir ka na nya nga mul tjan tu tja ra



na wi: ir ka na nya nga nyin ta nyin ta pa la



ru ku ri ri ka ti nai nyin ta nyin ta pa la....

Verse 4

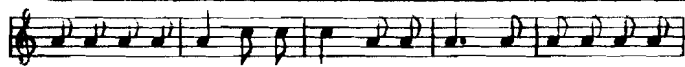
pina-piti-tjara	kantura	ngarangai	
small swamp (little hole)	stamping feet	standing	
malaku - kutu -nai	ulpuru	waningai	
behind	towards	dust	throwing

They're stamping on the ground with their feet  
as they dance.

They're throwing dust behind, making holes as  
they dance.



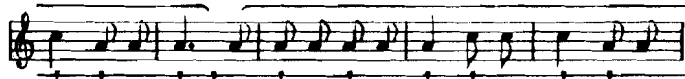
pi na pi ti tja rai kan tu ra nga ra ngai pi



na pi ti tja rai kan tu ra nga ra ngai pi na pi ti tja



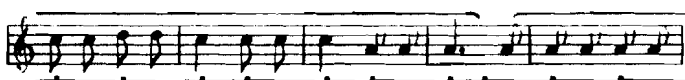
rai kan tu ra nga ra ngai ma la ku ku tu nai ul pu



ru wa ni ngai ma la ku ku tu nai ul pu ru wa ni



ngai mal la ku ku tu nai ul pu ru wa ni ngai pi



na pi ti tja rai kan tu ra nga ra ngai pi na pi ti tja



rai kan tu rai nga ra ngai pi na pi ti tja rai kan tu



ra nga ra ngai ma la ku ku tu nai ul pu ru wa ni ngai...

Verse 5

tjukalatangana	kuriri katinai
?	going round and round

tjinta tjinta	ngarala	wananai
pretty flowers	standing	following

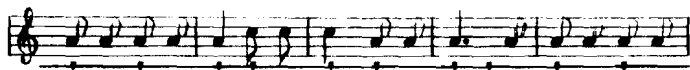
They're wan'dring round mid flowers, pretty  
flowers, many flowers,

mid pretty flowers here and there, here and there.

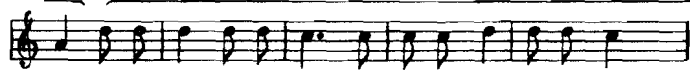


Beating

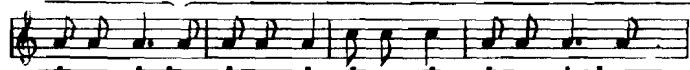
tju ka la ta nga na ku ri ri ka ti nai tju



ka la ta nga na ku ri ri ka ti nai tju ka la ta nga



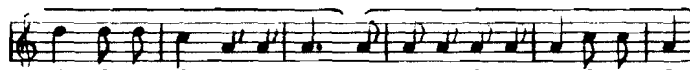
na ku ri ri ka ti nai tjin ta tjin ta nga ra la



wa na nai tjin ta tjin ta nga ra la wa na nai tjin



ta tjin ta nga ra la wa na nai tju ka la ta nga



na ku ri ri ka ti nai tju ka la ta nga na ku ri ri



Verse 6

mutumutu - palai      paiya iyalai

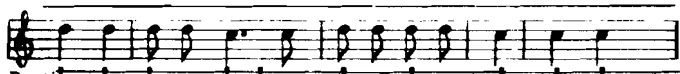
short                      drive away

kuru      katu      mantai      wati      wirkanai

eye      high      ground      man      comes  
   sand

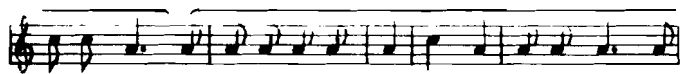
The little children are sent home, sent back home.

A man arrives and sends all the children home.

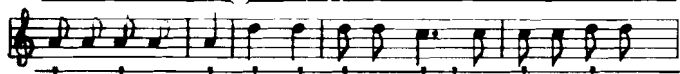


Beating

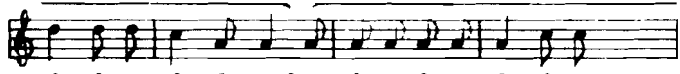
pai ya i ya lai mu tu mu tu pa lai pai ya



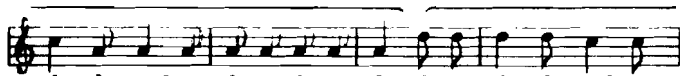
i ya lai mu tu mu tu pa lai pai ya i ya lai mu



tu mu tu pa lai pai ya i ya lai ka ru ka tuman



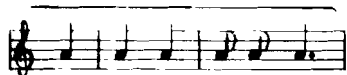
tai wa ti wir ka nai ka ru ka tuman tai wa ti



wir ka na ku ru ka tuman tai wa ti wir ka nai mu



tu mu tu pa lai pai ya i ya lai mu tu mu tu pa



lai pai ya i ya lai

Verse 7

pulpa	kutju-ta-na	wirkara	nyangai
hole (lair)	one	come	see

ngura	pariri	kaiyalaranai
camp	far off	printi? throw something?

There is a rabbit burrow, come and see! come!

It is a long way to the camp, the camp.



pul pa ku tju ta na wir ka ra nya ngai pul



pa ku tju ta na wir ka ra nya ngai pul pa ku tju ta



na wir ka ra nya ngai ngu ra pa ra ri kai ya



la ra nai ngu ra pa ra ri kai ya la ra nai ngu



ra pa ra ri kai ya la ra nai pul pa ku tju ta



na wir ka ra nya ngai pul pa ku tju ta na wir ka ra

Verse 8

karu	watjingka (na)	kantura	ngarangai
creek	Hamilton Creek (name of)	stamping feet	standing

pitjirilakutu

walpungarana

pitjiri to  
(place name)


"like a little road"

With stamping steps they're dancing at Watjingka Creek,  
They look along the road toward pitjiri.



Beating

ka ru wa tjing ka na kan tu ra nga ra nga ka



ru wa tjing ka na kan tu ra nga ra nga pi tji ri la ku



tu wul pu nga ra na pi tji ri la ku tu wul pu



nga ra na pi tji ri la ku tu wul pu nga ra na ka



ru wa tjing ka na kan tu ra nga ra nga ka ru wa tjing ka



na kan tu ra

Verse 9

kurparu (ngkutitjai) papuntjai waninai  
magpie call out ?

watjiltja ra wanai ngura nai kulpunga  
does not like where they are camp go back  
(return)

They hear a magpie calling them back, back to camp,  
he does not like their stopping place, go back to camp!

Beating

kur pa rung kuti tjai pa pun tjai wa ni nai kur

pa rung kuti tjai pa pun tjai wa ni nai kur pa rung ku ti

tjai pa pun tjai wa ni nai wa tjil tja ra wa nai ngu ra

nai kul pu ngai wa tjil tja ra wa nai ngu ra nai kul pu

ngai wa tjil tja ra wa nai ngu ra nai kul pu ngai kur

pa rung kuti tjai pa pun tjai wa ni nai kur pa rung kuti

tjai pa pun tjai wa ni nai kur pa rung kuti tjai pa pun

tjai wa ni nai wa tjil tja ka wa nai ngu ra nai kul pu

ngai wa tjil tja ra wa nai nga ra nai