

## NOTES ON WARDILBA CUSTOMS Banyjima initiation ceremonies (public rituals)

Women and wardilba.

jinyjanungu should do everything like building bough sheds, carting wood

Karnku shouldn't do anything – nowadays not like that

Karnku have a lot of say in the bush

If initiate is Burungu boy then banaga and garimara are karnku and jinyjanungu would be milangka and burungu

If banaga boy, then karnku would be milangka and burungu and jinyjanungu would be garimara and banaga (see Dench page 212)

If milangka boy, then karnku and garimara and banaga and jinyjanungu will be milangga and burungu

If garimara boy, then karnku will be milangga and burungu and jinyjanungu will be garimarra and banaga

Skin is different in Roebourne – Bidarra Law doesn't have Wardilba

Travellers come the day before

Day time – men out hunting, women cook feed for the men

Boys cut pieces of bark in morning to dry out

Karnku and jinyjanungu Elders eat food from hunting, young men eat the food sent from the camp

Left overs from hunting can be taken to women secretly.

Young men jinjanas build yard in afternoon – two entrances are made

jinyjanungu line up vehicles in a barricade north and south

Women set up camp behind a barricade

Jinyjanungu men bring nuju from bush – walking (only Rocklea Law sing as nujus brought from bush)

Soon as nujus in the yard, the wardilba songs begin

Peddlers start singing - jinyjanungu always start then karnku join in

Sing each song four or five times to teach young people – on old tapes only twice

Breaks in between while elders talk about songs –someone may be translating

Noise of Juna (devil) frightens women and children – makes them lie down

Men in yard also locked inside (nowadays some men sleep outside the yard)

Keep head covered at night or will go grey

Rattle tin of stones or hitting body – so young girls won't hear the songs

Also rub their ear

Don't move around

Men come back and forward from yard to check now and then – guarding against featherfoot/devils – more dangerous while people gathered at night – nujus also protected by Aboriginal 'doctor' or marban

Some danger could come from the travellers

Mothers and sisters supposed to stay awake – should be everyone

Jinyjanungu can sleep – nowadays most go to sleep

Can drink tea or eat food

Nowadays shine torch, but should be not many lights

Goes on all night until first light in east

Song changes – jinyjanungu go to camp to build small smoke fire

As they walk the men bring another song for the kids

Boys throw bark at new nujus to clean them and chase away bad spirits others give other reasons eg

Boys throw bark ‘to practice boomerang throwing’

‘to hit the headdress of nujus’

‘to scare away devils’ – not at the mob – told initiate is the devil.

Psychological interpretation – to ease the tension, lessen the fears of the boys who will be coming up in the following years. After the bark is thrown they can run around the back and come in behind the men.

Men hold up blanket as cover when nujus being dressed by jinyjanungu at dawn

These days blanket also used as protection from thrown bark

Boys who threw bark come around the back and join the procession – some run away who fear being smoked

Burrgun or Boyu ie smoking is to clean the nuju before they come back to the family

Mothers take off their tops and paint themselves

First to be caught comes out to mothers first

Is picked up by their thurtu (eldest sister)

Thurtu and nuju put their heads in the smoke

Song sung for kids not to be cheeky to parents, to be strong, lead a new obedient life

Young boys are chased to be put into the smoke – to remove the cheekiness from them

Men may hug each other to show everything went well – respect each other.

Nujus nowadays may go to their families for feed

People take lots of photos

Nujus must respect whoever put them through

Ones who went through together that year are called yalbu

Yalbu always to share things – have a special bond between each other.

Mangali and wives remain taboo for nuju but must help mangali (not speak to them directly)

Nujus stay around until they are healed

Gradually move into town, may wash themselves eg nujus went to Youngaleena funeral painted and with belt (buru) and junda (club)

Meeting camp abandoned, people move back to homes

In December, 2003, preparations began for the initiation of two young men at the Cane River law grounds on Peedamulla Station. In Tom Price, Greg Tucker, the Aboriginal Liaison Officer for the Gumala Aboriginal Corporation, made an urgent telephone call to the station manager, Trevor Parker. Greg was organising supplies (gamri) to be driven from Tom Price to Peedamulla, ready for the rituals to begin. On December 3, Greg rang South Hedland to tell elders there that a young man, or marlulu, had been ‘grabbed’ that morning by the marli in a short ceremony outside a house in Tom Price. A burru, or hair belt, had been tied around the waist of the marlulu and he was being escorted to Hedland. There the jinjanu (workers) would gather a mob to follow them to the law grounds at Cane River.

It was a busy weekend, with two funerals before the visitors and the marlulu reached the ceremony ground where the kangu ngali (relatives) were waiting for their mangga gutha (two sons). That night the young men became nuju. They spent the next five weeks in the bush, being instructed by the elders. At the end of this time, after a night singing the wardilba song cycle, the men led the two initiates back to their waiting families. Young boys threw bark, while the mothers and sisters sat behind a smoking fire. The smoke cleansed the nuju-ngali (initiates) before they were free to rejoin their families.

One man was not nuju. He was womalu ( goes through free)