Urrempel Men

A Collaborative Interrogation of T.G.H. Strehlow’s Collection

Submitted by

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# Contents

ABSTRACT .................................................................................................................. VI

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS ........................................................................................... VIII

LANGUAGE AND ORTHOGRAPHY ........................................................................... X

PROLOGUE ................................................................................................................ 1

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION .................................................................................. 6
  T.G.H. STREHLOW .................................................................................................. 8
  AGENCY IN THE ARCHIVE .................................................................................. 11
  ANMATYERR PERSPECTIVES ............................................................................ 13
  ARTWEKENH (BELONGING TO MEN) ................................................................... 18
  ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK .............................................................................. 20
  BETWEEN HISTORY AND ETHNOGRAPHY ...................................................... 24
  STRUCTURE OF THE THESIS ........................................................................... 26

CHAPTER 2: ETHNOGRAPHIC AND ARCHIVAL CHALLENGES ......................... 30
  PRIOR INTERACTIONS .......................................................................................... 31
  POSITIONING AND BEING POSITIONED ........................................................... 36
  THE FIELDWORK ................................................................................................ 41
  GROUP DISCUSSIONS .......................................................................................... 45
  THE ARCHIVAL RESEARCH .............................................................................. 49
  REVIEWING THE COLLECTION ......................................................................... 52
  CONCLUSION ........................................................................................................ 54

CHAPTER 3: EARLY ALHERNTER ENCOUNTERS .............................................. 57
  ‘DISCOVERING’ THE KNOWN ........................................................................... 58
  FRONTIER VIOLENCE ........................................................................................... 61
  PASTORALISM ...................................................................................................... 66
  FIRST ETHNOGRAPHIC ENCOUNTERS ............................................................. 69
  THE ‘GOVERNMENT MOB’ ................................................................................ 74
  THE COCKATOOST CREEK EXPEDITION ......................................................... 78
  CONCLUSION ........................................................................................................ 84

CHAPTER 4: STREHLOW’S SCOPE .................................................................... 86
  PLOTTING A COMPLICATED LIFE ...................................................................... 87
  A ‘FAMOUS FATHER’ .......................................................................................... 89
  LITERATURE AND LANGUAGE .......................................................................... 92
  ANTHROPOLOGY ................................................................................................ 97
  CONTINENTAL CONNECTIONS ......................................................................... 100
  PARALLELS AND COMPARISONS .................................................................... 102
  THE AUTHENTIC VALUE OF CULTURE ............................................................. 105
  ‘INFORMANTS’ AND ‘FRIENDS’ ......................................................................... 106
  CONCLUSION ........................................................................................................ 111

CHAPTER 5: A BALANCING ACT ........................................................................ 112
  FIRST LESSONS .................................................................................................. 115
  ATYWE-NHENG (THE AGE-MATE) .................................................................... 119
  THE ERA OF FESTIVALS .................................................................................... 123
  ‘THE KING’ AND THE ‘AKIWI-ARENYE’ ............................................................ 127
  COLONIAL INTERESTS ......................................................................................... 131
APPENDIX III: GLOSSARY OF KEY ANMATYERR TERMS ........................................ 338
APPENDIX IV: ANMATYERR CEREMONIES RECORDED BY STREHLLOW .............. 341

MAPS
Map 1: Some of the key places mentioned throughout the thesis ................................ xii
Map 2: Approximate distribution of Arandic languages ........................................ 10
Map 3: The Anmatyerr communities (from Green 2010) ....................................... 42
Map 4: Extract from Eylmann's map which omits any reference to the Anmatyerr ... 70
Map 5: Ceremonial Festival Sites near Alice Springs. Greyed out area represents Alice Springs township area .......................................................... 126
Map 6: Approximate location of a number of sites and estates mentioned in this chapter, including Warlapanpa ....................................................... 179

FIGURES
Figure 1: At Arrangkerlk hills with Jimmy Haines, Paddy Kemarr (hidden behind Jimmy) and Davey Presley (in background), 2nd August 2008 (photo: L. Jordan) ................................................................. 34
Figure 2: Viewing film material on a laptop with a group of middle-aged and younger men during a hunting trip on the Hanson Creek (photo: Jimmy Haines) ........ 47
Figure 3: One of Strehlow's Field Diaries featuring song transcriptions ............... 50
Figure 4: An artist’s impression of contact between Stuart’s party with Anmatyerr people at Mer Amakweng (Central Mount Stuart) (taken from Stuart 1865) .... 60
Figure 5: Ernest Kramer’s photograph of some of the men that worked for Thomas Moar at the Woodforde Crossing c.1927 (SAM, Aborigines Friends Association Collection, item AA 1/59/3) .................................................. 69
Figure 6: Jack Arlpalywerrng Pwererl wearing the hat made for him by F.R. Scott (Spencer Collection, Museum Victoria, XP 14577) ..................................... 72
Figure 7: Anmatyerr men decorated for althart (a public ceremony) at Tea Tree Well in August 1927. Photograph taken by Roy Renfrey (Image courtesy of Glenn and Rosemary Boerth) ......................................................... 75
Figure 8: Urabuta, one of Tindale’s Anmatyerr informants (South Australian Museum) .......................................................... 81
Figure 9: ‘Raueruka’ [Arawe-irreke] Nathanael Pengart photographed by Herbert Basedow at Hermannsburg in 1920 (National Museum of Australia) .......... 90
Figure 10: Mickey Dow Dow gathering alangkwe (bush bananas) at Apwerte Irretyepe to the north west of Alice Springs, 28th April 1932 (SRC) .................... 109
Figure 11: Strehlow’s recreation of Aremelareny and Lywenge’s drawings of the ahakey story (Strehlow Field Diary 1932). Fig I shows the route of the ahakey men between places on Anmatyerr and Arrernte land and was drawn by Tom Lywenge. Fig II. Shows the positions of two ancestors and a ceremonial pole 122
Figure 12: One of the informants at Werlatyatherre (possibly Bob Rubuntja) and T.G.H. Strehlow, the ‘denizen of the ceremonial ground’, in conversation in 1953 (Still taken from Film Reel No.46) .............................................. 131
Figure 13: ‘Last views of my Wolatjatara [Werlatyatherre] camp, 6th Oct 1955’. (Strehlow Research Centre, PHO 00812) ........................................................ 133
Figure 14: Aileron informants 6/9/1968. L-R George Yerramp Rlwengapeltyey, Tom Uneynt Pengart, Bruce Campbell Pengart and Charlie Artetyerwenguny (SRC 03847) ................................................................. 136
Figure 15: Kenny Penangk Tilmouth at Alcoota Station in 1965 (SRC PHO-03971) .................................................................................................138

Figure 16: Alcoota men recording songs to tape. Mick Werlaty is seated immediately behind the tape recorder (1965) (SRC, image 03700). ..............................................140

Figure 17: Mark Inkamala and I at Mpweltyakert where half of Ted Strehlow’s ashes were laid to rest. There were once two trees here but fire has removed one. (Photo: P. Batty September 2014). ............................................................................156

Figure 18: Harold Payne in 1971 (SRC PHO-03972) .................................................................................................................................161

Figure 19: With Harold Payne Mpetyan at Ahalper, April 2015 (photo: Malcolm Heffernan). ..............................................................................161

Figure 20: Paddy Kemarr at a site near Mer Alhather (Mt Esther) (photo: J. Gibson). ..................................................................................181

Figure 21: Percy the rainmaker and gardener at Anningie Station (taken from Chisholm 1999). .................................................................................188

Figure 22: Ronnie McNamara pointing to sites along the Napperby Creek (photo: Mick Turner Ngal). ........................................................................................198

Figure 23: Singing Anmanty at Altywepe keretek (Oct 16). L to R - Lesley Stafford, Peter Cole, Ronnie McNamara, Shaun Angeles, Huckitta Lynch, Martin Hagan (Photo: Ben Deacon). .........................................................................................203

Figure 24: Strehlow’s Sketch map of the burial site of Charlie Artetyerwenguny. .........................................................................................213

Figure 25: Strehlow’s Sketch map of the Hanson Creek area southwest of Ti Tree (Strehlow Field Diary 38, 1968: 85a) (SRC). ..................................................217

Figure 26: Map of Ingkaparleparl’s burial site on the Hanson Creek, south of Ti Tree. .................................................................................................221

Figure 27: Malcolm Heffernan at Artwertakert, in the vicinity of where his grandfather was buried in 1937 (September 2014) (Photo: J. Gibson). ..........224

Figure 28: Tony Ngwarray and Samantha Greenwood reading an Anmatyerr family tree at the Anmatjere Library and Knowledge Centre in Ti Tree (photo J. Gibson). ..........................................................228

Figure 29: Paddy Kemarr at the ‘seed’ tree of Ntapwet Ngal (photo J. Gibson, 2014). .................................................................................................234
Abstract
This detailed ethnographic and historical study explores both the making and interpretation of one of the most complete collections of cultural material of any Indigenous group in Australia. Focusing on the work of the linguist/anthropologist T.G.H. Strehlow, this thesis challenges existing scholarly and popular understandings of ethnographic collections as either being exemplars of reified historical records or simple instruments of colonial dominance. By re-examining this collection in collaboration with some of the Aboriginal people most closely connected to it, my research recasts Strehlow’s salvage ethnography as a ‘co-production’, actively made with informants who responded dynamically and creatively to their unequal relationships with ethnographers and Euro-Australian society more generally. Employing a combination of archival and historical research with collaborative ethnographic enquiry, the interactions and relationships between Strehlow and his informants are closely examined and brought to the fore.

Grounded in extensive field research across a number of small towns and remote desert settlements in Central Australia, this thesis extends previous historical and biographical work on T.G.H. Strehlow’s legacy by inviting the recollections and critical perspectives of contemporary Arrernte and Anmatyerr men. Strehlow’s little-known Anmatyerr ethnography is explored in depth via the remembrances of some of the men that served as informants to him in the 1960s and 1970s, others that witnessed their relations working with him in the documentation of their urrempel (men’s ‘ceremonial festivals’) and younger men that have come to his collection for the first time. The men articulate their own interpretations and responses to this highly complex and interrelated body of textual, filmic and audio material.

This is a reflexive study which aims to advance an understanding of contemporary Aboriginal and, in particular, Anmatyerr male perspectives, on the documentation and handling of records of their most treasured Law – song, ceremony and ritual. It also highlights the ongoing importance of sociality, relationship, memory and orality in these communities today and provides insights into Indigenous perspectives on museum collections, history and ethnography in remote Australia and beyond.
Declaration

This thesis contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma at any university or equivalent institution and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, this thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference is made in the text of the thesis.

Signature: [Redacted]

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Date: 4 May 2017.

Publications produced during Enrollment


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Language and Orthography

The orthography favoured in this thesis is the one devised by the Institute for Aboriginal Development (IAD) in Alice Springs and currently in use amongst Anmatyerr and Northern Arrernte communities. This orthography has been developed over a number of years in close consultation with people across the Arandic-speaking region. Although it is admittedly difficult for the untrained reader to use, once understood this orthography is an invaluable tool for attempting to interpret and pronounce Arandic words. Those interested in understanding why the Arandic languages are spelt using this orthography should read Turpin’s ‘Have you ever wondered why Arrernte is spelt the way it is?’ (Turpin n.d.).

When directly quoting from Strehlow’s work I have included his original Arrernte spelling followed by the current orthographic spelling in square brackets i.e. njinanga [anyenhenge]. Aboriginal language words or phrases have been italicised in the text with the exception of place names which are capitalised and followed, where possible, with the more commonly known English name in brackets.

My own translations of Anmatyerr or Arrernte words or phrases are presented in square brackets and at times additional explanatory information may be provided in footnotes. In some cases I have had to translate Arrernte or Anmatyerr text that Strehlow left untranslated in his diaries. On these occasions I have transferred his original rendering of the quote into the accepted contemporary orthography before additionally translating them into English and providing the original Strehlow text in a footnote. Anmatyerr material is rendered according to the *Central and Eastern Anmatyerr to English Dictionary* (Green 2010a) and the Arrernte material as per the *Eastern and Central Arrernte to English Dictionary* (Dobson & Henderson 1994). I chose not to use the varied spellings systems that are currently in use for Western Arrernte (see Roennfeldt & Western Arrarnta Communities 2006; Breen et al. 2000).

It should be noted that the Anmatyerr orthography omits word-final ‘e’ vowels that are used in the Eastern & Central Arrernte orthography. For example, *urrempel* (Anmatyerr) and *urrempele* (Arrernte) sound the same although the spellings vary. My spelling choices vary between Arrernte and Anmatyerr depending on context.
A Note on Sources
Strehlow’s field diaries are cited throughout the text as manuscripts rather than as archival sources and are listed in the bibliography. These references refer to the typed version of each diary unless handwritten versions only are available. These diaries are kept at the Strehlow Research Centre in Alice Springs and can be accessed via application to the Centre. All other archival materials are cited in footnotes.
Map 1: Some of the key places mentioned throughout the thesis.
Prologue

He who stands aloof runs the risk of believing himself better than others and misusing his critique of society as an ideology for his private interest ... The detached observer is as much entangled as the active participant... (Adorno 1951, p.26).

I first encountered T.G.H. Strehlow's work whilst growing up at the foothills of the Dandenong Ranges in Victoria. When I was young, my family would sometimes visit the William Ricketts Sanctuary in Kalorama where sculptures of Central Australian Aboriginal people were blended into the luxuriant, green, temperate forest and the rocky features. Broad, flat stone tablets engraved with Arrernte words and phrases accompanied many of the sculptures. I later discovered that T.G.H. Strehlow, the controversial anthropologist and linguist, had provided the sculptor William Ricketts with these texts and had explained to him a number of key Arrernte concepts, such as Altyerrengge (in the Dreamtime/eternal beings and times).

The Ricketts sanctuary made sense to a child brought up by parents who were fascinated by world mythologies and open to a range of spiritualities. My parents introduced me to stories of mainly Eastern philosophies but also taught me to be expansive in my thinking and to consider what might be the rudimentary, perhaps even ‘eternal’, elements of human experience. The syncretism on display in the Ricketts Sanctuary, through the merging of Indian philosophy and Aboriginal spirituality (via the works of Spencer and Gillen and T.G.H. Strehlow), intrigued me and matched my parent’s own eccentricities.

Whilst working with Indigenous people in Australia and Central America in later years, my interest in different languages and cultural practices deepened. In the streets of León, Nicaragua, where I lived for a number of months, stood monuments commemorating Indigenous resistance to colonial oppression. The mostly mestizo populace (referring to people of combined European and Amerindian descent) appeared to embrace their Indigenous history. On returning to Australia I began working for Aboriginal organisations and various Aboriginal related government
initiatives in Alice Springs and my interest in colonial history and ethnography continued.

In time I began working for the Northern Territory Library out of an office kindly made available to me by the Strehlow Research Centre. My job involved working with Arrernte and Anmatyerr people on the development of their own digital cultural and historical collections, and the Strehlow collection offered important content. Encouraged by the Anmatyerr and Arrernte people that I knew to look further into the Strehlow collection and find materials relevant to them, I became engrossed in its details. At the same time, I was travelling with Anmatyerr people across their traditional lands and gaining an appreciation of their Anengkerr (Dreamings, Ancestral stories) and the complex social and cultural relationships that were embedded in anpernerrenty (kinship networks) and anyenheng (land-based, estate) relationships.

After leaving my position with the Library in 2008 I began to work as a consultant to the Strehlow Research Centre, creating content indexes for the field diaries written by Strehlow between 1932 and 1972. I continued to spend time with Anmatyerr and Arrernte people in my own time, and would often return to their communities to conduct research under the auspices of the Central Land Council, the Australian National University, or later in my capacity as Curator of Repatriation Research at Museum Victoria. More and more I began to see the ways that museum and historical collections and the associated ethnographic literature merged with contemporary lifeworlds. During the course of this research Anmatyerr men and I made concerted efforts to reveal the relationships between these contemporary lives and the Strehlow collection. It also became clear that Strehlow’s collection itself operated as thoroughly interconnected body of data and that each component part, be it an audio recording, a genealogy, or a map, spoke to multiple other parts of the collection.

Having worked in a professional capacity as a museum anthropologist of sorts, I also came to this research with an appreciation of how ethnographic collections were apprehended by the institutions that legally possessed them. Museums use classification systems borne of particular Western epistemologies that can see linked pieces of data, objects or recordings becoming internally disconnected from their
related parts as well as their social context. I also understood that most museum-like institutions possessed policies of repatriation and looked to see various aspects of their collections now ‘returned’ to ‘traditional owners’. I would often ponder though how a dense corpus of multi-media, such as Strehlow’s collection, could ever be simply ‘handed back’? Improving the Anmatyerr community’s knowledge of and access to this collection appeared to me to be a highly desirable, if not utterly obvious undertaking, but I remained fully conscious of what Batty (2006a) referred to as the ‘redemptive’ motivations of Commonwealth and State collecting institutions. Strehlow’s collection had been made like an intricately woven tapestry and disassembling component parts for ‘return’ threatened its inherent value. Wishing to simply ‘repatriate’ objects in accordance with an overriding ethical objective, without properly acknowledging the ambiguity of the historical, colonial context or the complexities of contemporary and future management of this material, seemed misguided.

These were of course the concerns of someone apprehensive about ‘cultural heritage’ and ‘preservation’ but I could see that the real task required was to discuss this material with Anmatyerr and Arrernte men. In discussing the anxieties and complexities of this collection with them I wished to explore their own thoughtful understandings of the past, of ethnography and of collections. As far as I could see, the Strehlow collection had for too long been regarded as too hard to critically engage with by scholars. It was either seen as being almost impenetrable because it’s linguistic and cultural complexity, or too culturally sensitive to utilise in publications. The only way of working with this material, and thus exploring these issues, was to bring the collection back to those that had the greatest stake in its future and knowledge of its contents.

I consequently came to this research with an awareness of both the production of an ethnographic corpus and its uses by different interest groups. I was often confronted with a number of challenging questions regarding the nature of archives and ethnographic collections. How much is a cultural group’s identity influenced by the work of ethnographers and the records that they produce? How were the ‘historical’ materials that I had introduced into the Anmatyerr communities conceptualized and understood within their own different cultural milieu? What does an oral tradition do
with the print residue left by ethnographers and how is it valued? And what were the prospects for Anmatyerr people to speak back to official archival sources or ethnographic accounts? As someone who has been employee of both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal organisations actively pursuing the documentation of ‘Indigenous knowledge’ or ‘Indigenous perspectives’, I also wondered how collecting institutions borne out of the Western Enlightenment, could come to properly comprehend the richness of these collections for Indigenous audiences. Could large, bureaucratic institutions like museums ever fully appreciate the intricacies of reintroducing so called ‘historical’ materials back into their source communities?

Despite tumultuous changes in the economic, policy and legalistic contexts of Central Australia in the intervening years between Strehlow’s work and my own, there was an observable continuity in the cultural traditions, stories and the names recounted; both mythological and personal. Many of these are discussed in this thesis, but it was on Southern Arrernte country in June of 2011, that I personally began to feel the contemporaneousness of this history.

I was on my way to visit the gravesite of T.G.H. Strehlow’s father, Carl Strehlow, at Horseshoe Bend Station with my two colleagues from Museum Victoria. I had rung the station from a phone box at the remote town of Oodnadatta asking permission from the managers, Peter and Libby Morphett, to see the gravesite.1 Peter, who had been at Horseshoe Bend since 1958, invited us in to the homestead for a cup of Nescafé and some of Libby’s homemade biscuits. We later walked from the homestead to the base of a nearby hill where Carl’s gravesite lay. I turned to Peter and asked, ‘Did you ever met Carl’s son, Ted Strehlow?’ ‘Oh yeah,’ he replied. ‘Ted Strehlow passed through here on one of his fieldwork trips’. ‘What was he like?’ I prompted. ‘Oh, he was an aloof type of bloke’, Peter added before pointing back towards the homestead. ‘He sat up there in the kitchen and had a cup of tea, just like you did before. It must have been in the 1960’s because he was driving a Land Rover.’

The ‘aloofness’ of Ted Strehlow has come to define my vision of him as a person and an ethnographer. It points to a difficult dynamic between the world of Central

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1 See Black notebook ‘March 2009-September 2013’. 21st June 2011.
Australian male ritual, which he regularly inhabited, and his pretentions as an academic and scholar of literature. On the one hand he had completely immersed himself in this Arandic world of song and ceremony and he took his personal and kin relationships in this domain utterly seriously. On the other hand, he clearly struggled to balance two registers of authority; one modelled on the solitary, expert Western scholar, and the other involving a far more dispersed form of knowledge spread amongst connected individuals and groups. To paraphrase psychoanalyst Otto Rank, I imagined that Strehlow sought to merge with a cultural realm that transcended him, while simultaneously struggling to establish a more ‘individual and aloof' position from which his synthesis could be made (in Jackson 2013, p.7). Moreover, Strehlow never faced the complexities of ethnographic documentation head on and unfortunately presumed authority over his relationships and the material he collected.

When I began writing this thesis I hoped that my research would in some respects extend upon Strehlow’s scrupulous work, but I also knew that I needed to move in new and different directions. More than simply ‘updating’ his work with a new generation of ‘Aboriginal informants’, I wanted to know much more about how the content of ethnographic collections could maintain a presence and significance in people’s contemporary lives. I suspect that Strehlow would have regarded my attempts, as well as the contemporary Anmatyerr and Arrernte commentaries that feature in this thesis, as an obfuscation of his meticulous and authoritative account. Regardless, I contend that it is precisely these perspectives that will afford his work enduring significance. How the elevation of informant voice and the readings and interpretations of contemporary people enhance this body of work are explored throughout the thesis.
Chapter 1: Introduction

*The subjects of ethnographies, it should never be forgotten, are always more interesting than their authors (Smith 1990, p.369).*

In the final months of writing this thesis, I met with two Northern Arrernte men to discuss the potential return of sacred ritual objects held by the Melbourne Museum to the Strehlow Research Centre in Alice Springs. Over a number of days, we looked into the history of these objects and how they came to be in the possession of a state institution 2,300 kilometres from their place of origin. Our research and discussions meandered along a path that eventually led us back to questions about the degree of agency exhibited by Central Australian men in the production of collections like this.²

The assumption that collectors and anthropologists had dragooned these men into handing over their treasured possessions and knowledge proved to be a far too simplistic explanation.

I believed, like so many of the Arrernte and Anmatyerr men with whom I have discussed this history, that things were rather different. The Aboriginal informants to Australian ethnographers had not been supplicants or dupes, but rather extraordinary figures that were integral to the story of how ethnographic collections were made. Some even saw their ancestors as visionaries who, knowing the rapid pace of cultural change, had enabled anthropologists to film and record their most secretive ceremonial performances with future generations in mind (Angeles 2016). Although the reasoning and motivations of these past generations was often unexplained, it was the unearthing of their stories that mattered most to contemporary Central Australian Aboriginal men. What was the nature of their relationship with ethnographers? Why did so many share their most treasured and secretive ritual content? What were they hoping to achieve from these interactions? If we accept the agency and intent of informants, then how does it change the way we understand these collections, and what does this mean for their ongoing and future relevancy?

² I define Central Australia as the arid centre of the Australian continent taking in southern half of the Northern Territory up to the township of Elliot.
It is via the collection of one of Australia’s most well-known and controversial ethnographers, Theodor George Henry (T.G.H.) Strehlow (1908-1978) and the agency of his predominantly Arrernte and Anmatyerr informants, that these and other questions are addressed in this thesis. Although T.G.H. Strehlow’s personal biography and his work on Arrernte men’s sacred traditions has been well canvassed in the literature (see below), exactly how the interests and motivations of his informants shaped his ethnographic practice, and what these men and their descendants make of his work today has not been adequately considered. Having spoken with some of the men that performed in front of Strehlow’s recording devices or saw him at work, I knew that their side of the story could be told. These men not only had their own idiosyncratic take on this history but had strong views about the relevance of this collection to present and future generations.

Almost all research on Strehlow has focused on his relationships with the Arrernte, the group with whom he spent most of his time and was most familiar with. But this previous research has failed to explore his larger presence across the Central Australian region. In this thesis, I concentrate almost solely on Strehlow’s little known work with the northern neighbours to the Arrernte, the Anmatyerr. As a cultural and linguistic group with deep affinities with the Arrernte, but also with a distinct identity of their own (Green 2010a; Koch 2004), the Anmatyerr perspective adds a new dimension to a well-worn historical narrative. For the Anmatyerr, Strehlow and the men he worked with were all ‘Urrempel-men’, a cohort of men actively pursuing, demonstrating and sharing in ritual knowledge.3 It is the Anmatyerr views on the Strehlow collection and their attitudes towards his collection that fundamentally concerns this thesis.

During the course of my research, Anmatyerr men told me many of the same Anengkerr (Dreaming) stories that they had revealed to Strehlow, sang some of the same songs he had recorded, and took me to many of the same places they had shown him decades earlier.4 This inadvertent ‘shadowing’ of Strehlow and his interlocutors

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3 The Arrernte spelling for this term is ‘urrempele’, but it may also be ‘urwempele’ (see Dobson & Henderson 1994).
4 The suitability of ‘the Dreaming’ to refer to this concept has been discussed and debated in detail with reference to the equivalent Arrernte term ‘altyerre’ (see Moore 2016; Green 2012; Wolfe 1991; Morphy 1996).
became what anthropologist Michael Jackson (2006) has described as a useful ‘mode of discovery’ in the course of bridging historical events and contemporary interpretations. This process was further aided by the fact that I could take digital copies of the audio recordings made of these songs and the films of their associated ceremonial performances into the field with me. This was the first time that this highly restricted body of knowledge had left the confines of archives and museums and had been allowed to be shared with people in remote Aboriginal communities.

Collaboratively unpacking Strehlow’s corpus, Anmatyerr perspectives have helped me produce an historical and ethnographic critique that decouples its contents from the confines of T.G.H. Strehlow’s biography.

**T.G.H. Strehlow**

To write about T.G.H. or ‘Ted’ Strehlow is in many respects to go over old ground. Subject to two biographies (Hill 2003; McNally 1981a), often referenced in the history of Australian anthropology and linguistics (Morton 1995, 2004; Moore 2008), cited in works of literary and cultural studies (Morrison 2017; Watson 2017), and noted in the broader history of ‘race relations’ in Australia (Rowse 1999; Inglis 2002), Strehlow’s story is relatively well known. Born to German parents at the remote Lutheran mission of Hermannsburg in the Northern Territory in 1908, he was raised learning the language of the predominant Western Arrernte population. His father, the Lutheran Reverend Carl Strehlow, had been stationed at the mission since 1894 and had become an excellent ethnographer and linguist (see Kenny 2014; and Veit 2004). Strehlow’s mother also spoke Arrernte and dedicated herself to the welfare of the mission inhabitants (Strehlow 2011). In addition to learning the Arrernte language, T.G.H. was also schooled in German and English and came to possess an admirable ability with languages, later completing studies in English Literature, Latin, Greek and classical studies.

Although his feet were firmly planted in the traditions of the Old World, in the eyes of his academic mentors it was his fluency in an Aboriginal language that offered him most potential as a scholar (Jones 2004). He was encouraged to firstly put his language skills to use in order to survey the extent and variety of the Arandic languages, focusing on the various Arrernte dialects including Anmatyerr, but less so Alyawarr and Kaytetye (see Map 2). Secondly, he was to move on to recording
Arandic song and mythological traditions. To some extent building upon his father’s work on Arrernte and Luritja myth and song (Strehlow 1907a), T.G.H. spent close to four decades recording place names, songs, myths, genealogies and closed men’s ceremonies. It is a visually and aurally compelling collection containing over 26 hours of raw 16mm movie film footage depicting over 800 unique ceremonies, approximately 150 hours of song recordings and over 8000 still photographs of ceremony and landscape. Forty-four meticulously kept and extremely detailed field diaries, covering four decades of research, as well as over 1,200 artifacts (sacred objects and ritual paraphernalia) collected, make this the most complete collection of cultural material of any Indigenous people in Australia.

Wary of overly theoretical agendas, Strehlow’s approach to ethnography was empirical (Gibson forthcoming; Austin-Broos 1997; Morton 1995) and resembled the type of salvage anthropology pioneered by early American ethnographers and linguists such as Franz Boas and Edward Sapir (see Adams 2016; Hester 1968; Gruber 1970) that characterised Australian anthropology up until the 1960s (Mulvaney 2008; Elkin 1970a). The practice of salvage ethnography had begun in earnest in Australia with the arrival of the Cambridge Anthropological Expedition team, led by Alfred Cort Haddon to the Torres Strait in 1898 (Haddon et al. 1901) and Walter Baldwin Spencer and Francis James Gillen’s investigations throughout Central Australia in 1901 (Spencer & Gillen 1904). Premised upon the widely held idea that Indigenous Australians were set to decline upon contact with European society, these expeditions pioneered the use of audio and filmic documentation to record as best they could the unique cultural practices of the people.

Three decades after this pioneering work in Central Australia, Strehlow took up the mantle of salvage ethnographer with gusto, persistently making the case that urgent research was required before the languages and cultures of Central Australia contracted.

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5 The Arandic languages consist of two dialect clusters, Arrernte and Kaytetye. Anmatyerr is a part of the Arrernte dialect cluster. Up until the early twentieth century, the Arandic languages were spoken across a large swathe of Central Australia - between Oodnadatta in South Australia and Barrow Creek in the Northern Territory. However in recent times the distribution of the Arandic languages has contracted (Strehlow 1947, p.70; Koch 2006; Breen 2008; Chewings 1936, p.20190; Spencer & Gillen 1904, p.1).

6 The collection includes Strehlow’s professional and personal correspondence, over 1500 monographs and also the audio and film equipment he used in the field.
completely perished in the face of colonisation. In his view Central Australia was becoming increasingly ‘empty and silent’ of song and ritual; it was his role to save ‘the last scraps of the local traditions before complete oblivion settled down upon them’ (1968a, p.92). Unlike the aforementioned expeditions which involved either collaborations or teams of researchers, Strehlow worked alone but via close bonds with Aboriginal co-collaborators.

Map 2: Approximate distribution of Arandic languages.

Strehlow’s personal commitment to his project was remarkable. His published outputs alone revealed a poetic and ‘literary’ quality to Australian Aboriginal culture that had hitherto been imperceptible to the wider public. In the later stages of his career however, Strehlow became ruthlessly proprietorial over his collection and was blinkered to the rights and wishes of contemporary Central Australian Aboriginal
men. Unlike his counterpart in Australian anthropology, Ronald Berndt, who could see the potential of a collection like this as a source of ‘social meaning and emotional stability’ for Arandic peoples (Berndt 1979a, p.88), Strehlow regarded the material as his personal inheritance (see Morton 1995; Hill 2003; McNally 1981a). The inadvertent publication of a selection of his photographs of secret-sacred ceremonies in a popular Australian magazine (see Kaiser 2004) and his repeated claims to being the only appropriate heir to Arandic ceremonial traditions overshadowed his decades of work. Strehlow’s collection, as Peterson et al have noted (2008a, p.6), became well known ‘for all the wrong reasons’.

After his death in 1978 the controversies continued and the extensive compendium of artifacts, recordings and manuscripts became the subject of numerous disputes of ownership (Smith 2009; Hugo 1997). With his wife Kathleen Strehlow planning to move the collection overseas, the Northern Territory Government managed to purchase the collection for a significant sum in 1991 with the promise of establishing the Strehlow Research Centre in Alice Springs.7 Since that time, Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal researchers and community members have been able to access aspects of this rich body of work, though staff acknowledge (Galt-Smith 2001; Angeles 2016) that more needs to be done in terms of engaging Aboriginal expertise.

**Agency in the Archive**

Despite the considerable amount of literature produced on Strehlow over the years, there have been remarkably few serious attempts to record the perspectives of his Aboriginal informants. Those that have chosen to investigate the degree of Aboriginal agency in this history have tended to look back through Strehlow’s diaries for evidence (Kimber 2004), or concluded that it was too difficult to fathom their ‘original intentions’ (Morton 1995, p.56). Where the perspectives of Central Australian Aboriginal people have been sought out, the commentaries are often shallow or restricted to modest, abridged statements in English (see Smith 2009, p.92; Hill 2003; Cohen 2001a). None have attempted to significantly reshape their analysis of either the history, or the content of the collection itself, via the interpretations and evaluations of contemporary Aboriginal people.

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7 His second wife, Kathleen Strehlow, kept parts of the collection. Some of its contents have appeared intermittently on the auction market.
Bringing these perspectives to the fore in this thesis, I take Ann Stoler’s (2010) advice and cast the Strehlow corpus not as a receptacle of objective knowledge or anthropological fact, but as a site where ethnographic knowledge was, and continues to be, produced. And while I have permitted the non-archived evidence of ethnographic experience to inform my analyses, I have constantly returned to Strehlow’s collection looking for balance and contrast. As Stoler contends, it is important that we do not move too ‘quickly and confidently’ to readings ‘against the grain’ without moving first along the grain and becoming familiar with the archival evidence (Stoler 2006, p.100). The archive offers multiple possibilities for inquiry: for biographical study, for understanding the development of Strehlow’s distinct body of work on ritual and myth, and for a critical analysis of the formation of the archive itself. Strehlow’s archive is thus treated as a critical starting point to the analysis. While the ‘colonial forms and logics of knowledge’ and the way ‘native voice’ is represented are certainly challenged it is the deliberate and constant interchange between the archival/historical and the ethnographic/contemporary that is encouraged in order draw out a deeper appreciation of the material.

Finding evidence of Indigenous agency amongst the archives of colonialism and global exploration is now a growing area of study. Older ethnographic auction catalogues (Torrence & Clarke 2011), explorers journals (Konishi, Nugent & Shellam 2015; Driver & Jones 2009; Malaurie 2003), museum and archival sources (Harrison, Byrne & Clarke 2013) and early anthropological works are being scoured by scholars looking for evidence of Indigenous accomplishment or motivation (Gardner & McConvell 2015; Harrison, Byrne & Clarke 2013). Seeking to uncover similar creative responses from Indigenous people to colonial interests and agendas, this research develops further evidence to counter conventional emphases often given to the exploits and achievements of a singular, ‘heroic’, ‘white’ protagonist - a theme common not only to the hagiographies of T.G.H. Strehlow (O’Byrne 1993) but to histories of colonial exploration and expansion more generally.

I approach the collection, like so many Arrernte and Anmatyerr men do, as fundamentally a co-production. Shaun Angeles Penangke, a Northern Arrernte man who has joined me on a number of research trips and spent the last three years engaged in the cataloguing of Strehlow’s films, has described the involvement of
Central Australian men in the making of this archive in similar terms. Speaking at the 25th anniversary celebrations of the Strehlow Research Centre, Shaun emphasised that it was the ‘akngerrepate’ (senior cultural leaders), who exhibited ‘foresight and vision’ in choosing to work with Strehlow, that should be regarded as the collection’s ‘co-creators’ (Angeles 2016). Just as museologist Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett has noted, ethnographic collections like this are not simply found, but made by agents operating within scholarly and ideological frames (1998, p.2). And yet while Kirshenblatt-Gimblett stresses the particular academic or scholarly disciplines that produce these collections, I concur with Shaun; they are equally representative of the people and the relationships that made them.

**Anmatyerr Perspectives**

The limitations of the archive are balanced here with the recollections, commentaries, opinions, memories and critiques of Anmatyerr people. Between 2013 and 2016, I travelled to seven Anmatyerr communities on numerous occasions to discuss the Strehlow collection with over 40 men, across three generations. The majority of the participants had neither seen nor heard this material before, though two of them, Ken Tilmouth Penangk and Harold Payne Mpetyan, had acted as informants to Strehlow in the late 1960s and 1970s. They remembered their interactions with Strehlow and like many of the other men from across the region, they generously offered their explanations of the ceremonies and songs that had been recorded and their views of the present and future value of this material.

The process of eliciting Anmatyerr and Arrernte testimony, as well as documenting the manner in which these people understood and utilised this collection, marks a significant intervention into the narrative of cultural decline propagated by Strehlow and others. Strehlow’s ethnography, though detailed and thorough, is clouded by a kind of modernist primitivism that led him to promulgate contradictory views about the future of Aboriginal people. Sometimes he regarded them as adaptable and resilient, but mostly he regarded their traditions as decaying and damaged (Rowse 2012). The assertions of cultural decay have continued to haunt the Strehlow collection, stifling any serious attempts to assess how contemporary Arrernte and Anmatyerr people are able to make sense of it. In the absence of any ethnographic evidence, some either assume that ‘there are not many senior men’ with authoritative
knowledge of material collected by Strehlow (Cohen 2001a, p.133) or that the collection is now so ‘mysterious’ to Aboriginal people that they ‘themselves are unsure of who may see what’ (Smith 2009, pp.85–86 italics added).

The Anmatyerr and Arrernte responses to the elements of the collection examined in this thesis demonstrate just how inaccurate this view is. Whilst attenuation of ritual knowledge is certainly evident, these presumptions are far too fatalistic and fail to appreciate the different ways that Anengkerr (Dreaming), song, ceremony and place continue to animate the lifeworlds of Anmatyerr people. Senior men, albeit in small numbers, have considerable confidence in song and ritual knowledge and when given the opportunity, they and others across the generations have been able to illuminate this collection with surprising adroitness. As well as this continuity though, there are also important socio-cultural changes and ontological shifts that have occurred since the mid-twentieth century (Chapter 8) that need to be understood not simply as deficiencies, but as creative adjustments made during the tumultuous times of colonial Australia in the twentieth century.

It is important to point out however that these Anmatyerr perspectives and experiences are not necessarily shared by the Arrernte. The distinctive histories and experiences of the two groups make their interpretations and interests in the collection quite distinct from one another. Unlike Arrernte populations who have had to grapple with two competing Christian missions (Catholic in the east and Lutheran in the west) and the expanding township of Alice Springs (in the centre of Arrernte territory), the Anmatyerr have suffered comparatively less settler intervention in their region. Anmatyerr traditional lands have never hosted a sizeable township, mission or government settlement and their interactions with alhernter (Europeans) have been shaped almost solely by a long-term engagement with pastoralism (see Chapter 3). The Anmatyerr have also received far less attention from ethnographers than the Arrernte who are recognised as one of the most closely studied Aboriginal groups in Australia (Gill 1998, p.122; Russell 2001, p.47).

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8 Anmatyerr people use Anengkerr for this concept but also the more well known Arrernte word Altyerre.
9 There was a government ration depot at Mer Ata (Bullocky Soak) nearby to Central Mount Stuart that was very small and short lived (between 1945 and 1947).
Arrernte and Anmatyerr people are fully aware of these historical and contemporary differences. Martin Hagen, an Anmatyerr man aged in his early thirties, has for example noted with irony that his *mer* (country) was like a ‘secret land’ where knowledge of song, sacred sites and rituals have persisted largely undetected by observers. Only the acrylic paintings of Martin’s relatives from the Napperby area (the iconic founders of the Western Desert artistic movement Clifford Possum, Tim Leura and Kaapa Mpetyan/Jampajinpa) had publicised some of this information (Johnson 1994, 2010, pp.11–43; Kean 2011; Gibson & Kean 2016). The Arrernte on the other hand had experienced decades of intense documentation whilst struggling to maintain their traditions.10 Arrernte men openly confess to an increasing ‘reliance’ upon the so-called more ‘educated’ senior men of the Anmatyerr region in order to sing for them during initiation ceremonies, and in some cases to instruct them about their own countries, ceremonies and songs.11 The Warlpiri are said to have supported the Anmatyerr in similar ways in the past (Young 1987), as individuals will share in Dreaming, kin and ceremonial responsibilities across cultural and linguistic regions.

The decision to focus principally upon the Anmatyerr material and Anmatyerr perspectives in this thesis stemmed largely from my own personal relationships with these people (see Prologue and Chapter 2). In fact, the richness of Strehlow’s ethnography only became apparent to me after being prompted by Anmatyerr people to look more closely at his collection. As we delved deeper and deeper into the margins of this archive, away from far more voluminous Arrernte content, it became apparent that this previously unexplored material offered exciting new perspectives. Contrary to most of the scholarship on Strehlow’s work, relationships and legacy amongst the Arrernte, and more specifically the Western Arrernte (Morton 1997; Hill 2003; Austin-Broos 2009, 2002), this new angle revealed an ethnographic experience of regional scope. As Strehlow himself reminded us shortly before his death in 1978, he had conducted ‘most’ of his own research ‘away from the Hermannsburg area’ (1978a, p.155) and had been driven to ‘follow’ the travelling Dreaming tracks across the wider landscape. Strehlow had branched out across the region, following the

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10 Notebook, Alice Springs 09/09/2015. Martin McMillian, Martin Hagen and Johnny Dixon.
11 Interview with Shaun and Martin 15th April 2016.
connections between songs, places, ceremonies and mythologies and people’s personal and collective ties to them.  

Given these links and the geographical proximity of the Anmatyerr to the Arrernte, as well as their significant ties in ritual, language and kin (Green 2010a; Young 1987), it is unsurprising that he was drawn into their territory. The volume of Anmatyerr content in this collection is quite significant. Strehlow filmed 24 different Anmatyerr ceremonies between 1953 and 1965, consisting of 72 separate ceremonial performances (what he labelled as ‘acts’) and many hours of audio recordings (yet to be quantified) of over 30 different Anmatyerr songs. Travelling across the length and breadth of the Anmatyerr region twice (first in 1932 and again in 1968) and also making a number of other smaller trips into the region over the years, Strehlow was able to map a large number of significant sites associated with songs and mythologies. There are also a number of Anmatyerr-specific ‘family trees’ that record details of close to 370 individuals. Over 50 different Anmatyerr men helped Strehlow compile this collection, and it now stands as the most extensive ethnography of the Anmatyerr people produced prior to introduction of land rights anthropology in the late 1970s.

Concentration on the Anmatyerr should not suggest however, that I have not considered the perspectives of the Arrernte people. For example, a number of the participants in this research identified as having both Anmatyerr and Arrernte ancestry, while others expressed the view that the two groups were far more contiguous than the conventional linguistic and anthropological literature suggests. Senior men such as Ken Tilmouth and Paddy Kemarr for example, repeatedly commented that ‘Arrernte and Anmatyerr are the same!’, a view also supported by some of the early ethnographic observations (Róheim 1945, pp.60, 102, 203). On

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12 Though there is undoubtedly a very significant amount of Western Arrernte material in Strehlow’s collection, the Central and Eastern Arrernte content slightly outweighs it. The Anmatyerr, Southern Arrernte and Northern Arrernte material is also extremely extensive.

13 It should be noted that the appreciation of the connectedness of places, people and (often) travelling ancestors also led to important work with the Luritja and to a lesser extent with the Pintupi, Warlpiri, Kayeteye, Alyawarr, Yankunytjatjara, Antakirinya and Wangkangurru.

14 During this period and into the present, the majority of anthropological research in this region has been carried out in order to establish and assert rights to land under Australian law. Some of the key ethnographers to work on these claims include Jennifer Green, Rod Hagen, Marcia Langton, Nicolas Peterson and Elspeth Young. Systematic documentation of song or ritual however was never within the ambit of this research.

15 Ken Tilmouth at Alcoota 04062014 part3.WAV transcript.
the other hand, Anmatyerr speakers have equally been described as being ‘half-Walbiri [Warlpiri]’ (Meggitt 1962, p.40; Munn 1973, p.133) or ‘so mixed up with the Illiaura [Alyawarr] that it is difficult to tell where one ends and the other begins’ (Gillen et al. 2001, p.434). Tired of these orthodox categories, some members of older generations, like Paddy Kemarr, preferred to instead describe their cultural identities as being something far more localised. When pressed on the issue, Paddy replied, ‘Nah. I’m Kal ntheyelkwer. I’m Kal ntheyelkwer me’, referring to the ‘old language’ spoken by people from the western Anmatyerr area. Don Presley also preferred to describe himself as ‘Artetye unanth’, an ethnonym referring to the ‘mulga scrub’ environment of the central and northern Anmatyerr area.16 Leaving the inescapable limits of ethnonyms, tribal boundaries and classifications to one side (see Peterson 1976; Holcombe 2004; Fried 1975; McConvell 2006), contemporary speakers of Anmatyerr nonetheless agree that they do have a distinct identity.

By focusing on Strehlow’s Anmatyerr ethnography and Anmatyerr specific responses to this collection, some of the now well-entrenched attitudes and opinions about Strehlow amongst the Arrernte community can be avoided. In brief, some Arrernte people argue that Strehlow was a duplicitous or even corrupt character that dispossessed them of their cultural heritage. Others, usually those from the Western Arrernte community at Hermannsburg, speak of him with great fondness. Regardless of these opinions though, most Arrernte people see the Strehlow collection as an important cultural resource (see Malbunka 2004; Wilmot & Morgan 2010; Kenny 2014, pp.187–193) useful to helping rediscover details about their traditions and family histories.

To the Anmatyerr though, Strehlow is a marginal historical figure with little significance to their cultural history or future. Because their communities are located hundreds of kilometres from Alice Springs where the Strehlow Research Centre is located, and their interactions with Strehlow had been far fewer to begin with, their

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16 Pers. comm Don Presely and Paddy Kemarr. See audio file ‘Ti Tree 05062014 part 2.WAV’. Kal ntheyelkwer is according to Green (2010a) is likely based on the particular pronunciation, in that dialect, of the phrase kel nthenth-lkwer. It is described by some as having a ‘heavy’ or ‘deep’ sound. Paddy described this language as being spoken in the past by people, ‘That way from right up Napperby. Right up, I think, somewhere half way there, Mbunghara. Yeah but it’s hard from Arrernte now, from there. I bin living with them Arrernte people. That awern-akel Kal ntheyelkwer. Sometimes we talk Arrernte.’
utilisation of this collection has been much less frequent and far less political. In many cases, the Anmatyerr people I met and spoke with had never visited the Centre before and had no idea that the collection contained material of relevance to them. The distance from the controversial, and at times politicised discourse surrounding this history, gives Anmatyerr perspectives a distinctive freshness and invites new and innovative thinking about the value of such a collection.

Artwekenh (Belonging to Men)

There is an obvious absence of female perspectives in this research, but this omission is not accidental. Strehlow’s collection is almost exclusively focused on the song and ritual practices of men and is commonly understood as being utterly forbidden to women. One of the hallmarks of Central Australian Aboriginal society is the particularly strong divisions between male and female roles and responsibilities (Collmann 1988). These gendered domains are evident in everyday interactions, but are particularly strong when it comes to the ritual sphere, where men and women will generally have their own songs, dances, rituals and mythological descriptions (Spencer & Gillen 1899; Elkin 1935; Berndt 1974). While these gendered domains share a great deal and will at times interact, men’s ritual in Central Australia is generally demarcated as ‘men’s business’ or in Anmatyerr as ‘artwekenh’ [belonging to men]. This male sphere is highly secretive and its contents closely guarded by men with the requisite ritual knowledge and social standing (Myers 2014; Jones 1995a).17

The lives of Central Australian Aboriginal women, children and the uninitiated were largely cordoned off in Strehlow’s ethnography, as were the everyday, mundane aspects of social life. His ethnography was in no way expansive and never attempted to describe the heterogeneous nature of Arandic being or domestic community life. Myopically focused on male ritual and myth, women barely figure in his broader ethnographic scheme and are only cursorily noted (1971a, pp.650–653). Like most of his contemporaries, Strehlow accepted that female song and ceremony was secondary in a religious domain seemingly controlled by men (Bell 1984; Elkin 1935, p.197). Subsequent research has of course shown just how much women participate in ceremonial life (see Moyle 1986, pp.76–127), how they maintain their own song and

17 Artwekenh, literally means ‘belonging to men’.
ceremonial traditions (Bell 1985; Turpin 2013; Koch 2013) and how they may also be privy to some of the song and ceremonial traditions of men (Bradley & Yanyuwa Families 2010, pp.173–177). But for Strehlow, these concerns lay far beyond his interests.

Strehlow’s close proximity and involvement in the secretive male ritual world have made it very difficult for him to cross over into the female domain.18 To do so would have almost certainly caused suspicion amongst his male informants and raised anxieties about what he might inadvertently reveal to women. Mick Werlaty Pengart, one of Strehlow’s most important Anmatyerr informants in the 1960s for example, explained that Strehlow’s Land Rover ‘was known everywhere as a sort of travelling “sacred cave” (makamaka [amek-amek]) and that no women could normally approach it or even look in its direction’ (T.G.H. Strehlow 1964a, p.xx). Arrernte men today have similarly recall that when they saw Strehlow’s car arrive in their communities, women and children knew to keep well clear. Martin McMillan Kemarr was a young boy when he remembered seeing Strehlow arrive at the Santa Teresa Mission:

I saw it from a long way… Didn’t interfere or anything… That’s when all the kids were running around everywhere. And we said “Hey, there is a stranger over there!” … I was hiding you know. I didn’t know what was going on. I thought that must be akiw [men’s ceremony camp] or something. So we sneaked away and hid ourself… didn’t say anything after that, nothing.19

The secrecy and restrictions associated with men’s ceremonial matters continue to be taken extremely seriously by Arrernte and Anmatyerr people. The Strehlow Research Centre building, widely understood by the local Aboriginal populace of Alice Springs as a place of ‘men’s business’, is often described as being ‘amek-amek’ [restricted/off-limits] (see Chapter 9). Only the ‘family trees’ (genealogies) and a small number of non-ceremonial photographs are ever accessed by women, and even in these cases some women approach the building with a degree of caution and will

18 Though perhaps not impossible, see the work of Olive Pink (1933, 1936) for example, who documented some of the same male ceremonial material documented by Strehlow in the 1930s.
19 Interview with Martin McMillan 15th April 2016. See Shaun and Martin 2016.WAV.
often send in other researchers or friends to collect information on their behalf. Female perspectives and analyses of this collection, while not impossible as the work of both Anna Kenny (2014) and Dianne Austin-Broos (2009) have shown, is nonetheless incredibly difficult when the ceremonial content of the collection is being considered.

While it is conceivable that some senior women will have knowledge of aspects of these songs and ceremonies this cannot, as Eric Michaels has also observed, be confused with the right to speak publically about these matters (1985, p.508). I was therefore careful not to elicit or invite the views of women during the course of this research out of respect for their responsibilities in this predicament. Moreover, I wanted to ensure that my own reputation amongst the male Arrernte and Anmatyerr community was not jeopardised. As the ceremonies and songs discussed herein continue to be treated with extreme sensitivity and secretiveness, serious limitations have been placed upon how I present and discuss this material. Strehlow’s methodical explanations and translations of song texts, and his detailed descriptions of ceremonies as well visual evidence of the ceremonies cannot be reproduced here. Accordingly, the deeper clarifications and explanations of the ritual or mythological proffered by the men whom I spoke with have been deliberately truncated, rendered with intentional ambiguity, or simply excluded. To be doubly sure of the acceptability of the information presented in this thesis, an iterative process of writing was also adopted whereby interview transcripts and extracts were discussed with the relevant people prior to submission.

Analytical Framework
In devising an analytical framework, I have drawn on several disciplines including socio-cultural anthropology, history, and museology. Although ultimately an empirically driven study unbound by any specific theoretical model/s, I have sought to understand the making of this archive and its interpretation today through a conceptual approach that resonates with strands of thinking associated with dialogical, phenomenological and existentialist anthropology (Jackson 1996; Desjarlais &

20 Malcolm Heffernan told me of a young woman that had learnt some typically male song material from her father. She knew the material but never uttered it in front of men. See Brown notebook, 21st April 2015.
Throop 2011; Dastur 2010; Ram & Houston 2015; Jackson & Piette 2015; Jackson 2005, 2013). At the heart of this approach is an emphasis on the relationships between informants and ethnographers and the production of ethnographic knowledge.

This approach is inspired by anthropological perspectives that emphasise the centrality of relationships to the ethnographic encounter (Jackson 1996, 2013, 2005) and shared terrains of social activity. Michael Jackson’s prioritising of ‘radically empirical’ research that honours the sites of lived social experience where ‘meanings are made, will is exercised, and reflection takes place’ (1996, p.22) has been particularly influential. Understanding the social world in this way means that if we are to appreciate what the Strehlow collection means to people today, as well as appreciate its history, we can best deliver this via fieldwork and shared practical activity (Jackson & Piette 2015, p.21). Expressed in another way, this approach stresses that analyses should begin with the perceptions and experiences of people first and foremost within their social contexts.

Interpretation of the collection and its history is conducted from this vantage point rather than via recourse to conceptual abstractions like the ‘Indigenous’ and ‘non-Indigenous’ binaries or through the lens of historically determined and structural relationships. Chris Anderson, a museum anthropologist with wide-ranging experience in the repatriation of men’s ceremonial material in Central and Northern Australia, has called for similar particularistic and local analyses:

The focus on gross structural relations in Australian history has precluded or ignored micro-ethnographic and historical accounts of what actually happened on the ground. Also in the re-telling (reinvention?) of colonial encounter, social action has been all but left out. The battle lines have been too sharply drawn (Anderson 1995a, p.1).

I have therefore tried to write close to the contents of local history and experience despite potentially unsettling some of the binaries that now commonly circulate these politicised histories. Although I adopt a decidedly less politicised language than the ‘subaltern studies’ of postcolonial theory (Gandhi 1998; Spivak 1988; Chandra 2015)
I do nevertheless share their deep concern with non-Western, subjective experiences, memories and personal journeys (Gandhi 1998, p.164). Challenging the well-established epistemological divisions in Western scholarship that mark off the world of the ‘objective’ European intellect from the world of the ‘irrational’ or ‘authentic’ Indigene (Sahlins 1995; Wolfe 1999; Povinelli 2002; Kuper 2003; Merlan 2006) I try to gain a better appreciation of ethnographies as being sites of intercultural production (Hinkson 2005). Accepting that such categories are mutually constituting, historically contingent and ultimately too porous to be definitively bounded, I use the term ‘intercultural’ in order to again draw attention to this relationality (Myers 2002; Merlan 2005, 2013; Smith & Hinkson 2005; Sullivan 2006; Abercrombie 1998; Ottosson 2016). Rather than developing a narrative that pits Strehlow, the non-Indigenous linguist-ethnographer, against the Indigenous Anmatyerr and Arrernte, the thesis looks for the ways in which cultural differences are mediated, intermingled and interrelated.

Inspired by other studies that have taken this type of reflexive approach when investigating relationships between historical material and contemporary lives, I have tried to use my own experience as means of developing an interpretive understanding. Austin-Broos (2009) in her explorations of Western Arrernte reflections on their own contemporary sense of identity and its connections with the past, is an example closely related to my own field of ethnography. Jackson’s (1995) narrativity and reflection on his experiences amongst the Warlpiri similarly strives for an understanding borne of intersubjectivity. But, away from the deserts of Australia, anthropological explorations of Indigenous people’s reaction and interpretation of archival and museum objects, have proven equally motivating. Haidy Geismar’s (2009) collaborative return of early twentieth century photography to the Indigenous people of Vanuatu, Chris Ballard’s (2013) dialogical history of anthropological field practices (also in Vanuatu), and Orin Starn’s (2004) collaborative research with the Indigenous peoples in northern California into the fate of Ishi, the so-called ‘last’ of the Yahi people, each adopt similar strategies as I have in this thesis. In each case, the interactions of the researcher and their interlocutors are woven into description and analysis.
Though not losing sight of the historically conditioned inequalities that underpin the physical, political and legal structures in colonial states, I use descriptions of the relational, experiential and local to guide my analysis. Structural issues are not discarded in discussions of both historical and present interactions but neither do they take on a primacy (Ram & Houston 2015). Jackson puts it this way:

What is critical about experience is that it is at once determined by historically located or socially constituted pre-understandings and at the same time never entirely reducible to such pre-givens (Jackson 2015, p.294).

As I discuss in Chapters 3, 4 and 5, changing historical, colonial and economic contexts, including the early period of colonial violence in the Northern Territory, undoubtedly set the tone of relationships with ethnographers and settlers more generally. Many Central Australian Aboriginal people also came to know T.G.H. Strehlow either via his work with colonial authorities in ‘Native Affairs’ or via his scholarly research which was generally enabled by significant university and government funding and aided by local pastoralists. In Chapters 6 and 7, Anmatyerr men explain the interactions with Strehlow with reference to some of these larger historical, socio-economic considerations. These descriptions allow for issues of power to enter the analysis, as they are constituted in personal or group experiences, rather than emanating from theoretical models.

Having ‘shadowed’ Strehlow’s work I came to agree with Dennis Tedlock and Bruce Mannheim that all ethnography (Strehlow’s and indeed my own) needed to be recognised as an ‘intercultural phenomenon, produced, reproduced and revised in dialogues between fieldworkers and their subjects’ (1995, p.1). The significance of these interrelationships have been of particular concern to anthropology for some time now (Hymes 1972; Tedlock 1979; Fabian 1983). Taking these insights further, dialogical approaches insist that all knowledge is fundamentally a product of the differential relations between the perceiver (anthropologist) and the perceived (informant). Neither are separate entities at all, but ‘relations between two coordinates… each serving to differentiate the other’ (Holquist 2000, p.26). The
knowledge produced in ethnographies then, cannot be embodied exclusively in either of these categories but is a property of their relationship.

As such, I have tried to avoid reducing these complex interactions between people and groups to an interplay between powerful colonial apparatuses and ‘anticolonial responses’ (Veracini 2011, p.3). To do so would leave little space for the somewhat ‘unexpected’ political, social or religious ensembles that emerge during ‘moments of colonial stress’ (Clifford 2001, p.478). As Gardener and McConvell (2015) have shown in their analysis of some of the earliest anthropological investigations in Australia, colonial expectations often struggle to ‘contain’ the interdependent and personal relationships that arise amidst ethnographic work. Strehlow’s regular participation and inclusion in ceremonial events (Chapter 5 and 6) and the way in which Anmatyerr people now encourage Western institutions to adopt their own systems of managing this collection (Chapter 9), speak to the type of interrelation that has been a characteristic of collections as ‘contact zones’ (Clifford 1997, pp.188–219). Contrary to the view that ethnographies and their collections are simply powerful instruments of Western dominance, James Clifford has shown how these collections can become important arenas where ‘different cultures intersect, interact and are mutually influenced by the encounter’ (in McCarthy 2016, p.5).

Between History and Ethnography

Working at the intersection between ethnographic and historical methodologies, I embrace a view of the past that incorporates and welcomes social memory and orality. While some of the more ‘historical’ chapters presented early on (3, 4 and 5) are based upon archival sources, they are at times interwoven with insights derived from my fieldwork. The more ‘ethnographic’ chapters that follow (6, 7, 8 and 9) are similarly balanced by responding to the contents of the historical archive, although they emphasise Anmatyerr remembrances and versions of events.

It is important to acknowledge that in general, Anmatyerr people speak English as a second or third language, and may have limited literacy skills. Moreover, as their local histories have not been well documented, they are like many minority and colonised peoples, a society that possesses ‘reserves of memory but little or no historical capital’ (Nora 1989, pp.7–8). Listening to Anmatyerr oral memories was
therefore crucial to not only permitting more actors, and more stories, upon the stage of this history, but allowed for my ethnographic experience to function as an interpretive guide to the overall research. I took the phenomenological view that the past can only ever be understood in response to the changing social contexts of those that interpret and remember them (Ram & Houston 2015, p.18) and negotiated in a dialectical relationship with the present (Jones & Russell 2012, pp.270–71). As such, neither speaking nor writing is held up here as being a purveyor of 'historical truth' alone (Platt & Quisbert 2007, p.123). It was in the weighing up of orally transmitted ‘Indigenous histories’ in the ‘present’ and the histories of Indigenous people written from a ‘European point of view’ that insights were gained.

Despite the sincere efforts of some who have strived for a more anthropological understanding of colonial encounter (e.g: Dening 1980, 2004; Clendinnen 2005), the discipline of history in Australia has rarely consulted twentieth-century ethnographies as a path to interpreting the experiences of Indigenous peoples (Austin-Broos 2009, p.13). Fewer historians still have actually carried out fieldwork of their own amongst Indigenous communities to write in a way that reflects the different epistemologies and ontologies of non-Western peoples. Minoru Hokari’s work amongst the Gurindji (2011) stands out as one of few attempts to delineate a specific ‘mode of historical practice’ of an Indigenous group, although this has been a concern in anthropology for some time (see Sutton 1988; Kolig 2000). In a similar vein to Hokari, this thesis emphasises the manner in which the Anmatyerr sense of the past is a ‘lived experience’, created and maintained through a complex web of relationships between people and ancestral beings and significant places (Hokari 2005, p.219). These ‘histories’ are often produced via performative acts such as storytelling, singing, and travelling, and were always contextualised in terms of specific local experiences and worldviews.

Amongst the artety nwanth (mulga expanse) of Anmatyerr country and the hubbub of life in remote Aboriginal communities, the history of Strehlow’s archive really came to life. The songs and ceremonies, recorded long ago with men who are now deceased, produced keen demonstrations of present personal relationships (Chapter 7) and evoked the eternal and unchanging presence of Anengkerr ancestor beings and their associated stories and places. Field diary extracts and genealogies likewise
invited in-depth discussions of local histories (Chapter 6) and led to investigations into the intermingling forces of literacy and orality in these communities, as well as the apparently shifting ontologies of Anmatyerr people (Chapter 8). These fuller explications of the collection were not simply ‘historical’ but referred to a present and ongoing value for people across time and space.

**Structure of the Thesis**

This thesis is structured in such a way that explanations of the ethnographic and historical context of are first examined, followed by an in-depth, collaborative examination of the Strehlow collection’s contents. Mindful that all social research is inherently implicated in subjective and intersubjective concerns, I begin by laying bare the relational foundations to my own ethnography before venturing into a critique of someone else’s. This reflexive account addresses some the issues I have encountered as a person with an urban-Australian, Scottish-English heritage conducting research with Anmatyerr people and discusses some of the ‘insider’ and ‘outsider’ dynamics that arise. Deeply aware of my own my position as someone who has been granted a unique opportunity to see and discuss this highly restricted ceremonial material, I focus on the methodological and epistemological issues I confronted as researcher. I introduce both my previous experiences with Anmatyerr people and the specific ethnographic methodologies that enabled me to negotiate this position throughout the course of this research. As much as my prior relationships with individuals in these communities effectively ‘opened the door’ for me to begin this investigation, this exchange was also shaped by my familiarity with the Strehlow collection and my work with museums and Aboriginal organisations.

The various archival methodologies used throughout the research and the challenges of working with Strehlow’s complex archive are also explained in Chapter 2. The unpublished field diaries that form the foundation of Strehlow’s collection brim with extraordinary ethnographic detail, however in order to understand their full significance they must be read with reference to the linked audio, visual, cartographic and artifact materials. The linguistic and cultural intricacy of this material presents significant challenges that require painstaking translation, interpretation and anthropological insight. As is demonstrated throughout the thesis, working with
Strehlow’s collection was best done in collaborative manner with Anmatyerr and Arrernte people that possess cultural expertise.

The historical context of Anmatyerr engagement with ethnography and settler society is canvassed in Chapter 3. In this chapter, the history of these relationships, from the arrival of colonial settlers in the region in the 1870s up until the period when Strehlow began his research in the early 1930s, is described and analysed. The historical intricacies of where Anmatyerr and alhernter have met and grappled with each other, often in contexts of highly asymmetrical relations of power, are also discussed. Understanding these long-term engagements, and in particular the rather limited work of ethnographers in the Anmatyerr area, provides important context to Strehlow’s work and the historical context of these interactions.

Chapter 4 follows on from this by providing a detailed examination of Strehlow’s contribution to the field of ethnography. As the bulk of the literature on Strehlow to date has concentrated on biographical narratives, this chapter places far greater emphasis on the substance of his ethnography and the methodological and theoretical influences that he brought with him into the field. Beginning with an epistemological critique of Strehlow’s rhetoric, this chapter serves as a starting point from which we can better appreciate the way in which he portrayed Indigenous agency in his field diaries and publications.

The relatively unexplored career of Strehlow as a fieldworker is interrogated in Chapter 5 with particular emphasis on his work with the Anmatyerr. Strehlow’s fieldwork methods changed considerably over the years, from conducting surveys of language and myth early on, to hosting ‘ceremonial festivals’ for the purposes of documentation, through to intensive mapping of sites in the later period. How Arrernte and Anmatyerr men interacted, managed and worked with Strehlow during this time is charted across four decades. Initially apprehended by these men as a kind of ‘privileged documenter’, Strehlow ultimately saw himself being ‘disowned’ as an Ingkarte (ceremonial leader) when his informants, as a result of transforming social and political milieux, attained greater social and economic choices.
Anmatyerr remembrances and evaluations of Strehlow are presented in Chapter 6. In this section, the perspectives of Anmatyerr men reveal their memories of what these exchanges signified and some of the reasons why they and their forefathers decided to share this highly restricted material with Strehlow are discussed. As in the previous chapter, the narrative of Strehlow as the singular intrepid individual is destabilised as greater emphasis is placed on the many ‘old people’ that organised recording events and demonstrated their knowledge. People reworked existing Arandic cultural categories in order to facilitate their sharing with Strehlow and they remember him having an unusual depth of knowledge in song, language and ritual. His obsessive ‘following’ of songlines - the mythological narratives often celebrated in song and honouring ancestors that created the land – also saw him referred to as an Urrempel man (someone acquiring knowledge of song and ceremony) or an Akiwarenye (a denizen of the ceremonial ground).

The films and audio recordings retrieved from the Strehlow archive are discussed in Chapter 7. Seen as not only substantiations of the past but also confirmations of the present, these recordings were immediately relevant to the lives of present-day Anmatyerr people. Severely disrupting the assumption that loss of ritual knowledge reduced people’s capacity to speak authoritatively for this material, at times these discussions reveal an intimate degree of understanding. The ongoing utilisation of song and ceremony, particularly in initiation contexts, has facilitated the retention of much of this knowledge amongst a handful of senior ritual experts despite a noted reduction in a deeper, more involved ceremonial patrimony. Younger generations too, although less skilled in singing or performing these rites, demonstrate knowledge of the way in which places, mythologies and people interrelate with the material.

Contemporary interpretations of the collection are further explored in Chapter 8 where particular attention is paid to the collection’s manuscript materials. Strehlow’s field diaries, map and genealogical materials are closely examined via a number of case studies that focus on individual life stories and disclose the way Anmatyerr family and social history is remembered and retold. The analysis is framed by the intersection between social memory in a predominantly oral society and the influences of the written archive. Despite slightly differing opinions between generations on the value of the ‘written down story’, people generally read and
deciphered this material with direct reference (and deference) to the social memory held by elders. For some middle-aged and younger men however, the gap between the lived experience of their elders and the historical record now requires an intellectual feat of interpretation. This chapter also highlights some of the issues with Strehlow’s genealogies, such as how people interpret his terminology but more importantly how understandings about inheritance and reincarnation of ancestral associations appear to have changed over time.

The final substantial chapter of the thesis (Chapter 9) charts the prospects for the future of the Strehlow collection as a whole. While the logic of repatriation remains the primary rhetorical device through which secret-sacred content and objects kept in collecting institutions are often discussed (at least in academic and institutional circles) the Anmatyerr clearly think about these materials in diverse ways. People’s sentiments about current and future relationships to the collection are always made with reference to the centrality of their own ongoing ritual practices. Where expert ritual knowledge is faltering, the collection is increasingly being used as a site of potential cultural revitalisation. In light of this, I contend that the Strehlow Research Centre will need to shift its emphasis; its challenge will be to meet the enduring and yet mutable research and cultural resource needs of Central Australian Aboriginal men.

In the concluding chapter, I summarise the main findings of this research and reflect on the ramifications that these conclusions have for the historical and anthropological issues raised. I also discuss some of the future prospects of the collection and its relation to contemporary Anmatyerr and Arrernte lives.
Chapter 2: Ethnographic and Archival Challenges

*In whatever sense we understand it, personal acquaintance interweaves ontological and epistemological questions: [...] What is the nature and possibility of encountering a person in the field and in what ways do encounters affect the knowledge we produce? (Tamisari 2006, p.22).*

Every aspect of this study has been profoundly influenced by personal acquaintance. It was with Anmatyerr people that I shared in the excitement of finding song recordings, films and genealogies in the Strehlow archive, and it was via their generous guidance and explanations that I came to an appreciation of what the archive meant for contemporary generations of Anmatyerr people. Our relationships deepened over the course of the research but in many cases they did not begin there, and nor were they completely confined by it. Beyond this particular academic quest there were times where we came together over the years to share in life’s larger joys and struggles; we celebrated births, mourned deaths, grappled with sickness and stress and shared in new discoveries. But it was the very act of ethnography itself that created the bonds of connection, the ‘matrix of significant relationships’ (Gergen & Gergen 2002, p.12), that otherwise may not have formed.

In ‘the field’ I did not simply encounter ‘a culture’ and its representatives, but met with ‘the presence, personality and character’ of individuals (Tamisari 2014, p.7). These acquaintances undoubtedly affected my comprehension of Anmatyerr social life but it must be noted that they also influenced my handling of the historical sources. Although certainly informed by a rigorous reading of every element of Strehlow’s corpus, the analyses presented here have been negotiated and tested within a field of interpersonal relationships. Field diaries, song recordings, films and genealogies for example, were read in ways that connected them to contemporary people, and as I discovered new items I would quickly ensure that materials were shared with the relevant individuals or families. These affective qualities of research, whilst almost always present but seldom acknowledged by scholars (see Robinson...
motivated my pursuit of further knowledge. I enjoyed the frisson of knowledge and experience co-joined.

While the relationships that an ethnographer establishes via their research are recognised as being fundamental to most anthropological projects today (Jackson 1998; Behar 2008; Madison 2012), there are varying opinions about how critical they are to epistemological questions. The inclusion of personal reflection or autobiographical descriptions, for example, have been criticised for being either too narcissistic, a form of ‘academic navel gazing’ (Goodall 2000, p.192) or even a threat to ‘objective’ accounts of social reality. However, acknowledging these contexts is not just about establishing the social and personal foundations upon which research is carried out, but stands as a ‘commitment to methodological description’ (Watson 1987, p.31) and may in fact be regarded as ‘a key instrument for the establishment of objective knowledge’ (Kapferer 2007, p.82). One’s own position in social research is doubly important when the researcher’s active participation guides, directs and ultimately affects the knowledge produced.

Mindful of Johannes Fabian’s warning that ‘ethnographies are questionable representations unless they show their own genesis’ (1990, pp.xiv–xv), this chapter scrutinises the methodological orientation of this study and reveals its origins in prior and ongoing interactions with Anmatyerr people. Having had a connection with Anmatyerr and Arrernte people for more than a decade, these experiences have provided important ‘headnotes’ or remembered observations (Ottenberg 1990) to my investigation, and served to enable our discussions.

**Prior Interactions**

I had known most of the men that agreed to work with me in this research for close to a decade or more. I first began working with Anmatyerr people in 2005 when I was employed by the Northern Territory Library to establish a digital archive of cultural and historical materials in the township of Ti Tree (see Gibson 2007, 2009; Nakata et al. 2008; Gibson 2008). Located almost at the centre of the Australian continent and approximately 200 kilometres from the nearest township of Alice Springs, Ti Tree is little more than a roadside stop on a remote stretch of the Stuart Highway. Positioned in the heartland of the Anmatyerr people’s traditional territory though, it serves as an
important service centre for the Anmatyerr people living in a number of remote communities and outstations (family ‘homelands’) dotted across the region.

At Ti Tree, I came to know not just the Anmatyerr people who lived in the township or in the nearby communities of 6 Mile (Pmara Jutunta) and Nthwerrey (Nturiya), but also other Anmatyerr people that would pass by Ti Tree to pick up supplies or access services. I also came to know many of the older people that lived on the western fringe of the Ti Tree at ‘Creek Camp’, an unofficial camp consisting of makeshift ilha (humpies) made of mulga branches, corrugated iron and other found objects. I spent four years working for the Northern Territory Library in a hands-on support role to the Anmatjere Regional Council’s establishment of its ‘Anmatjere Library and Knowledge Centre’ at Ti Tree. Put simply, my task was to support the community at Ti Tree, but also the Arrernte community at Santa Teresa (Ltyentye Apurte), in the establishment of what the then Minister for Local Government initially described as an ‘Indigenous Knowledge Centre’ (‘Aboriginal “knowledge centre” to protect sacred objects’ 2003). Originally conceived as a service that combined museum, library and archival functions, the centrepiece of the Knowledge Centre service eventually became a digital collection of historical and cultural materials relevant to the local community.

Whilst engaged in the training of Anmatyerr men and women in the management of their collections, I reflected upon the various practical and theoretical issues that arose and the published papers and reports on these issues (Nakata et al. 2008; Gibson, Lloyd & Richmond 2011; Gibson 2007, 2009). Developing these local compilations required not only extensive research into the history of the region but meant working with people to record their own content. This led to the recording of oral histories, and mapping of key places in the cultural landscape.

Given this focus on Central Australian Aboriginal history my employers made a decision to place me in a spare office at the Strehlow Research Centre. This decision, though based purely upon the best allocation of government resources, had

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21 The Council used the spelling ‘Anmatjere’ and not ‘Anmatyerr’ as has been adopted in this thesis.
Having an office space within the Strehlow Research Centre whilst not being employed by them, provided me with a unique opportunity to observe how the collection was being accessed and discussed on a daily basis without being drawn into internal organisational affairs. There was also an opportunity to work closely with the Strehlow Research Centre in providing digital copies of some of the Strehlow collection materials to the Eastern and Central Arrernte community of Santa Teresa and the Anmatyerr community at Ti Tree.

Knowing that the bulk of Strehlow’s collection consisted of ceremonial, and thus secret-sacred material, my research began with those parts of the collection that were classified as ‘open’ or ‘non-restricted’. In the main, this consisted of historical photographs and genealogies. The content aroused great interest from the Anmatyerr men and women that I knew in Aleyaw (Ti Tree), but in the predominantly Catholic community of Santa Teresa the Arrernte people associated with the library were far more guarded. To them, Strehlow was generally thought of as someone who had exploited the trust of the old men and thus anyone affiliated with the Strehlow Research Centre, or even anthropology generally, was to be treated with caution. In Ti Tree though, Strehlow was remembered and discussed without any fear or anxiety, partly due to his association with the Lutheran church that has been active in the Anmatyerr communities for over fifty years.

Keen interest in the collection deepened as Anmatyerr people helped me understand Strehlow’s resources. Becoming more comfortable with reading Strehlow’s Arandic orthography and coming to grips with his idiosyncratic approach to anthropology, I later produced numerous detailed indexes for his field diaries. At the same time, I would often join Anmatyerr people on hunting trips and visited significant sites associated with the *Anengkerr* (Dreaming) (see Figure 1). Weekends were often spent learning about the Arrernte and Anmatyerr languages with my language tutor and mentor Malcolm Heffernan Pengart. I began to delve into Strehlow’s field diaries as part of my work and was often surprised by the similarities between Strehlow’s experiences with Anmatyerr people and my own. The language, the concepts, the people and the places that I read about in the Strehlow collection and I discussed with Anmatyerr and Arrernte people, were not reified in the historical past, they were still existing in the lives and the landscape of the region. This perspective jarred with the
often-heard lament of historians and anthropologists in Alice Springs that knowledge of place-names, songs or stories amongst the younger generations was deficient or perhaps even absent.

At the request of the then Chairman of the Anmatyerr Regional Council, Tony Scrutton Ngwarray, I began researching the restricted contents of Strehlow’s work. Initially, the Strehlow Research Centre staff seemed unsure as to whether the collection contained much Anmatyerr material at all and we began searching the archives. The search almost came to a stop when it was discovered that a researcher had annotated the so-called ‘Tjurunga Register’, Strehlow’s inventory of sacred objects, with the note ‘no Unmatjera material’. Yet it was evident from Strehlow’s published works that the Centre had to contain at least a small amount of audio, visual and manuscript material of relevance to Anmatyerr people. Tony was particularly interested in finding out if Strehlow had collected any songs or stories that might be of relevance to him and his immediate family.

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23 This register was only ever a partial and incomplete inventory of the collection. It does however contain excellent sketches of objects and detailed descriptions.
Continuing with my research in the archive, I soon came across an hour-long ceremonial film from 1965 featuring a large group of Anmatyerr performers at Alcoota Station. Tony visited me at the Centre, and as we read through the documentation he recognised the name of one of the informants listed by Strehlow, ‘Kenny Ebmalamaraka’ Penangk (Strehlow 1965a, p.157). Tony informed me that Ken was now an elderly man and one of the most senior ritual experts. He was living at Alcoota station (Engwala) but belonged to the nearby estate of Atwel. He was also a brother to Eric Penangk, Tony’s adoptive grandfather. Enthused and fascinated, Tony took it upon himself to bring Ken and his son Kevin into the Centre to see the film. We watched all of the 23 film reels of Ken and his father, along with a small group of other men, enacting the sacred ceremonies for Akwerrperl (Korbula), a sacred site to the south east of the Aileron roadhouse.

Ken only uttered the occasional commentary throughout the screening in order to instruct others in the room about the particular Anengkerr (Dreaming) ancestors being represented in the ceremonies, or to explain their connections to particular places. Nonetheless, it was clear that he was excited to see the film for the first time. At the conclusion of the one hour and twenty minute screening, Ken stood up, shook his head in disbelief, and thanked me for instigating the event. He left the building with Kevin and Tony saying little else. From my office window though, I could see the three men outside in the car park excitedly discussing the film and I knew that there was much more that could be done.

Ken returned intermittently to the Strehlow Research Centre over the next few years to work on matching the silent, colour film reels with the tape recordings made of the associated songs. Being able to identify the particular segments of song from the separate audio recordings, Ken worked with Strehlow Research Centre staff to overlay song excerpts to their relevant ritual sequences using digital editing software and finally gave the silent singers on the film (including himself) a voice. This was the first time in the collection’s history that an Arrernte or Anmatyerr person had actively worked on piecing together Strehlow’s recordings.

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24 These discussions with Tony occurred in August or September of 2006. Ken’s editing of the film was carried out with assistance from Mr. Garry Stoll, who as speaker of Arrernte and someone with knowledge of Anmatyerr and Arrernte men’s ‘Law’, was able to help Ken convey his knowledge of the ceremonies to staff at the Centre. Adam Macfie operated the digital tools.
Positioning and Being Positioned

These prior relationships, conversations and experiences undoubtedly played a significant part in locating me as a researcher within the Anmatyerr community for the purposes of this research. But finding the right academic framework for these explorations - how to position myself - was never an easy task. At times I was asked by men that I had not met before, ‘Are you an anthropologist?’ The question was not easy for me to answer. In addition to being acutely aware of the vexed history of anthropology and its associations with colonialism (see Starn 2011; and Wolfe 1999), as well as its tendency to fetishise tradition (Bessire 2014), I was also very mindful of the fact that most anthropologists in Central Australia were engaged in more pragmatic tasks. Usually employed by the Central Land Council (the primary representative body for Aboriginal people), these overworked employees usually had little opportunity to consider people’s engagements with historical collections or even matters regarding song and ritual (Merlan 2006; Weiner 2007). They needed to attend to the more pressing material and political issues, usually associated with rights in land.

I mostly baulked at the ‘anthropologist’ label, so I was pleased when senior elder Paddy Kemarr introduced me using the ambiguous category of ‘culture man’ or someone ‘belonging to tywerreng-thayt’ [privy to some men’s ceremonial content but also beholden to the limits and parameters of this knowledge]. His ascription allowed me to skirt the boundaries of professional or scholarly definitions and feel my way via ethnographic experience and relatively open-ended dialogue. The label of ‘historian’ also felt similarly ill-fitting and the clearly demarcated discipline of ‘history’ had never appeared to gain much currency in these communities anyway. The reticence to discuss the Strehlow materials as ‘history’ largely stemmed from the fact that the provinces of ‘past’ and ‘present’ were not always clear cut for Anmatyerr people, given that the fundamental ontology of Anengkerr (the Dreaming) blurred the dividing lines between the phenomenal and the noumenal (see Myers 1991, pp.48–54). These ancestral ‘Dreaming’ figures were eternally present in land, embodied in people and reaffirmed in songs and ceremonies. Although people had certainly come to acquire a 'history-consciousness' (Kolig 2000, p.27) and would engage with history-bearing media (books, television documentaries etc.), it is still localised,
esoteric narratives that privilege the links between people, land and Anengkerr that remain critical.

The Strehlow materials had been recorded within recent lifetimes (between 1932 and 1971) and pertained deeply with people’s living memory as well as their present day interpretations. As Tony Ngwarray put it to me one day, ‘We still have our ceremony you know… we could do a “Strehlow part two”’; meaning that we could record and document Anmatyerr song and ritual, just as Tony’s relatives had done with Strehlow in the past. Tony’s rhetorical invitation rejected the purely historical purview and spoke to a desire amongst Anmatyerr people generally, to declare, communicate and demonstrate the import of their ceremonial knowledge practices today.

My work over the years had focused upon the practical issues of improving access to cultural and historical materials and it was clear to me just how cherished these items were. Historical and cultural resources such as photographs, song recordings, films and genealogies were prized and rare documents in communities where heritage services like museums, libraries and archives were non-existent. Only Ti Tree had a library facility and every other Anmatyerr community lacked local historical or cultural services. In return for providing access to this type of material, people would often encourage me to sit and listen to their interpretations and make a record of their rejoinders to the archive. These experiences greatly expanded my knowledge of Anmatyerr worldviews.

The cumulative effect of these exchanges was not lost on the people I worked with, who at times would comment that making an alhernter (white person) knowledgeable in these matters, often worked in their favour by building sympathies or strategic alliances. As one younger man in his thirties noted during a discussion concerning people from another cultural group who were struggling to find evidence of their history in museum collections: ‘We’re alright though. We’ve got you. You work with us, together’. Others would be more forthright in offering ‘Unta Anmatyerr-akin’ (you are also Anmatyerr), a generous indication of my attempts to achieve a better understanding of Anmatyerr social lives.

25 The Yuendumu Men’s Museum had been closed for many years at the time of writing this.
26 Alice Springs 09/09/2015. M.H. at a meeting at the Strehlow Research Centre.
People who were less familiar with me occasionally referred to me with the generic appellation of ‘warlpal’ (white person) or ‘alhernter’ (lit. pink/red nose). With all its connotations of personal anonymity and cultural boundedness the use of such a generic racial description inferred a long history of interactions with a seemingly endless flow of transient ‘whitefellas’ through Aboriginal communities. Working relationships like this have emerged as significant sites of cultural mediation between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal throughout Australia (see Batty 2005). As an Aboriginal woman in the Western Desert is said to have remarked in recent years, 'Kartiya [Europeans] are like Toyotas. When they break down we get another one’ (Mahood 2012). This constant stream of ‘white’ contract workers, anthropologists, lawyers and ‘service providers’ means that few people either attempt to, or have the opportunity to, really ‘get to know’ each other beyond their ‘institutionalised positions’ (Tamisari 2006, p.21). The ‘anonymous power of institutions’, as well as Western categories of scholarship or professionalism, Ute Eickelkamp observes, have little currency amongst remote Aboriginal communities. As much as institutional or disciplinary positions might create the initial conditions of inter-relation, in these contexts it is usually the ‘social, rather than bureaucratic processes’ that bind people together (2014, p.417 italics added). Neatly divided academic disciplines do little to explain behaviours or establish expectations of one another.

According to anthropologist and linguist John von Sturmer, anyone conducting successful research with people belonging to cultures markedly different from their own, ‘must be accorded a degree of insider status’ (1981). But not only would it be an audacious claim to suggest that this research had been written from an ‘insider’s’ position, the very notion of an insider/outsider binary has come under significant critique (Voloder 2008; Halstead 2001; Webster & John 2010; Ramsland & Mooney 2012, pp.xiv–xv). In her account of working amongst Bosnian migrants in Australia for example, Lelja Voloder (2008) suggests that it is a researcher’s liminality, rather than the degree of their insider or outsider status, that ought to be recognised as giving rise to important insights. The discernments gleaned from ethnographic work therefore:

…need not rely on assumptions of shared experiences and identifications between oneself and participants, but rather that it is
in the exploration of the convergences and divergences in these experiences and identifications that the researcher’s experiential self can be used as a key heuristic resource (Voloder 2008, p.28).

As much as fieldwork and personal connections might build important rapport and familiarity, the insider/outsider dichotomy does not adequately describe these experiences. Narmala Halstead, an anthropologist with experience in Guyana, has made similar observations; ethnographic researchers when working in these liminal zones, will often find themselves occupying a range of positions, and not just one. These positions and relationships are neither wholly ‘inside’ nor ‘outside’, but always being negotiated and renegotiated with participants (Halstead 2001; see also Marcus 1998). Once brought into the fold, researchers are often ‘positioned’ as someone whose ‘role’ it is to help ‘promote’ the particular cultural lives being studied (2001, p.319). Halstead’s experiences resonate with the way my own shifting roles were often explained as a ‘worker’ for ‘Anmatyerr culture’.

This expectation was explained to me in no uncertain terms whilst travelling with a small group of Anmatyerr men on our way to Ngukurr (an Aboriginal community to the north on the Roper River) in 2006. We had stopped for fuel at a roadhouse where a large tourist information sign featured archival black and white photographs of two Jingulu men decorated for a ceremonial performance. The pictured men were holding what appeared to me to be objects very similar to the restricted tywerreng (sacred objects of stone and wood that embody ancestral beings) of the Anmatyerr and Arrernte. I called Tony Ngwarray over to elicit his opinion of what I presumed to be an offensive image. Expecting to hear his outrage over the public display of sacred material, I was somewhat surprised by his reply. Tony responded by chiding me for prying into the cultural politics of another group and reminded me to stay within my ‘own boundary’.27 Reminding me of the importance of focusing on the people with whom I had developed relationships with, Tony made it clear that my inclination towards ‘portable’ or universal Aboriginal rights (Sutton 2010, p.81) were antithetical to his localism and particularism.

27 August, Black notebook 2006.
I too was encouraged to put my knowledge, experience and connections, particularly with museums, to the service of Anmatyerr interests. There have been occasions where I have been pulled aside and spoken to in hushed tones and asked to search the museums and archives ‘down south’ (meaning in Adelaide and Melbourne) for sacred objects removed from Anmatyerr country (see Chapter 9). In this light, I was acutely aware of how my research interests were always entwined with the concerns of those being studied. Though anthropology as a discipline can be viewed as an exploration of difference via modes of cultural and temporal distancing (Fabian 1983), it is evident that establishing knowledge of each other is primarily a matter of sociality. Interrelations are neatly summarised by Jackson:

[W]hen the other recognises my humanity, and on the strength of this recognition incorporates me into his world [...] I am literally incorporated into his world, and it is on the basis of this incorporation and my reciprocal response to it that I begin to gain a knowledge of that world. Anthropology should never forget that its project unfolds within the universal constraints of hospitality (Jackson 1995, p.119).

While fieldworkers might strive to assume a specific standpoint in relation to their participants, they too are often being actively positioned by their subjects. In Central and Northern Australia this positioning is most easily observed when ‘outsiders’ are located within a local kinship system (Bradley & Yanyuwa Families 2010; Turner 2010; Kenny 2008, p.52; Gibson 2013, p.66). Peter Sutton, an anthropologist and linguist with decades of experience in Australia, has noted that where people have maintained a system of classificatory kinship, the concept of a ‘friendship’ outside of kinship is non-existent. Most researchers then, being mostly newcomers and thus exterior to the local family relationship network, are typically reinterpreted as familial relations understood via what Sutton calls ‘fictive’ or ‘adoptive’ kinship arrangements (see Sutton 2002, 2009a). By alluding to the local rubrics of interaction, this kind of ‘kin incorporation’ renders the researcher socially real, or at least socially present.

The Anmatyerr, and many Arrernte, continue to use their system of classificatory kinship, known as *anpernerrenty*, as the cornerstone of their interactions. Paddy Kemarr’s readiness to make an important point regarding the extreme restrictions around some of the ritual material for example, would often remind me of his ‘fatherly’ status to me. *Anpernerrenty* does not just concern relations between people, but is inclusive of the connections between all living and non-living things (Walsh, Dobson & Douglas 2013). As such it is used to draw connections between people, places, animals, plants and non-human entities. As Arrernte elder Margaret Kemarr Turner (2010, pp.80–81) has explained, *anpernerrenty* is a ‘relationship network’ like ‘fine branching root threads’ that ‘run onwards from us’, and is all expansive. If I was going to attempt to see Strehlow’s work from an Anmatyerr perspective I needed to think about how his work, and my own, might be seen through these various skeins of interwoven relationships. Embarking on fieldwork, travelling between communities and important sites and talking with men, brought the expansive presence of *anpernerrenty* to the fore.

The Fieldwork
The fieldwork on which this thesis is based was undertaken between 2013 and 2016. Repeated visits were made to seven distinct Anmatyerr communities in order to work through the Strehlow collection materials and conduct interviews. The communities in which this work was carried out included: Alyuen, a small family outstation located very close to the Aileron Roadhouse on the Stuart Highway; Engawala, a community of Anmatyerr and Eastern Arrernte people located within the Alcoota pastoral lease; the small family outstation of Mulga Bore (Akay) located on the Sandover Highway; Ahalper (New Store) on the eastern extent of Anmatyerr lands; the community of Laramba (Alherramp) located within the Napperby Station pastoral lease; Ti Tree township and the surrounding area with a long term population living in makeshift dwelling called ‘Creek Camp’; Six Mile (Pmara Jutunta), also known as ‘Ti Tree Six Mile’; and lastly, the community of Nturiya (Nthwerey), situated at the site of the old Ti Tree Station homestead (refer Map 3). Anmatyerr people will often refer to these communities also by the name of the pastoral lease on which they reside. Engawala,
for example, is often simply referred to as Alcoota, and Laramba is often discussed as Napperby.  

The majority of these communities have predominantly Aboriginal populations who speak Anmatyerr as a first language (Green 2010a) and may also be proficient in the languages spoken by their neighbours, such as Kaytetye, Western, Northern or Central and Eastern Arrernte, Alyawarr and Warlpiri. Current estimates suggest that although Anmatyerr is spoken by approximately 1,000 people, it is under threat from increasing use of the neighbouring Aboriginal language Warlpiri, as well as English (Marmion, Obata & Troy 2014, pp.8–9). Anmatyerr people today tend to move between using their own language, other Central Australian languages and English with relative ease. Older men and women will often use a type of ‘Pidgin’, or

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29 Community names are also generally based on antiquated spellings of Anmatyerr place names. For example, Alcoota is Alkwert, Engawa is Ingwala, Laramba is Alherramp, Nturiya is Nthwerrey.

30 People residing in the central and western Anmatyerr communities (Ti Tree and Napperby for example) are generally bilingual in Warlpiri. Those in the eastern Anmatyerr communities tend to be more familiar with Alyawarr. Given that Anmatyerr is a very closely related language to Arrernte and that Anmatyerr people will often visit Alice Springs (in Arrernte territory) they are generally proficient in this language also.
‘Aboriginal English’ (Sandefur 1979, pp.3–6) which they learnt during their time working on cattle stations (Hudson & Pym 1984, p.136).

As the significance of Anmatyerr associations with pastoralism are discussed in the following chapter, it should suffice to say here that most of the older and middle-aged generations of Anmatyerr people grew up living and working on cattle stations. Like many other Aboriginal groups who have coexisted with pastoralism (see McGrath 1987), Anmatyerr culture and language has been in part influenced by this history. Older men continue to wear ‘cowboy’ style clothing and hats, and country and western music remains popular across generational and gender divides. Anmatyerr people will also commonly refer to their traditional anyenhen (patrilineal estates) as ‘blocks’ marked by ‘boundary lines’ or ‘fences’, and use English terms such as ‘boss’, ‘manager’ and ‘worker’ as ways of describing cultural responsibilities (see also Austin-Broos 2009, p.125). Anmatyerr lands continue to be predominately covered by pastoral leases and most communities and outstations exist as relatively small ‘excisions’ surrounded by large tracts of pastoral land.

As with most remote Central and Northern Australian Aboriginal communities, unemployment is a significant issue across the Anmatyerr region. Small numbers of people do find seasonal employment with either local horticultural enterprises or cattle stations, however government funded initiatives and welfare programs provide the primary economic stimulus in the region (Wirf, Campbell & Rea 2008; Hunt 2008; Sanders & Holcombe 2005). Education for children in these remote areas is extremely limited, and because there are currently no secondary schools in any of the Anmatyerr communities, opportunities to develop skills that might lead to new vocations are extremely narrow. In place of advanced schooling or immersion in long-term employment, Anmatyerr people express a strong desire to engage in activities that have greater local, cultural significance. According to a study looking into ways of ‘improving’ ‘livelihood options’ in these communities (Davies & Maru 2011) it was discovered that ‘hunting’ and ‘family life’ were generally considered as being equal to if not more significant than attaining Western style education and employment.
A sizeable number of Anmatyerr people now live in the somewhat cosmopolitan township of Alice Springs, located over 100 kilometres to the south of Anmatyerr territory. As this is also where the Strehlow Research Centre is located, I would often meet with people here and hold group discussions or one-on-one interviews as we explored the collection’s contents. These discussions took place in the storeroom and offices of the Strehlow Centre and also involved visits to some of the sites where Strehlow’s ‘festivals’ (documentation events) were hosted, as well as interviews in people’s homes. Most of the 48 individuals who participated in my research reside in one of the aforementioned remote Anmatyerr communities and in most cases, felt far more comfortable discussing these matters away from ‘town’.

The highly restricted nature of the Strehlow collection meant that interviews had to be conducted with great discretion. Given my past experience in the region, it was generally assumed that I would be able recognise which information was too sensitive or restricted for inclusion in the thesis. On a small number of occasions however, I was instructed to cease recording conversations or refrain from taking notes in order to avoid documenting the names of sacred sites or the details of rituals. This generally occurred when our discussions ventured into the realm of the highly secretive men’s initiation ceremonies (as opposed to the Anmatyerr specific rituals) or when discussing politically contentious matters such as disputes over rights in land. Eric Penangk, a senior caretaker for the Aileron and Ryan’s Well areas for example, felt very uncomfortable about having his cultural knowledge of these places recorded.

While Eric possessed detailed site knowledge and could sing many of the songs for this part of Anmatyerr territory, and would regularly share this knowledge with younger men, because he was not the rightful merek-artwey (owner) he was reticent about having his insights documented in this form.31

In most cases though, people felt comfortable putting their names to the information they offered. Extremely aware of the growing significance of ‘the written down story’ for proving associations to land (for example in land rights and native title cases), and preserving information for future generations (see Chapter 8), people generally

31 Eric Penangk on the 5th June 2014 at the ‘Drinker’s camp’ on the eastern side of Stuart Highway, adjacent to the Aileron Roadhouse.
wanted their opinions and commentaries to be documented with personal details intact. When I was being told to ‘ingkvernem-ilem’ (put it in writing or make a record) or ‘pwetewem-ilem’ (take a photo), people wanted their position in relation to other people, stories and places documented. People understood that contextual *anpernerrenty* information - where someone was from, their relationships to land, their kin etc. - would make all the difference for future generations trying to make sense of the material. As an ethnographer, I was also aware of the importance of returning the results of my research to the people being studied, and that pseudonyms often served to hinder future reuse and reinterpretation of qualitative data (Geest 2003). Our interrogation of Strehlow’s work, for example, would have been virtually worthless if he had not received this type of detail.

**Group Discussions**

The central methodology used during this fieldwork was a semi-planned process of reviewing and discussing Strehlow’s materials in group sessions. My past experiences had suggested to me that the most suitable means of achieving greater insights into the production of the Strehlow collection and people’s history of working with Strehlow, would be to allow participants the time and space to follow their own interests in the material and let the dialogue naturally unfold. The content itself, being so visually and aurally stimulating, easily inspired and elicited conversations. I would join in by supplying additional information or asking questions. This collaborative examination would, as Lassiter (2001) puts it, enable me to ‘read alongside’ with Anmatyerr people rather than simply observe or ‘read over their shoulders’. As we watched films or discussed song recordings in groups involving up to eight men, I would often be asked to retrieve further information from my laptop, and would jot down pertinent information or just sit patiently and listen to explanations.

Upon arriving in a community or when meeting with people for the first time, I would typically begin by explaining the purpose of my research and would then discuss the best possible scenario for viewing and discussing the Strehlow resources. So eager were people to examine the material that I was usually told to start screening or playing recordings almost immediately. Having already been through an exhaustive process of archival research in order to identify and select appropriate materials to show to particular people (see below) the sessions usually centred on a particular suite
of materials that related to a particular place or Anengkerr (Dreaming). The tremendous interest in the collection meant that those with close personal associations to the material, or alternatively those with expertise in ritual matters, would soon be gathered together in anticipation. Once the sessions had concluded, people’s excitement generally spilled over into suggestions of trips to the relevant places referred to in the particular songs and ceremonies, or to suggestions of visits to see others with rights in the material. Jimmy Haines Ngwarray, an amiable man with a keen interest in his Anmatyerr and Kaytetye cultural inheritance, responded on one occasion: ‘When you come next time, we can go to Alekerang then, chasing after the merek-artwey map [all of the traditional owners]. I’ll go with you’.32

Selecting the relevant men to examine certain parts of the collection required careful consideration. Where possible, interviews were conducted with people that were either recognised as the most senior merek-artwey (traditional owners) or were kwertengerl (managers or assistants) of particular ceremonies.33 Being aware of the political issues that can arise regarding disputed ownership and control over sites, ceremonies, songs and their associated ritual objects (see Anderson 1995b; Batty 2014), I was ever mindful of choosing the ‘right’ content to discuss with the ‘right’ people. I could not, for example, show the films Strehlow made at Alcoota in 1965 to men from the far distant community of Ti Tree without the permission of the senior owner (in this case, Ken Tilmouth).

Given the restricted nature of these recordings, the group sessions would often transpire at a location far away from women and children. For example, at Napperby, it was customary to meet at a bough shelter on the western edge of the community where men would sit during their annual apwelh (young men’s initiation) ceremonies, while at Alcoota we met in a dry riverbed not far from where Strehlow had filmed the Akwerrperl ceremonies in 1965. At Ti Tree we usually assembled at the residence of one of the community’s most knowledgeable ritual experts, Paddy Kemarr. His home was located on the southern fringe of the Ti Tree Township in an area known as ‘Creek Camp’. Since each of these sites was located away from general daily comings

32 Jimmy Haines 10th September 2013, Creek Camp, Ti Tree.
33 The Warlpiri equivalents kirda and kurdungurlu are more widely known.
and goings in the community, the men were able to freely watch the films and listen to the recordings and also sing and act out parts of the ceremonies themselves.

The group sessions would typically begin with me handing out items such as photocopies from Strehlow’s diaries or genealogies, or presenting selected films or song recordings via a laptop computer (Figure 2). The interconnected nature of the material meant that discussion of one of the elements of the collection would inevitably lead into the discussion of another. For example, the screening of a ceremonial film could prompt the reading of a genealogy extract that detailed one of the featured performers, and be followed by an auditioning of an associated song recording.

![Figure 2: Viewing film material on a laptop with a group of middle-aged and younger men during a hunting trip on the Hanson Creek (photo: Jimmy Haines).](image)

Largely unstructured and free flowing, these groups sessions allowed for a more equitable power dynamic in the researcher/researched interaction than if direct, one-on-one interviews had been conducted. Being mindful that structured or even semi-structured interviews might introduce relationships that are disadvantageous to collaborative modes of exploration (O’Reilly 2009, pp.78–82) the sessions were often led by the interests of the participants. The sensitivity of the ceremonial material being discussed meant that it was absolutely crucial that all participating men felt free
to share or remain silent if they wished. I was not looking to pry into the concealed world of men’s ritual without invitation and, in any case as I was outnumbered, any moves on my part to do so would have been dealt with quickly. Rather than responding to a list of predetermined topics or questions, the men engaged with the material on their own terms, leaving me to respond to the themes being generated from wide-ranging group dialogues and personal interests.

In most cases these discussions were conducted in a combination of Anmatyerr and English. When Anmatyerr was used extensively, translations were produced with the help of Anmatyerr interpreters or explained in English by one of the participants during our deliberations as we went along. My interpretations of Anmatyerr terms and phrases were often cross-checked with language speakers.

The older men would often serve as mnemonic aides to each other, while younger men, deferring to the authority of their elders on matters of ‘tywerreng law’ (sacred rituals, but also land and Dreaming associations), tended to say silent and listen intently. Usually while the tea was being made, the cigarettes rolled, or the food was being shared, each person would have an opportunity to speak and others would help them remember particular details or provide corrections. Each utterance would build upon the other in a slow and cumulative manner to form a fuller picture of the meaning of a song, ceremony or historical event. Speaking in groups also meant that people were conscious that their relatives could review their statements and make embellishments or amendments if required, especially if the person speaking could not utter a particular relatives name due an avoidance relationship. Overall, the group approach was a natural fit with the usual mode of discussing ceremonial matters and encouraged an open discovery of the materials on people’s own terms.

Another important aspect of this method was that it enabled men from a range of generations to come together and share in the dialogue. It was in fact a specific intention of the research to invite inter-generational discussion as a way of correcting the tendency in Aboriginalist anthropology to focus on the ‘knowledge’ of senior men and women only. Under the perceived pressure to document societies in decline, research in these societies has been inclined to direct its energies towards the salvaging of languages, ritual details and cosmologies of older generations, at the
expense of understanding the viewpoints and experience of younger generations (Eickelkamp 2010, p.157). As shown in Chapters 6, 7, 8 and 9, these cross-generational discussions revealed some important differences in the way that song and ceremonial knowledge is understood across different ages, as well as how local history and genealogy is recalled and remembered. Many of the younger men were unaware of how much their fathers and grandfathers had shown to Strehlow and they used these sessions as an opportunity to marvel at the remarkable achievements of the angkwey map (older generations).

The Archival Research
Before any fieldwork could be undertaken, the work of identifying and locating the relevant Anmatyerr material in the Strehlow collection needed to be carried out. This process required an extensive exploration of the content of the Strehlow archive with a careful appreciation of how each element might contextualise or inform another. Strehlow organised his collection in such a way that anyone with knowledge of the languages, sites, mythologies and systems of kinship in Central Australia, could reconnect its various elements. Without this familiarity, the cross references and linkages are difficult to recognise. Years of use, re-ordering of the collection, and cases of absolute sabotage (such as when Kath Strehlow cut the descriptive labels off a number of artefacts), had made these connections less apparent. In order to compile suites of material that belonged in a group (for example all of the films, song recordings, artifacts, genealogies, maps and diary extracts that pertained to a single site/estate or ceremony), it was essential to first have an understanding of how they related to one another.

When this research began in 2013, the work of comprehensively cataloguing the 26 hours of 16mm film (including over 800 ceremonial performances) had yet to occur. Hart Cohen and Paul Willis from the University of Western Sydney (2001) produced a listing of the films produced up until 1962, but this lacked time codes and cross-referencing with the digitised films held by the National Film and Sound Archive in

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34 Géza Róheim (1974, pp.65–121) did of course consider the lives of children and more recent ethnographic work is shifting this emphasis (Eickelkamp 2013; Kral 2012).

35 Pers. Comm. Adam Macfie, 14th May 2014. T.G.H and Kathleen’s son, Carl, returned these labels to the Strehlow Research Centre in 2009 but the work of reconnecting them with their specific objects has yet to occur.
Canberra, and thus had limited value. Other than those anthropologists employed at the Strehlow Research Centre, no one had actively worked with the restricted ceremonial films for quite some time. Identifying each of the films that specifically depicted different Anmatyerr ceremonies was therefore a problematic undertaking, and one that necessitated in-depth research into the descriptions of ceremonies provided by Strehlow in his field diaries (see Figure 3).  

Figure 3: One of Strehlow’s Field Diaries featuring song transcriptions.

Thankfully Strehlow’s careful and meticulous methods of documentation meant that identification and re-partnering of the material was possible. The ceremonies he filmed, though silent and without on-screen titles, were always fully described in his diaries and additionally photographed with a still camera. As each ceremony was being performed in front of him, Strehlow would label it with a title, usually comprised of the name or entity of the Dreaming ancestor being represented (e.g. a ‘fish’, ‘possum’ or ‘rain’ ancestor), followed by the key site where the ancestor’s

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36 There were some unfortunate transcription errors in this catalogue that made identifications difficult. For example, the kwatja (kwarty) ceremony from Warlapanpa discussed in Chapter 7 was listed as the ‘Unmatjera Kinatja Act’. ‘Kinatja’ being a mis-transcription from Strehlow’s ‘Kwatja’. Strehlow Research Centre staff, Shaun Angeles, has recently finished a complete cataloguing of the ceremonial films and grouped them according to language/cultural group affiliation.

37 Strehlow produced over 8,000 photographs of these ceremonies but given that the films featured much of the same material, these photographs were not used for this research.
actions were depicted in the ceremony. The ‘Antana Ceremony of Erultja’ [Antenh Ceremony of Irrwelty], for example, referred to the antenh (common brushtail possum, *Trichosurus vulpecula*) ancestor from a place named Irrweltye. Because there was often no indication in these titles as to whether a ceremony related specifically to Arrernte, Anmatyerr or Luritja people, it was only by pouring over the related documentation that these relationships could be ascertained (see Appendix 1 for a full listing of these films).

A similar method was required when looking for Anmatyerr song material amongst Strehlow’s 150 hours of audio recordings. In this case however, the process was doubly difficult because the collection had never been comprehensively catalogued and the hours of audio contained only Arrernte and Anmatyerr speech. Being completely fluent in Arrernte, Strehlow felt no need to elaborate his recordings with English introductions and clearly did not envision this material being revisited by people with limited or non-existent Arrernte language capabilities. One can nonetheless listen to Strehlow and his informants as they talk between episodes of singing, but these interactions are usually very brief and focused solely on the correct identification of words or phrases in a song text.

Originally produced using the briefly popular magnetic wire recorder technology of the 1950s, Strehlow then switched to reel-to-reel tape in the 1960s. The recordings were later transferred to shellac disc and cassette tape. Today it is the cassette copies that are used for research purposes and while it is clear from the accompanying inventories what the tapes contain in a general sense, the lack of spoken introductions makes precise identification of discrete songs extremely difficult. Arandic songs, particularly those used in ceremonial contexts, are often esoteric and multi-dialectical (Ellis & Barwick 1987; Koch & Turpin 2008). They generally require extra-textual explanations from knowledgeable people in order for them to be understood. Given these challenges, it was through the process of working with language speakers, singers and holders of ‘Anmatyerr Law’ that identifications were ascertained.

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38 To make matters more complex, often a series of ceremonies that were associated with a single ceremonial cycle would be performed at different times during a particular documentation event (see Chapter 5) or different aspects of a ceremonial cycle would be performed over a number of years. The series of *Irrepeng* (fish) ceremonies from Alherramp (Laramba), for example, were performed first in 1953 and then continued again in 1955.
Reviewing the Collection

The process of reviewing various aspects of the collection – audio, visual and textual – was intended as a deliberate form of ‘elicitation’; as a way of generating thick and rich descriptions and discussions. As an ethnographic technique developed since the 1950s (Prosser 2011), elicitation continues to be popular when images, films, artefacts and sound material are used to stimulate discussion. Sociologist and photographer Douglas Harper (2002), described how visual elicitation methods tend to produce deeper analyses than those based on words-alone. Nicola Allet (2010), working with people’s reactions to music, has similarly noted the way that elicitation may additionally evoke important feelings and memories. Jane Lydon, a historian of Australian colonial photography, has used comparable methods to elicit responses to photographic collections amongst Australian Aboriginal communities (Lydon 2010, 2014). In doing so, Lydon reveals how engaging with this material can facilitate the recovery of stories that have been ‘lost through the dislocations of colonialism’ (Lydon 2010, p.180) or left undocumented in official histories.

These methods, often incorporating the ‘return’ or ‘repatriation’ of not just photographic but other archival materials to Indigenous communities (Poignant 1996; Macdonald 2003; Hinkson 2014), are now recognised as important dimensions to a decolonising anthropology. Many museum practitioners for example, now refer to the importance of discussing potential repatriation of physical objects with ‘source communities’ in order to enable better documentation and explanation of their collections (Brown & Peers 2013; Allen 2016). Anthropology’s move towards decolonizing methodologies has similarly emphasised the need to return research results to Indigenous communities (Smith 1999; Denzin & Lincoln 2008; Harrison 1997; Harris 2014), prompting some to use these experiences as sites of research in themselves (Christen 2005; Bell, Christen & Turin 2013; Treluyrn & Emberly 2013). What is clear from this growing body of literature (see Geismar & Herle 2009; Bell 2003, 2010; Ballard 2013) is that the act of returning film, sound or textual material, while it might be thought of as being relatively straightforward, is in fact an important and complex engagement.

The amount and depth of knowledge gained through these processes varies widely. In most cases, questions are provoked concerning the ongoing ownership of archival
objects and new perspectives on historical events are gained (Poignant 1996; Luise White 2000; Geismar 2009; Herle 1998; Bradley, Adgemis & Haralampou 2014; Thomas 2007; Palmer 2013). Haidy Geismar and Anita Herle’s (2010) comprehensive account of the return of the anthropologist John Layard’s photographs to Malakula communities in Vanuatu, stands as a particularly important exemplar for this thesis. Their work not only brings the evolving nature of collaborative relationships between ethnographers and communities to the foreground, but also shows how important the performative aspects of people’s engagement with ethnohistorical material can be. In Australia, the return of ethnographic films (Garde 2013; Sweeney 2006) and sound recordings (Campbell 2014; Gibson 2015a; Turpin, Gibson & Green 2016) have similarly augmented the ethnographic record.

If employed in a thoughtless manner however, the return of archival material can easily produce inaccurate or distorted memories, or worse, result in serious hurt or distress to participants. The risk of offending is most pronounced when viewing ethnographic films from the past when restricted aspects of men’s ritual were sometimes permitted to be filmed. There have been a number of instances where accidental screenings of footage of restricted ceremonies have resulted in distress or anxiety in Aboriginal communities and have led to threats of inter-community violence (Thomas 2007; Latz 2014, pp.161–63). I personally recall witnessing the distress and anxiety felt by women and children after having been exposed to this type of material. As families sat in the local library in Ti Tree viewing a documentary on the life of the Arrernte artist Albert Namatjira, the film suddenly cut to vision of an elaborate and very secret ritual being performed by Luritja men.39 Shocked senior Anmatyerr women commanded the children to run from the library and they too rushed for the doors.

Bringing Strehlow’s recordings into Anmatyerr communities therefore had to be carried out with extreme care and caution. Although I was careful in only showing this material to men of significant ritual standing, I knew that the arrival of this material was a risky intervention, and one for which I would be held personally responsible. Past experiences had taught me that presenting material to men who did

39 The film was the 1947 documentary ‘Namatjira the Painter’ directed by Lee Robinson and with help from C.P. Mountford and Axel Poignant.
not feel knowledgeable enough to see it or were not personally affiliated in some way to its Dreamings, could lead to discomfort and accusations that they were meddling in other people’s ‘Law’.

When utilised in a cautious and responsive manner however, collaborative screenings and listening sessions can be both elucidating and address sensitivities. Visual sociologist Jon Prosser has argued that participants in research will often feel less pressure when discussing sensitive topics, if the focus of the interaction is non-direct, focused on the audio or visual content being examined, and diffused amongst a cohort of respondents (Prosser 2011, p.484). Strehlow’s archive was therefore utilised in this way, as type of ‘intermediary’ or ‘transitional object’ through which dialogue could occur. People gathered around my laptop computer, or around photocopies of archival material, and used these items as a means to talk through or around important matters of ritual knowledge. They remembered historical events and made their personal connections to these things known.

It would be naïve to think that these discussions were in any way ‘natural’ or routine. It was my research intervention that had purposefully introduced this material. Being involved as an active participant in the discussions, I was often asked to provide further information or clarify the background to Strehlow’s work. This ‘shared learning environment’ (Abma & Widdershoven 2011) meant that I was able to benefit from the clarifications and descriptions provided by senior men, but they too could use me as a resource. As one of a small number of non-Aboriginal men to have been permitted to see these films and hear these songs, let alone share in the excited rush of commentary from senior Anmatyerr ritual experts, I felt enormously privileged to be able to record these responses, learn about their about interactions with Strehlow, and deepen my understanding of Anmatyerr lifeworlds.

Conclusion
When I first met Anmatyerr people, I approached them as someone engaged in ‘culture’ work. While I was initially interested in social histories and developing local archival collections, I was gradually diverted by Anmatyerr men towards the documenting of what underpinned their ‘history’, which in most cases involved Anengkerr (Dreaming), anpernerrenty (relationship networks) and an understanding
of people’s contemporary lives. The enthusiasm for mer (country), song, and myth that was expressed by men like Paddy Kemarr, Eric Penangk and Tony Scrutton was infectious. Travelling to significant ancestral sites and being urged to document, listen and learn, made me an accidental ethnographer of sorts.

These prior experiences made my arrival in Anmatyerr communities with copies of the Strehlow recordings explicable. I was a ‘known quantity’ and this gave Anmatyerr people an opportunity to utilise my interests, resources and skills in ways that supported their own interests. It also meant that the collaborative fieldwork methodologies and archival research strategies were already familiar.

The particularly dense linguistic, historical and anthropological contents of the Strehlow collection made it ideal for collaborative re-examination. Exposing its various elements to individuals with considerable interest and knowledge of what had been documented made complete sense. It was also the best way to understand the dialogical conditions of its original making and understanding its significance and relevance to people today.

Reflecting on my own experience, as well Strehlow’s ethnography, urged me to reconsider how Anmatyerr people encountered ethnographers and alhernter in general. Being encouraged to ingkwernem-ilem (record something in writing) or pwetewem-ilem (take a photograph) led me to reflect on these relationships. I had to assume that Strehlow was similarly asked to do these things, and if so, then surely there needed to be a reconsideration of the agency and motivations the people he was acquainted with. I also wondered whether there was a bigger picture to be found here. Were there longer historical relationships that informed these dynamics?

Although Anmatyerr people had largely escaped intensive documentation over the years, they had nonetheless developed significant ties with settler society and appeared relatively comfortable with working out mutually agreeable zones of interaction. Acknowledging this unfolding history dialogue and exchange appears to be far more important than submitting to the ‘tired binaries of cultural continuity versus culture decline’ (Bessire p.21) that typified twentieth century anthropology and was promoted most forcibly by Strehlow. In fact, Strehlow had not encountered
Anmatyerr people cut off from or exterior to Euro-Australian society when he arrived on the scene in the 1930s. He interacted with a people that had been negotiating asymmetrical power relationships with Europeans for decades.
Chapter 3: Early Alhernter Encounters

... rather than cementing estrangement, culture contact always entails, in some measure, for each party, stratagems of reconfiguring the horizons of their own humanity. [...] Though every anthropological encounter begins in strangeness and separation, that gap is gradually, though seldom utterly, closed (Jackson 1998, p.109).

Anmatyerr people will often refer to Europeans as alhernter; a term comprised of the words ‘alhe’ meaning ‘nose’ and ‘ntere’ referring to the colours ‘red’ or ‘pink’ (Green 2010a, p.43).40 Interactions with the ‘pink nosed’ date back to the arrival of the first explorers in the 1860s and have since been characterised by a long and unfolding history of coercion, inequality and conflict as well as interaction and exchange. The earliest encounters between Aboriginal people and Europeans are now subject to detailed historical analysis and the debates over what actually happened during these encounters now serve as important events where the moral foundations of Australian nationhood are questioned and defined (Manne 2003; Macintyre & Clark 2004). As historian Inga Clendinnen argued in Dancing with Strangers (2005), to understand more recent relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians, one needs to grasp their foundation in the earliest interactions.

This chapter presents a number of historical episodes where Anmatyerr and alhernter met and interacted prior to T.G.H. Strehlow’s arrival on the scene in the early 1930s. This historical purview is essential for seeing not only how transactions between ethnographers and informants developed up until this time, but also how the expectations and tensions that have persisted between alhernter and Anmatyerr since. The rough contours of intercultural relations had been established in the 70 years prior to the beginning of Strehlow’s work and these historical relationships built important preconceptions amongst both parties about how an exchange in cultural information might be mediated, structured and negotiated. In her study of colonial travel writing, Imperial Eyes, Mary Louise Pratt describes these situations as ’contact zones’; spaces

40 Other words are used to refer to Europeans such as mperlker, tywelker, or tyerty arlter. All make reference white or pale skin colour.
‘where peoples once geographically and historically separated’ came into contact with each other and established ‘ongoing relations’ (1992, pp.6–7). What is important about Pratt’s concept here is her emphasis on how subjects and groups are constituted in their associations with each other within ‘asymmetrical relations of power’ that include episodes of collision and misunderstanding as well as copresence, interaction and ‘interlocking understandings and practices’ (1992, pp.6–7). As Jackson notes in the epigraph, rather than ‘cementing estrangement’ these encounters may equally be productive sites of struggle, mixing, improvisation and dialogue.

Early colonial interactions between the Anmatyerr and alhernter were slow to build and at times ignited into bloody frontier violence. On the whole though, it was people’s long-term associations with pastoralism, combined with their irregular interactions with colonial authorities that laid out important expectations of the newcomers. Tightly interwoven into the fabric of colonialism and the wider social settings of the nation, the history of ethnographic practice in Australia has been dealt with in somewhat generalised terms (Ogden 2008; Lydon 2014; Wolfe 1999; Bennett, Dibley & Harrison 2014). These analyses have tended to highlight issues of oppositional frontiers and outright violence as well as structural, material and discursive power (Lattas & Morris 2010; Wolfe 2006), leaving the finer details of micro-ethnographic, local or regional accounts and experiences unexamined (see Griffiths 1996, pp.155–157; also Anderson 1995a). Taking inspiration from the more ethnographically-oriented and local of these histories produced in Australia and elsewhere (Abercrombie 1998; Merlan 1998; Austin-Broos 2009; Alva Ixtilxochitl 2015; Jones 2015), this chapter aims to explore the often deep intermingling of practices and world views in early encounters in particular. I begin with a discussion of exploration and conflict and the emergence of pastoralism as a significant ‘contact zone’, before moving on to an examination of the early ethnographers and their interactions with Anmatyerr people.

‘Discovering’ the Known
The first alhernter to enter into Anmatyerr territory was the Scottish explorer, John McDouall Stuart, in 1860. On his fourth inland expedition, Stuart and his small party travelled north from Adelaide and made their way to the centre of the continent
Following the Hanson Creek to the north, they headed towards a large mountain on the horizon, which they named ‘Central Mount Sturt’ after the explorer Charles Sturt, although it was later renamed after Stuart himself as Central Mount Stuart (See Figure 4). At the summit of this bulbous peak, Stuart and his second in command, William Kekwick, flew the British flag and claimed the surrounding country for the British Crown:

We then gave three hearty cheers for the flag, the emblem of civil and religious liberty, and may it be a sign to the natives that the dawn of liberty, civilization, and Christianity is about to break upon them (Stuart 1865, pp.165–166).

Unbeknownst to the explorers, the mountain was already known as Mer Amakweng and associated with numerous Anengkerr (Dreamings) that criss-crossed the country and were honoured in song and ceremony. As Stuart made almost no use of local Aboriginal guides and had little interest in ethnography, his interactions with Aboriginal people were mostly brief and insignificant (Finnane 2010; Jones 2012). His presence however did not go unnoticed by Aboriginal people and stories of his party’s arrival were later recorded in oral histories and artworks (Gillen 1968; Strehlow 1967; Gibson 2015b). As Stuart passed through Anmatyerr territory in 1862 during his successful crossing of the continent from south to north, he marked the commencement of the colonial era for all of the people of inland Australia and heralded the beginning of an influx of settlers, mainly pastoralists, who gradually began moving their stock into the area.

In addition to the emus of the Kngwarray and Peltharr subsections that travelled here from Alalkere in the east, Paddy Willis noted a public dance that referenced Central Mount Stuart. See ‘Paddy Kemarr Willis at 6 Mile 19th May 2016.WAV’. Paddy called the dance althart iwarpitpityarten.

This was despite suggestions from the South Australian Governor at the time that landmarks new to Europeans should be attributed with their Aboriginal names. Stuart’s unwillingness to engage with Aboriginal people meant that key features in the landscape were soon renamed after his financial backers and friends and his diaries contain very little about the local inhabitants.
By 1872, the newly constructed Overland Telegraph Line, which had been built to establish communications with the British Empire and the rest of the world, effectively dissected the traditional territory of the Anmatyerr. Successions of telegraph repeater stations were constructed between Adelaide on the southern coast and Darwin in the north. In Central Australia, telegraph stations were built at Charlotte Waters and Stuart (later renamed Alice Springs) in Arrernte territory and then at Barrow Creek on Kaytetye lands. Although there was never a Telegraph Station building actually established within Anmatyerr territory, the poles and wires of the line ran directly through their country and Anmatyerr people would occasionally encounter labourers and stockmen travelling between Alice Springs and Barrow Creek. These very early interactions were, according to historian Mervyn Hartwig, mostly insignificant and fleeting and thus left little mark on the historical record (1965, pp.389, 247, 257), but as land was ‘settled’ the transect of ‘the Line’ and its telegraph repeater stations were used as bases from which to launch new expeditions and explorations (Gosse & Goyder 1874). 43

By the mid 1870s, Anmatyerr

43 Hartwig’s thesis was based upon archival research but it is worth noting that his conversations with Anmatyerr people inspired the research. In the acknowledgements he thanks ‘the Aborigines of Ti-Tree Station, who first aroused in me an interest in the history of the land in which they proudly live’ (1965, p.x).
lands were being mapped from east to west by *alhernter* keen on expanding their own material and colonial interests, with very little interest in its Aboriginal inhabitants.

**Frontier Violence**

By the mid-1880s both Anmatyerr and Arrernte people to their south (who had borne the brunt of dispossession along the Overland Telegraph Line) became ‘the first to offer widespread resistance to the expansion of the pastoral leases’ (Hartwig 1965, p.395). According to the various histories written of the time (Kimber 1991; Hartwig 1965; Nettelbeck & Foster 2007), conflict tended to flare up over the killing of cattle, which had become so prevalent that it was discussed as an ‘emergency’ amongst the South Australian Police Force. The first serious instance of violent conflict on the 22nd of February of 1874, occurred only two years after the Overland Telegraph Stations had been established. The northern neighbours to the Anmatyerr, the Kaytetye, had attacked the Barrow Creek Telegraph Station, killing two settlers and wounding a third in retaliation for the abuse and exploitation of Aboriginal women (Koch & Koch 1993, pp.xiv–xv; Mulvaney 2004).

The punitive response that followed saw people being shot far to the south in Anmatyerr territory, along the Hanson Creek and Skull Creek (seemingly named after the skulls of the victims left there) (Koch & Koch 1993, p.xv, 17; Strehlow 1971a, pp.590–593, 1967, p.12). According to oral histories collected from two Anmatyerr men by T.G.H. Strehlow over forty years later, a ‘native police’ unit consisting of Arrernte troopers led by Mounted Constable Samuel Gason had pursued the attackers (Strehlow 1932, p.119). At Arlwekarr (Lukara), a waterhole to the east of the present day Stirling Community, the native police apparently scattered and destroyed the sacred *tywerrenge* objects kept at Arlwekarr (see also Mulvaney 2004). In

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44 The Northern Territory was considered part of South Australian until 1911, when it was transferred to the jurisdiction of the Commonwealth.

45 Alice Springs historian R.G. Kimber has advised that Skull Creek may not have been named after a massacre site. Kimber indicated that he had seen archival records that suggested the creek had been named prior to the Barrow Creek incident. If this is the case, it may be named after a site where people were murdered en masse before white settlement, or alternatively a mass burial site.

46 Strehlow’s informants identified a number of these Arrernte men in great detail, noting their names, their places of residence and the Dreaming associations.
Strehlow’s estimation, the Anmatyerr had received ‘all the punishment’ for an attack that they had little or nothing to do with.47

Ten years later, the Anmatyerr launched an attack of their own upon a settlement homestead that had been established on their traditional lands. Anmatyerr men, with the help of some Western Arrernte, attacked the Anna’s Reservoir homestead, first by setting fire to the thatched roof of the building and then waiting for the inhabitants to emerge (Kimber 1991, pp.10–11). As many as 150 Aboriginal men had waited outside the building with their spears at the ready. The head stockman rushed out, firing his revolver. The camp cook had already been badly wounded and both men eventually died in the affray (Willshire 1884). The exact reasons for the attack on Anna’s Reservoir are not known, but there is reasonable evidence to suggest (Eylmann 1908, pp.462–463; Kimber 1991) that access to resources (particularly water) or perhaps the rape of a young Anmatyerr girl had sparked the violence. Whatever the reason, the attack was again followed by a brutal response from the authorities led by the notoriously violent Constable Willshire (Nettelbeck & Foster 2007; Roberts 2009; Vallee 2007) and his team of Aboriginal ‘native-police’.48

Over one hundred years later, the history of the Anna’s Reservoir conflict is now part of the narrative of the Anmatyerr landscape. Driving between the Laramba (Napperby) community and the Stuart Highway, men have often pointed out the ranges of Angkwerl (Anna’s Reservoir) and commented on the story. On one occasion, Huckitta Lynch and Ronnie McNamara called out over the din of the Toyota engine to recount the story of the attack. Ronnie lent over into the cabin where I was driving, and speaking loudly into my ear remarked that this was the time of ‘the war’.49 Ronnie was often blunt about the region’s bloody history and had personal connections to it. His father, the white pastoralist William ‘Billy’ McNamara, had shot Aboriginal people for spearing cattle in the 1920s (Bowman 1989, pp.36–37; T.G.H. Strehlow in conversation with Curtis Levy c.1974. Levy audio-recorded this conversation whilst researching a film about the Overland Telegraph Line for the ABC that was never completed. Copy of the recording provided by Curtis Levy. Far less critical (Stapleton 1992) and more nuanced analyses of Willshire are presented elsewhere (Vallee 2009), including his own accounts (Willshire 1895, 1896). According to Willshire, ‘the principle ring leader of cattle killing’ in the region was shot dead, and at least another three people were killed by the punitive party in the coming weeks (Hartwig 1965, p.396; Willshire 1884). 25th July 2012, Ronnie McNamara and Huckitta Lynch.
Davis & Prescott 1992, p.92), and as a young man Ronnie was often confronted by descendants of the victims. Huckitta Lynch had also heard about the Anna’s Reservoir incident and described how the Anmatyerr men had used fire as their primary weapon. ‘They made ure [fires] everywhere around the station [at] Mer Angkwerl. Killed warlparl [whitefellas] too. We made trouble everywhere. That’s nwernekenh ayey. Angkwey map [That’s our story. From a long time ago].’

The ‘war’, or the ‘trouble’, sent shock waves throughout the region during the late nineteenth century. Of the 45 Aboriginal people that were officially recorded as having been killed during this early colonial period, at least 18 were from the Anmatyerr and Kaytetye areas (Kimber 1991). Local Central Australian historian and anthropologist Dick Kimber has noted that there were ‘undoubtedly’ other reprisals ‘carried out by groups of stockmen working beyond the law, and others involving the police but not being officially recorded’ (1991, p.13). Ken Tilmouth Penangk for example, has told of one such incident where his relatives were killed at the site of Itarlenty, a place now marked on maps as ‘Blackfellows' Bones Bore’ after the human remains apparently left at the site following a shooting (in Bowman 2015, pp.91–92; see also Strehlow 1967, p.6; Kimber 1991; Young 1987, p.160; Strehlow 1971a, p.588; Purvis 1940, p.176), and others speak of the fear that their ancestors had of violent whites.

Open and violent resistance to colonisation following these brutal responses, eventually faded in the late nineteenth century, leaving the local population with what Hartwig has described as a ‘refugee outlook’ (1965, pp.400, 413). The effects of frontier violence had been so great that by the turn of the century, one of the first anthropologists in visit the region, Walter Baldwin Spencer (see more below), declared that the Anmatyerr had been practically ‘wiped out’ (1928, p.412) by acts of ‘dispersal’, a euphemism commonly employed in the colonial period to describe the enactment of violence against Aboriginal people (see Foster 2009; Read 1983). With their lands largely usurped and having spent decades in the company of the ever-increasing presence of settlers, the Anmatyerr had apparently given up on violent

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50 Brown notebook, Huckitta Penangke Lynch referred to this story again on April 21st 2015 at Artwertakert angenty.
51 Eric Penangk, for example has told me of people who would hide in the ‘hill country’ so as to avoid detection.
resistance. According to Mervyn Meggitt (1962, p.335), Anmatyerr people made it known to their western neighbours, the Warlpiri, that the ‘whitefellows were there to stay, no matter what attempts the Aborigines made to dislodge them’.

The violence of the early colonial period reappeared in August of 1928 in what was the last recorded mass killing of Aboriginal people by a police punitive party in Australia, the Coniston killings. As the details of this terrible event have been adequately described elsewhere (Cataldi 1996; Cribbin 1984; Kimber 2003; Central Land Council 2003; Wilson & O’Brien 2003; Koch & Koch 1993; Read & Read 1993), only a very brief synopsis will be provided here. Following years of drought it was not uncommon for supplies and rations to be pilfered by opportunistic and hungry Aboriginal people (Kimber 2003; Scherer 1993, p.24; Wilson & O’Brien 2003, pp.67–70; Strehlow 1932, p.15). Given the stresses of drought, Aboriginal people in the region were understandably angered by cattle spoiling scarce food and water resources, as well as encroaching upon important places for hunting game (Scherer 1993, p.24).52 As tensions increased, a number of pastoralists were being threatened or openly attacked. When a ‘dogger’ (dingo trapper) named Fred Brooks was killed by a Warlpiri man at Arrwek (Brooks Soak) on Coniston Station, the police response was brutal.

Between August and October of 1928, Mounted Constable William George Murray and a small band of local pastoralists terrorised the region. Although the number of people killed is unknown, oral history accounts suggest that it was at least double the 31 deaths officially reported by the Board of Enquiry that was later set up to investigate the shootings (Cribbin 1984; Kimber 1991; Doyle 1999). The biggest slaughter, according to Silas Ngal, a Anmatyerr/Warlpiri elder that spoke with T.G.H. Strehlow decades after the event (1968a, p.60), was at a site called ‘Aloweija’ where an Urempel festival (the type of ceremonial gathering that Strehlow regularly documented throughout the 1950s and 1960s (see Chapters 5 and 6)), was underway.

Murders of Anmatyerr people by authorities ceased following the Coniston shootings, but Anmatyerr people continued to be used as indentured labour, suffered further

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52 Similar issues continued to be a problem for pastoralists into the 1930s. See Ernest Kramer’s Northwest Journey Report, August 1931. SLSA, PRG1322/2, p.6.
maltreatment, and saw more sacred sites desecrated. The harsh times continued. Paddy Kemarr Willis, born three years after the Coniston shootings, remembers being told about attacks made against a particularly brutal pastoralist, William John ‘Nugget’ Morton, for his apparent mistreatment of Anmatyerr women:

Well, Nugget Morton came from Western Australia. He brought bullocks from there. He came to Boomerang Hole [on the Lander River], through the desert. After that, well Nugget Morton gathered up some women and took them to his camp, taking them from the ‘old’ people. He used to take women to work for him as stockmen. The white fellow [Morton] told them, “I’m going to shift camp to Mud Hut [on the Lander river, north from Willowra] with these bullocks. You mob can stay here at this fertile place with a waterhole!” Well, the old people were worried about their women. Well, they gathered together into a fighting group, before attacking Nugget Morton. While he was sleeping… the fight started before daylight, at about 6 o’clock. There was a big fight. They smashed him about with boomerangs. Old Nugget Morton.53

The tensions of these times remain vivid in the minds of many Anmatyerr people today. While growing up ‘in the bush’ on Napperby Station, Janie Briscoe Mpetyan has explained that she and her family were anxious that ‘whitefellas’ would kill them. ‘That was the olden days. We never went to the station homestead – only our father used to go to the homestead to get rations. We stayed in the bush’ (in Bowman 2015, p.83). Unlike other Aboriginal groups in Australia that grew up on gazetted ‘Aboriginal Reserves’ (see Howard-Wagner & Kelly 2011a), towns or missions, the Anmatyerr came to know alhernter via the distinctive experience of living on a remote and largely unruly pastoral frontier.

53 Paddy Kemarr Willis, audio recording kept at the Anmatyerr Knowledge Centre, Ti Tree. Translated by David Strickland, Malcolm Heffernan and Jason Gibson.
Pastoralism

Amidst the tensions of this frontier however, a contrasting dynamic of co-existence and adaptation began to emerge. By the 1890s, as substantial camps of Anmatyerr people congregated around station homesteads and close to the Overland Telegraph Line, the utilisation of Aboriginal labour became commonplace. A kind of ‘middle ground’, which historian Richard White (2010) describes as a space where Indigenous and European people attempt to reconfigure mutually understandable practices, began to materialise. According to White, these types of relationships tend to emerge in environments where there is minimal state intervention, and where the need or desire to interact with one another, usually in order to access each other’s labour, technologies and resources, develops. While the demands that settlers and Aboriginal people placed on each other during this early period were, according to Hartwig, so minimal that each was relatively free to pursue their own interests (1965, pp.447, 449), increasingly the two came together. Bill Heffernan, one of the earliest pastoralists in the region, explained that being largely ‘isolated and scattered’ the early settlers needed to make concessions in order to accommodate Anmatyerr people (in Scherer 1993, p.19).

Having first tentatively and then violently confronted each other, there was a need to find a way of cooperating and developing consent between groups. So long as Anmatyerr people refrained from interfering with station infrastructure, chattel or interests, and added their labour to the pastoral economy, settlers would not obstruct their religious or cultural lives (Hartwig 1965, p.450). Those gathered near station homesteads began to receive rations (food, clothing and other goods such as blankets and tobacco) in return for domestic work or labouring, which the Aboriginal community would then typically distribute amongst their local kin. These conditions, where men worked as labourers/stockmen and women as ‘domestics’, lasted well into the 1960s. The historian Mervyn Hartwig, worked at Ti Tree Station over the summer months of 1959/60 and recalled that Anmatyerr people were paid in little more than ‘bully beef’, flour and tea slops poured from an old four-gallon kerosene tin.55

Conditions like these had been common across Central Australian cattle stations for

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54 Heffernan took up the Ti Tree lease in 1914.
decades (for similar descriptions see McFadyen 2005; & Ross & Whitebeach 2007) and characterised the imbalance in Indigenous and non-Indigenous power relations.

This type of ‘rationing’, as Tim Rowse has argued (2002), became a defining feature of the colonial experience in Central Australia. While undoubtedly a flexible instrument of social, economic and cultural manipulation that undoubtedly cultivated dependencies, rationing also operated as a point of exchange and established degrees of familiarity. As more and more people came to live close to station homesteads, some pastoralists attained rudimentary knowledge of the Anmatyerr language and developed closer personal ties with the local population.\textsuperscript{56} Some even came to have families with Anmatyerr women, though the taboos associated with ‘combo-ism’ (co-habiting with Aboriginal women) were so great that these relationships were often concealed (Strehlow 1968a, p.54).\textsuperscript{57} Randall Stafford, a pastoralist who had been partly involved in the Coniston shootings, for example, later had children to an Anmatyerr woman (Alice Stafford Pwerrerl) and developed obvious sympathies with the Anmatyerr.

\begin{quote}
I’ve been good to them on every station I’ve been on – I’ve fed them – I’ve treated them well. I’ve never interfered with them on their walkabouts; and yet I feel sure that they like those other whites who treat them as though they were dogs. But it doesn’t matter to me. I know that these myalls (bush people) sometimes spear one of my bullocks; but as long as it doesn’t happen too often, I say nothing about it. It was their country before I came into it, and I know they often have a pretty tough
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{56} Bushman Ben Nicker for example, was known to be skilled in Anmatyerr (Bowman 1989, p.23) and although it is impossible to gauge, others like Billy Briscoe, Mac Chalmers and ‘Nugget’ Morton were all reported to have possessed varying degrees of knowledge of Anmatyerr and/or Warlpiri (Green 2001; Bowman 1989, p.23; Kimber 2003; Briscoe 2010, pp.33–34).

\textsuperscript{57} T.G.H. Strehlow interviewed Randall Stafford, see SOU 00149 at the SRC. It is hard to assess the quality of many of these relationships given the taboos of miscegenation that surrounded Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal relations during this period (the topic is dealt with in two works of literature, Herbert 2008; and Gabbrilli 2008).
time in making a living for themselves (quoted in Strehlow 1959, p.312).

Eric Penangk, who was born in the same year as the Coniston shootings (1928) and whose family members fled for their safety during the chaos of the ‘killing times’, was told as a young man that some pastoralists had actually defended people. Looking at one of the photographs taken by the missionary Ernest Kramer in the late 1920s (See Figure 5), Eric recalled the efforts of Mr. Thomas Moar at Pine Hill Station who protected his workers from the punitive party led by Constable Murray:

They worked for Moar as sheep shepherds… because he looked after them from that one all the time. That Moar growled [become angry] at that whitefella without shooting. Mr Moar, he looked after them. [Mounted Constable William] George Murray came there, but Moar looked after them all. They all lived at Ilyelepwenty [Woodforde Well] because they looked after the sheep. Old man Moar looked after them with a shotgun, from that other white fella. That’s what happened.

Aboriginal workers - men, women and children – all over remote areas of Australia, became indispensable to the pastoral economy (Laufer 2001; McGrath 1997). Though undoubtedly exploited and receiving only meagre rations in return for their hard labour, pride in their work nonetheless constituted a form of defiance against the oppressive paternalism entrenched in mainstream social attitudes (McGrath 1997, 1987; Rose 2005; Sandall 1972; Hokari 2002). The seasonal nature of stock work also meant that ceremonial obligations, often involving weeks away in isolated ceremonial camps, could be accommodated within the demands of the pastoral economy, and droving or mustering enabled people to visit important ancestral sites whilst ‘on the job’. At stock camps too, people would meet and share stories, exchange ritual

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58 Stafford may have been before his time, but by the 1950s other station owners in some places began to acknowledge that while they owned the stock and the infrastructure, Aboriginal people owned the land itself (Sandall 1972; McGrath 1997; Bowman 1989, p.31).
59 Eric’s response was specifically in regards to image AA 1/59/3 in the SAM collection. Interview with Jason Gibson. Translation by Malcom Heffernan, Jason Gibson and David Strickland.
knowledge and perform public songs and dances (Mulvaney 1976; Harney 1946, p.38; Gibson 2015a). As Peter Sutton argues, it was these qualities that made pastoralism ‘the form of colonisation most compatible with the maintenance of traditional Aboriginal connections to land’ (1998, p.35).

Figure 5: Ernest Kramer’s photograph of some of the men that worked for Thomas Moar at the Woodforde Crossing c.1927 (SAM, Aborigines Friends Association Collection, item AA 1/59/3).

**First Ethnographic Encounters**

It was precisely amidst this socio-economic and cultural backdrop that the first ethnographers encountered the Anmatyerr. Neither ‘traditional in the pre-contact sense nor assimilated’, the Anmatyerr, like so many Indigenous groups across Australia had negotiated their own place within a complex contact zone (Rolls 2010, p.194). The first interactions with ethnographers began in the mid-1890s, thirty years after Stuart’s explorations and twenty-five years after the arrival of settlers. It was the German Forschungsreisender (traveling researcher) Erhard Eylmann, that apparently made the initial fieldwork incursion into Anmatyerr lands in search of anthropological insights (Schröder 2004; Monteath 2013; Courto 2004). In his Die Eingeborenmen der Kolonie Sud-Australien (1908), Eylmann writes of journeying and hunting with people on Anmatyerr country, but makes no reference to the Anmatyerr ethnonym.
(Eylmann 2011, pp.261, 284–285). His map of tribal territories (see Map 4) instead identifies only the ‘Arunta’ [Arrernte] and the ‘Katiye’ [Kaytetye], and omits any reference to the Anmatyerr (normally positioned between these two groups).

Map 4: Extract from Eylmann’s map which omits any reference to the Anmatyerr.

The next ethnographers to work in this area, Francis James Gillen and Walter Baldwin Spencer, were similarly silent on the presence of the Anmatyerr.60 Although they focused primarily on the ceremonial lives of the Arrernte living in the Alice Springs and the Charlotte Waters areas (see Spencer & Gillen 1899), Spencer and Gillen’s work did nevertheless make reference to places and mythologies that we

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60 Gillen hosted his ‘German friend’ during visits to the Alice Springs Telegraph Station between 1896 and 1898 and Spencer and Gillen’s work undoubtedly had an important influence on Eylmann (Gillen et al. 2001, pp.115, 122).
would now regard as being clearly identified with the Anmatyerr. What is confusing about Spencer and Gillen’s first publication is that much of this information is attributed to a group that they label as the ‘Ilpira’ or ‘Ilpirra’ (see Spencer & Gillen 1899, pp.90, 645–657), an Arandic term (spelt Arlpere in modern orthography) for the Warlpiri cultural group that reside much further to the northwest. A careful reading of Spencer and Gillen’s ethnography also reveals that the subsection terms listed for the ‘Ilpirra’ are also undoubtedly Arandic and lack the suffixes and prefixes that characterise the Warlpiri and Western Desert languages. Moreover, the geographic region associated with the ‘Ilpira’ group are where we might expect the Anmatyerr to be today, adjoining the Arrernte ‘on the north’, or ‘immediately to the north’ of the Arrernte (Spencer & Gillen 1899, pp.72, 276).

It wasn’t until Spencer and Gillen’s historic anthropological expedition across the continent in 1901 that the ‘Unmatjira’ [Anmatyerr] were finally recognised in the literature (Gillen 1968, p.126). Primarily interested in gathering information on ‘primitive’ people in order to advance an appreciation of social evolution, Spencer and Gillen followed the Overland Telegraph Line north from Oodnadatta in South Australia all the way to the Gulf of Carpentaria, producing detailed ethnographic records of Aboriginal groups in Central and Northern Australia (Spencer & Gillen 1904). Although they travelled through Anmatyerr territory past Ti Tree and Central Mount Stuart, they did not meet any Anmatyerr people until their arrival at the Barrow Creek Telegraph Station. Here a man named ‘Jack’ Arlpalywerrng Pwerrerl

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61 For example, one myth describes a group of alekaper (collared sparrowhawk) men travelling to a place called ‘Urumbia which lies to the north of the place which was named Anna's Reservoir’ (Spencer & Gillen 1899, p.401). Both ‘Urumbia’ [Arempey, on the Pine Hill Station lease] and Anna’s Reservoir are well within the ambit of contemporary Anmatyerr speakers. The two maps published in The Native Tribes indicate Gillen’s intimate knowledge of the Central Australian landscape beyond the Alice Springs region, and Anmatyerr site names, although often not located or spelt accurately, such as ‘Iri-i-pma’ (Arleyepmw), ‘Illaura’ (Ilewerr), ‘Awurapuncha’ (Awerrepwenty), Urangipa (Arangwep) can be found in T.G.H. Strehlow work and have been identified in my own fieldwork.

62 For example, a display of the relative locations of the Arunta, Ilpirra, Illeowra [Alyawarr], and Kytiche [Kaytetye] in Gillen’s letter of 25.04.1896 (Mulvaney et al. 1997: 112), places the Ilpirra to the northwest of the Arunta, west of the Illeowra, and southwest of the Kytiche, which accurately represents the location of the group that has been called Anmatyerr—cf. the map in Strehlow (1947), where the name Unmatjera is attached to the whole area that is designated Ilpirra on Spencer and Gillen’s maps (e.g. Spencer and Gillen 1927: 5).

63 For example, they list ‘Uknaria’ [Ngwarray] and ‘Bulthara’ [Peltharr] as subsections for the Ilpira. In the Warlpiri or Western Desert languages however these would be ‘Jungarrayi/Tjungarrayi’ or ‘Japaltjarri/Tjapaltjarri’ respectively.
(Illpaliurkna Purula), a senior Anmatyerr man from the Arlwekarr area, provided them with their first insights into the Anmatyerr people.

Word of the approaching anthropologists, who were interested in trading rations for artefacts and information, had been sent along the telegraph line, and Arlpalywerrng was just one of the many Kaytetye and Anmatyerr people that came in looking to participate (Mulvaney, Petch & Morphy 2000; Gillen et al. 2001). Writing to his family back in Melbourne, Spencer described Arlpalywerrng as ‘a very remarkable looking individual’, dressed in ragged clothes and donning a hat made out of ‘old hoop rim and calico’ (Spencer 2013, p.56). Giving an indication of Anmatyerr people’s early integration into the rural economy, the hat had apparently been made by the local pastoralist, Francis Robert William Scott, and given to Arlpalywerrng as protection from the sun while he tended to Scott’s stock. In annotating an accompanying photograph of Arlpalywerrng kept in the Baldwin Spencer Collection at the Melbourne Museum (Figure 6), Spencer noted that Arlpalywerrng was ‘in charge’ of a cattle ‘station’ on the nearby ‘Stirling Creek’.64

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64 Item XP14578 and also XP14577 in Spencer’s photographic collection at Museum Victoria.

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Figure 6: Jack Arlpalywerrng Pwerrerl wearing the hat made for him by F.R. Scott (Spencer Collection, Museum Victoria, XP 14577).
Eliciting information from Arlpalywerrng and the others at Barrow Creek was made possible via a number of means. After 25 years in the region, Gillen had attained a working knowledge of Arrernte (Jones 2005; Gibson 2013) (a language closely related to Anmatyerr), and Arlpalywerrng had presumably learnt enough English to communicate with alhernter such as Scott. But as John Mulvaney (2001) has noted, Spencer and Gillen’s talented interpreter Jim Alyelkelhayeka (Erlikilyika) Kite also played a key role at Barrow Creek, enabling discussions with informants that spoke any of the Arandic languages (Arrernte, Anmatyerr and Kaytetye). With Kite’s help, the duo obtained the earliest information on Anmatyerr burial and mourning practices, mythologies, kinship and ‘tribal boundaries’ from Arlpalywerrng. The other Anmatyerr people present at Barrow Creek, who according to Gillen had ‘never been near a white settlement’ and knew nothing of the English language, proved far less forthcoming (Gillen 1968, p.165). In exchange for food, tomahawks, knives, pipes and tobacco, these people were simply photographed and later submitted to having their heads measured with Spencer’s anthropometric instruments.

What is perhaps most striking about this early interaction though, is the way in which sacred ceremonial knowledge was shared so liberally. Not only was the sacred ceremony concerning the anyemayte (witchetty grub) of ‘Intiara’ that personally belonged to Arlpalywerrng discussed with the anthropologists, it was also performed and was permitted to be photographed (Gillen 1968, pp.134, 140–142). Though Arrernte people had given Spencer and Gillen permission to witness and photograph their sacred ceremonies five years earlier, after years of collaboration with Gillen (Morphy 1997; Kimber 1998), this appears to have been the first time Anmatyerr people had done so. Without pre-existing relationships of trust or familiarity, it was a remarkably open exchange. Future interactions with ethnographers (including Strehlow) would later build upon this model of congregating groups of people together, utilising local connections with pastoralists or colonial authorities, and providing rations and other resources in exchange for cultural information. The

65 A site known as Atwain-tika [Atwayntek], shares the name of an ancestor gum tree located in the vicinity of the Arlewkarr waterhole (pers comm. Clem Peltharr 21/03/2012).
66 See annotations for the following images in the Spencer Collection at Museum Victoria XP14390, XP14388, XP14389, XP14391, XP14392, XP 14393.
67 See also Spencer’s Journal XM5856 p.116 and photograph XP9022 (Museum Victoria).
performance of ceremony and song was emerging as a critical zone of cultural interaction and translation.

The ‘Government Mob’
It wasn’t until an unusual group of prominent men from Melbourne arrived at Ti Tree in the winter of 1927, that Anmatyerr people were again subject to this type of intensive examination. Known as the ‘Victorian Railways “Reso” Tour to Central Australia’, the group consisted of over sixty individuals, including ‘influential’ businessmen, journalists, graziers, politicians, naturalists, doctors, dentists and chemists. The primary interest of this entourage was to investigate the economic prospects of the arid interior’s natural resources (hence “Reso”), but exploring the exotic ‘outback’ of Central Australia that featured large in the imagination of urban Australia (Sutton 2009b) was also on the agenda. Amongst the party was the author, journalist and connoisseur of Aboriginal culture, Charles Barrett, as well as Leonard Keith Ward, a geologist who had travelled with Walter Baldwin Spencer to Alice Springs four years earlier (‘Reso Tour to Central Australia’ 1927; O’Neil n.d.; Barrett 1940; Barrett, Croll & Elkin 1943; Barrett 1939, pp.206–207). The group travelled by train to Oodnadatta and then by car convoy to Alice Springs and on to Tea Tree Well (on Ti Tree Station), where they had been promised that a ‘big corroboree’ would be performed as a finale to their journey.

Exactly whom it was that planned and coordinated the ‘Reso’ tour is difficult to determine, but archival records suggest that the Administrator and Government Resident of Central Australia, Mr. John Charles Cawood, had a part to play. Instructions were first sent to the Chief Protector of Aborigines stationed at the Barrow Creek Telegraph Station, Mounted Constable William George Murray. Murray, of course, was soon to be notorious for his leading role in the Coniston

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68 While T.G.H. Strehlow’s father, Carl Strehlow, did record an important collection Anmatyerr words, place names, songs and mythologies (Strehlow 1907b, pp.56, 410, 412, 413, 701, 718), this information came via Western Arrernte men and he never personally visited Anmatyerr country. It is likely that much of this information came from Arawe-irreke (Rauwiraka) ‘Nathanael’ Pengarte (see Strehlow 1950a; also Kenny 2014, p.33; Strehlow 1932, p.132). He had been spiritually conceived on Anmatyerr lands in the Ilewerr (Lake Lewis) area.

69 ‘Tea Tree’ is the name of the soakage and well, whereas ‘Ti Tree’ is the name of the township. Earlier on at Oodnadatta, the tour attracted controversy when one of its members, Mr David Dureau, was accused of stealing a suite of tywerreng from an Arrernte man (Batty 2014, p.306; Jones 1995a).

70 A similar ‘corroboree’ had been organised for the Governor of South Australia Tom Bridges in Alice Springs in 1923 (Kaus & Basedow 2008, pp.160–165).
shootings the following year. As Murray travelled south to Ti Tree Station to join them, he ordered Anmatyerr people from the nearby cattle stations to congregate at Bullocky Soak, at the base of Central Mount Stuart, and await further instructions.71 Clearly accustomed to having Aboriginal labour available to them at all times, some pastoralists complained that their workers had been ‘taken away’ by Murray simply to ‘attend a corroboree’ (Spierings 1984, p.20). To the south of Ti Tree, another group of Anmatyerr people living with the solitary Methodist missionary Miss Annie Lock at Arden Soak (Mer Ilpereny) (Turner 1930; Cartwright 1995; Gibson 2007; Bishop 2008), were also on their way to play their part in the performance for the ‘Resos’.

![Figure 7: Anmatyerr men decorated for althart (a public ceremony) at Tea Tree Well in August 1927. Photograph taken by Roy Renfrey (Image courtesy of Glenn and Rosemary Boerth).](image)

Annie Lock claimed that the Anmatyerr were fearful of the order from the authorities to see ‘all the natives of the district […] take part in a dance’. It had only been the promise of plentiful food that had eventually swayed them to participate (Turner 1930, p.11). Horrified by the encouragement of this ‘pagan’ behaviour and distressed to see Constable Murray ‘roar’ at the Arden Soak group for singing any Christian hymns, Lock labelled the event as a sham and went as far as claiming that the

ceremonies later shown to the visitors had been inauthentic (Turner 1930, pp.12–13). Bill Heffernan, the owner of Ti Tree Station on the other hand, was quick to fulfil his role in the event, and ensured that a number of bullocks were slaughtered to feed the ‘Reso’ party and the Aboriginal performers. According to newspaper reportage, 200 Anmatyerre people had been rallied together for the ‘most interesting spectacle’ of the tour.

The ‘Resos’ were not interested in serious anthropological or ethnographic enquiry. Their documentation was more in the mould of earlier nineteenth century descriptions of curious or exotic people. In this vein, Aboriginal people and their ceremonial performances were often poorly understood, regarded as temporally and spatially distant, and therefore seen as being ‘savage’, ‘strange’ and ‘exotic’ (Casey 2012, p.3). The photographs and film produced at the time (Edwards 1927) reveal images of curious onlookers, dressed in suit coats and hats, standing at a careful distance from the performers with cameras at the ready. The meaning or purpose behind the ceremonies was probably lost on the audience.

Sharing some of the photographs taken during the event with Anmatyerre men in 2014, it was clear that the ceremonies on display were, contrary to Annie Locks’ assertions, entirely genuine. Sitting only metres from the site of the ‘big corroboree’, Paddy Kemarr and Jimmy Haines flicked through the black and white photographs, identifying what they could. It was clear from the body paint adorning both men and women, that amongst the ceremonies performed were althart (male public dances), awely (women’s public ceremonies) and at least one restricted men’s ceremony, featuring an Irlpanter (sacred ground painting).

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72 Lock worked as a lone lay missionary at Harding Soak and then at Rabbit Well between 1927 and 1929. In 1929, she was called into Alice Springs to give evidence to a board of inquiry investigating the Coniston shootings.


74 Motion picture film taken at the time is compiled in ‘A Reso Tour to Central Australia’, National Film and Sound Archives, Title 9400. See also the Northern Territory Library’s ‘Reso Tour’ Photographic Collection. The H.R. Balfour Collection at the Melbourne Museum also contains a similar photographic print (see item XP 16633).

75 Jimmy Haines and Paddy Kemarr at Ti Tree in July 2014. Original photographs from the Reso Tour shown here were taken by one of the driver’s employed on the tour, Mr. Roy Renfrey. The photos were kindly provided to me by Roy’s grandson, Glenn Boerth (07/2014). Other photographs from the tour can be found in the State Library of Victoria and the Northern Territory Library’s photographic collections.
Arguably the ‘Resos’ most ethnographically oriented team member, Charles Barrett, made the only serious attempt at engaging with the performers. His endeavours reveal just how shallow, and potentially offensive, these interactions could be when alhernter rushed in without first being attuned to cultural and linguistic differences:

When I approached and bent down to examine the ground-picture, the greybeards with bald foreheads and hair done a la chignon, waved me away with angry cries. They had not a word of English, while I was ignorant of the Arunta or Aranda language. We resorted to gesture language and got on very well. I pointed to the red and white circle, then placed a hand over my eyes. They smiled approvingly, and laughed as I walked slowly away (Barrett 1939, p.207).

Barrett eventually came to understand that the circular, red and white ground painting was restricted to men, but on the whole, the ‘Resos’ lacked sensitivity in the way they approached the Anmatyerr. Tywerrenge (sacred objects) were also collected from the performers by Barrett but they were treated as curios, with little contextual information being taken down about their significance or meaning. The ‘Resos’ claimed that the event was one of ‘the greatest' corroboree[s] ever seen by white people in Central Australia’ (The News 1927), but for the Anmatyerr the encounter was remembered in less effusive terms and represented the interests of colonial authority.

Speaking with linguist and anthropologist Jennifer Green in the early 1980s, an elderly Jacob Petyarr recalled the ‘big corroboree time’:

A big mob of [Anmatyerr] men went, and they camped at Bullocky [Soak]. From there they went to Ti Tree, and they had a big meeting, a big corroboree. That’s when I was a kid, a

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76 When discussing the photographs taken of this ground painting with men from Ti Tree, Paddy Willis agreed that the emu painting most likely referred to the Ancestral emus that travelled to Anakweng (Central Mount Stuart) from Alalkere in the east.

77 See item X 087589 at Museum Victoria – one of these objects is possibly a ‘Tiger Snake’ totem tywerreng from the Woodforde Creek.
long time ago. The station was there, only the station, no pub, and that old whitefella (Heffernan) was there. The Government came up from the south, they had those cameras with legs [on tripods]. They photo’d people, with some rubbish clothes, some naked. The station mob killed two bullocks to feed us, and we ate bullock. The Government mob brought food, oranges, lollies, everything. That’s big corroboree time, long time ago (in Spierings 1984, pp.20–21).

Though short-lived and shallow, the performance for the ‘Government mob’ had reinforced a developing mode of interaction and exchange. As with the earlier Spencer and Gillen expedition, pastoralists and local colonial authorities had again encouraged Anmatyerr people (more forcibly this time) to come together to demonstrate their cultural wares in exchange for food and access to other resources. The symbolic labour of ceremonial performance, song and dance, as well as trade in ritual artefacts became an acknowledged currency, alongside labour in the pastoral economy, in exchange for material resources.

The Cockatoo Creek Expedition
The University of Adelaide’s Board for Anthropological Research expedition to Cockatoo Creek in 1931 continued with these themes of building congregations and trading resources in exchange for information and ritual knowledge. The Board had already carried out a number of similar expeditions into other parts of Australia, and would often seek out ‘contact’ with Aboriginal people in remote locations by bringing them together in a proposed camp so that they could be subjected to intensive examinations (Jones 1987; Batty 2013a, 2006b). Led by medical and physical anthropologists, John Burton Cleland and Thomas Draper Campbell, the team adhered to a rather outmoded evolutionary approach already under fire from Functionalism’s theoretical shift away from speculative, evolutionary chronologies of human development. By studying the so-called ‘pure-blood’ ‘natives’ living on the pastoral stations to the northwest of Alice Springs (Cleland 1932, p.369), the Board were unashamed in their intention to gather physiological, psychological and cultural data that might shed light on the place of Aboriginal people within this evolutionary paradigm.
Prior to the arrival of the expedition, the Swiss born missionary Eugene Ernest Kramer and his Arrernte assistant Mickey Akwerre Dow Dow, had been engaged to spread the word of the up-coming event. Not unlike the Spencer and Gillen expedition and the ‘Resos’ event, the Cockatoo Creek expedition utilised local expertise and resources to promote the coming together of people for the purposes of ethnographic study and curiosity. An expert bushman who had already travelled extensively in the Anmatyerr and Arrernte areas, Kramer was an obvious choice as expedition ‘fixer’, and Dow Dow could easily converse with the predominantly Anmatyerr speaking population in the area (Jones 2011, pp.71–92; Batty 2013b); they were the perfect duo for the task. Anmatyerr residents at Napperby Station were first entertained with lanternslide picture shows and bible readings, before seeking out further potential participants camped along the creeks to the north, encouraging them to ‘follow on’ to Anartelh (Cockatoo Creek). To bolster the gathering, several parties of chosen Station ‘boys’ (Aboriginal stockmen) from Napperby and Coniston Stations, were also sent out on ‘riding camels’ with Dow Dow to call in additional people.

As news of the gathering spread, the camp soon swelled to close to 150 individuals. Kramer entertained the first arrivals with more Christian songs, lantern shows and bible readings, and began to distribute rations as they waited for the academics from Adelaide to arrive. Seeing it as his ‘duty’ to ‘befriend’ the ‘natives’ to the researchers, Kramer hoped that the congregation would function as something of a reconciliation between the settlers and the local ‘tribe’ who in his view, had been ‘deeply disturbed’ by the ‘murderous reprisals’ of the Coniston shootings only few years earlier. Most of the team set to work with psychological and physical tests while Norman B. Tindale, the expedition member from the South Australian Museum most interested in socio-cultural anthropology, began noting the particulars of each of the participants. Numbers were assigned to each individual and with help from Kramer, Dow Dow and the expedition’s Arrernte speaking interpreter, Tom Wheeler Tjungala, people’s

78 Kramer’s Northwest Journey Report, August, 1931. SLSA, PRG1322/2, p.6. Kramer collected ethnographic objects (including a large number of tywerrenge with carefully recorded associated ‘totem’ and site information), and developed important associations with a number of anthropologists, including Olive Pink, Géza Róheim, Ted Strehlow and Norman Tindale (Jones 2011, p.74).

79 Kramer’s Northwest Journey Report, August, 1931. SLSA, PRG1322/2, p.4. Anartelh, the Anmatyerr name for the Cockatoo Creek site, is a term that refers to the upper part of the Red kangaroo’s tail. The Warlpiri refer to this site as ‘Yanardilyi’.

80 Kramer’s Northwest Journey Report, August, 1931. SLSA, PRG1322/2.

81 Kramer’s Northwest Journey Report, August 1931. SLSA, PRG1322/2, p.5.
genealogies, age, sex and ‘tribe’ were recorded on ‘sociological data cards’, along with other cultural information.\textsuperscript{82}

The majority of people that came in to Cockatoo Creek identified themselves as ‘Anmatjera’ (Anmatyerr), with the remainder describing themselves as either Luritja or Warlpiri.\textsuperscript{83} Learning that the Anmatyerr spoke ‘an Aranda type language’, Tindale appreciated having Arrernte speakers at hand (Tindale 1953, p.175). Just as Jim Kite had assisted Spencer and Gillen in their discussions with ‘Jack’ Arlpalywerrng at Barrow Creek, Wheeler and Dow Dow also played critical roles as interpreters. Wheeler even knew some of the songs and Anengkerr (Dreaming) mythologies being alluded to in conversations and with help from these interpreters, Tindale drew up the first extensive record of Anmatyerr vocabulary (Tindale 1931, p.40, 18, 425).\textsuperscript{84} The linguistic differences across the region were not always easy for Tindale to comprehend however, and when Wheeler referred to the language spoken at Cockatoo Creek as being ‘Nanna’ (\textit{nhenhe}) (Tindale 1931, p.202), Tindale assumed this to be the name of a local dialect. In actual fact, \textit{nhenhe} simply meant ‘here’, meaning the language spoken by the people in the immediate locality.

Just days into the expedition, Anmatyerr and Warlpiri men ‘offered’ to perform a number of restricted ceremonies ‘for the benefit of the cameras’ (Tindale 1931, pp.22–23). Urabuta Ngwarray, an Anmatyerr man aged in his sixties (Figure 8), organised the younger men to first perform an atyelp (Western Quoll) ceremony that personally belonged to him, before revealing a number of other ceremonies. This was now the third time that Anmatyerr sacred ceremonies had been photographed or filmed, but the first time that their associated songs had been audio recorded.

In 2008, I had the opportunity to listen to these recordings and watch these films with James Glenn Mpetyan, the then Chairman of the Anmatyerr Regional Council. James, a younger man in his early thirties, claimed to have no great insights into the recordings, but with his help we were able to work with the South Australian Museum

\textsuperscript{82} These ‘data cards’ are a particular hallmark of Tindale’s work.
\textsuperscript{83} As with Spencer and Gillen’s work, the majority of the data cards for Anmatyerr and ‘Ilpirra’ participants included Arandic names and subsections (such as the name ‘Atyeilpa [Atyelp] or the subsection ‘Paltara’[Peltharr]).
\textsuperscript{84} 230 words were listed.
to see digital copies returned to Anmatyerr communities. While the songs were difficult to decipher because of the scratch and pop of the wax cylinder recordings, the films had clearly captured aspects of men’s initiation still practised by all Anmatyerr.\(^{85}\) Since that time, numerous men have approached me to express their surprise that highly restricted ceremonies were recorded by the expedition.

The historical context of these recordings is partly explained by Tindale in his diaries. After many of these performances had taken place, a group of ‘mostly Anmatjera [Anmatyerr] men’ approached Tindale offering a small collection of *tywerreng* (sacred objects). The objects being offered, Tindale was told, pertained to the main site in the Cockatoo Creek area, Anartelh (Anatila) (Tindale 1931, pp.25–36, 49, 50). As the South Australian Museum’s principal representative, Tindale dutifully received the objects, but at the same time tried to justify his actions with reference to what he understood of Central Australia hierarchies. Presumably being familiar with the Western Arrernte concept of an *Ingkarte* (a ceremonial ‘chief’, ‘leader’ or ‘boss’) from his experiences at Hermannsburg during an earlier Board for Anthropological

\(^{85}\) I did not make a serious attempt to analyse this material in any depth with Anmatyerr people at the time as my focus was on the non-restricted elements of the collection.
Research expedition in 1929, Tindale attempted to employ this concept amongst the Anmatyerr.86 Seeking to build an analogy between the responsibilities of the museum curator and the ritual owner of ceremonial objects, Tindale identified himself as being equivalent to an ‘Inkatai’ (Ingkarte). Though we cannot exactly be sure of how this notion was received, a ritual exchange then took place whereby sacred objects were pressed against Tindale and others from the expedition:

The old men pressed three of the tjurunga [tywerreng] upon us; we had already told them on a previous occasion that I was the man who was inkatai [Ingkarte] or “boss” of all the tjurunga [tywerrenge] at Adelaide [Museum]’ (Tindale 1931, p.48).

This method of handing over sacred objects after pressing them on a man’s body (usually on his stomach) was first experienced and described by Spencer and Gillen at the turn of the 20\textsuperscript{th} Century (1904, pp.265–266). Known amongst the Arrernte as atnerte ulpe-ileme, literally the mashing or grinding of the stomach (Wilkins 2001, p.496), the practice was often practiced at the termination of ceremonies and was seen as a way of creating a personal bond with the Ancestral beings embodied in these objects.87 By inviting anthropologists to participate, and to even physically take tywerreng, these acts can only be interpreted as sincere attempts at conveying the significance and import of people’s ‘Law’ (their deeply felt personal connections with ancestors and the country which they created). Trading of these objects increased in Central Australia from the end of the nineteenth century (Jones 1995a) and also became an aspect of Strehlow’s work in the decades to come.

The performance of these rituals, as well as Tindale’s enlistment of the Ingkarte concept, invited at least in a symbolic sense, the elevation of some Central Australian principles. Finding proper ways of classifying and positioning each other was critical

86 The term Ingkarte does not appear in Spencer and Gillen’s work and there is no evidence of Ingkarte being used by Anmatyerr people at this stage. The Central and Eastern Arrernte, for example, appeared to use the term Alarretye (Alartunja) to mean a boss, head person, main spokesman for a family or totem group ceremonial leader (Wilkins 2001). See Chapter 6 for more on the origins of this term.

87 There are photographs in both the Spencer and Gillen collections of the anthropologists being subject to this procedure. Unlike Europeans who regard the heart as the emotional centre of an individual, for Central Australians it is the stomach (see Gibson 2013).
to the exchange at hand. For example, the presence of ‘observers’ to secret rituals was unlikely to have existed prior to the arrival of settlers, and the trading of religious objects with unrelated and utterly disconnected people was a relatively new phenomenon that obviously required cultural translation. Individuals who showed sincere interest in ritual and ceremony, in ‘Law’, were being accommodated to some degree in order to legitimate their interactions. More than this though, the notion of an *alhernter ingkarte* (a non-Aboriginal ritual leader) taking artefacts away to their ‘museums’ was also being introduced. These were significant precedents to the far more advanced and personally invested form of participation from T.G.H. Strehlow (and others) in the years to come.

After two weeks of intensive data collecting, recording and experimentation, the expedition party departed amid shouted ‘goodbyes’ and the waving of hands (Tindale 1931, p.56). One old Warrmarla man, Tindale noted, approached the group and ‘made quite a speech asking us to come back again to his country and have a big series of ceremonies’. Silas Antenh Ngal, whose family had been present at the Cockatoo Creek camp at the time, explained to T.G.H. Strehlow many years later that the expedition had been remembered in largely positive terms (1968a, pp.57–64). While the names of most of the academics that had been present were mostly forgotten in the oral history, Silas described the event as an ‘urumbula’ [urrempel] festival that had been supported by men named ‘Kramer’ and ‘Tini’ (Tindale). Their provision of food stuffs and other resources had enabled the coming together of people from disparate locations to perform and share ceremonial and cultural knowledge.

Rather than seeing the expedition in *alhernter* terms, either as an exercise in scientific exploration or even colonial coercion, for the Anmatyerr the event marked a demonstration and sharing of cultural knowledge. Even the bags of rations handed out by Kramer and the others were remembered as ‘tjaurelija’ (*tyewarrely*), a traditional payment of food usually offered in exchange for ritual knowledge by novices (Strehlow 1968a, p.57). As Anmatyerr people transposed the *urrempel* concept on to the interrogations of the *alhernter*, and men like Tindale tried to build analogies between the authority of the *Ingkarte* and the authority of the anthropologist, the

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88 Walamala is likely Warrmarla, a western dialect of Warlpiri.
participants came to a negotiated understanding of these events. This does not mean, of course, that the experiences and recollections of the expedition were the same, or that inequality was overcome. What I have tried to show however is the ways in which the Anmatyerr (and Warlpiri) looked to gain value from the circumstances that confronted them and anthropology sought to justify its actions in Aboriginal terms.

**Conclusion**

Episodes of colonial violence and coercion, as well as the exchanges of labour and resources on the pastoral frontier, provide an important backdrop to Anmatyerr/alhernter encounters. Anmatyerr people’s limited yet meaningful experience with ethnography and ethnographers had provided their own unique ‘theatre of contact’, as Jones has described it, ‘enlivened by the agency of each troupe of actors—European and indigenous’ (2015, p.90). In this particular ‘contact zone’, both parties exhibited a preparedness to engage. Even where the enquiry was driven by the affectations of colonial and scientific exploration, or produced rather limited linguistic and ethnographic accounts, the relationships that ensued often awkwardly and unevenly progressed towards a meaningful exchange of objects, knowledge, names and concepts. These local experiences established important anticipations and expectancies that were taken up and developed further in the following decades.

By the early decades of the twentieth century, the Anmatyerr and many other Aboriginal groups in remote Australia, had experienced a period of enormous adjustment. The violence of the early period wrought terrible tragedy and social trauma, but also gave rise to complex interpersonal and intergroup relations. When ethnographers arrived looking for ‘un-spoilt’ or ‘uncontaminated’ ‘natives’, they often encountered individuals who had already intermingled with settler society to varying degrees. The colonial infrastructure of the Overland Telegraph Line cutting through the remote centre of Anmatyerr territory, had meant that the form of ethnography that developed during this time was particularly reliant on networks of pre-existing relationships already developed between settlers, missionaries and local Aboriginal people. Early cultural translation was achieved with the help of Arrernte speaking interpreters and guides.
Particularly significant was the way in which Anmatyerr people’s symbolic and cultural capital, in these cases men’s ritual knowledge, was at the centre of these exchanges. Instigated by ethnographers with ties to government administration and universities, but crucially enabled by local pastoralists and missionaries, the ‘big corroborees’ or what the Anmatyerr regarded as urrumped festivals, brought with them opportunities for meaningful intercultural dialogue as well as access to material resources. At the same time, the idea that alhernter taking some kind of responsibility for ritual information and objects was also an emergent idea amongst Central Australian men during the late 19th and early 20th century.

In describing these historical events I have tried to reveal the types of social engagements and exchanges that prefigured Strehlow’s arrival on the scene in the 1930s. Generally, these early colonial interactions have been scrutinised for their inequalities, romanticism or shallowness, but in the zones of translation described above, there appears to have been room for varied interpretations and purposes. While Anmatyerr people may have been seen as objects of curiosity by the inquiring alhernter, I suggest that their participation was not entirely defined by this gaze. Although ‘performing their Aboriginality’ within discursive and material conditions set by others (see Myers 2002, pp.255–76), I have tried to show how Anmatyerr people themselves made sense of these interactions. Meeting with Anmatyerr people for the first time in 1932, T.G.H. Strehlow’s fieldwork would partly build upon these earlier experiences and expectations. His methods and conceptual interests however, would be quite distinct from many of his predecessors.
Chapter 4: Strehlow’s Scope

Experiential authority is based on a "feel" for the foreign context, a kind of accumulated savvy and sense of the style of a people or place. Such an appeal is frequently explicit in the texts of the early professional participant-observers (Clifford 1983, p.128).

From the late nineteenth century up until the 1920s, anthropologists across the globe saw themselves as explorers, moving into virgin and exotic territories occupied by ‘primitive’ peoples. By the 1930s though, the discipline had begun to move away from the model of scientific expeditions and fleeting exchanges on frontiers, and social evolutionism was on the wane (Stocking 1983). While some of the earliest anthropologists had certainly acknowledged the difficulties of seeing the world in the same way as ‘the natives themselves’ (Gardner & McConvell 2015), the emerging ethnographic methods took this objective far more seriously. Far more intensive fieldwork, observation and interrogation was now increasingly expected of ethnographers (Kuklick 2012; Young 2004). 89 It was at this historical juncture that T.G.H. Strehlow began to make his first forays into a still rather nascent field of ethnography and Indigenous language documentation in Australia.

Understanding the underpinning theoretical influences and the intellectual style of T.G.H. Strehlow is essential for appreciating the personal and professional orientation he brought to interactions with informants. While analyses of Strehlow’s moral character and intriguing life are plentiful (Hill 2003; McNally 1981a; Morton 1995, 2004, 1993), far less has been written about his conceptual and methodological approaches to ethnography. The breadth of his career as a collector and translator of Arandic (and to a lesser degree Luritja) language material (McNally 1981a; Hill 2003; Rowse 1999; Rubuntja & Green 2002, pp.116–119; Morton 1995; Moore 2008), an administrator and activist in ‘native affairs’ (Long 1992; Rowse 1992, 2012; Inglis 2002), and his associations with Christianity (Austin-Broos 2009; Moore 2016), have all aroused significant attention.

89 The work of Frank Hamilton Cushing in North America and Spencer and Gillen in Australia, were important precursors to the development of methods in participant observation.
Ward McNally’s *Aborigines, Artefacts and Anguish* (1981a), an authorised biography written only months before Strehlow’s death in October 1978, was the first text to bring the drama of T.G.H. Strehlow’s life to light. A relatively slight manuscript, McNally’s account provides the general reader with a chronological account of the major events in Strehlow’s life with insights from friends, colleagues and relations. Over twenty years later, Barry Hill’s *Broken Song: T.G.H. Strehlow and Aboriginal Possession* (2003) considerably extended and deepened this biographical narrative, and notwithstanding a number of philosophical ruminations and detours, was mostly concerned with the challenges of translation. Hill’s work has undoubtedly become the most important biographical piece on T.G.H. Strehlow to date, but remarkably neither he nor McNally made any serious attempts to examine his ethnographic methods or anthropological inspiration.

Barry Hill’s biography of T.G.H. Strehlow’s life does nonetheless tell us a lot about his development as an ethnographer. Despite being overshadowed by a primitivism borne of his training in the Classics and literature, Strehlow’s work overwhelmingly relied upon the stuff of ethnography, what Ingold describes as the desire to describe the lives of a living people with an ‘accuracy and sensitivity honed by detailed observation and prolonged first-hand experience’ (2011, p.229). In Strehlow’s case, this involved decades of intensive study into the mythic, linguistic and ritual underpinnings of Arrernte speaking peoples. Understanding the specific theoretical lenses and methodological influences he took into the field, helps us recognise the scope and intent of his research and how this may have affected his interactions with Anmatyerr and Arrernte people.

**Plotting a Complicated Life**

Theodor George Henry (T.G.H.) Strehlow (1908-1978) was born at the Hermannsburg Mission, Central Australia, on June 6th 1908. He was the son of Carl and Frieda Strehlow, Lutheran missionaries who had emigrated from Germany in 1892. Before arriving in Australia, Carl Strehlow had trained at the Neuendettselsau seminary in southern Germany in preparation for his missionary work overseas (Toren & Pina-Cabral 2011, p.3). Upon being posted to the Bethesda Mission at Killalpaninna in remote northern South Australia, Carl Strehlow worked with the Reverend J.G. Reuther on a translation of the New Testament into the local Diyari...
language (Stevens 1994). In 1894, the Strehlow family headed northwest, further into the interior, to take over the dilapidated Hermannsburg Mission established in 1877. Carl worked diligently to first learn the Diyari language spoken at Bethesda, and then the Arrernte and Luritja languages spoken at Hermannsburg. Through producing translations of Christian hymns and the Old Testament, Carl Strehlow’s interest in the Arrernte and Luritja people at Hermannsburg extended well beyond his missionising. Becoming one of the first ethnographers in this part of Australia, and producing outstanding written records of local traditions, songs and mythologies, Carl Strehlow’s contributions to Australian anthropology were substantial, though not well recognised at the time. Written in the German nineteenth century humanistic style, predominantly out-of-step with the British evolutionist approach to anthropology prevalent in Australia at the time, his work remained under-recognised. Over ten years after first arriving at Hermannsburg, Carl published his first volume *Die Aranda- und Loritja-Stamme in Zentral-Australien* (*The Aranda and Loritja Tribes of Central Australia*) with support from the Städtisches Völkermuseum in Frankfurt. The following year, young T.G.H. was born.

T.G.H. Strehlow was raised in an environment where his parents often spoke a combination of German, English and Arrernte and where close relationships with Aboriginal people were the norm. He learned the local Western Arrernte dialect spoken by his childhood companions and his father also taught him Greek and Latin, giving him a passion for the Old World of Europe. Undoubtedly a significant figure in T.G.H. Strehlow’s life, when Carl Strehlow died whilst travelling down the Finke River to receive medical attention, the event became the theme of his sole literary publication, *Journey to Horseshoe Bend* (Strehlow 1969a). Written in the third person, the novel is a cathartic recounting of the journey of the fourteen-year-old son ‘Theo’ as he ponders a landscape eternally animated by *Altyerre* (Dreaming) ancestors while witnessing his own father’s own mortality.

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90 Upon listening to recordings of T.G.H. Strehlow’s voice, some Anmatyerr men have commented that he spoke with a Pertame (Southern Arrernte) accent. Pertame is an endangered language spoken by people living along the southern reaches of the Finke River, immediately to the south of Hermannsburg.
Following his father’s death in 1922, Strehlow moved away from Central Australia and relocated to Adelaide with his mother, Frieda. He was fourteen years old at the time, the approximate age that many of the Aboriginal boys he had grown up with at Hermannsburg would have begun to be initiated (Strehlow 1978a, p.150). As his male Arrernte peers started their instruction in song and ceremony, Strehlow commenced his studies at the Lutheran Immanuel College and later enrolled to study classics and English literature at the University of Adelaide. Having excelled in his studies, he was subsequently awarded an Australian National Research Council grant to study ‘Australian Native languages’, and returned to Central Australia in 1932 to begin his fieldwork. Strehlow’s return began what would become a life-long enterprise in documenting Arrernte languages, songs and ceremonies (see Chapter 5).

In his reflections many decades later, Strehlow described how it had been the legacy of his father, and his conception and birth at Hermannsburg, that had opened doors for him across the region:

Once my credentials – son of Mr. Strehlow of Hermannsburg, and Aranda [Arrernte] tribesman, Kamara [Kemarre] class, conception site Ntarea [Nthareye] – had been announced, there was no question of my being treated as an ignorant white man any longer… Even Anmatjera [Anmatyerr] men at Aileron, Leramba [Alherramp] and Mt. Allan, also Walbiri [Warlpiri] men, had spoken to me with respect as soon as I had been introduced as “the” tjurunga [tywerrenge] leader, who knew all about men’s tjurunga everywhere (Strehlow 1968a, p.114).

A ‘Famous Father’

Being the son of Carl Strehlow not only made his research amongst the Arrernte easier, it also prefigured his engagement with the scholarly community. The highly influential social anthropologist, Raymond Firth for example, referenced these patrilineal ‘credentials’ when introducing T.G.H. as the son of a ‘famous father’ at a conference in London, and other academic advisors often noted his father’s work (Strehlow 1950a, p.165). Carl Strehlow’s influence on his son was not just personal and psychological as has been noted in the literature (Morton 2004; Hill 2003), it also had a significant impact on the approaches he developed in ethnography and
linguistics. Like his father, T.G.H. Strehlow shared a deep interest in language and myth, and adopted a style of mostly descriptive ethnography that avoided grand theorising. The original manuscripts of his father’s work, along with Carl’s unpublished dictionary and over 150 ‘family trees’, stayed in the possession of T.G.H. throughout his career (Kenny 2008, p.43). Although he rarely admitted it, his father’s work had set an important precedent for his own research. Father and son even shared ‘informants’, with men such as Wapiti (or Talku), Arawe-irreke (Rauwiraka, Nathanael) (Figure 9) and Moses Tjalkabota providing information to both men.

Figure 9: ‘Raueruka’ [Arawe-irreke] Nathanael Pengart photographed by Herbert Basedow at Hermannsburg in 1920 (National Museum of Australia).
In her recent assessment of Carl Strehlow’s scholarship, anthropologist Anna Kenny (2014) has shown how different his approach was to that of his Australian contemporaries. Carl Strehlow was largely marginalised by the anthropological establishment in Australia and Britain, with Walter Baldwin Spencer suggesting that he was inescapably tainted by his missionary background (1927, pp.584–596), and Bronislaw Malinowski referring to him as being ‘incompetent’ (Young 2004, p.435).

The Anglophone nature of Australian anthropology and its general desire to be a contrast to the ‘amateurish’ ethnography of missionaries was undoubtedly a factor in this assessment of Strehlow’s work, but as Kenny points out, equally important was the different ‘German’ intellectual position that he represented.

Carl took his inspiration and guidance from his editor in Frankfurt, Baron Moritz Von Leonhardi. A German intellectual with an interest in philosophy and a humanistic tradition in anthropology, Leonhardi encouraged Strehlow to make strictly empirical observations and records and resist the temptation to make theoretical suppositions about the song or myth traditions of the Arrernte and Luritja compared to those of classical antiquity (Kenny 2014, p.121). Following the works of influential German anthropologists such as Rudolph Virchow and Adolf Bastian, Leonhardi’s antagonism towards anthropological theories that hierarchically stratified ‘races’, complemented Strehlow’s Christian conviction in the unity of humankind (Kenny 2005). Grounded not in social evolutionism then, but the intellectual spirit of the German Romanticism, Christian theology, and philology, Strehlow’s work focused on building a record of the language and traditions of Aboriginal people as a way of understanding their worldview. As a Lutheran missionary, his task had been of course to develop these linguistic skills in order to translate and preach the gospel in the local vernacular.

Far from being ‘incompetent’ as Malinowski suggested, Strehlow was able to produce excellent language, myth and song translations of considerable depth.91 Although principally focused on the Western Arrernte and Luritja people residing in or near Hermannsburg, Carl was also amongst the first to make reference to the

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91 Not all German ethnographers in Australia were of this humanist and empiricist mould (see Nicholls 2007; Veit 2004).
‘Imatjera’ (Anmatyerr)\(^{92}\) *Die Aranda- und Loritja-Stamme in Zentral-Australien* includes some of the earliest references to Anmatyerr words, phrases, place names, songs and mythologies (Strehlow 1907b, pp.56, 410, 412, 413, 701, 718), which he had presumably collected from men like Arawe-irreke (Rauwiraka), a Western Arrernte man who had been conceived in Anmatyerr territory.

Carl Strehlow’s greatest weakness as an ethnographer however, was his refusal to witness the sacred ceremonies that accompanied the song and myths that he had collected. As a Christian, Strehlow regarded these ceremonies as ultimately pagan in nature and while he did collect some of their ritual paraphernalia, he was unable to produce eye witness accounts of how they were used. While his contemporaries Spencer and Gillen lacked the type of linguistic competence needed to develop an accurate comprehension of ceremony and song, Strehlow’s work lacked detailed photographic, filmic, and audio records.

As a student of both his father’s and Spencer and Gillen’s work, the young Strehlow began to bring these two strengths together. Throughout his career he would attempt a comprehensive documentation that combined textual work, ethnographic description and the utilisation of various recording technologies (see Chapter 5). In the main though, his focus remained squarely on the primary interests of his father - literature and language.

**Literature and Language**

T.G.H. Strehlow embraced classical studies and English literature at university. He studied Latin and Greek in his undergraduate years and emerged from the University of Adelaide with First Class Honours in English. Under the tutelage of Professor Archibald Strong, the author of an acclaimed translation of the oldest surviving Old English poem *Beowulf*, a keen interest in the literature and mythologies of Europe matured. Turning his mind to postgraduate studies under the careful guidance of Professor of Classics, John Aloysius FitzHerbert (1892-1970), he later devised a

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\(^{92}\) The likely source for this information was one of Carl Strehlow’s Christian converts, Arawe-irreke (Rauwiraka) ‘Nathanael’ Pengarte, a Western Arrernte man who had been ‘spiritually conceived’ in the Anmatyerr region and who later returned to the region for instruction in the rituals of the Ilewerr (Lake Lewis) area (see Strehlow 1950a; also Kenny 2014, p.33; Strehlow 1932, p.132).
Masters research proposal that went on to shape the remainder of Strehlow’s academic career, and the overall the trajectory of his life.

FitzHerbert, a Cambridge educated Professor of Classics, Comparative Philology and Literature at the University of Adelaide, had been aware of Carl Strehlow’s publications and quickly recognised the unique opportunity before the young Strehlow. His distinctive background and ability with languages meant he had the opportunity of making serious advances into the study of Aboriginal languages. FitzHerbert encouraged Strehlow to combine his knowledge of Arrernte and his passion for traditional literature in a concentrated study of the Central Australian language and poetry.

In hindsight, Strehlow’s M.A. thesis proposal looks like an early sketch of the themes that came to dominate his magnum opus, *Songs of Central Australia*, published over forty years later. Grounded in his passion for literature, the original idea was to examine the ‘Primitive Elements in Old Icelandic Mythology and in Old English Heroic Verse, in the light of Aranda Myths and Legends’ (Hill 2003, p.121). While the research into Icelandic and Old English traditions could be carried out using library and archival sources, discovering the oral traditions of Arandic ‘myths and legends’ required extensive fieldwork. His first task therefore, was to make a record of the Arrernte language in terms of phonetics and grammar, and secondly, to map out the geographic territories and linguistic variations of the various Arrernte dialects. It was these objectives that took him beyond the familiar territory of his upbringing in Arrernte (specifically Western Arrernte) country and to circumnavigate the Anmatyerr region during his initial fieldwork (see Chapter 5).

In these formative stages of his career, Strehlow found additional guidance from a number of individuals associated with the University of Adelaide’s Board for Anthropological Research. Some of these men had conducted fieldwork with the Anmatyerr and Warlpiri at Cockatoo Creek in the previous year (as discussed in the previous chapter) and many of them had also been to Hermannsburg, Alice Springs and other places in Central Australia during the 1920s and early 1930s. The medical

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93 This thesis never came to fruition. Instead he submitted a study in linguistics which was later published as *Aranda Phonetics and Grammar* (Strehlow 1942).
anthropologists John Burton Cleland, Thomas Draper Campbell, and Henry Kenneth Fry, as well as Norman Tindale from the South Australian Museum, supported Strehlow and each provided their advice on method and theory (Jones 1995b; Strehlow 1932, p.203). The Board would also later enlist Strehlow to work alongside the men that coordinated the Cockatoo Creek gathering so efficiently, Ernest Kramer and Mickey Dow Dow, in order to track down Aboriginal people living across the remote Western Desert for an upcoming expedition to Mt. Liebig in 1932.

After returning from extensive fieldwork throughout the wider Arandic region in 1932 and 1933, FitzHerbert arranged for Strehlow to obtain a junior lectureship position at the University (Jones 2002). Now able to devote time to writing up his research findings, Strehlow first published a detailed account of a Northern Arrernte song and myth (Strehlow 1933a). He then began compiling his thesis, the first grammar ever produced of Arrernte (Strehlow 1938), which was later published as *Aranda Phonetics and Grammar* (1942). This manuscript concentrated on the form of Arrernte Strehlow knew and spoke best, Western Arrernte, making only scant references to other the Arandic dialects such as Northern Arrernte, Southern Arrernte, Central and Eastern Arrernte or Anmatyerr (Wilkins 1989, p.18; Moore 2008).

Aside from his contributions on Arrernte, Strehlow also become the first scholar to describe features of the type of English used by Aboriginal people (Eades 2013, pp.106–107), what he called ‘Northern Territory English’.

Subsequent Arrernte language specialists, whilst praising Strehlow’s pioneering work, have nonetheless come to re-assess his linguistic contributions on a number of fronts (Wilkins 1989; Breen 2002; Moore 2003; Green 2012). There was common agreement that his work was seminal in its treatment of Arrernte as a language of great complexity and subtlety, which made it very hard for arguments to persist that Aboriginal languages were crude or unsophisticated. However, inconsistencies in the way he rendered Arrernte sounds, and his tendency to maintain spellings in their Western Arrernte form instead of changing them to reflect the different Arandic dialects, were just a few of the limitations that make his work somewhat difficult to interpret (Breen 2002, p.57). At the time of Strehlow’s training there were no

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94 The papers in this volume were originally published in Oceania, from March 1942 to March 1944.
departments of linguistics in Australian universities and the conceptual approach that he took with him into the field was grounded more in the historical study of literary languages, texts and written records. His work therefore, sits awkwardly between nineteenth-century philology and twentieth-century structuralism (Moore 2008). By continuing to cast his work in the ‘classical Indo-European model’, Strehlow had failed, according to Wilkins (1989, p.18), to draw upon many of the analytical practices already well known in linguistics by the 1940s.95

Strehlow’s work was interrupted throughout the late 1930s and 1940s because he was engaged as a Patrol Officer with the Northern Territory Administration initially, and then later in World War Two military service. As the first Native Affairs Patrol Officer, Strehlow was charged with ensuring the welfare of ‘natives’ in the Central Australian region (Long 1992, pp.5, 16–22). As he travelled across Aboriginal Reserves and pastoral leases, he made important personal connections both with pastoralists and Aboriginal people across a large area. Soon after returning to his academic vocation, with an appointment as senior research fellow in Australian Linguistics at the University of Adelaide in 1946, his study of ritual and related social organization, *Aranda Traditions* (1947), was published. Two years later he was able to take up a postgraduate fellowship at the Australian National University. On the advice of Professor A.P. Elkin he attended the London School of Economics (LSE) to undertake his first studies in the discipline of anthropology.

At the LSE, Strehlow sought support and guidance from the then head of the anthropology department, the eminent ethnographer of Oceania Raymond Firth. Strehlow hoped that Firth might confer on him a doctorate in recognition of his existing publications, which included his manuscript for *Songs of Central Australia*. He soon realised however, that Firth, like Elkin, remained unconvinced of his appreciation of social anthropology (Hill 2002: 472-3). Strehlow’s opinion was that the training in linguistics and anthropology being offered at the LSE was largely irrelevant to his work. Instead of bending his work to fit the strictures of social anthropology, Strehlow was unwavering in his commitment to classics as his primary source of intellectual stimulation, and spent considerable time at the British

95 Gerhardt Laves, a linguist trained by Edward Sapir in Chicago, was already conducting research in Australia when Strehlow began his career (Nash 1993).
Museum’s Assyrian, Egyptian and Greek collections during his time in London (Strehlow 1950a).

Returning to Australia in 1954, Strehlow remained uninterested in the British school of social anthropology most dominant at the time and became a reader in Australian linguistics at the University of Adelaide. Towards the end of his career he received an honorary Doctor of Letters from Adelaide University as well as an honorary doctorate from Uppsala University in Sweden; and was made Professor of Australian Linguistics (1970–73). His in-depth knowledge of the Arrernte language and its dialects, as well as his deep interest in ritual, religion, dance performance, material culture, song, and cultural geography, meant it was difficult to confine his work to a single discipline. As well as producing his own writings on Arandic literature, arts and song practices (Strehlow 1971a; 1964), he appears to have found some affinity amongst alhernte artists with an interest in Indigenous Australians. The sculptor William Ricketts (Strehlow 1965b), the poet Roland Robinson (see his foreward to Robinson 1956) and the painter Rex Battarbee (Strehlow 1961a), each received important public support from Strehlow, due to their shared interest in seeing Indigenous culture elevated in the Australian national identity.

For these writers and artists, only the incorporation of an Indigenous sense of place, mythology and poetry could make the Australian nation distinct from that of Britain or Europe (see Elliott 1977, 1979). Described by Nicholas Thomas as ‘settler primitivism’, these ideas emerged across numerous colonial states during the mid-twentieth century and looked to affirm settler relationships with their own particular, local ‘native’ cultures (1999, pp.12–13). Exhibiting these tendencies, Strehlow hoped that the material he was gathering would play a part in giving the ‘new Australia’ a ‘heart’ of her own (1964b, p.57). While these ambitions are now easily recognized for their appropriation or ‘looting’ of Indigenous forms and styles of representation (see Sansom 2006; Langton & David 2003), ‘settler primitivism’ was nonetheless part of a longer process of recognising Indigeneity in colonial states (see McGregor 2011; Thomas 1999; and Myers 2006). Notwithstanding its framing within European bourgeois notions of religiousness, aesthetics and environmental purity, this viewpoint improved the appreciation of Indigenous cultures and worldviews. Strehlow’s work on literature and aesthetics gave considerable support to these
endeavours.

**Anthropology**

Strehlow’s intellectual engagement the discipline of anthropology was always secondary to his interests in language and literature. While he certainly wished to be better recognised in this field, and exhibited expertise in this area, Strehlow never aspired to being an anthropologist at all (Jones 2004, p.37). Recent reappraisals of his contributions to anthropology however, reveal a style of analysis that was somewhat ahead of its time. Largely disinterested in the abstracted models of social organisation that were typical of British/Australian anthropology during the 1940s and 1950s, Strehlow’s analyses were more akin to the type of ‘interpretive’ anthropology of the 1960s and 1970s (Austin-Broos 1997). Committed to detailed observation and prolonged first-hand experience, Strehlow attempted to portray Arandic song, language and ritual experience from their point of view. Like Ronald Berndt, one of the few anthropologists in Australia who persistently supported Strehlow’s work in the discipline (Berndt 1979a, 1979b; Hill 2003, pp.743–744), Strehlow similarly strove to present material in ways that were true to their original context in Aboriginal society (Morphy 2009, p.78).

Defiantly describing himself as having been ‘trained by natives’ and not by ‘armchair anthropologists’, Strehlow baulked at what he saw as a privileging of theory over local concepts (Strehlow 1950a, p.129). The disconnect between his approach and that of his contemporaries in British and Australian anthropology, who were largely preoccupied with social institutions, their structures, and functions, was clearly made apparent during his aforementioned time with Raymond Firth in London. As he would later write in *Songs of Central Australia* (1971), ‘…in a hundred years future research scholars will be much more interested in knowing what’ Aboriginal people themselves had to say rather than ‘any explanatory theories advanced by Freud, Malinowski, Frazer, Róheim, and the rest’ (Strehlow 1971a, p.xxxix). His version of social research resonated with what the American sociologist C. Wright Mills (2000, p.215) described as ‘the individual social scientist’ working in the ‘classic tradition’, who in seeing their efforts as the ‘practice of a craft’ are ‘made impatient and weary by elaborate discussions of method-and-theory-in-general’.
Anthropology’s preoccupation with corporate structures, kinship terminologies and marriage practices during the mid-twentieth century were far too removed from reality for Strehlow’s liking. He derisively referred to the practices of ‘algebraically abbreviated kinship terms’ and the systematisation of field data used by most anthropologists as confusing for general readers, whom he believed should be the primary audience for work of this kind. He also thought these practices disregarded the ‘emotional overtones’ inherent in ‘social relations’ (Strehlow 1966). Likewise, when reviewing the work of others in the field, he generally approved of those who approached their subject/s in a way that was ‘humanitarian’ and/or ‘emotional’ (Strehlow 1970a, 1966, p.75). Despite these aversions to social anthropological theory, his research did nevertheless engage with some of the conceptual apparatuses of Functionalism and made significant contributions to the Australianist literature on social control, agency, geography and social structure (see for example Strehlow 1950b; Theodor George Henry Strehlow 1956; Strehlow 1965c, and 1970b).

When writing on these topics, Strehlow’s own tendency towards systematisation becomes apparent. In the face of his contemporaries in Australian anthropology who described a range of social institutions such as patrilineal clans, moieties, phratries, tribes, bands and economic groups (Warner 1964; Meggitt 1962; Elkin 1970b), Strehlow instead insisted on only three such units: language/territorial groupings (such as Arrernte, Anmatyerr etc.), the family group and, in particular, *anyenhenge* (*njinaŋa*) groups (1947, 1965c). The *anyenhenge* concept, an Arandic term that roughly translates as ‘father and child together’, underpinned Strehlow’s appreciation of land tenure and emphasised the centrality of patrilineal descent groups (Strehlow 1947, p.139). These groupings, now generally referred to in anthropological parlance as ‘estates’ (Peterson & Long 1986, p.55), were according to Strehlow the ‘only political structural unit of Central Australian native society’ (Strehlow 1999, p.7). Even though he understood the multiplicity of ways that people, land and *Anengkerr/alteryerre* (Dreaming) would intersect and produce different relationships and rights in land, resources and ritual knowledge, Strehlow defined the Arandic region as being distinctly estate focused.96 As anthropologists John Morton (1997)

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96 The Arandic region was visualised by Strehlow as being like a patchwork of patrilineal, *anyenhenge* ‘totemic clan’ areas, each defined by its central sacred site or *apmere kwetethe* (*’pmarakutata’, eternal place). Ultimately, Strehlow argues that it is the differing environmental contexts of these groups – the
and Peter Sutton (2003, p.124) later observed, Strehlow had *streamlined* his own dense, ethnographic evidence to broadly fit a Functionalist programme.

This rather rigid *anyenhenge* model sits somewhat uncomfortably with the genealogies that Strehlow recorded. Unlike his contemporaries in anthropology, T.G.H. Strehlow’s genealogies were never collected in order to discover a social ‘system’ of ‘kinship’, but were used as a way of mapping the *specificity* of Arandic custom and culture. Labelled as ‘family trees’, these documents typically followed the male members of an *anyenhenge* (estate) group and emphasised the place and Dreaming of each person’s *akgangentye* or ‘spiritual conception’, described as the process whereby a ‘Dreaming’ being would animate a child in the womb (see Pink 1933; Merlan 1986; Hiatt 1996, pp.120–141). These events were not necessarily tied to the inheritance of Dreamings from either matrilineal or patrilineal ties and therefore did not necessarily have a direct relationship with one’s *anyenheng* estate. Strehlow emphasised that a person’s conception site and its story amounted to a form of ‘individuation among patrifilial relatives’ (Austin-Broos 2009, p.109). It served as a significant marker of personal identity.

By taking his understanding of the person, place, myth relationship further, Strehlow was able to make his most notable contribution to the discipline. He was amongst the first Australian ethnographers to give central importance to Aboriginal beliefs about, and experiences of, the living, ‘mythically inscribed landscape’ (Rumsey 1999, p.177). Strehlow’s accounts gave rise to an appreciation of Aboriginal lifeworlds that show deep connections between individuals, their personal relationships to mythological Ancestors and narratives of the Ancestors that animated and gave shape to the land. Going beyond both his father’s discussions of ‘totem-gods’ (Strehlow 1907a) and Spencer and Gillen’s references to the ‘wanderings of the various totems’ (Gillen et al. 2001, pp.37–41), Strehlow wrote more detail about the inseparable, personal and collective bond to an overarching ‘totemic landscape’ (Strehlow 1970b). As with the contemporaneous writings of Róheim (1945) and later

Arremente occupying a region with relatively more reliable water sources compared to the sand plains of the Western Desert – that has led to this differentiation. Others have agreed hat in more arid areas emphasis on well-defined estates dissipate (Peterson & Long 1986, pp.55–56).
Munn (1973), Stanner (1979), Strehlow produced significant insights into the person-land-myth interconnection as well as its expression in ceremony and song.

It was the emphasis on ‘land-based’ (Strehlow 1970b, p.98) myth and ritual and in particular the commemorative songs honouring ancestors (Strehlow 1971a) that provided direct inspiration for the now popular notion of the ‘songline’. Originally coined by the British novelist Bruce Chatwin (1988), the term had grown out of Strehlow’s characterisation of the ontology of Central Australian Aboriginal people and the way in which ritual songs would reference a sequence of places in an animated physical environment (Shakespeare 2000, pp.409–411). Strehlow described these paths as the ‘trails of wandering ancestors’ but never used the descriptor ‘songline’ itself (Strehlow 1978b, p.Map II). The term has since become a neat shorthand for what Bradley describes as a complex ‘way of knowing’, where the act of singing arouses ‘both country and kin’ and imparts multiple layers of cultural knowledge (2010, p.xiii). Understanding the importance of geographic, mythological and ritual links, Strehlow produced one of the most detailed records of Aboriginal place names, Dreamings routes, individual sites, song texts and myths ever made in Australia.

**Continental Connections**

Despite these significant contributions, Strehlow was on the periphery of mainstream Australian anthropology. His preoccupation with myth and ritual as opposed to kinship and marriage relations, left most of his contemporaries in British and Australian anthropology genuinely perplexed by his work. The British Australian anthropologist John Barnes, for example, recalled the ‘odd frame of reference’ used by Strehlow which he ‘did not understand’ (in Gray 2007, p.224). As both Austin-Broos (1997) and Kenny (2014, pp.238–240) have argued, Strehlow’s Lutheran missionary heritage, his focus on European literature, and his almost myopic interest in the Arandic world, meant that he was far more at home amongst the romanticism and historical particularism of the German-speaking tradition in anthropology. Seeing the importance of a holistic documentation of both language and culture, his research continued the practice of earlier German missionaries and extended it.
Despite speculation that Strehlow may have been significantly influenced by the writings of German philosophy and anthropology (Austin-Broos 1997, p.54), careful attention to his diaries and personal book collection suggest that this is unlikely. He had not, for example, read the philosopher and founder of German anthropology, Johann Gottfried von Herder, as claimed by Barry Hill (2003, p.23) and nor had he engaged with the work of the influential German-American anthropologist Franz Boas (Adams 2016; Stocking 1996; Denby 2005).\(^97\) If Strehlow had travelled to Yale University in 1932 however to study with Edward Sapir (Boas’s student), as had been originally suggested by Raymond Firth (Jones 2004, p.37), he could have discovered like-minded peers. Strehlow would have agreed with their rejection of social evolutionism and their emphasis on the holistic study of culture and language, as well as their ‘activist science’ (Beals 2000, p.316) which converted Indigenes into a people with histories and an inherent value of their own.

Inheriting this disposition from his father, perhaps ‘unconsciously’ as Anna Kenny (2014, p.240) has suggested, Strehlow remained attentive to ‘German’ ideas throughout his career. He felt a connection to scholars associated with this brand of German diffusionist ethnology, who shared an interest in human creativity, myth and ritual. Very early on he was contacted by members of the Frobenius Institute in Frankfurt (Beinssen-Hesse 2004) and later met with Helmut Petri while in Europe (Strehlow 1950a, p.130). His associations continued later with a contribution to the *festschrift* for another Frobenius Institute associate, Adolf Ellegard Jensen (T.G.H. Strehlow 1964c) and correspondence with the American comparative mythologist Joseph Campbell.\(^98\) Many of these writers were more speculative than Strehlow in their ideas about the circulation of language and culture across the globe, but their ‘late-Romantic’, and ‘fieldwork-oriented’ approaches (Gingrich 2005, p.108) resonated with Strehlow’s interests.

The allure of psychoanalysis, an intellectual tradition with deep connections to German-speaking countries (Ermann 1999), is recognisable in both Strehlow’s personal and public writings. During the first years of his fieldwork he read a German

\(^97\) There is no mention of Herder in either Strehlow’s published works or his diaries, and there are no copies of any Herder texts in his personal book collection at the Strehlow Research Centre.

\(^98\) Strehlow also wrote a favourable review of Frobenius Institute member, Andreas Lommel’s ‘humanitarian’ and ‘emotional’ *Fortschritt Ins Nichts* (see Strehlow 1970a).
edition of Freud’s *Totem and Taboo* (1922) and avidly annotated the Hungarian anthropological-psychoanalyst Géza Róheim’s *Australian Totemism* (1925) and contributions to the *International Journal of Psychoanalysis* (1932). Strehlow referenced Carl Jung in the introduction to *Aranda Traditions* (1947, p.xv), and stated his interest in the possible ‘parallels’ and common ‘subconscious drives’ across cultures in *Songs of Central Australia* (Strehlow 1971a, p.xvi). Although careful to not make definitive statements in support of psychoanalytic theory, Strehlow concluded that ‘the Freudian school’ had produced some ‘excellent suggestions’ (1971a, pp.xvi–xvii) that could help explain the themes and content of Arrernte traditions.

**Parallels and Comparisons**

T.G.H. Strehlow felt far freer than his father to go beyond pure descriptive ethnography and entertain comparative investigations. In what is arguably his most influential body of work, *Songs of Central Australia* (1971), Strehlow compares the traditions of Australia’s desert peoples with those of Europe’s past. Regarded as a kind of ‘Bible’ of Australian Aboriginal verse and religiosity (Jorgensen 2010), this hefty 775 page tome has come to assume canonical status in Australianist scholarship (see Elkin 1975). Its examples of Central Australian (male only) song verse are often used to demonstrate the poetic or literary qualities of Aboriginal ‘literature’. The translations highlight the plaintive and inspiring elements of Australian Aboriginal song, and go well beyond the paltry descriptions of Aboriginal song existing in earlier literature (see Spencer & Gillen 1899; Davies 1932, 1927; Moyle 1959).

*Songs of Central Australia* is not the grand compendium of Strehlow’s fieldwork career that its size and scope might suggest. He wrote the bulk of the text between

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99 See Strehlow’s personal library collection at the Strehlow Research Centre. The inside cover of the *International Journal of Psychoanalysis* volume XIII 1932 reads ‘T.G. Strehlow June 25th 1933, Alice Springs.’ Strehlow has heavily annotated this text. In the same year he also read what he called ‘a very convincing study of native mentality’ (Strehlow 1932, p.9) by Stanley David Porteus (1931). Porteus’s work has since been heavily criticised (Anderson 2005, pp.216–18).

100 Freud understood that ‘inadequate observation’ and ‘misinterpretation’ of Indigenous ‘manners and customs’ by anthropologists in the late 18th and early 19th Century was a concern for the development of psychoanalytic theory (Freud 2014, p.36).

101 Others influenced by comparative mythology, psychoanalysis and cultural diffusion, such as the American mythologist Joseph Campbell, received support from Strehlow (Campbell 1974, p.xii, 185).

102 Ronald Berndt’s (1952) work on the Djangawul ritual in Northern Australia had also provided important translations of song.
1946 and February of 1953, and of the following eighteen years of his fieldwork only a very small selection was later incorporated into the manuscript. But it was during this period that most of his work on the Anmatyerr was carried out (see discussion in the next chapter). *Songs of Central Australia* contains only one fifth of the song material he recorded (1971a, p.xxxix), and is tightly focused on the form and content of songs alone. While the social context of these song traditions are generally explained, their linked ceremonies are left virtually untouched in this analysis. Detailed descriptions of the ceremonies were never published and rarely (see T. G. H. Strehlow 1964) were analyses offered of the material qualities or visual aesthetics, that informed their ritual paraphernalia, iconography or dances.

Like his work in linguistics, which was heavily influenced by the intellectual traditions of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century and resistant to new developments in theory, Strehlow’s anthropology was similarly cast with reference to studies in classics. Anthropology had partly emerged out of comparative studies in classics and folklore such as James George Frazers’s *The Golden Bough* (1890), but by the early to mid-twentieth century this connection was distinctly on the wane (Ackerman 2008). Anachronistically, Strehlow continued with comparisons of ritual and religious material during this period, but utterly rejected the earlier evolutionary epistemological perspectives of British anthropology by suggesting that Central Australian Aboriginal song and myth could be equivalent to that of classical antiquity.

Making this comparative point was not purely a scholarly exercise for Strehlow, but also a political one. The ‘parallels’ given in *Songs*, he claimed, were ‘designed to achieve a more sympathetic attitude in the world of ideas’, towards Aboriginal Australians (Strehlow 1971a, p.xl). Strehlow was anxious to convince his readers that these songs were of equal quality to ‘our own’ early poetic works from Europe, and he gave considerable space in *Songs of Central Australia* to comparing Aboriginal songs with poetic verses from the Greco-Roman world, the Anglo-Saxons, Norse/Scandinavian mythology and Judeo-Christian traditions. Using these texts as the benchmark, Strehlow uncritically accepted the classic tradition’s fixation on the

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103 The map included with *Songs of Central Australia* include sites recorded after 1953 and there are some song texts collected from Mick Werlaty at Alcoota for example in the 1960s that were later inserted.
cultural development of the West. By the 1960s there was an advanced body of anthropological and folkloric literature from North America, Africa, India, Asia, Central America, South America and elsewhere in Australia, but Strehlow bypassed most of it.\footnote{104 There are a small number of references from South-East Asia (Strehlow 1971a, pp.116, 620).} However, unlike most classicists, Strehlow had already accepted (based on his own ethnographic experience) that the human mind operated in a similar fashion everywhere, regardless of history or geography. The Athenians and the Arrernte were comparable.

Relying on comparisons with Europe alone however, meant that Strehlow had accepted a Eurocentric form of criticism and analysis. He defined Arrernte song by modernist assumptions about the centrality of aesthetics and language, and when combined with his Lutheranism, this meant Strehlow assigned value to the ‘Word’, with all the resonances of the Christian term. This perspective was not however, as literary theorist Devlin-Glass has unfairly suggested, a ‘racist’ position, exhibiting a ‘pervasive disgust’ for the culture he documented (2005, p.135). It is more a consequence, as previously mentioned, of his settler primitivism. From this viewpoint, Indigenous cultures offered an insight into a lost domain of European cultural heritage, and could create the cultural capital needed to establish a unique nationalist, cultural identity in colonial states.

This preoccupation with the cultural history of Europe also led to a particular view of social change. As a student of classics, Strehlow understood that the so-called ‘primitive’ or ‘primary’ literature of earlier European societies had been eventually overcome by French forms, with their roots in the Latin models and Greek originals. These introduced forms of language had proven ‘too strong’ for what he described as the pre-Latin ‘native verse’ of Europe (Strehlow 1971a, pp.5, 15) and their documentation was carried out too late and too carelessly. His work in Central Australia was, therefore, an historic opportunity to document Arandic ‘native verse’ before it too was overcome by external influences.
The Authentic Value of Culture

If there was any one task that defined Strehlow’s investigations across disciplines, it was his aim of uncovering the cultural ‘soul’ of Central Australian Aboriginal people through their language, song and mythologies. Having inherited this focus from his father, Strehlow was unequivocal; the ‘soul’ of people was ‘enshrined in its legends’ (1947, p.46). Although not a missionary himself, T.G.H. Strehlow’s work bears the mark of what Clifford (1980) describes as the mission-oriented ethnographer who is engrossed in locating the ‘soul’ of ‘their’ people and strives to understand their ‘culture’. Given his background, Strehlow imagined culture as something inherent in the ontological domains of ‘mind’ and ‘spirit’, and primarily expressed through language and most significantly connected to religious ritual. Being focused on text and translations, Darren Jorgensen (2010) writes that Strehlow ‘simulated’ the sacred of Central Australian people by turning it into the cerebral language of poetry and literature.

The completely physical, embodied and visceral nature of Aboriginal lifeworlds that caught the attention of others at the time (Róheim 1988, 1974; Berndt & Berndt 1951) were subordinate to Strehlow’s interest in the conceptual and linguistic characteristics of human social existence. Captive to a notion of ‘culture’ as something found in language, poetry and song, Strehlow was limited by what critical theorist Herbert Marcuse (1968) has described as an ‘idealist cult of inwardness’, where ‘authentic culture’ is regarded as an expression of spiritual or psychological states (Marcuse 1968, p.70). Typically associated with the German romantic tradition, this viewpoint sees culture as an ‘interiorised property’ (Denby 2005, p.58) and leaves the immediacy of the human condition, its somatic, mundane and everyday experiences largely unexamined.

Further evidence of this tendency to aestheticise and etherealise ‘culture’, is found in Strehlow’s very meagre record of material culture, and perhaps even more surprisingly, his lack of published works about the hundreds of dance and other ritual performances he filmed. Strehlow certainly collected material culture objects, in particular tywerrenge, both the sacred objects associated with ancestors and the ritual paraphernalia made during sacred ceremonies. These were collected less for their material culture qualities than for their associations with the songs, rituals and myths.
recorded. Rarely were the more mundane aspects of domestic or family life ever filmed or photographed. Even films made of ‘everyday’ scenes at the Hermannsburg mission were staged for the camera and captured little of the immediacy of people’s lives,\textsuperscript{105} perhaps because film, wire and tape was expensive at the time of his fieldwork, and one needed to be economical and selective when making recordings. Strehlow’s gaze was always found to be focused on the conceptual domain of religious cultural practice.\textsuperscript{106}

‘Informants’ and ‘Friends’

As noted above, Strehlow’s authority as an ethnographer was most often evoked in reference to his personal biography. This has been a common theme in the history of anthropological writing, with authors commonly defending their accounts by citing either the amount of time they spent in the field or their successes in establishing close rapport with their informants. Through these personal experiences, claims are made about a cumulative deepening of knowledge, in situ and over time. In his critique of how ‘ethnographic authority’ is produced, James Clifford pointed out that experiential claims often work to sanction an ethnographer’s ‘real’ but nonetheless ‘indefinable, feel or flair’ for his or her people (Clifford 1983, p.130). Long term personal experience and deep linguistic skills gave rise to the notion that he had some kind of privileged access to the souls of Central Australian people (Morton 2004, p.44). As Clifford has argued though, if based upon such foundations and expressed in an un-reflexive way, such representations of a ‘people’s’ “world” will inevitably be:

\textldots{} subjective, not dialogical or intersubjective. The ethnographer accumulates personal knowledge of the field. (The possessive form, "my people," has until recently been familiarly used in anthropological circles; but the phrase in effect signifies "my experience.") (Clifford 1983, p.130 italics added).

\textsuperscript{105} See Strehlow ‘open’ film reels at the Strehlow Research Centre.
\textsuperscript{106} There are few recordings of this nature. In a rare example though, he did attempt to record the Eastern Arrernte elder Jim Ulambarinja tapping a River Red Gum tree root for water and him making a kangaroo skin water bag (Strehlow 1968a, pp.116–118).
This kind of subjective/personal accumulation of a people’s worldview is most directly attested in Strehlow’s self-identification as an ‘Arrernte tribesman’ (as noted above), as well as his persistent claims to have personally, almost exclusively, taken possession of sizable repertoires of ritual knowledge. Working in this way, Strehlow’s ethnography became a serious personal obligation, involving prolonged and deep attachment with the region and its people, but leaving its relational foundations unexplored. While the benefits of this personal investment were evident in the fine-grained analyses and detailed language studies that he produced, it also contributed to an unfortunate, proprietorial attitude that intimidated other researchers interested in conducting their own research in the region (Hill 2003, p.336; Marcus 2001, p.111; Green 2001, pp.33–34). Typifying what Stocking (1989, p.211) has referred to as the ‘one ethnographer/one tribe’ phenomenon in anthropology, or the “my people” ‘syndrome’, Strehlow aggressively guarded his ‘patch’ and his accrual of ethnographic detail led to a hubris that marred his appreciation of wider social experiences and processes.

Before delving into deeper analyses of his fieldwork interactions with Anmatyerr people in the chapters to come, it is important to consider how Strehlow’s informants were represented within his published works. It is true that Strehlow emphasised his own authoritative status, but both Aranda Traditions (1947) and Songs of Central Australia (1971) open with genuine acknowledgements of the men that so trustingly provided him with information. Unlike past researchers in Central Australia such as Spencer and Gillen, who failed to recognise the identities of their informants in their published works (see Bradley, Adgemis & Haralampou 2014), Strehlow both named and thanked them, insisting that they ‘should get the full credit for their own information’ (Strehlow 1971a, pp.xxxv–xxxviii). But how this was done reveals a great deal about the limitations of Strehlow’s approach. In Aranda Traditions for example, both the age (antiquity) of the informants and their subsequent passing into ‘memory’ is highlighted:

Many of the legends and much of the information contained in these three studies were obtained from old native informants under a

107 Spencer and Gillen did however name their informants in their field diaries and correspondence (see Gillen et al. 2001; & Gibson & Batty 2014).
promise of secrecy during their lifetime, and that is why these papers were not published earlier… This book is dedicated to their memory (Strehlow 1947).

A similar sentiment also concludes his introduction to Songs of Central Australia:

I must not close without acknowledging by far my greatest debt – that which I owe to my old native friends who supplied me so liberally with their secret lore and admitted me to so many of their totemic rites… Many of them were, in fact, pathetically eager to pass on their totemic secrets to someone whom they trusted, and in whom they placed their confidence that he would do his best to preserve these secrets from oblivion; for they all knew that their own young men would not carry on the traditions of their fathers (Strehlow 1971a, p.xlv italics added).

Leaving aside for the moment the expectation that these traditions would not be ‘carried on’ (as I discuss this in detail in the coming chapters), Strehlow’s language evokes both an indebtedness to his informants, as well as the personal accrual, perhaps even final usurpation, of their deep knowledge. Despite the fact that there is convincing evidence in his own field diaries and from my own discussions with Arrernte and Anmatyerr people (see coming chapters) to suggest that that numerous men were indeed ‘eager’ to share their ritual expertise, the impression given here of a group of ‘pathetically eager’ people, seemingly incapable of handling the changes around them, is undeserved. The range of responses to colonisation from Anmatyerr people in the early twentieth century, already outlined in the previous chapter alone, are testament enough to the dynamism and creativity of a people under pressure. Numerous illustrations of how this ceremonial and song knowledge persists into the current period are also detailed in the following chapters.

These critiques aside, the presentation of the informant voice in Strehlow’s work nevertheless often gave rise to particularly poignant passages. Quotations from the Northern Arrernte man Gurra [Akwerre] (also known as Mickey Dow Dow) (Figure 10) in Aranda Traditions for example have given this text a value beyond its original
intent. Translations of Dow Dow’s words have since been used to describe the affective relationships of Central Australian Aboriginal people (Das et al. 2014, pp.12–13; Darian-Smith, Gunner & Nuttall 1996; Campbell 1974; Sproul 2013) and their relationships to land (Gammage 2011, pp.123–138).

There are aspects of Strehlow’s portrayal of his informants however, that do deserve scrutiny. In the face of others working in the field at this time, such as W.E.H. Stanner and Olive Muriel Pink who openly explored issues of ‘culture contact’ and the ‘contemporaneity’ of Indigenous peoples (Hinkson 2005, p.202), Strehlow instead portrayed his informants as exemplars of the past. Akwerre, or Mickey Dow Dow as he was more commonly known, had already worked as an enabler and interpreter to the missionary Ernest Kramer and the anthropologist Norman Tindale (see Marcus 2001; Jones 2011, pp.74–76), and was pivotal to the important ethnography produced by Olive Muriel Pink amongst the Northern Arrernte (Pink 1933, 1936).

Pink

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108 *Aranda Traditions* alone features ten individual informants who are directly named and quoted in the book, while a small number of others are left unidentified.

109 See also the Olive Pink Collection, MS2368, at the Australian Institute for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies, Canberra.
would also describe Akwerre as being expert at explaining ‘sections’ and ‘subsections’, as having enough English literacy to scan Spencer and Gillen’s publications, and that he had too much anthropological knowledge to be a good ‘informant’ (Marcus 2001, p.109). Obviously a significantly intercultural figure, he was nonetheless portrayed by Strehlow in his publications as ‘Gurra’, the authoritative ‘native’ expert in ritual knowledge. These representational strategies rendered informants as exemplars of an authentic ‘Other’ from another time.

With minimal attention given to the shared histories with settlers, pastoralists, colonial authorities and missionaries these published texts effectively removed men like Dow Dow from the workings of broader social and political life. The age of informants was also stressed as being critical to obtaining the most authoritative material. Indeed, the ages of Strehlow’s informants are listed in the index to *Songs of Central Australia*. Those, like Dow Dow, who had been born before 1875 he argued (1971a, p.xxxv), were a better source of information because they had been less influenced by settler society and thus embodied a tribal past. As those born after this period represented a far more uprooted or acculturated *present*, the contemporaneous and ongoing application of song or ritual material was never seriously entertained by Strehlow.110

Rendered in mostly sympathetic ways, these informants would always be representative of a disappearing authenticity, that in his estimation was doomed to ‘utter and final oblivion’ (Strehlow 1953a, p.147). This denial of coevalness, as Johannes Fabian (1983) has famously described the temporal distance imagined between ethnographer and informant, ultimately disavowed the shared experiences of Strehlow and the people that he wrote about. The decision to locate Central Australian culture wholeheartedly in the past, contributed to the primitivism that marred Strehlow’s work.

110 Though he did acknowledge that circumcision and other initiatory practices, albeit ‘imported’ from other, non-Arrernte cultural groups in Central Australia, continued to have ‘full social importance’ (Strehlow 1978a, p.153).
Conclusion

Somewhat out of step with his Anglo contemporaries in Australia, Strehlow’s interests in Literature and the Classics produced a focused and empirical form of ethnography. His intellectual roots played an enormous part in shaping his interactions with people, determining his ethnographic focus and framing his scholarly contributions. Even though his interest in ‘parallels’ and ‘comparisons’ were a constant motivating theme for his research, they did not dominate his findings. However, empiricism, modernism, settler primitivism and an intense focus on language and song ‘texts’ did put limits on his appreciation of the material he collected, and the people he collected it from.

Strehlow committed himself to the collection and translation of this material, not in order to create a bank of cultural knowledge for the people of Central Australia, but for the greater edification of an ignorant nation. As each song text was recorded, each myth written down and each ceremony filmed, Strehlow imagined his records would one day be used by future scholars, much in the same way that Greek or Norse mythologies are scrutinised for cultural and historical insights today. Writing about what he regarded as the eventual decline of these traditions, Strehlow used a religious phrase in Latin to express his despair, ‘sic transit gloria mundi’ (thus passes the glory of the world). His theoretical biases were clear.

Understanding Strehlow’s work, and more importantly its standing amongst Anmatyerr and Arrernte communities today, requires a far deeper analysis of his time as a fieldworker. How Strehlow met with his informants in the field, how he worked with them and negotiated with them, is discussed in the following chapter. Specifically focused on his exchanges with Anmatyerr men, the next chapter draws upon Strehlow’s meticulously kept field diaries to present a picture of his evolving ethnographic methods and the active role of Anmatyerr informants in the production of the Strehlow collection.
Chapter 5: A Balancing Act

‘Iparrpe lyang pepeke arrirtnye arrerneteyenhe’ ['Sing it quickly, so that the correct song can be put down in the book'] - (Tom Perrurle Lywenge urging the Anmatyerr elder Angelthe-rawenye Ngal to sing for Strehlow).\(^{111}\)

I first had an inkling of the critical role played by Strehlow’s informants in September of 2005, after interviewing senior Arrernte man, the late Rupert Max Stuart Kngwarraye. Max, as he was known to most, had grown up on the Jay Creek Aboriginal Settlement, an Aboriginal Reserve to the west of Alice Springs that T.G.H. Strehlow and his wife, Bertha, ran in the 1940s. He had also performed in sacred ceremonies in front of Strehlow’s cameras in 1955. Max was also later helped by Strehlow when famously convicted of murder in a case that caught the nation’s attention and sparked a Royal Commission (Inglis 2002). I would occasionally run into Max over the years, either when he visited the Strehlow Research Centre to advise on the collection, or on the streets of Alice Springs. On this particular day, I was interviewing Max in the Strehlow Research Centre’s boardroom, recording his commentaries on some of the non-ceremonial photos in the Strehlow collection from the 1930s.

Amongst the pile of photos stacked on the boardroom table was an image of Max’s grandfather, Tom Lywenge (Ljonga) Perrurle.\(^{112}\) Lywenge had been an important fieldwork assistant to Strehlow in his early years, and as we looked at the black and white prints, Max began reminiscing about their relationship:

Tom Lywenge my grandfather... He was right under late Professor Strehlow. Camel man and a bit of a goat shepherd… They went everywhere! They went out to the Hale River [to the far east] and everything these two. He [Tom] didn't know the country, didn't know the people, but they were talkin’ and he could understand... he could

\(^{111}\) Strehlow writes, "Parpa ljang, pepuka retnja renitianatanga" without any English translation (Strehlow 1932, p.102a). The above translation is mine.

\(^{112}\) Lywenge was Stuart’s atyemey, mother’s father.
talk Luritja and Arrernte. He talked Western Arrernte... [He was] very, quite cunning [clever].... I think he showed Strehlow more than he showed me, ya know? Taught him how to understand the people. He was a pretty hard man.\textsuperscript{113}

Max’s description of Lywenge suggested a person with the confidence to venture into relatively unknown areas, but also to act as an interpreter and cultural intermediary. He clearly possessed deep ceremonial knowledge and had apparently shared a great deal with Strehlow:

He taught him [Strehlow] a lot. His own ceremony he showed [to Strehlow] but other ones he keep quiet... Nobody knew Strehlow properly like this old fella did. And nobody knows my grandfather like what I did.

According to Max, Lywenge was in no way passive in his exchanges with Strehlow and would often tell him to ‘sit down over there’ and to give the performers ‘room’ to prepare. ‘You can sit down in the shade’, he would instruct Strehlow, and ‘I’ll call ya when we’re ready’. As they worked together, Max imagined, these two men would have created a ‘balance... like this one on a scales’ [Max moved his hands as if balancing scales]. But if he witnessed Strehlow ‘getting a little bit cheeky’, meaning aggressive or coercive, ‘he’d pull him down... pull him back.’\textsuperscript{114} He would also communicate in a discreet and concealed way with the other Aboriginal informants, using ‘finger-talk’ (hand signs and gestures), so as to avoid detection by Strehlow. Max’s story made me think that men like Lywenge had not only been critical as intermediaries, but essential to promoting and carrying out the recording of this material.

In this chapter, I take Max’s insights into the agency, ability and confidence of men like his grandfather, and use this as a lens through which to view Strehlow’s fieldwork interactions. It was these initial comments that inverted the story of Strehlow as the principle figure in this history for me. I wanted to know more about how Strehlow’s informants influenced

\textsuperscript{113} Interview with Rupert Max Stuart Kngwarraye: interview conducted by Jason Gibson with Rachel Perkins. 29/07/2005.

\textsuperscript{114} ‘Cheeky’ is used in Central Australian Aboriginal English to signal aggressive, threatening or dangerous behaviours.
and shaped the documentation of their own rituals and songs? How much agency did they really have? But I also wanted to know how these relationships may have changed over time, particularly as Strehlow’s methodologies developed, relationships evolved and larger socio-historical forces affected these interactions.

In examining these questions, I returned to Strehlow’s field diaries looking for evidence of Indigenous ‘agency’, and for signs of a significant intellectual exchange. While recent studies of colonial encounter often focus upon how Indigenous intermediaries - when either acting as guides, translators, hosts, performers or facilitators – exercise degrees of autonomy in these encounters (Konishi, Nugent & Shellam 2015; Torrence & Clarke 2011; Harrison, Byrne & Clarke 2013) - I wanted to also consider how these interactions shaped everyone involved. Archaeologist Mike Smith (2013), comes close to this idea with his consideration of Baldwin Spencer and Francis Gillen’s significant ethnographic work amongst the Arrernte in 1896. According to Smith, Spencer and Gillen’s intensive documentation of the Angkwere (Engwura) ceremonies in the summer months of 1896/97, marked a moment of ‘profound intellectual exchange between elite members of two very different societies’ (2013, p.341). While not as pioneering as Spencer and Gillen’s early work, the engagements between Strehlow and his interlocutors were equally if not more ‘profound’ and had effects in both directions.115

Strehlow’s interactions spanned four decades, involved the participation of hundreds of individual informants, covered an expansive region, and benefitted from a depth of linguistic and conceptual comprehension that evaded the earlier ethnographers. In depicting the history of these exchanges and the dialectical interplay between researched and researcher, this chapter draws principally on Strehlow’s own written record of events. As the quote from Tom Lywenge in the epigraph demonstrates, these diaries do not simply emphasise Strehlow’s role in this process, but if read judiciously, can also illuminate more complicated collaborations. Strehlow’s diaries, for example, reveal a great deal about the vigorous and interested roles that Anmatyerr and Arrernte people played in the fieldwork, and show the various

115 While Strehlow was certainly critical of Spencer and Gillen’s lack of linguistic expertise, he did nonetheless consider their work a ‘landmark in anthropology’ (Strehlow 1969b). He also wrote positively of Gillen’s stature amongst Arrernte people.
challenges faced by all when negotiating the inequities and vicissitudes inherent in colonial relationships.

**First Lessons**

Strehlow’s first year of fieldwork in 1932 consisted of four trips across Central. His principal aim was to ascertain the boundaries of the Arandic languages. After arriving in Alice Springs on the 2nd of April, and spending close to two weeks at the Hermannsburg mission going over his father’s work, he began to make preparations for his own sojourns to the north. Planning to travel by camel across the northern boundaries of the Arandic language region, his first task was to secure the necessary beasts, as well as a ‘camel boy’ (an Aboriginal man expert in camel wrangling) to act as a guide. It was the missionary Ernest Kramer who recommended that he take Max’s grandfather, Tom Lywenge Perrurle (c.1880 – c.1940) (Strehlow 1971a, p.753). Of course Lywenge was not a ‘boy’ at all, but a man in his fifties who, as noted above, possessed excellent social skills and like most Central Australian men, was knowledgeable in a range of languages and dialects.

Two very senior men, Moses Tjalkabota at Hermannsburg and Mickey Dow Dow in Alice Springs, explained to the young Strehlow that Arrernte language was spoken as far north as Tea Tree Well and Central Mount Stuart. So it was in this direction that he first headed to make a study of a northern dialect barely described in the anthropological and linguistic literature (Strehlow 1932, pp.7, 14). Fortunately for Strehlow, the Reverend T.G. Lithgow was driving north in his vehicle and agreed to take the young scholar and his assistant to Barrow Creek, where they could purchase a number of camels for their planned fieldwork expeditions. Before they could leave, they needed a ‘license’ for Lywenge, because under the protectionist policies of the ‘Aboriginals Ordinance’ Legislation of the time, the mobility of Aboriginal people was closely regulated (Summers 2000; Howard-Wagner & Kelly 2011b). With the paperwork complete, the group motored north along the Stuart highway, before diverting northwest towards a very remote cattle station at Mt. Peake (Strehlow 1932, p.13). Here Strehlow chatted with the white pastoralists while Lywenge quickly befriended those in the station’s ‘blacks camp’, including an elderly man named ‘Jacky’, or as he was properly known, Urarty.116

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116 Strehlow spells this name Eroartja, Urartja or Urartja-raunja. He also notes that his other names were Wiririkara or Namatuna. Barry Hill (2003, p.160, 2002) has suggested that Jacky/Urartja was an Ilpara [Warlpiri] man, however it is clear from the language spoken by Jacky, his identification as an
Lywenge explained to Strehlow that Urarty was someone universally respected in this region, a ‘proper’ Ingkarte (ceremonial leader or boss) (Strehlow 1932, p.22) and thus someone worth knowing.\textsuperscript{117} His ‘country’ was Amawenk, Central Mount Stuart, ‘where his father, an Aranda [Arrernte] too, had lived all his days’ (Strehlow 1932, p.14). Strehlow wrote down a further explanation from Urarty himself ‘Ite nehe kwetethe neke nyentamanyente ware’, but not did not provide a translation (Strehlow 1932, p.15).\textsuperscript{118} Translated as ‘They were always living here, just one by one, separately’, Uraty’s words gave the impression of distinct and slightly autonomous groups of people, existing side by side across the landscape in what would later be described as ‘estates’. This was a concept only just beginning to be understood by anthropologists at the time (Radcliffe-Brown 1918, 1930) and one that would feature prominently in Strehlow’s work in the years to come through his emphasis on anyenhenge (state or ‘local groups’) (Strehlow 1965c, 1970b).

Although Urarty clearly spoke an Arandic language and could be mostly understood by both Strehlow and Lywenge, his ‘strange’ ‘accent’ (presumably his use of Anmatyerr rather than an entirely different language) caused some difficulties (Strehlow 1932, p.15). Seeing the opportunity of benefitting from Urarty’s elite knowledge, the duo made plans to return to Mt. Peake once they had secured their camels and the necessary supplies for their longer expedition.

Just under a month later, Strehlow and Lywenge returned to Mt. Peake, this time on camels. Strehlow was again largely reliant on Lywenge to interpret and translate Urarty’s information. In relaying his ‘totem-story’, Urarty spoke quickly in a mixture of Arrernte and what appeared to be ‘Ilpara’ [possibly Ngalia Warlpiri], and although Lywenge could understand the gist of it, he found it too difficult to translate (Strehlow 1932, p.26). Urarty also sang his sacred songs concerning an ancestral arrweketye (woman) from a place called ‘Katna’ in the Black Hills, but Lywenge found it extremely difficult to slow him down in order to dictate the individual words and song lines for Strehlow to record. Even with

\textsuperscript{117} Carl Strehlow records ‘urarjja’ as a ‘small rat’ (Strehlow 1907a, p.53) that makes tunnels in the earth. Strehlow later records a women with this same name from Illewerr (Lake Lewis) area (Strehlow 1953a, p.112a). Contemporary Anmatyerr and Arrernte dictionaries do not list this word, though Carl Strehlow’s wordlists feature ‘urarjja’ ‘a small rat (without pouch)’.

\textsuperscript{118} Written by Strehlow as ‘etna nala kutata naka njintamanjinta wara’, without an English translation. I acknowledge the assistance of Jenny Green in helping me with this translation. Pers. comm. 301/01/2014.
Lywenge’s help, being unfamiliar with Anmatyerr, and recording his first ever song text, Strehlow was struggling. He later recalled the event in this way:

These Unmatjera [Anmatyerr] men spoke a dialect akin to Northern Aranda [Arrernte] but at that time I did not know any Northern Aranda, and I was still having difficulty even in understanding Ljonga’s [Lywenge’s] translations of Unmatjera sentences…” (Strehlow 1959, p.132)

For the elderly Urarty, the task of slowly reciting and then providing free translations of the songs tired him out. ‘Rtwekert ikwer kel arrewem!’ [I can’t stop my heart from trembling], he finally exclaimed (Strehlow 1932, p.27). Similar language difficulties cropped up with other informants at Napperby and Woodgreen Station, where one man complained that his ‘aleny’ (tongue) was ‘kwern’ (not functioning properly) (Strehlow 1932, p.41a, 88). Even though the informants tried valiantly to modify their expressions so that they could be understood, Strehlow complained that they that would often ‘break down under the mental effort involved’ (Strehlow 1932, p.90). It seems that Tom Lywenge also grew impatient at times, but instead of asking people to slow down so that Strehlow could better hear each of the words more clearly, he demanded that the singers speed up. Obviously frustrated by some of these exchange he encouraged singers to ‘Iparrpe lyang pepeke arrirtanye arrernetyenhe’ [‘Sing it quickly, so that the correct song can be put down in the book’] (1932, p.102). Intensive language documentation of this kind was new to all involved, and placed each of the participants under considerable strain.

The following morning, Urarty persisted with his explanation of his ‘totem-story’ (Strehlow 1932, p.26) before leading everyone to the site where the associated sacred objects were kept. Urarty went ahead in search of the objects amongst the rust-coloured boulders at the Black Hills. After a short time, he returned in despair:

‘Nating, nating’ [Nothing, nothing] exclaimed the old man. He searched again. In vain; all had disappeared. Perhaps some atua kurka

119 Written by Strehlow as ‘tukuta ekura kalla erouma’. The presented above translation is mine.
120 Strehlow writes ‘linja’, and ‘kunna’.
121 Strehlow writes ‘Parpa ljang, pepaka retnja renitjanatanga’.
[artwa akwerrk/akwek, young men], or some atua wailbela [artwa warlpal, white man], or some arugutja [arrweketye, woman] had stolen them… (Strehlow 1932, p.29).

Speechless and saddened by the obvious distress caused by the theft, Strehlow diarised the event as a tragic but predictable result of colonialism. It was ‘disgusting’ that a ‘white man’ would steal ‘from an old native the last and most precious things which still remained to him’ (Strehlow 1932, p.29).

Over seventy years later, I climbed these same boulders at the Black Hills with Jimmy Haines Ngwarray, searching in vain for the very same objects. This was before I had read Strehlow’s diaries and knew of Urarty’s loss. At the conclusion of our search I filmed Jimmy telling the same stories and Paddy Kemarr singing of the same ancestral woman and moon man as Urarty had done many decades earlier.122 Because the objects remained elusive, the country was one of those ‘wounded spaces’ (Rose 2004; Kearney 2016), torn and fractured by colonial expansionism, and haunted by (what I later found out) the theft of the objects by the pastoralists from Mt. Peake Station (Strehlow 1963, pp.129–130). Having joined in this search so many years later, I can imagine how this episode, so early in Strehlow’s career, could have influenced his negative opinion of colonialism, and produced gloomy predictions for Central Australian Aboriginal traditions.123

The sense of urgency to salvage as much as possible in the face of colonialism’s march and a fracturing ritual order, was only further confirmed throughout the remainder of his time on Anmatyerr lands in 1932. At Stirling Station, Strehlow and Lywenge again met men whose objects had been desecrated and broken into pieces, this time by a police punitive party after the Kaytetye attack on the Barrow Creek Telegraph Station in 1874 (see Strehlow 1971a, pp.590–593, 1959; Mulvaney 2004) (see Chapter 3). ‘Deeply moved’ by the event, Strehlow had been invited by one of the owners of the objects, a man named Arlpalywerrng Kemarr, to join him in singing the associated songs for the damaged

123 See notes from video made at Mer Akarn and ‘Jimmy Ngwarray Haines 26 June 2014.doc’. 
At other places, objects were being constantly moved, relocated to safer destinations away from possible theft by pastoralists or opportunistic Aboriginal people. These events were clearly having an effect on people’s attitudes towards their *tywerrenge*. As evidenced in Chapter 3, sacred objects, songs and stories, were being sold or traded with interested white men in the face of the changing socio-cultural milieu. The fact that ‘men everywhere wanted to sell their’ *tywerrenge* to the whites’, Tom Lywenge commented, had come about because ‘the bad whites… lorded it over their natives, took their wives away from them, and threatened the men with their rifles’. Even though this disempowerment was real, Lywenge also felt that it was mostly ‘bluff’ and complained that his peers ‘*itneke iterlarenye kapertele itya*’ [had not thought about this properly] (Strehlow 1932, p.23).

The changing attitude towards sacred objects, he concluded, was not only the direct result of these power dynamics, but also due to the temptations of alcohol and other settler goods. Sacred ritual and objects had become a tender of sorts in a rapidly changing world, in which missionaries, policemen, museums, anthropologists, and private collectors all desired to possess them (see Jones 1995a). In fact, the arrival of Strehlow and Lywenge in their quest of the same materials, similarly represented this change.

**Atyewe-nhenge (The Age-mate)**

At this time in Strehlow’s career, the collection of material culture was in no way central to his methods. Chieflly interested in determining the dialectical differences between the Arandic languages, and the documentation of people’s song and mythic traditions, Strehlow often baulked at the offer of objects from informants unless he could also collect their songs and stories. Most of the objects that came into his possession during these early years were not kept in his private collection, but on-sold to the South Australian Museum. At Tea Tree Well for example, when he was approached by Paddy Kaltyirrpek and his nephew Tommy Ngal, Strehlow asked the men to first ‘recite’ their *tywerrenge-arritnye* (sacred songs, literally ‘sacred name’) before any object transaction could occur. Once this was done though, the men nevertheless continued with their invitation to take Strehlow to the site so that he could acquire their objects. It is important to point out here that objects

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124 This man was likely a close relation, possibly the son of, Spencer and Gillen’s Anmatyerr informant in 1901.

125 Strehlow wrote ‘etnaka etalerinja kaputala itja’ without English translation. The translation is mine.
were not necessarily being traded with Strehlow due to any exceptional relationships. Hermannsburg was hundreds of kilometres away from Anmatyerr territory and the legacy of his father is unlikely to have had much sway here. Rather, it appears to have been his language abilities, his upbringing in Central Australia, his obvious cultural sympathies, and his willingness to enter into a reciprocal exchange that made these interactions more efficient.

On their way out of Ti Tree, Strehlow noticed the younger man, Tommy Kaltyirrpek, following close behind. Looking to align himself with the more senior men in the group, Strehlow dismissively referred to the younger man as an ‘artwe akwerre’ (a little man), and a ‘hanger on’. Lywenge however, who was 25 years Strehlow’s senior and who stood as a classificatory father to Strehlow, recognised the age similarities between the two men. The trailing man was in Lywenge’s words, Strehlow’s ‘atyewe-nhenge’, an Arandic term meaning an ‘age mate’ and often used to refer to men that have passed through the rites of initiation at the same time (Strehlow 1932, p.35). The point was made with great subtlety. Strehlow was young, he had never been (and would never be) initiated, and while he had read and heard about senior men’s knowledge of ritual and Dreaming, this trip was his first experience of it.

At the rock holes of Arrengerweny (Aranggurunja) Paddy and Tommy explained the significance of the ahakey (native currant, Psydrax latifolia) objects in an eloquent fashion:

*Nhenh tywerreng altyerreng ngampekarl akwet ahakeyele
aknganekarl; itya artwal intelhelek, re arrp mpwarelekel.*

[These sacred objects manifested themselves in the dreaming/eternal times and are enduringly of the native currant dreaming; not designed by men, they are self-made] (Strehlow 1932, p.35).128

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126 Paddy Kaltjirbuka Pengart was a Yerramp man from Armanapwenty and ‘kutungula’ (kwertengerl) of Tommy Kaltjirbuka Ngal father (Strehlow 1932, p.36a, 39). (This is possibly the earliest record of the term kwertengerl being used in an Arandic speaking area, before Pink 1936)
127 Strehlow writes ‘tjo:ananga’. At Hermannsburg too he had been identified by everyone as an atyeye, meaning a younger sibling (Strehlow 1932, p.1).
128 Strehlow writes ‘Nana tjuruna altjiranga nambakala kuta agiala knanakala; itja atula intalelaka, era arpa mbaralakala’. The translation and rendering into contemporary orthography is mine.
The quote, again left without translation in his diary, captured a radically different ontology. When understood in its original language, Strehlow’s first-hand experiences, hearing these words and being at the site with these people, gave central importance to Aboriginal people’s own beliefs and experiences. It highlighted the living, mythically inscribed landscape they inhabited as well as what Arrernte elder M.K. Turner (2010, pp.12–15) has more recently described as its ‘angampeke-arle’ (meaning the way in which existence continually arises out of itself). The details of this distinctively Aboriginal ontology and epistemology are now reasonably well articulated in the literature (Morphy 1992; Myers 1991; Rose 1992), but at the time Strehlow was discovering this for himself, via empirical experience. It was firstly through the combination of his informant’s willingness to have their worldviews understood, but also Strehlow’s keen interest in the conceptual and linguistic, that such insights could be apprehended.

Following this first foray, Strehlow’s formative learning experiences were soon diverted. Strehlow had been asked to assist with the University of Adelaide’s Board for Anthropological Research Expedition to Mt. Liebig. It was here amongst the predominantly medical and physical anthropologists that he was able to witness a very different mode of anthropological research, one that contrasted greatly with his own. Just as they had done the previous year during the Cockatoo Creek expedition, the University team organised a short-term, large gathering of people for the purposes of intensive examination. They numbered their subjects and subjected them to a range of scientific experiments and empirical tests (Batty 2013a; also Jones 1987). Their methodology could not have been more different from Strehlow’s more intimate style of fieldwork, which was supported by a single Aboriginal assistant and devoted to the comprehension of myth, ritual and language.

At the conclusion of the Mt. Liebig expedition, Strehlow and Lywenge immediately returned to Anmatyerr territory in order to resume their studies. As they headed north through pastoral leases, elders again approached Strehlow with objects, songs and mythologies and comparative wordlists of Anmatyerr, Warlpiri and Arrernte (Strehlow 1932, pp.95–97). At Stirling Station, an Anmatyerr man named Arimerlareny Pwerrerl

This concept of angampeke-arle (‘numbakulla’ or ‘ungambikula’) was originally misunderstood by as an ancestral being (Spencer & Gillen 1927, p.355), but was better described by Pink (1936, p.280).
began energetically expounding another story concerning *ahakey* (native currant) ancestors. As he spoke, he began to use a distinctively ‘multimodal’ style of communication, using a combination of hand signs, song and sand drawings to convey his narrative (Munn 1973; Wilkins 1997; Green 2014). As he ‘tossed his hands about him, and lifted up his voice… nothing could restrain him’ (Strehlow 1932, p.116). Tom Lywenge and two other Anmatyerr men who had been watching and listening intently, refused to relay the details of the story for Strehlow who was left somewhat perplexed. The story was specifically Arimerlareny’s to tell. Upon realizing that his own personal conception site (‘totem place’) was connected to Arimerlareny’s story however, Lywenge sat down in the soft red sand with the old man and together they used their fingers to map out various ancestral paths, and make iconographic depictions of the story. Sketching the sand drawing into his diary (Figure 11), Strehlow documented important mythological detail, and revealed the extent to which he was learning from the dialogues and interactions between his informants.

Figure 11: Strehlow’s recreation of Aremelareny and Lywenge’s drawings of the *ahakey* story (Strehlow Field Diary 1932). Fig I shows the route of the *ahakey* men between places on Anmatyerr and Arrernte land and was drawn by Tom Lywenge. Fig II. Shows the positions of two ancestors and a ceremonial pole.

130 Lywenge’s ‘totem place’ (conception) is noted in this drawing as being ‘par erultja’ [Parirrweltye]. ‘Raguuraguura’ is most likely *arrakwerakwer* (a spiny-cheeked honeyletter ancestor).
The Era of Festivals

Strehlow would only intermittently set foot on Anmatyerr country again over the next 25 years. Having been permitted to record secret-sacred songs and ceremonies with Northern and Western Arrernte for the first time in 1933, his research then concentrated almost exclusively on the Arrernte (Strehlow 1978c; Kirby 1978; McNally 1981a). Between 1933 and 1936 his fieldwork focused on photographing and producing written accounts of these ceremonies at a number of ceremonial camps, and between 1936 and 1948 his energies were diverted first towards a new role in government administration and later military service. Appointed as the first Patrol Officer in Central Australia in 1936, Strehlow often worked with the police and the judicial system to investigate Aboriginal welfare (as seen in Chapter 8) and between 1937 and 1942 established and ran the Jay Creek Aboriginal settlement, forty kilometres to the west of Alice Springs.

As Rowse has noted, Strehlow switched from his primary experience of recording expressions of Indigenous authority to personally enacting it within the ‘reforming colonial practice’ of government administration (1992, pp.102-103). In this respect, he struggled with a synthesis and though he wrote on matters of Aboriginal policy throughout his career (T.G.H. Strehlow 1956; Strehlow 1958a, 1961b, 1975) he later regretted his time in ‘native affairs’:

I should have stuck to my collection of myth, songs and ceremonies in 1936 and never sacrificed any years of my life – or the enthusiasms of my wonderful and educated old men – for my foolish dreams of seeing a regenerated dark population [...] They would have to learn self control first and determine to work hard for their own future (Strehlow 1968a, p.72).

It was only with the aid of a postgraduate fellowship towards the end of 1948, that he was able to resume his documentation of ‘legends and chants’ (Strehlow 1948) before embarking on his studies in anthropology at the London School of Economics.

131 Two men Kinto Ngal and Mick “Racebow Mick” Arwerltareny Mpetyan revealed a considerable number of the Northern Arrernte ceremonies linked to the Anmatyerr region (see Strehlow 1933b, and 1959, p.572).
Following this largely unsatisfactory venture (see previous chapter) and a quick tour of Europe, Strehlow returned to Australia ready to reignite and renew his fieldwork methods. This new period of fieldwork, he later reflected, was defined by the ‘new ways of preserving’ song and ceremony that were now available to him - colour film, colour slide photography and wire audio recording (T.G.H. Strehlow 1964b, p.110). Beginning in 1953, he started to produce colour films of ceremonies in the style of ‘objective’ ‘data gathering’ (Morphy 1994). They were made with a single camera fixed to a tripod and positioned so that only the ceremonial ground and the principal performers were in shot. While at times films were made of men making ritual objects, or travelling to sacred sites, the vast majority of these films were taken at ceremonial camps and focused intensely upon capturing the enactment of ritual alone. It is worth noting that other ethnographic filmmakers in Australia during this time, such as the British born Ian Dunlop who made important films in the Western Desert in the 1960s, gradually moved beyond the focus on traditional life and began to document ‘societies in change’ (Deveson 2012, p.21). Striving for the most authentic record of the pre-contact ceremony though, Strehlow encouraged his performers to represent their ceremonies as they would have been pre-contact and remove any accoutrements of modernity (such as shoes, hats, billy cans etc.) from shot.

Turning this raw film ‘data’ into something that could be understood and explained to a wider audience was a costly and time-consuming exercise. Illustrated ‘film scripts’ were made for a small a number of ceremonies in order to describe and explain their contents, but these were only ever drafted and never published. Moreover, of the ‘kilometres of film’ produced of hundreds of ceremonies only three edited versions, complete with associated song and voice over soundtracks, were ever made.

With ceremonies being revealed in succession, Strehlow perched on the edge of the ceremonial ground with his cameras at the ready. Film and colour photographs were taken of each performance and a full a description of each ceremony was later noted in his diary, along with sketches of ritual paraphernalia, body paint designs and the positions of

132 Ian Dunlop met Strehlow at Port Augusta railway station in the 1965 and the two men shared ideas about film making. Pers comm. Ian Dunlop 05/2011 (see also Strehlow 1965a, p.2).
133 See ‘film scripts’ folder at the Strehlow Research Centre.
134 http://www.magnt.net.au/strehlow-research-centre
different performers. Embracing the nomenclature of the theatre, each ceremonial
performance was described as having been ‘staged’ and each part of a ceremony was
classified as an ‘Act’. The Annmatyerr ceremony of the *tyelk-aperrertety* (rufous
songlark, *Megalurus mathewsi*) from Awengatherr (a place near Bushy Park Station) for
example, consisted of three separate ‘Acts’. Continuing with his theatrical taxonomy,
which had evidently originated in his background in Classics, Strehlow described the suite
of related songs or ceremonies pertaining to a single estate or site, as constituting a
ceremonial ‘cycle’. His methods of documentation, although somewhat idiosyncratic,
were being carefully perfected in order to be as descriptive and systematic as possible.

Importantly, this period of fieldwork was characterised by the organisation of ambitious
ceremonial ‘festivals’, often involving large numbers of participants. Ceremonial
gatherings like this, where Strehlow had been permitted to attend, had been organised by
Strehlow in the past, first at Nywente (Njonta) close to Alice Springs in 1933, and again at
Arltunga in 1935. But between 1950 and 1962 these so-called ‘festivals’, sometimes also
referred to as ‘urrempel’ or ‘ceremonial camps’ were held regularly at two sites close to the
Alice Springs township, at Werlatyatherre (Wolatjatara) and then at Ajura (see Figure
12). Gatherings were also hosted beyond the Alice Springs district, often with assistance
from local pastoralists on nearby cattle stations such as Maryvale, Hamilton Downs, Todd
River Station and Alcoota. Having cultivated a friendly relationship with many
pastoralists, and being recognised as a ‘native-born’ Central Australian, pastoralists often
assisted Strehlow with these gathering by granting leave to some Aboriginal stockmen to
attend ceremonies, and in some cases providing logistical support.

In some respects these festivals resembled the previous gatherings of ‘the Resos’, the
Board for Anthropological Research and Spencer and Gillen. Provisions were provided to
participants in return for access to ceremonial knowledge and the proceedings were
documented. But Strehlow’s festivals were far more embedded in, and shaped by, the

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135 To Strehlow an ‘Act’ was a single performance from a larger series of performances that constitute
a complete ceremonial cycle. Though Strehlow never defined his use of this term it appears that he
regarded each *ampere kwetethe* (eternal home, major sacred site) of each *anyenhenge* (estate area) as
possessing a ceremonial cycle, which features numerous performances and songs.

136 Strehlow never used the concept of a ‘song cycle’. He only ever used the notion of a ‘cycle’ in
relation to the enactment of ‘ceremonial’ or ‘totemic’ performances, inclusive of dance, ritual and
song.

137 I have left the spelling of Ajura as Strehlow had it. Modern variants could be Ayure or Aywere.

138 Such as at ‘Taka’ on Maryvale station in 1953 and at Alcoota Station in 1965.
dictates of Aboriginal interests. These festivals brought men together from far afield in order to share selected parts of their ceremonial patrimony and as the ritual education unfolded, Strehlow was there, ready to capture what he could on his new recording devices.

Map 5: Ceremonial Festival Sites near Alice Springs. Greyed out area represents Alice Springs township area.
Interestingly, much of the material recorded between 1950 and 1962 was effectively omitted from his most influential tome, *Songs of Central Australia*. Mostly based upon the songs he had collected during the 1930s and 1940s, Strehlow had taken the manuscript for this book with him to London and put the finishing touches on it in the early months of 1953. Although *Songs* was not published until 1971 and only the occasional snippet of information from fieldwork after 1953 made it into the publication, it is the years between 1950 and 1962 that are best remembered by Arrernte and Anmatyerr people today. The earliest memories I could find of Strehlow’s presence in the region began with the Werlatyatherre ‘festival’ of 1953.

The site of Werlatyatherre is extremely well known to Arrernte and Anmatyerr people. It is one of the key places associated with a significant and partly restricted Dreaming which travels from south to north through the Alice Springs Township, onto the Anmatyerr estate of Ilkewartn and beyond. Translated as ‘two breasts’, Werlatyatherre refers to two ancestral women being pursued by a group of *urrempel* men led by a man named Kwekatye (Wilkins 2002, p.36; Wootten 1993; Office of the Aboriginal Land Commissioner & Gray 2007, p.139). Werlatyatherre had been chosen as the venue for two of the ‘festivals’ sponsored by Strehlow principally because of its proximity to the camps of Aboriginal people living nearby on the Alice Springs Telegraph Station Reserve, known as ‘the Bungalow’. As the Bungalow accommodated local Arrernte people as well as Aboriginal people from across the wider region (Coughlan 1991, p.li of 151), it was an ideal place to source performers for the enactment of ceremonies.

‘The King’ and the ‘Akiw-arenye’

The person most instrumental to the success of these events was the Northern Arrernte man, Bob Rubuntja Penangke. Just as Tom Lywenge had enabled Strehlow’s work in 1932, Rubuntja now assumed a similar role as facilitator, go-between and

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139 Kwekatye’s presence is marked by a large river red gum tree on Todd Mall, the main shopping strip in Alice Springs.

140 The site was later controversially earmarked for a recreational dam by the Country Liberal Party. After significant protests, involving leadership from Bob Rubuntja’s son Wenten Rubuntja, the plan was abandoned in the early 1990s (Rubuntja & Green 2002).

141 Aboriginal people from all over Central Australia came to live at the Bungalow. For example Meggitt (1962, pp.31, 40–41) has noted the presence of Warlpiri engaging in ceremonies with the Pitjantjatjara there.
intermediary. The significance of Rubuntja’s associations with Strehlow, although noted by both his son and grandson (Rubuntja & Green 2002; Rubuntja 2011), has generally been missed by those writing about Strehlow’s legacy. Barry Hill’s Broken Song (2003) for example, contains only a single reference to Rubuntja, and McNally (1981b) makes no mention of him at all. Nonetheless, Rubuntja was a man of considerable ceremonial authority, and was comfortable working with alhernter. As a youth he had been one of the initiates involved in the ceremonies recorded by Spencer and Gillen in 1896, and he was involved in Strehlow’s earlier work. Even though the older men in the 1930s referred to him as ‘awerre akweke ware’ [‘just a little boy’] (Strehlow 1933b, p.6), Rubuntja had become a well-regarded ritual expert.

By the 1950s, Rubuntja was eager to show Strehlow some ‘very important’ ceremonies in a ‘big festival’ that could last ‘months’ (Strehlow 1953a, pp.116–117). Predominantly orchestrated by Rubuntja, the 1953 and 1955 festivals introduced for the first time, a significant number of Anmatyerr-related ceremonies. Rubuntja’s genealogical and Anengkerr (Dreaming) connections partly explain the inclusion of this Anmatyerr content. Both his mother and father had been conceived in the shared Anmatyerr/Northern Arrernte country near Native Gap, and he himself had been conceived on the Urepentye (Rubuntja) estate neighbouring Anmatyerr country to the south (Rubuntja & Green 2002, p.27). Significant Dreaming ancestors such as the fish from Alherramp (Napperby) for example, had travelled out of Anmatyerr territory and moved into Rubuntja’s country, creating important links between them.

As is the case across most of Australia, different language groups were not as divided as the hard and fast lines drawn on tribal maps might suggest (see Peterson 1976; Davis 1989; Sutton 1995). Anmatyerr and Arrernte ceremonies were often intimately interconnected. Four of the five ‘main series’ to be shown at the 1953 festival for example (Strehlow 1953a, p.129), and many of those shown in 1955, had direct connection with Anmatyerr people and country (see Appendix IV: Anmatyerr Ceremonies).

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142 Both Strehlow’s index to Songs of Central Australia and the NT Register of Wards, 1957 p.2 estimate Rubuntja’s birth date as c.1880.

143 Strehlow writes: ‘worra kurka worra’. Gillen also notes that men from Mt. Hay (Rubuntja) invited him to witness the making of tywerrenge objects (Gillen et al. 2001, p.186).

144 See also Family Tree IV, 1 at the Strehlow Research Centre. See the Native Title Determination for Napperby Perpetual Pastoral Lease, DCD2013/001.
In addition to these Dreaming associations, Rubuntja had also travelled extensively throughout his life, driving wagons and stagecoaches across large distances (Rubuntja & Green 2002, pp.21–22) and had built up connections across the region. Like other ‘Aboriginal men of high degree’ as Elkin (1977) described them, Rubuntja used these opportunities to meet with other Aboriginal men and develop deeper ritual expertise across an expansive region. Confident in his knowledge of these connections, Rubuntja would even go as far as describing himself as an ‘apmere-ke ingkarte’ [a boss for the country] (Strehlow 1958b, p.119) for Anmatyerr as well as Arrernte sites. Even senior Anmatyerr men living at Ti Tree, close to one hundred kilometres away from Rubuntja’s traditional lands, were quick to remember his authority. Describing him as a ‘King’, Paddy Kemarr remembered the Arrernte elder affectionately. ‘Old Japanangka [Penangk] from Rubuntja… That was a big boss! Old Urepentye [fire Dreaming place], he’s the one. King! He was king for all that land… all over’. Strehlow’s diaries similarly reveal how influential Rubuntja had been during the 1950s. It was often at Rubuntja’s and not Strehlow’s request for example, that performers would begin to gather at the Bungalow in readiness for the ceremonies (Figure 13). With his regular companion, the Northern Arrernte man Tom Arleykwarte Pengarte by his side, Rubuntja oversaw the coming together of grand gatherings, involving Arrernte, Anmatyerr and Alyawarr men ‘joining forces’ with Pintupi and Luritja men from across the Western Desert (Strehlow 1955a, p.4). Rubuntja’s idea was to see all ceremonies concerned with the travelling ancestral yerramp (honey ants) performed. Because these honeyants journeyed from Tatata in Pintupi country, through Luritja, Arrernte territory, Anmatyerr and on to Ngkwarlerlanem in Alyawarr territory, performers and ritual experts from across cultural and linguistic regions were necessary. The plan required the coming together of men from the Aboriginal settlement of Haasts Bluff in the west, Anmatyerr and Alyawarr men from the cattle stations to the north, and Northern Arrernte men from Hermannsburg and Alice Springs.

145 Strehlow writes ‘pmaraka ingkata’.
146 See Ti Tree 06062014 part 3.WAV p.7.
Strehlow was convinced by Rubuntja to help host and record the ceremonies, and other *alhere*nter too were recruited to help make Rubuntja’s plan come to life. Native Affairs officers and mission staff at Haasts Bluff helped with the transportation of performers from the west, while the visiting Melbourne-based sculptor William Ricketts was “roped in” to pick up the Alyawarr and Anmatyerr men from the Sandover river area on the back of his truck. At the same time, Strehlow ferried people between Jay Creek, the Bungalow and Alice Springs. Each of the *alhere*nter would carry the message that Rubuntja had called together performers for these ceremonies. Organising such a large scale regional event stood as testament to Rubuntja’s authority across cultural differences and his widely acknowledged standing as a ceremonial leader.

But if Rubuntja was the ‘leader’ in these contexts, what was Strehlow? In a revealing exchange between these two men at the conclusion of the 1953 ceremonies, Rubuntja inadvertently ‘volunteered’ a partial explanation. As Strehlow drove Rubuntja away from the ceremonial ground back into town after a successful event, Rubuntja turned to him and commented that the performers were all saddened to see Strehlow, the ‘*akiw*-arenye’ returning to Adelaide (Strehlow 1953b, p.50). This appellation ‘*akiw*-arenye’ is worth considering in detail. Meaning someone ‘belonging to’, ‘inhabiting’ or being a ‘denizen of’ (-arenye) a men’s ceremonial ground (*akiwe*), this description contrasted with Strehlow’s own idea of himself as an *Ingkarte*, as a ‘leader’ or ‘boss’ (*Ingkarte*). While it is certainly true that many Arrernte people referred to Strehlow using this term, we can’t be sure of their intended connotations. Rubuntja’s more nuanced label, ‘*akiw*-arenye’, recognized Strehlow’s privileged participation in these events but importantly also left room for the critical, leading roles played by men like himself. (Further perspectives on Strehlow and his role in these contexts are discussed

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147 Strehlow had earlier filmed the ‘Honey Ant Ceremonies of Ljaba’ during a Research Fellowship with the Australian National University between 1949 and 1951. Former Art Advisor to Papunya Tula, John Kean (pers comm 07/02/2016), has noted that the iconic Papunya mural that was painted on the school grounds in 1971 may have similarly been a coming together of Anmatyerr, Arrernte, Pintupi and Luritja men linked via this very same honey ant songline. The son of Strehlow’s informant ‘Old Jimmy Lynch Penangk’, Johnny Lynch Pengart, later described the same connection between Tatata in Pintupi country with Ngkwarlerlanem (Ungawalanama) in Anmatyerr/Alyawarr territory (Bardon & Bardon 2004, p.59). The songs associated with this songline, across Pintupi, Kukatja and Luritja territories were all sung in Arrernte (Strehlow 1970b, p.95).

148 Strehlow spelt this term as ‘*kewarinja*’. The dictionaries define *akiw* as ‘men’s ceremonial camp’ (Green 2010a, p.22; Dobson & Henderson 1994, p.68) and the –*arenye* suffix as meaning belonging to or ‘usually found’ (Dobson & Henderson 1994, p.198).
in Chapter 6).

Figure 12: One of the informants at Werlatyatherre (possibly Bob Rubuntja) and T.G.H. Strehlow, the ‘denizen of the ceremonial ground’, in conversation in 1953 (Still taken from Film Reel No.46).

**Colonial Interests**

Legitimating such a regional gathering in the eyes of colonial authorities required careful inclusion and enlistment of the necessary administrations. In 1955, although Strehlow railed against Rubuntja’s decision to yet again host the ceremonies at the site of Werlatyatherre, he eventually conceded. It was left to Strehlow to firstly negotiate use of the site (being within the bounds of an Aboriginal Reserve controlled by the NT administration) with the local Native Affairs officials, and secondly to see that permits and transport for the Pintupi and Luritja performers could be arranged. Strehlow’s ties to the colonial administration were needed to see Rubuntja’s plan come to life. As writer Kim Mahood (2012) has cogently put it, white workers on the colonial frontier, are now (as they were undoubtedly then) assessed according to how they might best assist local Aboriginal people carry on with their own concerns.
I suggest that men like Bob Rubuntja, in understanding that colonial authorities largely controlled the resources of their world, carefully assessed how best to utilise and exploit the situation. People like Strehlow with their eager recognition of ceremonial expertise and desire to understand and record it, presented as opportunities. But, as Max Stuart observed at the beginning of this chapter, there was still a need for men at the coalface of these interactions to carefully ‘balance’ the varying and competing interests involved.

In 1953 alone, the Native Affairs Welfare Branch of the Northern Territory contributed £676 in rations, clothing and fuel to assist Strehlow’s fieldwork.\(^{149}\) When a similar amount was again contributed in 1955 and permits and permissions were granted for these ‘festivals’, some staff asked for permission to see some of the ceremonies (Strehlow 1955b, p.41). Strehlow left the decision to Rubuntja, the actual convener of the gathering, and although he eventually agreed that a small number of male staff could attend, no photographs were to be taken (Strehlow 1955b, pp.41–47). Whether it was Strehlow or Rubuntja that introduced this proviso is uncertain, but clearly Rubuntja had allowed these men to attend in light of their notable influence over the local community. The interaction was a moment of ‘colonial stress’ where unexpected pacts are made and where those in less powerful positions try to preserve their tactical relationships with holders of institutional power (Clifford 2001, p.478; see also Scott 1990). The sole condition of no photography was nevertheless ignored by two of the officers, who had assumed that if Strehlow was recording, then they could too.

Seeing what offense this might cause and looking to preserve his privileged relationships, Strehlow negotiated with District Welfare Office Billy McCoy for the film to be publically burned.\(^{150}\) Rubuntja and the Lower Arrernte elder Fred Akngeyetneme (Kngeitnmana) agreed that this was an appropriate course of action, with Akngeyetneme adding that all of ‘the men had been saying that if any pictures of’ the ceremonies ‘appeared in the Alice Springs picture show’ (or were shown to

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\(^{149}\) See NAA: A452, 1953/43 page 169.

\(^{150}\) McCoy was originally a stockman at Oodnadatta and then driver for the Wallis and Fogarty store in Alice Springs. He was known as ‘Mukowi’ by Aboriginal people (See Interview with Garry Stoll at the NTAS. NTRS226, item TS880).
women in Alice Springs) then three or four native women would surely “die” in Alice Springs, - right before the whites' eyes’ (Strehlow 1955b, p.45). With threats of violence in the air, Strehlow also hoped that by burning the film, men who had ‘come from further afield’, such as the Anmatyerr, would ‘return much more happily than they would have done otherwise’ (Strehlow 1955b, p.47).

Figure 13: 'Last views of my Wolatjatara [Werlatyatherre] camp, 6th Oct 1955'. (Strehlow Research Centre, PHO 00812).

Unlike the Arrernte that had grown accustomed to Strehlow’s presence at these festivals and in their communities, the Anmatyerr had been noticeably ‘reticent about their acts’ early on and spoke ‘about them only in whispers’ (Strehlow 1955a, pp.149–150). Strehlow was a stranger to them, and performing their most treasured ceremonies over 250 kilometres away from their homelands, close to the largest township in the region, and then seeing multiple people taking photographs, must have been disconcerting to the Anmatyerr to say the least.

The last of the ceremonial ‘festivals’ that involved Strehlow were held at the Amoonguna Aboriginal Settlement, to the south of Alice Springs, in 1960 and 1962. Like the Bungalow it replaced, Amoonguna was both a settlement for the local Arrernte and a ‘transit camp’ for other Aboriginal people passing through the
township (Rowse 2002, p.199). Many of the settlement residents were registered in assimilationist style employment programs that were designed to teach trades and get people ‘ready’ for mainstream society (Coughlan 1991). This is remembered by many of the older Anmatyerr men that I have spoken with as a period of being put to work for ‘them DA [Department of Aboriginal Affairs] Welfare people’. They worked as cooks and learnt trades and were encouraged to live in the newly built homes as nuclear families (Rubuntja & Green 2002, p.97).

Strehlow’s diaries from this time reveal the effects of the changing political and policy environment. Although openly critical of many of these assimilationist polices (Strehlow 1958a, 1961b; T.G.H. Strehlow 1964d), he simultaneously lamented the social dysfunction and decline in ritual activity amongst the Arrernte. Just as Tom Lywenge had in 1932, Tom Arleykwarte commented in the 1950s that colonialism, alcohol and imprisonment were having disastrous effects on the local people (Strehlow 1955a, p.4). Even the now elderly Bob Rubuntja appeared dejected:

He goes up to the town on most mornings and begs for some money (so the people say). Probably he drinks too. It is tragic to see an old man, who could be an honoured leader at an urumbula [urrempele] festival, being disregarded as though he were already dead and of no account. His contacts with the white world have been his downfall… (Strehlow 1962, p.141).

The era of the big ceremonial festivals in Alice Springs had come to an end for a disillusioned Strehlow. Seeing Rubuntja in this state merely confirmed for Strehlow the notion of a ‘disappearing object’ of study. Like others working in ‘salvage’ mode, Strehlow often assumed the ‘moral’ and ‘scientific’ position that social change inevitably led to the destruction of ‘something essential (“culture”)’ (Clifford & Marcus 1986, p.113). By conflating ‘culture’ and ‘life’, the supposed death of culture was assumed to also mean ‘social death’ (Bessire 2014, p.7). For Strehlow, in the face of such lethal impacts from Euro-Australian society, only those making the recordings of these traditions could testify to their original authenticity and take on the

151 Paddy Kemarr at Ti Tree 05062014 part1.WAV.
responsibility for their future. His view hardened and intensified during the final phase of his fieldwork career despite conflicting evidence of an ongoing ‘social life’.

**Inner Cycles and Local Sites**

In his third and final fieldwork period from 1964 to 1974, Strehlow spent more time looking to document what he regarded as ‘lost and forgotten’ places, traditions and songs (Strehlow 1968a, pp.68, 45–49). The landscape was, in his view, quickly becoming ‘empty and silent’ and he was now ‘merely traveling through it in a final attempt to save the last scraps of the local traditions before complete oblivion settled down upon them’ (Strehlow 1968a, p.92). It was this melancholy assessment that motivated the extensive ‘mapping trips’ of sites that ultimately came to inform his large format, fold out map that accompanied *Songs of Central Australia*. But this pessimistic view was not entirely of his own making or invention, but had been importantly influenced by his experiences with Arrernte people. As early as 1958 he had been repeatedly told by men like Bob Rubuntja that knowledge of certain sites and their associated songs had been ‘lost forever’ in the Northern Arrernte and Anmatyerr regions (Strehlow 1958b, p.116). The terrible violence of the region (see Chapter 3) also suggested a decline in local knowledge.

It was with Rubuntja and Arleyekwarte then that he went ‘hunting’ for what were presumed to be ‘lost and forgotten places’ (Strehlow 1958b, p.121) on the cusp of Northern Arrernte and Anmatyerr lands. To their surprise, the Anmatyerr men living nearby at Aileron Station were quick to identify each and every site. Ten years later, Strehlow returned to many of these same men, including Charlie Heffernan, Tom Uneynt, George Yerramp Riwęngapeltyey and Bruce Campbell (Figure 14), to find that in their roles of *kwertengerl* (ceremonial managers and custodians) they had retained knowledge of many of the songs that he had presumed gone from the Ryan’s Well and Aileron areas. In what was a purely working relationship, the men sang their verses in exchange for ‘raw meat and some bread’ and at the end of the session walked back to their camp at the nearby Anwekeran (Laughton’s Lagoon), declining Strehlow’s offer of a lift in his Land Rover (Strehlow 1968a, p.82). That night Strehlow camped as he usually did on his own, and commented in his diary that a sense of ‘enthusiasm’ had returned to his work. The Anmatyerr men had been ‘excellent and willing guides’ and a ‘privilege’ to work with (Strehlow 1968a, p.95).
Perhaps his most significant and detailed work with Anmatyerr people began at Alcoota Cattle Station in 1964. Strehlow had come to Alcoota at the request of Arrernte men who wished to recruit performers for their ceremonies. Mick Kamperkng Werlaty (Wolatja) approached Strehlow asking for help (T.G.H. Strehlow 1964a, pp.49–50). The local pastoralist was constructing a road perilously close to an important sacred site named Akwerrperl (Korbula) and had threatened to shoot the men if they ‘trespassed’ on his station run (Strehlow 1965d, p.11).

Appealing to Strehlow as the ‘ngkart ameke-arle-arey anthwerr’ [the truly untouchable leader/boss], presumably referring to his connections with the Northern Territory Administration and colonial influence more generally, Werlaty asked for help in protecting the site. \(^{152}\) Though Strehlow shared Werlaty’s concern he felt powerless to act:

> I sympathised with them, and promised to look them up again about this matter […] Secretly, of course, I was rather worried by these

\(^{152}\) Strehlow writes, ‘ingkata makalari indora era’. Dobson and Henderson have recorded the term *ameke-arle-areye* as a North Eastern Arrernte term meaning ‘untouchable or can’t be beaten’ (1994, p.115).
pleas – I have no official standing in the N.T [Northern Territory] and Australian laws have never yet given the slightest protection either to aboriginal religion or the aboriginal sacred sites (T.G.H. Strehlow 1964a, p.49).

Unprepared and unwilling to intervene, Strehlow left Alcoota, but true to his word returned again in 1965 with an offer to help protect the site in the only way he knew how, by filming its ceremonies and recording its songs. The Alcoota group immediately agreed and began to make preparations. Strehlow supplied the performers with some of the raw materials needed to manufacture their ritual paraphernalia (hair-string, spears, boomerangs and red and yellow ochre) (Strehlow 1965a, pp.149, 151) but most of the materials were already at hand. Some of the men’s methods of making these items were also highly inventive. They had made a particular type of hair-string known as ‘ndoija’ for example, not with the traditional possum fur but with sheep’s wool that had been purchased by pooling together station wages (Strehlow 1965d, p.36). Living in a small ‘native camp’ on the fringe of a remote cattle station, over 200 kilometres north of Alice Springs, these men were clearly ceremonially active, innovative and fiercely independent.

Ten men were present at the ceremonial camp when the singing began. The older men in attendance - Sandy White Penangk, ‘Lame’ Tom Ltarerlkek Ngal, Reilly Kwekaty Pengart, Tom Raekwarr Pengart, Mick Werlaty Pengart and George Yerramp Pengart - were all pensioners and largely reliant on station rations. Also participating were four younger men in their twenties and thirties, including Werlaty’s son, Kenny Penangk (Figure 15) (the man that I would meet with to view these films over forty years later). Over a five-week period, what Strehlow referred to as the ‘Inner Cycle’ of Akwerrperl were enacted (1965d, p.49), meaning the entire suite of ceremonies pertaining to this estate. Each of the 27 different ‘Acts’ divulged deeper layers of highly localised ritual and mythological knowledge, and often involved the production of highly ‘elaborate and constantly changing’ ground paintings (Strehlow 1970b, p.138). Quite possibly the most complete set of ceremonies for a single estate ever produced in Australia, these films are some of Strehlow’s most intimate and thorough. Unlike the previous urrempel ‘festivals’ which often featured only selected aspects of ceremonies from different locales (Peterson 2000, p.207; Curran 2010,
p.100), these ‘inner cycles’ specifically documented the rarely revealed ceremonies of a local anyenheng group.

Strehlow’s role during these ceremonies was by now well established and understood across the region. He would arrive in a community, make contact with the most senior men, and then begin to record as much as he was permitted to. At times his presence would demand a degree of participation, and as his knowledge grew he felt justified in interjecting during ceremonial performances or joining in with the singing (though never on a recording). During the Akwerrperl ceremonies for example, he sang along
with the group, suggested changes to a performance and often participated in the ritual handing-over and receiving of *tywerreng* (Strehlow 1965d, pp.31–32, 1955a, p.103). At the conclusion of the first ‘Act’ concerning the *Alpwertek-alpwert* (Grey Butcherbird), three men in the same generational moiety to Strehlow (*anwakerrakeye*) joined him in the act of ‘pleading’ for the associated objects (1965a, p.150). Despite only recently being acquainted with these men, Strehlow’s subsection affiliation and his spiritual conception at *Nthareye* had enabled this ritual exchange (Strehlow 1965d, pp.8–10). Blinkered by his own self-aggrandisement however, Strehlow saw himself as the sole heir to not only the material artefacts gifted or sold to him, but their associated knowledge as well:

> …no one else will ever again be allowed to make another final Korbula [Akwerrperl] groundpainting or use again the designs done on its two shields and *alkata* unless I authorise such a thing. […]

> *these are all my personal property from now on* (Strehlow 1965d, p.48 italics added).

Such was the hubris and self-deception that came to dominate Strehlow’s later career. The ‘duplicitv’ that anthropologist Johannes Fabian (2008, p.6) has described as one of the defining characteristics of all ethnography ended up haunting Strehlow. He failed to think reflexively about his dual roles; he partook in ritual in the present, but simultaneously closed off the possibility of any contemporaneous or future trajectories. As is demonstrated in following chapters, participating in ritualised handing over of material *had not* extinguished the rights of other men. As each of the inner cycle rituals were performed at *Alcoota*, Strehlow’s own diary entries note that both Kenny and Sandy White were being purposefully instructed in Mick Werlaty’s expertise (Strehlow 1965d, p.9). Strehlow’s presence, although it may have been a catalyst and opportunity to record the ‘inner cycle’, was not a prerequisite for its maintenance, let alone preservation (see Chapters 7 and 9).

There was nevertheless little doubt about the eagerness of this group in having their material recorded. The silent colour films of the Akwerrperl ceremonies show performers gesturing to and conversing with the person behind the lens, and when the desert winds blew up making recording of songs difficult (Figure 16) they joined
together to sing ‘arlke ultiakemele’, songs to break up the wind (Strehlow 1965d, p.34).\(^{153}\) In spite of Strehlow’s quest to accrue and amass knowledge, their cooperation and enthusiasm shone through.

Figure 16: Alcoota men recording songs to tape. Mick Werlaty is seated immediately behind the tape recorder (1965) (SRC, image 03700).

‘Disowned as Ingkata’

The ‘balanced’ interactions between Strehlow and his informants came to an end during the tumultuous times of the late 1960s and early 1970s. Three decades after starting his research amongst the men of Central Australia, significant social and political changes were about to radically change relations between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples. Described as ‘a period of estrangement’ between anthropologists and their subjects (Starn 2011, p.180), the rise of the Aboriginal rights movement and the emergence of new social policies, effectively ended the way in which self-appointed non-Indigenous peoples could simply assume proprietorship over all things Aboriginal. Former ‘protectionist’ regimes had given way to new strategies of ‘integration’ or ‘acculturative assimilation’ and by the end of the early 1970s they would morph again into policies of ‘self-determination’ (McGregor 2005). By the early 1960s Aboriginal were granted voting rights, they were no longer

\(^{153}\) See Film Reels TGH no.17 – no.41. Strehlow writes ‘ilka ultiakamala’.
regarded as ‘wards’ of the State and those working on cattle stations had finally been
granted equal wages.

With a growing sense of independence in the air, Strehlow returned to Alcoota in
1968. This was a watershed year of important change across the desert communities.
The Department of Social Security had begun paying cash allowances directly to the
beneficiaries in settlement rather than seeing the money go to the superintendent of a
community first, and Aboriginal stockmen were better paid (Bunbury 2002; Martinez
2007). Car ownership had become far more prevalent amongst Aboriginal people in
this part of Australia (Peterson 2000) and increased mobility led to greater movement
between communities for the purposes of ceremony.

Finding it increasingly difficult to pin down his informants Strehlow struggled to
obtain exactly what he wanted. He had heard men from Alcoota sing the ingwa
(night/darkness) songs at Arltunga over thirty years earlier, and Strehlow was
desperate to finally record them. But since Ned Kemarr, the head stockman at Alcoota
and the owner of the ingwa traditions avoided him, it was left to Mick Werlaty to
assist. They headed out along the creek mapping the ingwa sites, but much to
Strehlow’s frustration this was soon cut short. News had hit the community of an
impending apwelh (circumcision ceremony), involving a ‘red truck’ carrying the
initiate from Napperby. As soon as the apwelh ‘singing began’, Strehlow understood
the Alcoota men would be obliged to devote all of their attention to it (Strehlow
1968a, p.101) and his efforts to record the ingwa songs would be thwarted.

As Werlaty and Strehlow drove back towards the station homestead, they were passed
by Ned Kemarr and Tom Raekwarr in a Land Rover who informed them that the
young man to be initiated would be arriving at any moment. The youth, they
explained, was Harold Ankatanga Mpetyan, the son of one of the key Akwerrperl
performers in 1965, Lame Tom Ltarerlkek. Although Strehlow knew that the Alcoota
men could no longer work with him, he became hostile and unsympathetic. These
men, he complained, had reneged on their promise to provide him with the ingwa

154 Strehlow first met men belonging to the ‘unusual totem of the night’ from Alkwert (Alcoota) at
Arltunga in 1935. See letter to Norman Tindale on the April 20th 1935. AA316 Strehlow Papers, South
Australian Museum.
songs, and had thus ‘cheated’ him (Strehlow 1968a, pp.111–112, 114). Instead of asking him to stay as they would have done only a few years earlier, now they were ‘begging’ him to leave. The Alcoota men, with a greater sense of autonomy and mobility, would apparently share their knowledge when it suited them, and not simply when Strehlow asked for it. Failing to appreciate the broader economic and social changes underway in Central Australia, Strehlow took it personally and declared that he had been dealt ‘a savage blow’:

On my travels this year even Anmatyerr men at Aileron, Leramba [Alherramp] and Mt. Allan, also Warlpiri men, had spoken to me with respect as soon as I had been introduced as ‘the’ tjurunga [tywerrenge] leader, who knows all about men’s tjurunga everywhere. [...] But whatever the explanation was, yesterday morning, for the first time since 1932, I had been disowned as ingkata [ngkarte] by a section of the Aranda-speaking population (Strehlow 1968a, pp.114–115 italics added).

The dynamism and autonomy of Anmatyerr and Arrernte ceremonial life, completely independent of Strehlow’s influence or concerns, was lost on the ageing and humiliated anthropologist. Angry and hurt, he branded the Anmatyerr as cowardly ‘shrimps’ (Strehlow 1968a, p.115) but returned to Anmatyerr country one last time in 1971 (Strehlow 1971b, p.73a). Mick Werlaty had passed away by now, but his son Kenny Tilmouth, along with Harold Mpetyan, Ned Kemarr and another man named Dick Alpwertekalpwert Purvis, agreed to allow him to record not only their ingwa songs but also the ikwelengk (king brown snake, *Pseudechis australis*) songs of Ken’s conception site (Strehlow 1971b, p.71a). Harold, whose initiation had disrupted Strehlow’s visit only three years earlier, exhibited great familiarity with the song material and this surprised Strehlow. The way that he joined in with the singing, Strehlow wrote, showed that Harold had ‘learned quite a lot of the sacred traditions of this area in recent years’ (Strehlow 1971b, p.51), though he made no attempt to find out why or how.
As Strehlow left Anmatyerr country for the last time, Harold suggested that he return on another occasion in order to see some of his own cultural inheritance, in this case the *ahakey* (native currant) ceremonies from a site that Strehlow had first visited in 1932. Contrary to Strehlow’s overly negative perspective, some younger men were obviously still knowledgeable of their traditions and after his 39 years of research, ceremonies and songs that were new to Strehlow kept emerging. Always looking back and being content to simply mourn the passing of a ‘culture’ and its ‘people’, Strehlow had failed to comprehend how people were living in the present.

**Conclusion**
When Max Stuart first described the way that his grandfather used to ‘balance’ T.G.H. Strehlow, it was difficult to imagine precisely what he meant. But as has been demonstrated via an examination of Strehlow’s archival record, it was often important intermediaries such as Lywenge and Rubuntja that brought degrees of equity to the exchanges. These men actively assisted in the gathering of information and objects, organised and choreographed many of the ceremonial festivals, and in turn utilised Strehlow in ways that were not always evident to him. The zeal with which numerous men cooperated in this work is absolutely undeniable, as was the careful balancing of interests (personal, communal and institutional) that they exhibited. As the *akiw-arenye* (denizen of the ceremonial ground), Strehlow’s presence afforded those men living within a zone of changing cultural, political and social relations, not just the opportunity to ‘record’ or ‘document’, but more importantly to demonstrate and reiterate their own cultural authority.

One could critique Strehlow’s recording events as cases where informants had accepted a position assigned to them as “primitives”, or that they had been corralled into the exchange. I contend however, there is substantial evidence to argue they were not only attentive to the dynamics of these interactions, but that they partly set the terms of the engagement. Even though the precise motivations and interests of these informants can only be partially revealed via Strehlow’s field diaries, it is clear that their interests in these exchanges often ran parallel to Strehlow’s fixation on the documentation of an authentic Aboriginal ritual aesthetics. An obsession that positioned cultural/ritual vitality above the ongoing sociality

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155 The site was Arangwereny (Arranggurinja), to the east of Ti Tree.
of his subjects, produced blinkeredness in regard to the sites where life is lived, meanings are made and cultural practice is generated.

The following chapter presents Anmatyerr people’s remembrances and stories of working with and witnessing Strehlow. These insights reconstruct the exchanges in ways that further tease out the various motivations of informants and interrogate some of the different ways that Strehlow’s presence and his work was perceived.
Chapter 6: Urrempel Man

Strehlow had been coming around everywhere looking for all the man now. Strehlow had been coming around alright, that old Strehlow – Paddy Kemarr.156

The campfire I most often sat by during my time with Anmatyerr people was the one belonging to Paddy Kemarr at Ti Tree. Paddy was born in the Arnmanapwenty area (to the north of Ti Tree) in 1932, and like his father, Charlie Pwerrerl Kanajukurrpa (born c.1895), had worked amongst the ‘wild cattle’ most of his life.157 Whilst growing up amongst all the ‘old people’, young Paddy was apparently singled out and selected as someone to ‘learn more and more’ and become what he described as a ‘knowledge man’.158 Later in his life, Paddy travelled all over the Northern Territory working as a stockman and would often reside at the Bungalow and Amoonguna settlements in Alice Springs. It was here that he first became aware of T.G.H. Strehlow and met many of the senior men that had worked closely with him. In what must have been 1955, Paddy (then in his early twenties) remembered seeing Strehlow at the Werlatyatherre camp:

I bin see him. He bin sit down with Arrernte people, on the Bungalow-thayt [lit. ‘side’ referring a direction or area], somewhere they bin sitting… There were three lots [three groups] sitting down… mix up… nhakw-areny map [people from different places].159

The ‘three groups’ of people that had come together from all over the region were most likely those Arrernte, Pintubi/Luritja, and Anmatyerr/Alyawarr men that Bob Rubuntja had ‘summoned’ to Werlatyatherre in 1955.

I talked with Paddy about Strehlow’s description of the ceremonies that were contained in his field diaries from the time and he nodded patiently before launching

156 Ti Tree 06062014 part 3.WAV.
157 According to Bowman (2015, p.255) Paddy was born in 1935. Information on his father can be found at (Northern Territory of Australia 1957, p.12).
158 26th June 2014, Black notebook ‘June 2014 – April 2015’.
159 See audio file Ti Tree 05062014 part1.WAV. Page 4 of transcript.
into his own explanation. He knew perfectly well where the ceremonies of the yerramp (honey ant) ancestors pertained to, and pointed out their connections to numerous places in the Anmatyerr region including his own birthplace, Ammanapwenty (‘the place of the worker ants’) but also Arempey, Akwerrperl and Alyape. Emphasising the points of connection between people, sites, and ceremonies, he reminded me that it was fundamentally one’s ability to ‘follow’ these connections that made a person ‘kalty’ (knowledgeable). This was not just a matter of tracing an objective story track, ‘line’ or ‘path’, it meant understanding the links between a myriad of connected local Anengkerr episodes that could bifurcate or vanish, go underground or into the air, and most importantly that belonged to individuals and local groups. Strehlow, Paddy posited, was someone that understood this. He was a ‘high school man’ someone who had actively accrued this inherently complex ritual knowledge by working along the points of connection.

At almost every Anmatyerr community I visited, I was told the same things. The older men had a nuanced or balanced memory of T.G.H. Strehlow that was fundamentally informed either by direct personal experience or oral histories. Strehlow, they explained, was a rare character, with unusual skills for an alhernter, and as such he stood out at the time. But it is the very specific way in which Strehlow is remembered that I want to feature in this chapter. As I travelled to these communities discussing his legacy and work with Anmatyerr men from across three generations, it was clear that Strehlow was remembered not according to the conventional narratives established in the literature, but through the lens of Anmatyerr people’s own cultural categories and local histories.

As stated in the introduction to this thesis, it was remarkable that neither of the two biographies written about T.G.H. Strehlow (Hill 2003; McNally 1981b) contained any significant commentary from his informants. Considering that over fifty Anmatyerr men alone, and over one hundred Aboriginal men from across Central Australia contributed to this long-lasting and thorough regional ethnography, it is astonishing to see how little of their memory has been incorporated into our understanding of this iconic historical figure. Where Aboriginal commentary on Strehlow has been inserted into the literature (Malbunka 2004; Cohen 2001b), it has primarily come from those connected with the Lutheran Mission at Hermannsburg (see Hill 2003, pp.728–730;
McNally 1981b, pp.38–40) and rarely concerns his ethnographic methods or relationships. As a result, very little detail has been unearthed about the nature of his relationships with the men that he filmed, recorded and photographed. The conventional wisdom that Strehlow was ‘no doubt’ positioned ‘in the role of saviour’ (Morton 1995, p.56), or that people ‘turned to him’ as an Ingkarte (ceremonial leader, chief or boss) so as to act as ‘a guardian of secrets’ (Jorgensen 2010, p.22.6), has therefore been left to linger without proper examination.

Even as Australianist anthropology increasingly turns in on itself, to trawl over its place in history (Gray 2007; Cowlishaw 2015, 1992) and in particular to consider the lives and contributions of its key thinkers (Hinkson & Beckett 2008; Wise 1985; Kenny 2014; Gillen et al. 2001; Monteath & Munt 2015; Young 2004), the reflections or critiques of informants and participants remain marginal. And while there is growing recognition of Indigenous informants as ‘cultural experts’ (Gardner & McConvell 2015), as well as a sustained Indigenous critique of the production of anthropological knowledge (Nakata 2007; Smith 1999), few in Australia have followed the lead taken by those internationally (Geismar & Herle 2009; Kan 2001) to ask how ethnographers - and their practice of ethnography – is/was perceived, accommodated and remembered by their interlocutors, a process that Geismar (2009, p.279) describes as looking ‘back up the lens’ at the documenter. 160

Being a predominantly oral society and having little access to textual sources about Strehlow’s biography, the Anmatyerr perspectives brought to the fore in this Chapter emanate either from people’s direct experiences, or from locally circulating oral histories. Telling these stories allows people to shift attention away from previous narratives of a singular historical figure/agent and return emphasis to the points of interaction and relation, either in dialogue, conversation, singing, or travelling. Shifting focus, this chapter uncovers an account of these interactions as seen through Anmatyerr concepts of ritual responsibility, kinship and relatedness.

160 Chris Anderson (1995a, p.10) has made only a brief comment that some of the men he worked with in the 1980s and 1990s remembered working with Norman Tindale. The men were not identified and their comments not provided.
Urrempel Man

Ronnie McNamara, a senior Anmatyerr/Arrernte man born at Tempe Downs Station in the mid to late 1930s, was the first person to improve my understanding how Strehlow was remembered amongst older men today. Ronnie was familiar with the Strehlow story as he had spent his youth at the Hermannsburg mission, had passed through his initiation at the Jay Creek Settlement which T.G.H. Strehlow had run, and later trained as a Lutheran pastor himself.161 When he came to the Anmatyerr region as a young man to work on Napperby station Ronnie quickly established close connections with local families. Effectively adopted into the Ilewerr (Lake Lewis) group, he came to possess profound song, geo-mythological and ceremonial expertise but remained committed to Lutheranism, as his nickname ‘Ngkart’ (pastor) suggests. Despite this background, Ronnie remembers T.G.H. Strehlow not as a Christian figure primarily, but as someone essentially defined by his involvement in men’s ceremonies. Like Paddy Kemarr, Ronnie had seen Strehlow meeting with and recording the ‘old people’ over the years and had come to understand him as being a part of the ritual scene at the time:

Well he was on that urrempel-thayt [the domain of men’s ceremony]. You know Urrempel? Like ah… Amarleyarr [the men’s initiation ceremonies]. What they call ‘em? He used to go around with all the angerr-pat map [all the senior men], and taking pictures of the old people, like on the tywerreng-thayt [the domain of secret men’s Law]. Kel ayeng iterlarem [I knew/saw him]. I know old Ted Strehlow.162

Ronnie had seen Strehlow ‘everywhere’ when he was a young man, but specifically at ‘Hermannsburg, Haasts Bluff and the Bungalow in the 1950s and 1960s.163 When I naïvely asked if he ever spoke with Strehlow, Ronnie shook his head and snickered. ‘No. He only talked to the old men. He was a business man!’ Ronnie’s use of the Aboriginal English term ‘business man’ was unambiguous and clearly evoked a person deeply implicated in Aboriginal men’s ceremony and ritual (cf. Arthur 1996,

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162 See audio file ‘Napperby 25th June 2014 pt 1.WAV’.
163 This account tallies with Strehlow record of travels (see Appendix I).
He went on to say, ‘They didn’t, you know, come near the women’s thayt [side]. They used to go along way [away] and show him [Strehlow] things like that one [sacred ceremonies]’. At the time though, everyone knew that the gatherings were at least in part intended for Strehlow’s documentation purposes. As Paddy Kemarr explained, he could see that Strehlow was ‘was right there in that “high-school business” [men’s ritual education]’, and while Paddy, Ronnie and others of their age had attended similar ritual events throughout their lives, on those particular occasions in Alice Springs ‘they bin properly show him [Strehlow] first’.

I came to realise that it was Ronnie’s earlier description of Strehlow as being someone ‘on the uerrempel-thayt’ that best encapsulated the way people thought of him. It was similar to how Strehlow remembered being referred to by his informants, as an ‘Urumbulak’ [Uerrempeleke], meaning someone at or for uerrempel ceremonies (1978c, p.6). The term uerrempel (or ‘urumbula’) though, despite its prevalence in the ethnographic literature for Central Australia, is difficult to define. In the southern parts of Arrernte territory and further south, it is often used as the name of a particular songline concerning western Quoll ancestors who travel from Port Augusta in South Australia, through Central Australia and on to the north Australian coast (Hercus 2009; Ellis 1964; Strehlow 1947, pp.153–57; McBryde 2000; Nano et al. 2008; Office of the Aboriginal Land Commissioner & Gray 2007). In more generic terms though, it has been recorded as denoting a ‘series’ of ‘men’s’ ceremonies (Róheim 1945, pp.104, 124; Strehlow 1978a, p.151; Dobson & Henderson 1994, p.603; Wilkins 1989, p.599), or a kind of ‘travelling ceremony’ where rituals from different places are shared amongst large, mobile groups of men and women (Lovell 2014, p.187). As Arrernte man Tom Williams described it to linguist Gavan Breen, the uerrempel was equivalent to a ‘university’ education and ‘a thing that's been going on

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164 Ronnie McNamara at Napperby 25 June 2014 pt 1.WAV.
165 See audio file ‘Ti Tree 06062014 part 3.WAV’. Emphasis added.
166 In the Arabana region this is often described as the ‘Urumbula’. Pers. Comm Syd Strangways, Arabana elder, 11/06/2008 and Hercus 2009.
167 Paddy Kemarr Willis commented that the ancestor Marlpwengk had travelled from Port Augusta and travelled through Anmatyerr country going further north. Pers. Comm 16th-17th October 2010.
168 Spencer and Gillen referred to this ceremony as either ‘urumpilla’ (Spencer 2013) or ‘Oorimpilla’ – see Gillen’s ‘Anthropology Notes’ Volume 3, at the Barr Smith Library page 329. Róheim (1945, p.124) glossed the term as ‘fire urine’.
from year to year, by every generation. A main ceremony. Men only’. The way Ronnie used the term, clearly referred to the coming together of large numbers of men, from across the region, to perform ceremonies from a range of distinct places. The ceremonies and songs performed did not always intersect or directly relate to each other, but on the whole they pertained to stories that travelled through the country. Associating Strehlow with the *urrempel* then was noting his active pursuit of knowledge about the *travelling song lines*. As James Tewtew Mpetyan, a man in his late thirties described Strehlow to me, he was a person that embarked upon ‘expeditions’ into ‘other people’s country… following the country-lines’ as they passed through different estates. Rupert Max Stuart Kngwarraye, who performed for Strehlow’s cameras in the 1950s, similarly characterised him as a person ‘always looking for that big country, ya know? Big ceremony. That's what he was doing’.

This was overwhelmingly the way Anmatyerr men explained Strehlow’s presence at the highly restricted ceremonies. He wasn’t simply an ‘observer’ or inhabitant of the ceremonial ground as Bob Rubuntja’s description ‘*akiw-arenye*’ had suggested (see previous Chapter), but a person that ‘followed’, ‘chased’ and eventually ‘caught’ (apprehended/understood) ritual knowledge. Importantly, this was and remains a category of person, and an activity, that persists in Central Australia. As Fred Myers’ early biographies of Pintupi men from the neighbouring Western Desert reveal, the notion of travelling with the intention of (among other things) attaining ceremonial knowledge, was a common pre-colonial practice in the region (1982, pp.176–179) and remains important (see Austin-Broos 2009, p.117; and Peterson 2004, 2000). Although most Anmatyerr men reiterate that they are mostly concerned with their own localised cultural knowledge, and unlike their Western neighbours do not ‘jump over boundaries’, there are nonetheless small numbers of Anmatyerr men that do participate in this more expansive ritual accumulation. Sometimes referred to as

171 Interview with Rupert Max Stuart Kngwarraye: interview conducted by Jay Gibson and Rachel Perkins. 29/07/2005.
172 Pers. Comm Rodney Cook, Mount Nancy Camp 31/05/2015. This is a common idea amongst both contemporary Arrernte and Anmatyerr people who insist they have always been more estate focused.
tyelkath-map, *or jilkaja* by Warlpiri speakers (see Peterson 2000, 2004), these men travel to accumulate ritual knowledge throughout their lives, often by ‘following up’ Dreaming tracks, visiting important sites and attending numerous ceremonial gatherings.

Remembered as an ‘urrempel man’ then, Strehlow’s behaviours mimicked existing cultural categories and practices that remain relevant to contemporary lives. To the Anmatyerr watching him from afar, he moved metaphorically and physically through their cultural landscapes, as one of those people devoted to learning about the dynamic links between song, myth and land. As Archie Mpetyan, whose father Friday Ankerr-raweny Ngal had sung for Strehlow in 1932 put it, Strehlow was a ‘high school man… Oh, [he was a] good young fella!’… Yeway [Yes]! Law. He’s a ‘high school man that one’. 173 Others agreed that what Strehlow had been doing was recording and participating in the more advanced stages of male ritual, known amongst the Anmatyerr as Akernenty but often expressed as ‘high school’ in English.

Others would be more specific, conjuring up memories of exactly which ceremonies had been filmed or recorded at different times. Tommy Thompson, a Kaytetye elder from the Barrow Creek area to the north of Ti Tree for example, knew exactly which series of ceremonies Strehlow had recorded in 1955. Having heard about Strehlow’s work from his Anmatyerr and Alyawarr relatives, Tommy made it clear that Strehlow’s presence had been remembered across the wider Arandic region:

Strehlow… He was coming there to Alyawarr country to catch ‘em [to learn] whole lot, business! That *yerramp* [honey ant] and all he bin catch. The whole lot. It started from Papunya, went right up to Ngkwarlerlanem. Different-different talking again, showing him [People of different language groups showed him]. 174

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174 Tommy Thompson at Atarre 18th May 2016. See TTJG1805201600_19.MP3. Tommy’s father was Kaytetye and his mother was Alyawarr.
Tommy’s story clearly referred to the recording of the honey ant ceremonies with Bob Rubuntja that had drawn together men from ‘different-different’ language groups, including Tommy’s Anmatyerr and Alyawarr kin. Strehlow’s ‘coming’ to Alyawarr country as Tommy put it, was not necessarily the act of physically travelling to the region (although he certainly did in 1968) but the metaphorical visitation to the country via the revelation of ceremonies. This is what urrempel men did.

**Ingkarte?**

But why hadn’t any of the Anmatyerr men, or Northern Arrernte men for that matter, ever referred to Strehlow as an ‘Ingkarte’, a ceremonial leader of ‘chief’? Certainly Strehlow’s own writings had encouraged this view of himself and others have since applied the term (see Hill 2003, pp.184–185, 555; McNally 1981a). While the men I knew seemed perfectly happy to accept Strehlow’s presence and participation in ritual, none had ever elevated him to a status above them. Part of the reason for this omission can be found in the linguistic particularities of the term itself. Often used to refer to either ‘missionaries’, ‘priests’ or ‘ministers’, and by association ‘God’ (Green 2010a, p.439), Ingkarte/Ngkart is never used by contemporary Anmatyerr speakers to refer to traditional ceremonial matters. The word also appears to have originated from the Western Arrernte language spoken at Hermannsburg and was only later introduced into both Anmatyerr and other forms of Arrernte (Dobson & Henderson 1994, p.493) via early missionaries. As Central Arrernte speaker Mort Conway cheekily explained, Ingkarte had been ‘made up by the German monks!’

These linguistic issues are not the only reason why the notion of Strehlow as an Ingkarte has not persisted. Nor is it associated with any ideological or political intentions, but rather the way in which Anmatyerr people fundamentally conceptualise ownership of ritual knowledge. To raise a single individual to the status above all others seems untenable to most people today, especially when it concerns ceremonial knowledge that is never entirely confined to ‘personal property’ but regarded as continually emerging from the non-labile Dreaming content objectified in

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175 The term was never recorded by Spencer and Gillen in the Northern, Central and Eastern Arrernte area, who alternatively use what is most likely the Eastern Arrernte variant Alartetye (Alatunja) which carries a similar meaning to a ceremonial leader (see Wilkins glossary to Gillen et al. 2001).
176 Gavan Breen transcript of tape recorded with Mort Conway on 30-11-84. See also the entry for Ngkart in the Arrernte ‘megablend’ document produced by the Institute for Aboriginal Development in Alice Springs.
land (Sutton 1996, p.23). For a single person to be a ritual ‘leader’ for all is antithetical to the way in which these responsibilities are shared and distributed, particularly through the dual, complementary responsibilities of merek-artwey (owners) and kwertengerl (managers). One could certainly be knowledgeable, as suggested by Rubuntja’s ‘King’ status, but these people always founded their authority in the enactment of reciprocal duties and responsibilities.

At the Strehlow Research Centre conference in 2002, anthropologist John Morton quipped that if Strehlow saw himself as Ingkarte, then it needed to be asked who his kwertengerl (offider, manager) was. While the intention of Morton’s rhetorical question was justified, in that it pointed out the lack of checks and balances in Strehlow’s dealings, it is not however an entirely fair question to begin with. The proper, binary compliment to a kwertengerl is not an Ingkarte at all, but a merek-artwey, someone that owns and inherits their own personal traditions. As Strehlow himself noted, while an Ingkarte or ceremonial leader might ‘strive’ to possess expertise beyond his own traditions, he ultimately ‘had to become’ a kwertengerl (custodian, protector) for others (Strehlow 1971a, p.248fn). While Anmatyerr men agree that Strehlow undoubtedly strove to possess expertise, they pay little heed to the Ingkarte title and reiterate that there were always senior men present to keep an eye on his powers from ‘tyerry-kenh thayt’ [from the Aboriginal point of view].

Stressing the critical importance of complementary rights and responsibilities for country, ceremonies and songs, they insist that Strehlow was, and his collection ought to continue to be (see Chapter 9), bound by these expectations.

In addition to these clear ritual demarcations, the way that Anmatyerr people render social history also presents serious barriers to any elevation of Strehlow’s status. As Jackson (1995) noted in his work with the Warlpiri, the western neighbours to the Anmatyerr, Central Australian Aboriginal people tend to prioritise a relational telling of local history that de-emphasises the significance of individuals (Jackson 1995, see also 1998, p.129). Jackson writes that contrary to conventional Western conceptions of social history that present individual lives as “heroically standing out from history

and its social determinations’ (1995, p.162), individuals in the Aboriginal context usually placed within broader ‘skeins of relationship’ that involve Dreaming, landscape and kinship. Historical figures are therefore, melded into a constellation of social relationships as well as relationships to place and Dreaming, that downplay a self-contained individual actor. It is perhaps for this reason that T.G.H. Strehlow and his father - both ‘Ntharey-areny’ (belonging to, or coming from Nthareye/Hermannsburg) - were conflated or at times their names were interchanged during discussions.

It is therefore fitting that the various appellations ascribed to T.G.H. Strehlow by Anmatyerr men, ‘urrempel man’, ‘high-school man’ and ‘business man’ suggest a non-hierarchical social status. Indeed, the suffix ‘-man’ used with each of these descriptions, appears to suggest instead a commonality and sociality amongst ‘men’. In this way, Strehlow is remembered as being one amongst many rather than above or beyond. As has been observed in other parts of northern Australia, cultural categories and labels like these can often be ‘reworked’ in ways that establish ‘workable degrees of relatedness’ with non-indigenous people (Redmond 2005, p.242). With an atypical alhe renter in their midst, people’s pragmatism and desire to communicate led to an affiliation based upon a shared encounter that was underwritten by Arandic concepts of relatedness.

Anpernerrenty (Relations)

Strehlow came to these interactions with the privileges and constraints of a related individual. At the very least, people that met with him often knew of his classificatory subsection affiliation as a Kemarre. They knew that he had been blessed with considerable knowledge of Arandic lifeworlds, and many also knew that being ‘Nthareye-arenye’ (belonging to Hermannsburg), he had a personal conception site. Indeed, it was Strehlow’s zeal to be positioned as kin that reinforced his Arandic social identity and ultimately enabled that most ‘mysterious’, yet necessary quality in fieldwork, his personal rapport and point of connection with informants (Geertz 2005, p.59). Located within anpernerrenty, a term often translated into English as a ‘kinship system’ or ‘relationship network’ (Walsh, Dobson & Douglas 2013; Dobson 2013; Green 2010a), Strehlow was made socially ‘real’ or present to his informants (see Sutton 2002). As with many ethnographers across the globe (see Kan 2001),
Strehlow’s kin incorporation played a key role in the cultivation of his relationships and in some respects legitimated his access to knowledge and experiences. The significance of Strehlow’s place within *anpernerrenty* can be seen in his participation in the Akwerrperl ceremonies at Alcoota, described in the previous chapter. As Strehlow ritually pleaded for ceremonial objects at the conclusion of the Grey Butcherbird ceremony, his *anwakerrakeye* (men belonging to his same generational moiety) joined him (1965a, p.150) in what was an unmistakable recognition of his place within the kinship system. Unlike most other ethnographers, Strehlow could also claim deeper relationships to people via his personal ‘conception’ at Nthareye (Hermannsburg). In agreement with Arandic custom which regards a person’s actual conception as the moment when a local ancestral spirit *angane-rireke* (spiritually conceives) an unborn child (cf. Merlan 1986; Montagu 1974), Strehlow asserted that he was related to the *Anengkerr* (Dreaming). As the ontological basis to Arandic lifeworlds, the claim could not be more momentous.

The *Anengkerr*, or *Altyerre* as it is referred to in Arrernte, that Strehlow was connected to, was that of the arathap (newborn baby) Dreaming. Seeing this as part of his personal inheritance (Strehlow 1950b, p.47), Strehlow sought out knowledge of this Dreaming and its ceremonies and songs from senior Western Arrernte men throughout his life. When in Zurich, he searched the Australian ethnological collections, in vain, for the *arathap tywerreng* (the sacred objects embodying the newborn baby ancestors) (Strehlow 1952, pp.54–55). The cover of *Songs of Central Australia* featured a reproduction of one of the ground paintings used in the *arathap* ceremonies and because he believed these traditions had been ‘handed over to him’ as his ‘private property’ (Strehlow 1971a, p.frontispiece), Strehlow had no qualms about reproducing this usually secret iconography.

Anmatyerr men today make little comment about Strehlow’s claims to spiritual inheritance, however those closer to his personal story often do support these claims. Intrigued by the notion that a non-Aboriginal person might be able to assert affiliation, perhaps even ‘rights’ in Dreaming sites and mythologies, I raised the issue with a number Arrernte people. I knew that Wenten Rubuntja, the son of Bob Rubuntja, had publically stated that both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people
born in Alice Springs could be spiritually connected to local Dreamings (Rubuntja & Green 2002, p.175). But did this really confer rights to ritual knowledge?

When discussing this with Western Arrernte men they were often careful with their answers. Ownership of the Nthareye estate had been disputed for decades, resulting in a rancorous and seemingly intractable ‘factionalism’ (Austin-Broos 2009, pp.179–182) and no one wanted to rekindle debates about ownership and rights. Mark Inkamala, whose patrilineal estate of Parirrweltye was to the north, agreed that Strehlow was correct in regarding himself firstly as a man of the Kemarre subsection, and secondly as someone connected to Nthareye via his conception.

Journeying with Mark to Mpaltyartakerte, a related arathape site on the outskirts of Hermannsburg and the place where Strehlow’s ashes had been spread, I asked if he thought Strehlow had exaggerated his connections to the area (Figure 17). Mark insisted the connection seemed plausible, but it was impossible for him to know much more.

![Figure 17: Mark Inkamala and I at Mpweltyakert where half of Ted Strehlow’s ashes were laid to rest. There were once two trees here but fire has removed one. (Photo: P. Batty September 2014).](image-url)
As one of the few Arrernte men to have spent considerable hours exploring the contents of the Strehlow collection, Mark simply commented the recognition that Strehlow was granted by past generations was proof enough.\textsuperscript{179} He explained that a child born in the area might be related to the local altyerre (Dreamings) but he or she couldn’t make claims over sacred/ritual material. They had to be bestowed responsibilities by senior men. Mark suggested that this had been the case with Strehlow. ‘Just look at the way those old men treated him! He was a traditional owner for this country.’\textsuperscript{180}

Further evidence of Strehlow’s deep connection with the arathape Dreaming and his willingness to engage with his informants as kin, is again found in local oral history. Arrernte man Sandy White, one of the men present at the recording of the Akwerrperl ceremonies at Alcoota in 1965 for example, told both Pastor Paul Albrecht and the lay missionary Garry Stoll that Strehlow personally performed a ceremony from his conception site. White claimed that the ceremony was an act of ritual akepenh (reciprocity or ‘squaring up’) on Strehlow’s behalf, in return for being granted permission to record the Akwerrperl ceremonies. ‘He did a ground painting and everything’, Stoll had been told.\textsuperscript{181} Strehlow’s field diaries from the time do not reveal any kind of performance like this (see Strehlow 1965d, p.10) however and, and other stories (of Strehlow ‘dancing’ in ceremonies for which he was ‘custodian’) have circulated with little supporting evidence.\textsuperscript{182}

Writing about how the English anthropologist, John Layard, was remembered by Indigenous people in the Pacific, Haidy Geismar documents a comparable story. Resembling Strehlow’s case, the people of Malakula remember Layard performing and participating in ritual, even though evidence is absent from his own archive. In an insightful consideration, Geismar has suggested that the information documented by anthropologists can become ‘incontrovertible proof’ not just of the important ‘relationships’ that underlie the necessary dialogue to record these things, but of participation itself (2009, pp.279–80). Where knowledge is embedded in sociality

\textsuperscript{179} Mark was the first Arrernte employee at the Strehlow Research Centre. He worked there intermittently throughout 2014.
\textsuperscript{180} Interview with Mark Inkamala at Mpatyartakerte. 29\textsuperscript{th} September 2014.
\textsuperscript{181} Interview with Garry Stoll 4/7/2013.
\textsuperscript{182} This was told to missionary Kevin Heintze by Western Arrernte men in the 1970s. See NTAS 1087/Item 1112, transcript of interview with Kevin Heintze recorded 4\textsuperscript{th} June 2003 by Francis Good.
and most often actively performative rather than representational, it is expected that one could not ‘know’ this information without having enacted it. Even though he was never initiated, it seems anomalous to most Arrernte and Anmatyerr men that he could be permitted to observe and record rituals, without being in some way a reciprocal participant.

**Singing and Talking**

When I discussed Strehlow and his work with Arrernte or Anmatyerr men, it was universally commented that he was like no other *alhernter* that they had encountered before. His fluency and commitment to language and the speed with which he became adept in communicating across Arandic dialects was striking. More than this though, his ability to comprehend the esoteric language of men’s song and his ability to sing was extraordinary. These abilities, which must be noted are possessed by many senior Aboriginal men, were nonetheless particularly unusual and impressive for an *alhernter*.  

After spending over five weeks with Strehlow during the filming of the Akwerrperl ceremonies, Ken Tilmouth was clearly impressed. ‘Oh yeah. ‘He was *proper* hey! He was a good Arrernte bloke. He talked Arrernte all the time’.  

It was these linguistic and cultural skills then that set him apart and afforded him deep relationships. Ronnie McNamara, similarly noting the significance of language to cultural identity, commented that these abilities made him ‘Arrernte-anthwerr [really Arrernte]’.  

Others that had not met Strehlow but had heard stories about him, claimed that he spoke ‘really hard Arrernte’, or that he could speak Arrernte ‘right through’ (fluently). And when listening back to recordings which included Strehlow in conversation with Anmatyerr men, Don Presley Pengart, the Lutheran pastor in Ti Tree, went as far as claiming that Strehlow appeared to speak *Pertame*,

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183 Mick Mclean Irinyili, a Lower Arrernte/Wangkangurru man, who worked with Strehlow in the late 1960s, also commented on his impressive language and song knowledge. In conversation with museum curator Alan West in 1968 he said ‘…Mr Strehlow is Arrernte himself you know … he knows Arrernte. He might translate it [a song verse] to you better than me…’ See XAV1, Museum Victoria.  
184 Alcoota 04062014 part1.WAV transcript page 6.  
186 See field black notebook starting June 2014. Entry 26th June 2014.
the dialect of Arrernte spoken to the south of Hermannsburg, although with a German accent. To Don it was ‘German Arrernte’.  

It is telling that these Aboriginal language abilities are perceived as exceptional in Central Australia to this day. Of the ten or so non-Indigenous individuals that presently speak an Arandic language, it is doubtful that any would regard themselves as truly 'fluent'. The rarity of this expertise, as well as the commitment and time it takes to attain these skills, makes individuals like Strehlow particularly important local historical figures. But there are even fewer non-Indigenous people, not only in Central Australia but across the continent, who know how to sing ceremonial songs.

Harold Payne Mpetyan, or ‘Papelaw’ as he is known amongst his peers, made a great deal about this. Harold had been away mustering cattle on a station in Eastern Arrernte country when Strehlow first arrived at Alcoota in 1965 to document the Akwerrperl ceremonies, but his father ‘Lame’ Tom Ltarelkek spoke fondly of the white man. When Strehlow returned three years later, it was Harold’s apwelh (circumcision ceremony) that had effectively forced Strehlow to have to leave the community (see Chapter 5). So in 1971 when Strehlow drove back into Alcoota for the last time, Harold followed the lead of his father, as well as his kwertengerl Ken Tilmouth, and trusted the Arrernte-speaking alhernter (Figure 18). With his relatives by his side, Harold agreed to sing on both the audio recordings that were made. They sang the ingwa (night) songs belonging to Ned Kemarr and also Ken’s ikwelengk (king brown snake, Pseudechis australis) songs relating to the site of Ulem, on Edwards Creek. Strehlow later commented in his diary how surprised he was to meet young men like Harold and Ken who exhibited such excellent knowledge of song and myth.

187 Thursday 26th June 2014, Black Notebook ‘June 2014–April 2015’.
189 Amongst some of the notable exceptions are the anthropologists Peter Sutton and John Bradley.
190 See interview with Harold Payne 20/04/2015. As Ken described it, ‘we all thought he was a good bloke. All of them old blokes […] the whole lot together’ – see Alcoota 04062014 part1.WAV transcript page 6.
191 Tom Ltarelkek recorded his songs with Paul Albrecht and also the scientist Alan Newsome (1980).
I met with Harold for the first time in 2015 at the remote community of Ahalper (New Store) on the edge of Anmatyerr and Alyawarr country (Figure 19). I had specifically sought out Harold to learn from him about his time with Strehlow, but given his high mobility between the Eastern Anmatyerr communities of Mulga Bore, Alcoota and Ahalper, he was often extremely difficult to locate. Finally meeting him at Ahalper, I began clumsily with a broad question aimed at eliciting his opinion of Strehlow’s character.

In Harold’s estimation, Strehlow was essentially a ‘friendly bloke’, someone ‘alright’, but it was his ability to speak Arrernte and sing men’s songs that most impressed him. He recalled sitting under the shade of a gidgea tree (*Acacia cambagei*) with Ken and his father while Strehlow photographed and filmed them decorating *alkwert* shields with Ken’s *ikwelengk* (king brown snake) designs. As they painted (with ‘white lime’ provided by Strehlow) they sang the necessary songs. As Harold remembered the occasion, he began to move his hand in a wave motion as if to indicate the design which represented the movement of the snakes across the shields. Returning to my questioning, he explained that his principal concern was to fulfil his duties as a *kwertengerl* (ritual assistant) to Ken:

*Ya* [yeah], I met that one Strehlow. We were sitting down on the countryside, old Ken and me. I painted up some shields, *alkwert*. *Alkwert* [shields] we painted them with the *ikwelengk*, *ampwa* *Ikwelengk* [the king brown snake] designs. Me and old Ken. I was working with Ken as his *kwertengerl*.192

Harold recalled that after ‘dinner’ (actually lunch in stockman parlance), the trio were asked to sing the songs again, this time so that they could be recorded to tape. Sitting up straight now and seemingly reliving the occasion in his mind, Harold began to sing a short burst of the *ikwelengk* song before stopping suddenly. ‘Ya [Yes]. We bin singing…*alakenh!* [just like that!]’.

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192A category of person most often glossed as a ‘manager’ of ceremonial knowledge and practices. These people usually acquire their rights to this material via their mothers’ fathers, but also from their fathers’ mothers’ fathers and their mothers’ mothers’ fathers. Interview with Harold Payne at Ahalper, April 20th 2015.
Figure 18: Harold Payne in 1971 (SRC PHO-03972)

Figure 19: With Harold PayneMpetyan at Ahalper, April 2015 (photo: Malcolm Heffernan).
As a *kwertengerl* Harold had to know these songs, but could only ever sing them with the expressed approval of the rightful *merek-artwey* (owner). He continued by providing only a very basic outline of the places to which the song related and reasserted Ken’s ownership:

We sang like that you see. That’s the *ikwelengk* [the king brown snake] that one. We went [the songs verses recounted the travels of the ancestor] from there to *Ayampe-thayt* [an estate in Northern Arrernte territory]. He [the snake ancestor] then meet that other *ikwelengk* that went there. Yeah, those two fellas met up on the Bushy Park plain on the east side from the station. And we pulled ‘em right back [sang the verses that described his travel right back] to *Ulem* [on the Edwards Creek]. We were singing. Old Ken can sing that song for you. He knows that song. I know the song alright, but you might think bad about me [singing without permission from the owner].

The retelling of this event had also reminded Harold of not only Strehlow’s excellent talents as a speaker of Arrernte but his abilities as a singer as well:

He could talk Arrernte language and he could sing too. Ken and me bin hear him that one. He was singing. We all bin there. Three blokes. He would sing too [with us], *ya proper really one* that bloke! [He sang] that *apmwa* [snake] song now.

Laughing and shaking his head in genuine amazement, Harold continued to marvel at how an *alhernter* could become so adept in these esoteric songs. ‘He might be know everything that bloke!!’, Harold remarked. He had never seen such proficiency in song from a white person before, and in the forty years since, had never seen anything like it again. Although Harold didn’t know it, Strehlow had in fact been trying to master what he called the ‘horribly irregular’ singing style of Anmatyerr men for

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193 Ayampe is a Northern Arrernte estate neighboring the Anmatyerr estate of Atwel.
194 Interview with Harold Payne at Ahalper, April 20th 2015.
195 Interview with Harold Payne at Ahalper, April 20th 2015.
decades (Strehlow 1955b, p.37). He described one occasion during the Werlatyatherre festival of 1955 for example, where Anmatyerr men ‘came in close’ to watch him transcribe their songs and then attempt to sing them. After singing ‘loudly’ from his written notes, ‘everybody laughed’, apparently enjoying ‘the fact that he had mastered it so quickly’ (Strehlow 1955b, p.33). Serendipitously, the song that Strehlow was trying to learn on that occasion was part of the same *ahakey* (native currant, *Psydrax latifolia*) songline that travelled west from Ahalper (where Harold and I sat), through to Harold’s patrilineal estate and further west.

There are a number of oral accounts of the speed and accuracy with which Strehlow would rapidly transcribe songs before singing them back to his informants. Garry Stoll, an excellent speaker of Western Arrernte and former employee of the Finke River Mission in Hermannsburg, for example, tells a similar from Strehlow’s final visit to Hermannsburg in 1977. Ever in search of new songs, Strehlow asked Stoll to escort him down to the camp of some of the old singers:

So I took him down to the *kwaty lhere* [the river] and Old Luther, Jack Coulthard and Yankee, the ones that usually did the singing were there. Strehlow told them, he said, ‘I know the songs from up to Tempe Downs but I never learnt the ones that went on from there’. And they said, ‘Oh no, well that’s where we’ll pick it up from then’. Straight away they sang it around the back of the range, almost back to Areyonga. Strehlow said ‘That’s amazing!’ He was making a few notes… just a few notes. Then he’d say ‘Have I got that right?’ and he read out the verses that he’d written down to them. But they said ‘Sing it’. [After he had finished singing] They said, ‘Yep, never missed!’

Harold Payne and Ken Tilmouth recalled a similar exchange back at Alcoota in 1971. As Ken and Harold sang for these recordings, Strehlow again became involved. While Strehlow’s diary remains silent on this exchange, Harold distinctly remembers Strehlow writing down each of the song verses while he, Ken, and Harold’s father Lame Tom Ltarerlkek sang and decorated the *alkwert*. When it came to singing for

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196 Interview with Garry Stoll 4/7/2013.
the recording though, Strehlow listened carefully to their performance, matching it with what he had written down earlier in his notebook. Looking out for any omissions or errors, he suddenly stopped them. Harold recalled:

He said ‘You two fellas just missed a line’. We started to sing another song. And when we started another one, then he called out ‘Hey!’ and he was looking down at his paper. [Strehlow said] ‘You missed that one [line] hey?’ ‘You missed that one’, he said. ‘Hey you bin…why you bin miss that one?’ he bin tell me. ‘Oh we missed that one’ we bin tell him…

Harold laughed about the irony of the exchange. ‘Was Strehlow right?’ ‘Had you really missed a song line?’ I asked. Shaking his head in disbelief, Harold replied, ‘YeYe yeYe [yes, yes]. He was right. He’s a singing bloke that one!’

‘Strehlow-time’ and ‘Three Law’
Beyond these personal aptitudes though, Strehlow’s name had also come to represent a distinctive phase in people’s local history. ‘Strehlow time’, as it was often referred to, signified not just Strehlow’s role in recording and documentation but also his association with colonial authority. As with many other Aboriginal groups across Australia that describe important phases in their history with the suffix ‘time’ or ‘times’ – such as ‘Land Rights Time’, ‘Killing Times, or ‘Wild Time’ (Baker 1999; and Trigger 1992, pp.17–25; Cribbin 1984) - the Anmatyerr identified ‘Strehlow Time’ as a clearly identifiable historical period. Although the term was sometimes used by younger men, when older generations mentioned ‘Strehlow Time’ it clearly evoked memories of a period in colonial history when the influence of the state began to assume a greater interest in and control over people’s lives. The complicity of the Northern Territory administration in authorising and assisting Strehlow in his efforts during this ‘time’ was not undetected by Arrernte and Anmatyerr people.

197 See recordings SOU 00218: Tape No.1, 1971 and Tape No.2, 1971 (SOU 00219) at the Strehlow Research Centre, Alice Springs. Both the Reverend Paul Albrecht and Lutheran missionary Garry Stoll remember witnessing other similar interactions between Strehlow and his song informants.
Sitting by Paddy Kemarr’s campfire at Ti Tree Creek Camp, Albie Mpetyan a man in aged in his 60s, explained that ‘Strehlow-time’ was when ‘a whole lot’ of men would be brought in to Alice Springs to perform for ‘the cameras’ with the consent of local authorities. ‘Yeewe, Amoonguna-le [Yes, it was at Amoonguna Settlement]. And he [Strehlow] let that policeman, manager know that they bin do ‘em [ceremony]’. The consent of local authorities (‘policemen’) to stage ceremonies on Aboriginal Settlements meant that cultural practices that might otherwise have been deemed to be in contravention to the objectives of assimilationist policies, were effectively given free reign during Strehlow’s stay.

In this sense, ‘Strehlow Time’ is remarkably similar to what Arrernte people had earlier described as ‘Gillen Time’ (Strehlow 1969b; Kimber 1998). Named after the anthropologist and Aboriginal sub-protector Francis James Gillen who was the first alhernter permitted to record secret-sacred ceremonies, ‘Gillen Time’ referred to a period in history whereby colonial authority and anthropological inquiry were encapsulated and combined within a single, charismatic individual. Much like Strehlow, Gillen had decades of experience amongst Arrernte and although he did not possess anywhere near the same level of linguistic expertise, his personal affinity with the Arrernte was outstanding for the time. Not conceived on Arrernte soil like Strehlow, Gillen had nonetheless been incorporated into kinship as a man of the Peltharre subsection and bestowed with a ‘Dreaming’ connection (Gibson 2013). He also had ‘close emotional involvement in’ rituals he documented and, at times, participated in (Morphy 1997, p.47). As historical labels then, ‘Strehlow Time’ and ‘Gillen Time’ denote not only anthropology’s historical (Asad 1973; Stocking 1993) and enduring embeddedness in colonialism (Lattas & Morris 2010; Altman & Hinkson 2010) but also the lasting significance of these exceptional relationships.

Oddly enough, the colonial milieu in which this ethnographic knowledge was being produced can also be evinced in the way some Anmatyerr people have come to pronounce ‘Strehlow’. I first heard this pronunciation after spending time with Ray Nelson Penangke, a senior man who often resided at the community of Mulga Bore (Akay). I knew Ray through my work in the region over the years and after stumbling

199 Ti Tree 06062014 part 3 transcript.
into him on the streets of Alice Springs, I invited him to come to the Strehlow Research Centre to discuss the collection with me. The following morning, we walked through the Centre’s storeroom and archives discussing some of the tywerreng that had been collected by Strehlow in the vicinity of Ray’s traditional country. Ray initially showed no signs of comprehending who the person responsible for this collection was. My conventional pronunciation of the Strehlow surname drew a blank. I could see that he obviously knew of an alhernter that matched the description of the person I was talking about, but he struggled to recognise the name. Frustrated, he began to probe his memory for clues:

Oh, what’s his name!? They bin sell ‘em and give ‘em away tywerreng [sacred material] hey? Iwenhe [what is] his name? He went all over the place… Angwenh-athew? [What is it?] He bin alonga Mer Athatheng, Mer Aleyaw [He went to Woodgreen, Ti Tree], everywhere. Oh, I forget his name […]

Suddenly, Ray asked ‘Oh! Do you mean Threylaw? We know Threylaw!’ In fact, it was Ray’s angy (father’s brother) Paddy Kaltyirrpek Pengart, that had twice escorted Strehlow through Eastern Anmatyerr sites in 1932. Other men from the Eastern Anmatyerr area similarly explained to me, again using this distinctive pronunciation, that it had been ‘Threylaw’ that ‘the old people had sold some of their amek-amek’ [dangerous possessions] to.

This articulation was previously noted by one of the few anthropologists to work extensively in this region, Jeannie Devitt, in the 1990s. According to Devitt, the name sounded something like ‘Threylaw’, ‘Thrrelow’ or ‘Thrreelo’, and had come to resemble the words ‘Three Law’ in English (see also Green 2001). Investigating further, Devitt asked the senior man Tommy Bird Mpetyan for an clarification. Bird, who had only met Strehlow once during a mapping trip on the Sandover River (see Strehlow 1968a, pp.98–99), explained to Devitt that this was

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200 Interview with Ray Nelson and Rodney Cook at the SRC, 13th June 2014. See audio file: SRC 13 June 2014 part 1.WAV. As neither ‘s’ nor the ‘St’ sound combination exist in any of the Arandic languages approximations are given. ‘St’ is commonly rendered as ‘Th’.

201 Pers comm. April 19th 2015.

202 Pers comm. Jeannie Devitt, 02/03/2015.
precisely how Anmatyerr people had understood Strehlow’s name to be. It seemed to perfectly resemble his personification of three distinct ‘laws’: his standing in ‘whitefella law’, referring to his association with welfare and government administration; his well-known involvement in ‘blackfella law’, meaning his deep involvement in men’s sacred ritual; and his links to ‘God law’ via his missionary background and bible translation work. The serendipitous twist of a German surname by Eastern Anmatyerr speakers had become a perfectly fitting encapsulation of the man in English.

A Spectre in the Region

Embodying these qualities, Strehlow quickly became a well-known figure across the Central Australian Aboriginal community. Even who had not personally met him, but rather witnessed him working with their fathers and grandfathers, understood the what was being exchanged. But in many cases, elders did not communicate with their sons and grandsons what was told or given to Strehlow. On a number of occasions, whilst reading over Strehlow’s notes with groups of men, people expressed genuine surprise to learn of their fathers’ or grandfathers’ dealings with Strehlow. Lesley Stafford Pwerrerl from the Mamp/Arrwek estate, for example, was startled to learn that in 1932 his father, Sambo Rltwamparwenguny Kemarr, had permitted Strehlow to take many of his objects. In cases like this, the interactions were so short lived that even though the discussions concerned deeply treasured ritual content, the exchange was ultimately insignificant in the broader scheme of things. In other cases though, it seems that stories of Strehlow may have been withheld or repressed due to the sensitivities associated with men’s ritual. One could speculate that, revealing the sale of sacred objects in particular, or the revelation of vital song, may have been to sensitive too admit amongst peers.

Eric Penangk’s memories speak of this spectre of Strehlow in the region rather than a direct memory of him. Born at Atynemkwaty (Ryan’s Well) where his father Tom Uneynt Pengart worked as a stockman, Eric became a station-hand himself and spent years mustering, droving and breaking in wild horses in the area. When Strehlow

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203 Pers. comm, J. Devitt 2/03/2015. Devitt could not remember precisely who it was that told her this but it was probably either Lindsay Bird Mpetyan or his older brother Tommy. It is more likely that Tommy made this comment given his age and likelihood of meeting or hearing of Strehlow from men that met him in 1932.
drove into the ‘native camp’ at Anwekeran (Laughton’s Lagoon on Aileron Station) in 1958 looking for guides, Eric remembers watching him from afar. Strehlow and his Northern Arrernte guides, Bob Rubuntja and Tom Arleykwarte, had approached Eric’s elderly father Tom Uneynt as well as his brother George Yerramp Rlwengapeltyey. Eric’s brief recollection of this occasion generally matches the account given in Strehlow’s field diaries:

I saw him one time, when he got all the older people together. They talked about ‘business’ to old Strehlow. And they bin go in the bush to sing and see sacred sites. Well, I was a little boy then so I couldn’t go. Cause it was a ‘man’s’ one [a trip that involved revealing secret men’s business].

Numerous Arrernte and Anmatyerr men have explained similar situations to me when as young men they would quietly witness Strehlow’s arrival in communities. They knew that older men were engaged in some kind of ‘men’s business’ with Strehlow, but never dared to ask about it. Eric would have been in his late teens at the time.

Ten years later Strehlow once again returned to Aileron and sought out Eric’s father. As soon as I explained to Eric that I had found recordings of his father singing during Strehlow’s visit, he immediately suggested that we move closer to the site of the old camp at Anwekeran. As we climbed into my car, Eric explained that we should listen to the recordings near to where they were originally made. After a short drive from the Aileron roadhouse, we arrived at the site of the old camp. I readied the laptop to play the songs and Eric started to recall the occasion in more detail. ‘I saw Strehlow one time in the place that we’re sitting now. [They were near] that arrkernk [bloodwood tree, Corymbia opaca], that way ingerr-thayt [to the east]. It was a long time ago that one. But I still remember’.

Eric insisted that in both 1958 and 1968 his father, and indeed all of the other men at Aileron, had remained tight-lipped about the contents of their dealings with Strehlow. The type of information shared with Strehlow, or ‘country-laws’ as Eric describes it,

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204 Aileron 05062014 part 2.WAV.
205 Field notes May 3rd 2013 at Melbourne Museum – A. Cavanagh. Also Interview with Shaun Angeles and Martin McMillan Kemarr about Strehlow 15th April 2016.
were only ever imparted to those fully qualified to share in it and at the time Eric was too young or inexperienced. But Strehlow, he reiterated, had the credentials at the time. The old men didn’t mind discussing this material with Strehlow because he had been ‘working all over the country, Anmatyerr-side, Eastern Arrernte/Anmatyerr, all mix up [people from lots of different areas]’.206

Eric’s adopted grandson, Tony Ngwarray marvelled at how an alhernter could so easily be granted access to this type of information. I had shown him some of the related diary entries including song transcriptions and maps of sacred sites and his response was one of puzzlement and curiosity. ‘Why was everything passed on to him?’ he asked. Before I could answer though, Tony thought of a reply of his own based on the evidence before him. ‘Because he knew what old Tom Uneynt was talking about… Tom passed it to him. He must have been a pretty fucking brainy bloke hey?’207 It was clear to Tony that Strehlow must have possessed the skills to comprehend this information. While the archival evidence suggested that ‘everything’ was ‘passed on’ to Strehlow, he also knew that Eric also possessed much of the same song and site knowledge, and in fact Tony had also learned some it himself.

He took it dishonestly!

What is most striking about the memories and accounts given above is that on the whole, Strehlow was largely spared serious criticism from his informants and their descendants. Despite allegations of misappropriation and dishonesty being levelled against Strehlow as early as 1965, when the Northern Territory Administration’s Director of Welfare, Mr. Harry Giese made inferences that Strehlow had stolen tywerreng (sacred objects) (Strehlow 1965d, p.40), Anmatyerr men never made any such claims. During my conversations with people however, there were observable differences of opinion regarding his avid collecting and personal accrual of ritual knowledge.

Some of these sentiments would arise whilst walking through the collections stores with Arrernte men at the Strehlow Research Centre. Most men were unaware of Strehlow’s outrageous claims to sole ownership of their material. As they perused the

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206 Aileron 05062014 part 2.WAV (5th June 2014).
207 Tony Scrutton at Waygibarr, 22/08/2006.
collection shelves they were reminded of stories told to them about Strehlow. One senior Peltharre man from the Anapipe estate for instance, claimed that he had been told by his father to desist from sharing with Strehlow. This man later claimed that while he had been away working as a stockman, Strehlow had been through his country, and with the help of other Arrernte men, had ‘emptied everything’. Far more deeply embroiled in Strehlow’s project than their Anmatyerr relations, the Arrernte had become more affected by his doctrinaire and possessive attitudes. His eager accumulation of *tywerrenge* (sacred objects) was particularly worrying for them. They argued that the decades of Strehlow’s collecting had not only resulted in the ‘emptying out’ of many of the sacred storehouses (where sacred objects were kept), but now meant they had a depleted ability to maintain the vitality and significance of ‘country’ for younger generations.

As one of the few men alive that worked with Strehlow on a number of occasions, I regarded Ken Tilmouth’s version of this history as being particularly significant. I first broached the topic with him during his visit to the Melbourne Museum in May of 2013. Ken had travelled to Melbourne as part of a delegation of men from Central Australia interested in identifying secret-sacred objects that might be repatriated (none of which incidentally had been collected by Strehlow). At the end of a long day of inspecting hundreds of objects, I asked Ken if he thought Strehlow had *arwengkel inem*, taken something without permission? Somewhat puzzled by my question, Ken reminded me that he and his father (Mick Werlaty) had participated freely in the both the recording of their ceremonies and the handing over of objects. It was clear that Ken disagreed with the suggestion that he and his kin had somehow been deprived by Strehlow. ‘*Itya [No]*. I don’t know how he *stole* those things?’ Ken responded. ‘That old man, *angey- atyengenh* [my father] he still had them there in his *head*! And I still

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209 John Morton, an anthropologist that has worked extensively in the Alice Springs region has also noted that many Arrernte men have commented on his strict persona (per. comm. Canberra June 18th 2015). Luise Hercus recalls the story of the Lower Arrernte man, Archie Allen, who was treated harshly by Strehlow, being told to stand at the rear of ceremonial performance due to his ‘adoption’ into a ritual group. Allen was furious since under normal circumstances he would in fact lead these performances (pers. comm. 4th August 2013).

210 These men have preferred to remain anonymous. See my notebook. 25th April 2015. ‘Pengarte’ mentioned that ‘Kenhen’ a site just to the north of Alice Springs had been ‘emptied out’ by Strehlow.

211 These hand overs are captured on film on other occasions too. On one occasion a group of eight men are filmed sitting with Strehlow as a very elderly blind Western Arrernte man named Kaltyirrpek hands Strehlow sacred objects at Taka (Maryvale/Titjikala) (see Video Reel 3 1953 00:53:44).
The very idea that they had been dispossessed of tangible or intangible cultural knowledge was in Ken’s view, entirely mistaken.

As with most suggestions of cultural appropriation, as Richard Martin (2013) has correctly pointed out, my question rested upon the simplistic assumption of negligent or unequal unbalanced collaboration. Strehlow had certainly taken Aboriginal knowledge and objects and appropriated them into his own discourses, but his lay well outside Ken’s specific interests. It was the distinctiveness of the local Anmatyerr lifeworlds, the arena where people learn and are bound together via social relations, that mattered. Ken’s experience and feelings on these issues derived fundamentally from a combination of his direct interaction with Strehlow, the roles played by his father, and the future position of his sons. The ‘Inner Cycle’ of Akwerrperl, Ken reiterated, had certainly been presented for Strehlow’s documentation purposes, but more important than this, it had been shown for the edification of all of the men present, in particular himself.

There were, however, some differences of opinion about the ethics of Strehlow’s work between generations. Younger Anmatyerr men without Ken’s experience or authority, found it easier to be critical. After a number of hours of viewing Strehlow’s films and discussing his collection with a group of five men at Napperby Station, I asked for people’s opinions on the notion of appropriation. Peter Stafford Kemarr, the youngest man amongst them (aged in his mid-to-late 40s) was the first to respond. ‘Ya, arwengkel inem!’ [Yes, he took/stole it dishonestly!], he asserted. Ronnie McNamara quickly interjected. Remembering more about Strehlow than anyone else in the group, and having witnessed him with the ‘old people’ on numerous occasions, Ronnie wanted his particular reading of these events understood:

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213 According to Kevin Heintze, a former missionary at Hermannsburg between 1971 and 1979, many of the Western Arrernte informants ‘knew the story of how he had acquired’ the collection and, like Ken, disagreed with the suggestion of misappropriation. Transcript of interview with Kevin Heintze recorded 4th June 2003 by Francis Good. NTAS - NTRS 1987/Item 1112 p.17.

214 Alcoota 15 08 2013 Notes. The Arrernte man was Sandy White Penangke who had married into the Anmatyerr/Kaytetye region.
…two ways [of thinking about it]. Whether he was stealing it, or whether he was just recording it? I reckon that he didn’t really ‘steal’ it’ because he was a big business man and he was asking about all the old people, the owners of the tywerренге, and the owners of the songs. Because [to be] level with tywerренге he’s got to have song too, you know? He can’t just take the tywerренге without song. I think that was what he was doing. But some people really say that he was ‘stealing’.215

Following the older Ronnie’s lead, Stafford altered his assessment. ‘Arraty urlanem song’ [This is the right way to study or make sense of the songs]. Song and all hey? Lепел-акерт. Arratty-ilem [They make it level, equal, balanced or correct].216 Both men agreed that it was right and proper to treat ceremonial designs, performances and songs as inextricably interwoven and thus any documentation or learning of them should treat them as such. Recording material in this way also meant that all of the interconnected elements – in Peter Stafford’s words – could then be ‘given back afterwards’ to the next generation of legitimate person/s with rights to learn them. But it was precisely in this realm that Strehlow had failed and his possessive treatment of these things stood in direct contradiction, indeed a violation, of what Anmatyerr men agreed was their established laws and customs. After reading from a diary entry in which Strehlow claimed sole ownership of a ceremony, for example, Jimmy Haines, a key organiser of the annual young men’s initiation ceremonies at Ti Tree, reacted strongly. ‘That’s wrong way all right! When he was getting old he should have handed it back.’217 Developing a detailed sense of the information for a period of time made sense, indeed it was an important responsibility argued Jimmy, but with the coming of age men were equally responsible to hand on the material to others that were personally related to it’s original source in Anengkerr.218 Knowledge and their associated artefacts were to flow between generations.

215 Napperby 25 June 2014 pt4.WAV. ‘Level’ in this context would mean being correct, or being able to demonstrate one’s knowledge of the various aspects of ancestral knowledge – song, design, ritual, site etc.
216 Arraty = straight, correct or truthful. Urlanem = sorting or setting out (Green 2010b, pp.208, 556).
217 Audio File - Jimmy Haines 10092013 2.WAV (10th September 2013).
218 Garry Stoll was informed after Strehlow’s death that Strehlow had considered him to be a worthy heir to all of his material. The proposition was however never put to Garry, as Strehlow apparently
Conclusion
I began this analysis by demonstrating how contemporary Anmatyerr people thought of Strehlow as an individual with personal links to the Arrernte, and as someone who had become concomitant with the ceremonial events of the wider region. Commonly referred to as an ‘Urrenpel-man’, ‘High-school-man’, or ‘Business-man’, Strehlow appears to have assumed, at least in the minds of many of the older men I spoke with, the familiar role of an individual who travels widely to accumulate knowledge of ceremonies. Strehlow is also remembered as a person of highly unusual and exceptional linguistic skills and was renowned for possessing considerable knowledge of men’s ceremonial songs and ceremonies. His language abilities enabled him to quickly develop rapport, grasp the details of the material he was recording, and eventually attain the necessary skills to personally perform esoteric songs and participate in ritual performance.

With these proficiencies at his disposal, Strehlow came to occupy an advantaged and widely acknowledged position as a documenter of ceremonial material across the region. It was his later failure to honor, what Myers has described as the ‘vital responsibility’ to ‘hand-on’ or ‘pass-on’ knowledge in Central Australian communities (Myers 1991, p.152), that spoiled his legacy. Amongst the Anmatyerr communities there are differing attitudes towards these matters along generational lines. These attitudes, and this historical context, provide the backdrop to how Anmatyerr and Arrernte people respond to the various aspects of this collection today. The import of the material collected during ‘Strehlow Time’ is discussed in the following chapters. I begin with contemporary reinterpretations and responses to the ceremonial films and the recordings of song.

realised Stoll’s interest and knowledge of the material far too late in Strehlow’s life (Pers. Comm Garry Stoll).
Chapter 7: Declarations of Relatedness

‘My family that one. I know that one’. – Huckitta Lynch Penangk

When I walked out of the Strehlow Research Centre with a portable hard drive full of Strehlow’s recordings of Anmatyerr ceremony and song under my arm, I felt a tremendous sense of responsibility. After a formal application to the Strehlow Research Centre Board, I had been granted access to the material for the purposes of this research. Stated in the application was my intention to take digital copies of Strehlow’s Anmatyerr-related films, song recordings and manuscripts to Anmatyerr communities in order to garner contemporary responses, but also document the interpretations and elucidations of senior men. Having seen some of the films with Anmatyerr men previously, I understood the sheer power and gravitas that these recordings conveyed. It was the first time that material like this had ever left the building and it was upon me to ensure that it was kept safe and revealed only to the appropriate senior Anmatyerr men. I knew these men would be eager to see and hear the material but I felt slightly anxious about the range of responses that might ensue: delight, melancholy, surprise, disappointment, perhaps even anger.

Once I had driven through the gap in the Hann Range, Arwerlt Atwaty (Native Gap), and on to Anmatyerr country though, my anxieties subsided. After several decades, these recordings were about to be shared with the people that knew most about them. Undoubtedly it was where these recordings belonged.

The secret-sacred nature of the material meant that researchers visiting the SRC were generally denied access to this material, unless they had specific permissions from the pertinent Aboriginal men. Strehlow had also struggled with the dissemination of his photographic and filmic material, mostly opting to screen his films in international contexts or in closed sessions amongst academic peers. His publication of a small selection of ceremonial photographs in the German news magazine Stern in 1978, and their surprise republication in People Magazine back in Australia, had invited severe criticism (Kaiser 2004; Hill 2003, pp.741–752). Even though numerous anthropological publications had published material like this in the past by the 1970s
the mood had changed considerably. The increased recognition of Indigenous interests and their rights to maintain confidentiality in regards to such ritual content (see Antons 2009; Peterson 2003) had resulted in a gradual reduction of access to this type of material.219

Prior to this period though, Strehlow had allowed his research assistant, Catherine Ellis, to draw upon his extensive audio collection of song for use in her dissertation in ethno-musicology (later published as Ellis 1964).220 His films, though never subject to any analysis per se, were last publically screened (albeit restricted to ‘specialist audiences’) around the same time in the late 1960s (McCarthy 1966; Dunlop 1979).221 Largely off-limits to researchers since that time, Strehlow’s audio and film collections have been cursorily noted, omitted from accounts of Australian visual (and aural) anthropology (Bryson 2002; Morphy 2012), or subject to generalised discussions of scope and form (Hersey & Cohen 2004; Willis & Cohen 2001; Cohen 2001a). The only way of moving this material from the peripheries of Australian anthropology and delving into the significance of its contents was through collaborative review with senior Aboriginal men.

It was therefore in a spirit of collaborative and dialogic inquiry I began delving into this audio and visual material. To be clear, my intention was never to examine the technical form or linguistic contents of the songs as an ethnomusicologist might do, but to explore their meaning for Anmatyerr people. In this sense, I wanted to tease out the existential and social value and significance of this archival material in contemporary contexts. As briefly described in Chapter 2, the journey began when Tony Ngwarray rang me from a payphone in Alice Springs. ‘I’ve got Ken Tilmouth

\[219\] During the late 1960s, a number of texts that contained men’s ceremonial material, such as C.P. Mountford’s ‘Winbaraku and the Myth of Jarapiri’ (1968) and Richard Gould’s ‘Yiwara’ (1969), were subject to some controversy. By the time Mountford’s Nomads of the Australian Desert (1976) was published, a landmark court ruling was made that restricted the distribution of the text based on Aboriginal customary rights and protocols (Myers 2006b, p.249; Holcombe 2015, p.7).

\[220\] This study specifically utilises a number of Anmatyerr songs in its analysis.

\[221\] Although Strehlow made a point of never showing the films in Central Australia, he did screen some films in Europe in the 1950s and again as part of the the 1966 UNESCO Round Table on Ethnographic Film in the Pacific Area. His films were to be shown to ‘approved scientific and specialist audiences’ and not to ‘groups among which Aboriginal women and children are present and never in central Australia’ (McCarthy 1966, p.19). Strehlow’s decision to screen films and publish photographs overseas, but not in Australia where they could be exposed to Aboriginal audiences, is similar to the wishes of some Papunya painters who have suggested that it is permissible to show their restricted works overseas but not in Australia (see Myers 2014).
here’ he said. ‘He worked with Strehlow and he’s probably on that film you mentioned.’ Within minutes, Tony had arrived at the Strehlow Research Centre with Ken and his son Kevin in tow. We sat in a darkened boardroom watching the silent colour films for over an hour.222 This was a critical moment not only in the history of the collection - for it was seemingly the first time one of Strehlow’s informant/performers had visited the Centre to watch any of the films they had helped create - but also for my own understanding of the relevance of this collection to contemporary individuals and families.223

Like the vast majority of Strehlow’s films, the raw footage of the Akwerrperl ceremonies had never been publically screened before and had certainly never been seen by Anmatyerr men in the four decades since their making. In addition, the songs had been confined to tape copies and never played to any contemporary Anmatyerr singers. Strehlow’s rhetoric, that there were ‘no successors’ to the ‘band of singers’ at Alcoota for example, and that ‘when they die, their living song too will pass into eternity’ (Strehlow 1965d, p.58), had relegated these recordings to the realm of ethnographic history. Apprehended in this way, the recordings were destined to sit lifelessly in museums stores or on library shelves awaiting recuperation from Western historians, who ‘could not dance or sing or live’ this content, but only ‘dissect it’ (Dening 1980, p.2). Ken’s arrival at the Centre thus heralded an opportunity for a complete re-evaluation of not only the Akwerrperl films, but the entire collection.

As someone that did and does ‘dance’, ‘sing’ and ‘live’ this material, Ken was able to bring the archive to life. Over the number of years since his reintroduction to these recordings, he has confidently explained the full significance of the ceremonies to the Strehlow Research Centre staff building upon what he and his father had already told Strehlow in 1965. He has also assisted them in matching each of the film sequences with their associated song recordings using digital editing programs. This process is significant because it had long been assumed that the linguistic and cultural knowledge needed to properly understand the ceremonies filmed by Strehlow, as well

222 The twenty seven ceremonies filmed total one hour and seventeen minutes of footage.
223 The films made of the ceremonies pertaining to Akwerrperl along with 225 recorded verses, the hundreds of pages of field notes, 140 photographs and the thirty-two ceremonial objects collected, constitute what is quite possibly the most complete document of a single estate ever produced in Australia. See Strehlow catalogue at the Strehlow Research Centre, Alice Springs.
as their associated songs had effectively passed with Strehlow’s death (Cohen 2001a, p.133). \(^{224}\) ‘It is tragic’, ethnographic filmmaker Ian Dunlop (1979, p.15) wrote, ‘that the remainder of Strehlow’s footage could not have been fully documented, annotated and edited before his sudden death…’ It seems that the assumption had always been that either these sorts of tasks were beyond the practical skills of senior Aboriginal men, or that they simply no longer possessed the ritual knowledge to carry it out.

When the Strehlow Research Centre was established in the mid-1990s these assumptions constituted the principle reason why collaborative research into the collection had never been seriously entertained. Largely accepting the narrative of cultural decline originally fashioned by Strehlow himself (see Chapter 4), subsequent discussions of his work also tended to focus on ‘traditions’ that have been fundamentally ‘broken’ (Hill 2003). Without denying the effects that colonisation has wrought on the depth of knowledge surrounding much of this ritual, what this perspective glosses over is the regional variation in retention or relevancy of this material. Individuals from Anmatyerr, Arrernte, Alyawarr or Luritja backgrounds will each come to this collection with varying degrees of ritual competency and familiarity. Moreover, without any ethnographic evidence to back it up, this perspective automatically accepts that notion that cultural knowledge will be depleted between generations. It also sidesteps the way that ‘traditions’ in general, are not communicated in a rote-like fashion between people and generations, but creatively in a way that involves change and adaption (Weiner 1999, pp.205–206). There are a variety of ways that ongoing personal and collective identities are intertwined with song and ceremony in Central Australia as sources of social and symbolic capital.

As is evidenced in my discussions with men from a range of communities and age groups, even where tacit knowledge of actual performance has been attenuated, many people continue to possess both the ontological and epistemological premise upon which the song and ceremonial performance rests.

Dancing and Singing Warlapanpa

Ken had shown me an instance where song and ceremonial knowledge had been retained in an individual, but I wondered whether his expertise was anomalous. What about those songs and ceremonies recorded far earlier, say in the 1930s or 1950s, where the performers no longer lived? What would people know about them after decades of social change and disruption? I made the conscious decision to begin with a suite of recordings for a particular estate close to the country of the men I knew best at Ti Tree.225 Having located three films and a song recording for what Strehlow described as the ‘Unmatjera kwatja’ (Anmatyerr kwaty) ceremony of ‘Walabanba’ (Warlapanpa), an estate I had visited with men before, I decided to begin there.226

Warlapanpa is an important Rain Dreaming place located in the far north western corner of the Anmatyerr territory (see Map 6) and is well known to Warlpiri, Anmatyerr and Kaytetye people (Munn 1973, pp.22, 25; Bell 1985, pp.92, 112, 134; Campbell et al. 2015; Capell 1952, pp.121–122; Meggitt 1962, p.167; Turpin 2005, p.68).227 Located approximately 300 kilometres north of Alice Springs, Warlapanpa was removed from Strehlow’s primary focus on the Arrernte to the extent that he had even failed to mark it on the large format map that was appended to Songs of Central Australia.228 The fact that Strehlow was able record these ceremonies demonstrates the diversity of ritual that was often on display at the ‘festivals’ and the regional scope of his informants. It was only by chance that the owner of these ceremonies, Kwetyaney Ngal, had been present at Bungalow in 1953 and was willing to reveal his ‘Acts’.

Jimmy Haines Ngwarray was the first person to see the films of the Warlapanpa ceremonies. As Jimmy hailed from Akarn, one of the estates neighbouring Warlapanpa, and because I knew that he had been central to the organisation of the annual initiation ceremonies at Ti Tree over the years, I thought he would be an appropriate person to begin with.

225 Also referred to as Alapanp or Arlapanpe.
226 The listing of Streeloh’s film produced by Cohen and Willis mis-transcribed this as ‘Unmatjera Kinatja’. See Video Reel 3 1953 TGHIS No.43.
228 In the south Strehlow recorded two Lower Arrernte ceremonies from Mer Ulpere (Pmar Ulbura) and Akarre (Akara). These sites are a similar distance from Alice Springs as Warlapanpa is to the south.
Jimmy had also been to the Strehlow Research Centre with me in the past and had a good idea of what the Strehlow collection contained. At his makeshift camp comprised of corrugated iron sheets, tarpaulins and boughs, we found some shade by his F-100 Ford and started to play back the first film on my laptop. As the film ran I read out the names of the two performers, Kwetyaney Ngal and Bob Malbunga Mpetyan. Jimmy stopped me immediately. ‘What was that old man’s name?’ he asked. ‘Ah, Kwetyaney…’ I replied. A smile appeared on Jimmy’s face. He had known Kwetyaney when he was a much older man in his 70s; in fact, Kwetyaney had

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229 Strehlow writes ‘Kwatja of Alabanba or Walabanba’ (Strehlow 1953a, p.152). See Video Reel 3 & 4 Ceremony 12 from VR 3 TGHS No 43, Ceremony 46 from VR 4 TGHS No 8B (Final Act).
married one of Jimmy’s sisters at the Warrabri Settlement (now Alekerang Community). He also had fond memories of seeing the old man ‘Ingkang kwart’ [walking barefoot], between Ti Tree and Anningie Station (over 60 kilometres) when Jimmy was ‘out bush, mustering with horses’ on Ti Tree Station.230

We proceeded to watch all of the Warlapanpa performances filmed by Strehlow. The first two showed Kwetyany as the sole actor decorated with kwaty (water) designs, advancing towards a group of six standing men, one of whom beats a shield with a large stick. The other ‘Act’ showed both Kwetyaney and Malpangk performing together and decorated with head dresses and body paint designs that represented the principal protagonists in this water Dreaming. Delighted to see ‘Old Kwetyaney’ as a young man showing his ritual prowess, Jimmy spoke in whispers, explaining the various moves used by men in their ceremonies such as ‘warrkuntwem’ and ‘rrkwem’.231 The general outline of the Warlapanpa story, featuring two ‘rain amarleyarr’ (new initiates), Jimmy explained, was known to most Anmatyerr, Kaytetye and Warlpiri men but he did not personally claim any specific or intimate knowledge of it. Seeing that Jimmy had some familiarity with the material, I continued to read an extract from Strehlow’s field diary. ‘Warlapana artwa atherr alata akem-irrem (The two men from Warlapanpa rose up from the ground)’, I prompted.232 ‘Yeah, ‘akantyer-akwek akem-irrem’ [The little storm clouds got up] he replied, but declined to say any more.233 While Jimmy felt relaxed about seeing the films, he suggested that more senior men like Paddy Kemarr (Figure 20) would have a far more confident understanding of the ceremony and its anengkerr story.

Paddy Kemarr and Don Presley were sitting together, warming themselves in the morning sun when I arrived at Paddy’s camp. I had also known both of these men for many years and appreciated just how close Don had become to the older man. Don often referred to Paddy as his ‘teacher’, and admired him for his encyclopaedic

230 Audio File: Jimmy Haines 10092013 (10th September 2013). Other men from the Laramba community, like Huckitta Lynch and Ronnie McNamara, also remembered Kwetyaney (see Napperby 25 June 2014 pt 1.WAV).
231 Audio File: Jimmy Haines 10092013 (10th September 2013). Given the restricted nature of these films I have refrained from describing what these moves consist of or discussing Jimmy’s further comments about the content of the ceremony.
232 Strehlow (1953a, p.152) writes ‘Walabanba maliera atua tara alata kamerama’.
233 Audio File: Jimmy Haines 10092013 (10th September 2013).
knowledge of local Dreamings, songs and ceremonies. After exchanging pleasantries, I briefly told the two men about how I had met with Jimmy and how I had shown him ‘films’ of a man named Kwetyaney, and that Jimmy had suggested that I come and see Paddy to garner his response. Before I could describe the contents of the films, Don launched into further biographical details about Kwetyaney who he explained had been a labourer, and like many of his generation, had carted goods to the railhead at Oodnadatta in South Australia with strings of camels.

Figure 20: Paddy Kemarr at a site near Mer Alhather (Mt Esther) (photo: J. Gibson).

Similar experiences were repeated on almost every occasion where these audio and film recordings were introduced to Anmatyerr men. Explaining who individual performers were and recounting their genealogical and biographical stories was usually the first step in discussions. Men would often point to the screen and mutter Anmatyerr expressions of affection such as ‘oh poor buggers…Terawath itya!’ [They

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235 The ‘Great Northern Railway’ travelled between Port Augusta and Oodnadatta from 1891 to 1929. It was not until 1929 that it extended beyond Oodnadatta to Alice Springs. Other men also remembered Kwetyaney as owning nanekwets (‘nanny goats’).
had no trousers], and remarks about their obvious self-confidence in ritual such as ‘aketh-anthwerr!’ [really naked!] ‘tyelkath marnt map’ [all closed men’s ceremonies] and ‘angkweye nhenhek’ [this is the old days]. The way in which these biographical narratives and emotional responses intersected with Strehlow’s archive is discussed in more detail the following chapter. Seeing and hearing these recordings brought up fond memories of the much-revered ‘old people’ and their ceremonial proficiency. The men that danced naked, as well as those adorned with body-paint designs of pigment, feather and portulaca or were carrying large ceremonial objects like atnartenty (long ceremonial poles), were admired by their current day relatives.

**Continuity and Change**

I had made a decision at this point to show these films to Paddy and Don without giving a description of their contents. As mentioned in the previous chapter, during the course of this research I came to realise that Paddy and Jimmy had discussed and sung of the same artwa anyenty (moon man) and arrwekety (woman) ancestors at the Black Hills (Mer Akarn) in 2007, that Strehlow had recorded with Jacky Urarty in 1932. If Paddy or Don could immediately recognise the ceremony depicted in this film then the assumption that Aboriginal men no longer possessed the detailed knowledge to help edit and annotate this material could, yet again, be contested. As I readied the film on my laptop, I simply explained to both men that the film depicted Kwetyaney ‘dancing’. Strehlow’s title for the film and all other descriptive material was not revealed prior to the viewing.

Their first comment was not about the ceremonial performance itself, but the landscape that provided the setting. Expecting to see country in which Kwetyaney would be associated, most likely within the Anmatyerr or Kaytetye areas where he was from, Don was immediately puzzled and surprised to see the iconic MacDonnell Ranges of Alice Springs in the background. ‘This is Alice Springs is it!?’ he asked quizzically. His question was perfectly understandable given that ceremonies of this nature would usually be performed close to their country of origin. Many other men responded in the same way when first seeing the mise-en-scène of Alice Springs for

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236 See Peter and Lesley Stafford’s comments on Napperby 25 June 2014 pt 1.WAV.
cere monies from the Anmatyerr region.\textsuperscript{237} It was clear that place, as Merlan has written, was never considered as a simple passive entity and certainly not an abstract ‘backdrop’ upon which events occur (Merlan 1998, p.211). Rather it was something that afforded clues as to whose country the performance was enacted on and thus what possible connections and relationships between individuals and families may have been at work during the performance and during the production of the film.

The ‘setting’ also told a story of how people travelled in the past to places like Alice Springs and became ‘mixed up’ on Aboriginal Reserves, Settlements and Missions. Kwetyaney, everyone agreed, would have been in Alice Springs as part of his labouring duties, possibly when he was working with the ‘Kamwerl-team map’ (the camel caravans that carried freight across arid Australia). For those without the personal experience of ‘Strehlow Time’ or ‘Bungalow Time’ (see previous chapters) however, it was slightly disorienting to see ceremonies enacted so far from the sites that they referenced.

Plainly curious about this film and the ceremony depicted, Don looked to Paddy for clarification. ‘What is that? Do you know it?’ he asked Paddy. With his eyes fixed firmly on the screen, Paddy at first stayed silent. As the performers began to move closer to the camera and he began to recognise the performer’s body paint designs and actions he became animated. Speaking in an excited mixture of Anmatyerr, Warlpiri and English, and pointing towards the direction of Warlapanpa he declared:

\texttt{‘Yewe, yewe, yewe [Yes, yes, yes!] … \textit{Warlapanpa! Warlapanpa!} \\
Ngapa! Ngapa [Water! water] dreaming! That’s water dreaming that one! And \textit{Awely-awely} [storm lightning]. \textit{Yeway} [Yes], there! … That’s \textit{kwaty} [rain]… Oh, proper number one! Proper number one!’}\textsuperscript{238}

Don excitedly called out to Archie Mpetyan, another very elderly man lying under a brush shelter nearby, to come quickly. The son of Friday Ankerr-raweny Ngal, a significant elder and one-time informant to T.G.H. Strehlow, and now aged in his 80s,

\textsuperscript{237} This response was noted at Napperby and Ti Tree and also with men at the Strehlow Research Centre in 2013 and 2014.

\textsuperscript{238} Audio File: Paddy Don 10092013 (10\textsuperscript{th} September, 2013).
Archie lifted his head to see what the fuss was about. ‘Artwang-ay! [Old man look here!] Old Kwetyaney, your old uncle. That’s him now’, called out Don. ‘Yeway. I’d been a youngfeller for him’ retorted Archie, referring to Kwetyaney’s classificatory standing to him as a father. Paddy however remained transfixed by the film and waited for the first ceremony to conclude before he started to explain exactly what he knew.

Not only had he seen this ceremony before, but he had seen it being performed in situ at the ‘main centre’, or principal totemic site, of the Warlapanpa itself. He remembered seeing the performance during a time when Anmatyerr, Warlpiri and Kaytetye people from across the region had been ‘gathered up’ to work on the Anningie Tin Mines:

I bin see it along Warlapapampa again. We had a big camp there … They bin working, old people, picking up all that tin. Working around. Well old people bin gather up there, for that painting [to produce sacred designs on bodies and objects for ceremonies]. They bin start painting now. Show ‘em at night. All the young people, they bin learn ‘em. Tell old story. With this old man [Kwetyaney] we bin sitting down [and] with Davey Pengart’s father. We bin sing ‘em there.

Given that Paddy was born c.1932 and that he would not have been privy to witnessing sacred ceremonies until he had been initiated (at approximately 11 years of age), this was probably in the 1940s or later. Paddy’s first hand memory of the performance however was slightly different from the version Strehlow had captured on film. Instead of there being two performers – as depicted in the filmed version - Paddy remembered seeing three performers acting out the activities of the akantyer (storm clouds) and awely awely (lighting and thunder) ancestors. In Paddy’s version, it was two men that accompanied or ‘shadowed’ the main performer, presumably trailing behind him:

239 Archie is referring to his classificatory relationship as ‘son’ to an older man of the Ngal subsection.
241 The tin field on Anningie Station is about 40 kilometres northwest of Central Mount Stuart. Mining for tin and tantalite was carried out from the 1930s up until the late 1940s.
I bin see it alonga Warlapanpa, a long time ago. This one. Well they been try it a different way. That three men had been dancing with kwaty aken [water designs and ceremonial objects]. And another, he’s got two shadow [people following him]. When him go long way, he’s got to keep going that way.242

Given the speed with which Paddy immediately recognised this performance and the way in which he later proudly sang along with recording of the Warlapanpa song, his deep knowledge of this tradition was unquestioned.243 Kwetyaney, Paddy continued, was the ‘right seed’ for Warlapanpa, meaning that he had inherited the traditions through his father, a man named Kwelanty Mpetyan. In fact it had been Kwelanty that had taught Paddy these rituals, songs and stories at Anningie.244 ‘He’s kwaty-areny [belonging to the rain Dreaming] again that one …He’s the one that bin show that painting [body paint designs] and all. Got all the story. That’s Kwelanty. He’s the rainmaker. He been boss for that place.’245 Impressed with Paddy’s account and wanting to convey the importance of the story to me Don exclaimed, ‘That takes us back three generations!’246 But the version of the ceremony captured by Strehlow in 1953 in Alice Springs, hundreds of kilometres from its source, was seemingly different.

Having witnessed the ceremony being performed in situ and under the guidance of numerous senior men, including the owners of the tradition, Paddy’s commentaries were of immense value. His memory of the Warlapanpa ceremony suggested that the filmed version may have been a slight variation from the norm due to the unusual circumstances in which it was produced – hundreds of kilometres away from its source and perhaps with a limited number of Anmatyerr performers available at the Bungalow Settlement. What was most interesting about Paddy’s comments though

242 Audio File: Paddy Don 10092013 (10th September, 2013). The details of this performance, given that is secret/sacred cannot be discussed in detail here.
243 Time code: 00:13:09 Don recognise the Warlapanpa song. Tape SOU 00141. Kwetyaney also performed the tyap atwerneng (the termite grub, Amitermes vitiosus) of Ilepetwetyart, a site just north of Tea Tree Well. Paddy’s detailed explanation of this Anengkerr has been omitted from this discussion.
244 Many years later Strehlow confirmed that Kwetyaney’s father’s-father was indeed kwaty-kartwey (belong to the rain dreaming) and from Warlapanpa (Strehlow 1969c, p.107).
245 Paddy Willis. Audio File: Paddy Don 10092013 (10th September, 2013). The word Kwelanty, not listed in the Anmatyerr dictionary, appeared to refer to the flat bottoms often seen on rain clouds.
246 Audio File: Paddy Don 10092013 (10th September, 2013).
was his acceptance of the possibility of variation to a sacred performance that is often cast (particularly by Strehlow in regards to song) as being archaic, inert and unchangeable. This observation had been made by other Anmatyerr men, but also Arrernte men who also noted ‘different versions’ of ceremonies after watching Strehlow’s films (Hersey & Cohen 2004, p.183). As Strehlow described it in *Aranda Traditions*, these sacred ceremonies and songs were governed by ‘the oppressive night-shadow of tradition’ that in his view ‘stifled creative impulse’ (Strehlow 1947, p.35 and 6). It is exactly these degrees of ambiguity and indeterminacy in what might appear as fixed traditions however, that have come to the attention of both specialists in Aboriginal art (Morphy 1989) and song (Sutton 1987; Hale 1984) in more recent times. Sutton had for example, noted that while a ‘cultural ideology’ amongst senior Aboriginal men might promulgate the ideal of cultural fixity, ritual has an inbuilt ‘mystery’ that makes it somewhat more lithely.

The contexts within which people came to learn this material had changed considerably over the course of the second half of the twentieth century. While men used to acquire knowledge in the formalised settings of ‘*akernenty*’ or ‘high school’ gatherings which involved long periods of seclusion in ceremonial camps, in recent times men came to learn these rituals only during the relatively brief annual *apwelh* (young men’s initiation) ceremonies. *Akernenty*, was according to Paddy, ‘the same like whitefella call them big high school. And after that they go and have another high school. That’s how I been learn’. 247 Based on ‘*akern*’, meaning ‘high’, or ‘on top’. Akernenty refers to a period of secluded, intensive and higher level instruction in ritual. Men learnt ceremonies that were ‘dear’, meaning that in order to learn these rituals one would have to make significant payments to those possessing the knowledge of them and any contravention of the restrictions around this knowledge could be costly (not only in terms of local reputation and standing amongst men but in terms of potentially fatal physical harm, even death).

Paddy had attended many of these ceremonies as a younger man and later in life had himself led aspects of these proceedings in order to teach younger men. But as *akernenty* stopped in many Anmatyerr communities around the 1970s, no other forum

247 Paddy Kemarr at 6 Mile (Pmara Jutunta), 19th May 2016.
for learning about ritual life, in particular the ceremonial patrimony associated with specific sites or estates, has specifically replaced it. While some of these ceremonies continue to be revealed during the annual *apwelh* initiation events, many are now only remembered via the descriptions of older people.\footnote{Lesley noted that the *Irrpenng* designs and song were ‘used’ ‘every year’ at Laramba. Napperby 25 June 2014 pt 1.WAV p. 3. The family name has been withheld.} Strehlow’s colour films therefore added magnificent visual evidence to these descriptions and gave younger men a chance to learn more.

Despite never having seen this ceremony, Don Presley did nonetheless have an excellent understanding of its context and relevance to present day generations. One of the rain-making sites associated with Warlapanpa, Don asserted, was in fact located at ‘an old sheep well’ on his own country, Mer Angenty (in the Anningie Station area). Here, the leading old rainmakers, Don’s father’s ‘full uncle’ and the gardener at Anningie homestead Percy Mpetyan (Figure 21), Paddy’s father Charlie Kanatjukurrpa Pwerrerl, and another man simply referred to as ‘Old Jack’ Pwerrerl, would perform their ‘*angerr-ilem*’ (increase ceremonies) to make rain, with the young men looking on. They made the rain, not just for the health of the country and its Aboriginal inhabitants, but as part of their station duties of shepherding and caring for livestock (sheep and cattle).\footnote{Chisholm took over Anningie in 1957 (Carment et al. 2008, p.99). Aspects of these rain ceremonies are not restricted. Tommy Thompson Kngwarraye, for example described and sang an *althart kwaty-mparetyarte*, a public rain making song and dance relating to the estates of Paw (Mt. Barkly), Warlapanpa and Arnerre. Pers. Comm Tommy Thompson, 18th May 2016.} Paddy continued the story:

> Yeah, they were dancing and they’re making the rain. And all the young fellas bin see ‘em old people. Oh! Old what’s his name was there at that station, Old Tony Chisholm [manager of Anningie Station in the 1950s and 1960s]. He bin make ‘em want them to make rain for the cattle too. [Make it] Green. … Yeah, it made it green. They make it water no worries! … Tony Chisholm tell ‘em for *kwaty* [rain]. Make ‘em rain for *pwelek* [bullock]. It worked. They do ‘em straight out.
> Big rain coming up, big rain coming up.\footnote{Paddy Willis. Audio File: Paddy Don 10092013 (10th September, 2013).}
discussed in ways that accentuated the place of song and ritual in lived experience. As Francesca Merlan argues, ‘social experience’ including socio-economic marginalisation, cannot easily be separated out from peoples ‘mytho-religious content’ (see Merlan 1991). The Rain Dreaming of Warlapanpa in some respects is now intertwined with settler history, such as the ‘old sheep well’, the gatherings of people in exploitative conditions at the Anningie tin mines and the adaptive merging of pastoral interests and Anmatyerr rainmaking rituals.

![Percy the rainmaker and gardener at Anningie Station](taken from Chisholm 1999)

**Figure 21**: Percy the rainmaker and gardener at Anningie Station (taken from Chisholm 1999).

**Declarations of Relatedness**

One of the most important reasons why Anmatyerr people sing their traditional songs or perform their ceremonies, is to assert relationships to the country and the Ancestral beings. Originating from the eternal presence of the Ancestors, these songs and rituals bring forth the very power and presence of these beings and have the ability to affect not only the natural environment, but human and non-human animals as well (Koch & Turpin 2008, p.169). In addition, these repertoires will also be reproduced to assert religious, moral and political authority. People will therefore sing, reproduce a body-
paint design, dance or reveal ritual objects, in order to make a statement regarding their social status and their rights and relationships to the ancestors or the land. Song and ceremony has also come to play a significant role in the enforcement of Australian law under the *Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act 1976* (Cth). In this Western legal context, the ability to perform a ceremony or sing a song (amongst other evidence of ‘spiritual affiliation’), can be a key determinant in granting ownership of traditional lands (Koch 2013).

I always considered Strehlow’s recordings as being potentially controversial. So when I sat down with people to play back songs or films, or discuss the names of performers, I was often apprehensive about the possibility of reigniting or perhaps even starting disputes. What if one of Strehlow’s informants was regarded by people today as someone who did not have the authority to sing or dance a particular ceremony? What if I mistakenly exposed people to ritual material they did not have legitimate cultural rights to see or hear? There was also the very real possibility that if rituals were no longer known, hearing or seeing these recordings could cause embarrassment or sadness. The reintroduction of forgotten or unknown material could even cause confusion or conflict.

What I soon discovered however, was that in most cases, people came together in groups and the responsibilities associated with seeing and hearing ritual content were shared. While material utterly unrelated to Anmatyerr people was quickly dismissed as irrelevant or improper to view/hear, such as the time when I accidentally played a snippet of a song from the Hermannsburg area, people generally looked for ways of making connections. Reviewing the Anmatyerr ritual material gave people the opportunity to declare varying forms of relatedness not just to the ceremonial content but to the performers and places.

The *Irrpenng Anengkerr* (fish Dreaming) song from Ankwerewenng was amongst the first that I played back to a group of six senior men at Napperby (Laramba) in 2014. Having arrived at the community in the afternoon, I immediately sought out the two

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252 Strehlow writes ‘Irbannga of Ankurowunga’.
senior men that I knew best, Ronnie McNamara and Huckitta Lynch. Excited to see and hear the recordings they insisted that we start immediately and began assembling the other older men from the arrkenty (single men’s camp). As we drove past the camp, Ronnie called out from the passenger seat of the car, ‘apety-althay ampwang-ay... akiw, apwer akwek’ [Come on elders! Come to the ‘bush camp’/ceremony ground]. A small gathering of men aged fifty and up soon congregated under a bough shelter on the edge of the ceremonial ground used during the annual ammnty (initiation ceremonies). Each time I returned to Napperby, this was the preferred venue for our discussions because it was out of earshot of the women and children in the community and was respected as the domain of senior men.

As the afternoon light faded we began listening to the songs directly associated with the country we were sitting on. As soon as I pressed play on the recording everybody instantly pointed north along Napperby Creek, in the direction of Ankereweng the specific fish Dreaming site to which the singing referred. Two of the men aged in their seventies, Harry Ngal and Bobby Tilmouth Pwerrrl, assured me that although none of the merek-artwey (owners) that descended from the singers ‘Old Irrpenng’ and Jack Peltharr (see Strehlow 1953a, p.133) were present at our gathering because they were kwertengerl (ritual managers) from the neighbouring estates they had dutifully learnt these songs and the related ceremonies. The ceremony’s body paint designs and songs were also ‘used’ Huckitta assured me ‘every year’ on the ceremony ground not far from where we sat. Knowing of my interest in this ceremony, I was later informed by a number of men that during the 2017 initiation ceremonies at Napperby, this Irrpenng ceremony was again performed. During this group session, Huckitta and the others refrained from singing along with the recordings. Like Harold Payne in the previous chapter, as kwertengerl they would not sing while the merek-artwey were absent. There was no doubt though that the actions of the principal ancestors referred to in the song, the arlweng-rlperr (Desert mogurnda fish), ntepirtny (bony bream fish) and the ankeper (waterbird), were well known by all the

253 I worked as a consultant with the Central Land Council in recording the ecological perspectives on senior men at Napperby/Laramba in 2009. In 2012 I recorded Ronnie and Huckitta’s advice regarding the restriction of various photographs and objects collected by Spencer and Gillen. 254 Notebook and audio recording, Napperby 25th June 2014.
senior men here and they recounted the story of the song line as it moved south into Arrernte territory.255

Hearing the *Irrpenng* song and also watching the film made of its associated ceremony was not simply an act of looking back at times past but also a way of demonstrating present-day connections. Men gestured to related sites along the nearby Napperby creek and acknowledged the past and present *merek-artwey* that embodied these *Anengkerr* ancestors. People’s experience of this material was dually embodied as a spatial and social encounter. Whether hearing or seeing, perception of this material was much more than a sensory stimulation but an action involving the construction of meaning. If, as Merleau-Ponty’s phenomenology suggests, perception ‘occurs not in the head but in front of the subject and it brings the perceiving subject as well as the perceived object into being’ (in Crossley 1994, p.14), then Anmatyerr people (as perceptual subjects) and these recordings (as the perceptual objects) brought each other into being. More than this, it was the intersubjective knowledge garnered from dialogue, response and exchange, that almost always made apparent the interconnectivity of Anmatyerr place, person, song, ancestor and ritual.

Even in cases where ceremonies or songs are no longer performed or well known, seeking out these points of connection remained paramount. When the film for the Awengatherr (Awungatara) ceremony was shown to Ken, George and Kevin Tilmouth at Alcoota, they all confessed they had never seen this performed before.256 As they stared at the screen carefully to see what their relatives had shown Strehlow, I noted in my diary how they all watched in utter silence, only intermittently interrupting their viewing to point out a movement or to discuss a particular aspect of the body paint decoration on a performer.257 While the ceremony was new to them and they marvelled at the skill of the performers, all three knew the *Anengkerr* story and its connected site. Kevin, the youngest amongst them, spoke up first. Deferring to

255 Wednesday 25th June, Black Notebook ‘June 2014 and April 2015’. Roland Robinson (1966) also records part of this story. The ‘waterbird’ was presumably either the Great Cormorant, *Phalacrocorax carbo* or the Australasian Darter, *Anhinga novaehollandiae*.  
256 See Awungatara Ceremony of *Tjilkaliburritjia* water birds – Video Reel 5, VR 5 TGHS No 15 – Act 1, *Tjilkaliburritjia* II from VR 5 TGHS No 26 – Act 2 and *Tjilkaliburritjia* III from VR 5 TGHS No 27 & 28 – Act 3 (Final Act). George described this bird as being found ‘on the plain, little plain country’ and Ken described them as having red rumps.  
257 See Alcoota 04062014 part3.docx notes.
his father, but obviously knowing the answer himself, he asked ‘Tyelk-aperrertety [rufous songlark], isn’t it?’ ‘Ya. It’s our country. Yeah it’s my country, Atwel’ Ken answered.258 No one asked to see his diary entries or any other documentary evidence. The group’s knowledge of the ritual designs, the body movements of performers, and the local totemic geography, were enough to make sense of it all.

Mapping the connections between personal identity, kin, place, and song line were of course central to Strehlow’s original ambitions, however given the complexities of these interwoven relationships, that were often understood in changing ways throughout out a person’s life time, his record could only ever be a static snapshot of active relationships. Some of the deeper relationships between song and country were serendipitously revealed to me when reviewing the aforementioned Irrpenng (fish) traditions from Napperby.

Having just finished watching the Warlapanpa films, Paddy and Don wanted to hear the wire recording made of the associated Warlapanpa song. The two men sat patiently as I grappled with the imprecise cataloguing of Strehlow’s tapes, which often made the selection of specific songs from the (digitised) cassette compilations produced in the 1990s, a very difficult task. As the original audio recordings rarely featured any spoken introductions, and in most cases each song is preceded only by a brief prompt from Strehlow in Arrernte, one has to listen very closely to the brief glimpses of conversation or, alternatively recognize familiar song melodies.259 Having found the beginning of the recording, or so I thought, I readied Paddy and Don to listen carefully, pressed play and waited for their response to the Warlapanpa song.260


258 Atwel is an estate that takes in parts of Alcoota Station, the Angula Aboriginal Land Trust, Mount Riddock Station, Bushy Park Station and Delny Station.

259 It is common throughout Central Australia that all songs within a song series have the same melodic structure. It is perhaps for this reason that Strehlow (1971) referred to the song series as a ‘song’ and the individual songs as ‘verses’ (Turpin 2007). The recordings do therefore allow those familiar with Arrernte, even to a limited degree (as in my own case), to identify keywords or phrases spoken in between songs. For example, finding the song for a site named Illepatwetyart required carefully listening to a long section of tape simply described as ‘all the Unmatjera verses sung at ceremonial acts performed at Wolatjatara’. Eventually, I could hear Strehlow’s voice announcing ‘atwerneng ingwendpenh irrenelhenh-nilene ilepatwetyart arrenelhenh’ – and then the other flying ant landed at Illepatwetyart’. Transcription and translation discussed with David Moore 20/06/2014 and later confirmed by Jimmy Haines Ngwarray at ‘Creek Camp’ on 26th June 2014. See 00:07:36 sound recording SOU00026, which features Spool 25 of the 1953 wire recordings.

260 Here I begin to play the recording from the beginning of side B of tape SOU 00141.
Upon hearing the first verse Paddy immediately responded. ‘Irrpenng [fish]… Napperby!’ he confidently stated. Don quickly concurred with Paddy. ‘Ya, Fish dreaming song!’ he agreed. Slightly embarrassed, I quickly returned to my notes and realised that they were both correct, the Irrpenng of Ankwerewenng song was indeed listed as preceding the Warlapampa song on the original tape inventory.\(^\text{261}\) Feeling uneasy that I had unintentionally revealed this song to the ‘wrong’ men, I quickly tried to find to the Warlapampa song. Before this could happen, Don spoke up in a way that demonstrated both his legitimate hearing of the song, and his personal relationship to it. ‘According to… well in Aboriginal way, this is my grandfather. He shares with this song’.\(^\text{262}\) Given that Strehlow had titled this recording as a song relating specifically to a site far to the south of Don’s patrilineal country (Mer Angenty) I was unsure of the connection, but nonetheless willingly accepted his claim. We listened to more of the recording and at the twelve-minute mark the connections became clearer. At this point Don sprang to life as he recognised a particular part of this song that specifically referred to his country, Mer Angenty and the anterrng artety (mulga seed) Dreaming that travelled from there to the Napperby area:\(^\text{263}\)

\[
\text{That's my old man! … That song, it's belonging to my arreng, grandfather [father’s father] … that’s Mer Angenty. Mer Angenty that one. They're dancing.}\(^\text{264}\)
\]

Whispering the verses to himself, and leaving the more confident singing to the older Paddy, Don seemed pleased; but not that a recording of the song existed, but far more importantly that he could recognise with confidence his personal associations with it. Though Don had been living away from his country for many years due to poor water quality at his outstation, hearing and singing the song had produced a type of intense closeness where his individual identity was integrated with the external objects of song and place (see Munn 1970). This closeness was not just with his arreng (father’s father’s) country but extended across the wider Anmatyerr landscape, following the song line that undoubtedly drew in other relationships along the way.

\(^{261}\) See tape SOU 0014, ‘Irbannga of Ankurowunga Song’.
\(^{262}\) Audio File: Paddy Don 10092013 (10th September, 2013).
\(^{263}\) Time code at 00:12:24 Side B of cassette SOU 00141 (side B).
\(^{264}\) Audio File: Paddy Don 10092013 (10th September, 2013).
Confirming Don’s identification with this small song, the men at Napperby agreed that the song words referred to the anternng artety that travelled from Mer Angenty to Artetyelherel, a site close by to the fish site of Ankwerewenng, before moving further south to Ilewerr (Lake Lewis). What Strehlow had simply labeled as a song pertaining to the fish tradition of the Alherramp estate (belonging to people of the Peltharr and Ngwarray subsections) had in fact included within it a ‘small song’ (see Ellis & Barwick 1987) that referenced a tradition linking estates belonging to people of the Penangk and Pengart subsections of Mer Angenty and Mer Ilewer. The tradition told of an old man from Angenty who travelled to Ilewerr (Lake Lewis) collecting mulga seeds before returning again to Angenty via an underground route. Huckitta Lynch Penangk, the senior owner for the Ilewerr estate, also knew this song. Upon seeing the filmed ceremony Huckitta, rather nonchalantly commented, ‘Yeah, I bin use ‘em that one’. His kwertengerl, Lesley Stafford added ‘Yeve yeve, artetye alyent awem [Yes, you beat the mulga seedpods with a stick]’ in that ceremony, while Bobby Tilmouth, who hummed the tune added, ‘I’ve got the music for that one too’.

Over sixty years after Strehlow had recorded this material, the men at Napperby were able to identify or confirm Strehlow’s records, and reveal further connections between people, estates and Dreamings that were absent from Strehlow’s record (Strehlow 1953b, p.40). Whether he had neglected to note these associations, or whether they were not revealed to him is unknown, but these connections could only have been made known by contemporary Anmatyerr handling of the recordings. Their elaborations put to rest any suggestion that Strehlow had been comprehensive in his documentation, but also that contemporary Central Australian people found the collection ‘mysterious’ (Smith 2009, pp.85–86). It is possible that Strehlow’s emphasis on bounded estates, what he called anyenheng sections (based on father-son subsections), blinkered his apperception of these links, an observation suggested in Morton’s (1994) critique of the anyenheng model (as noted in chapter 4).

Identification of more detailed and complex interactions between Anengkerr

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265 Huckitta and Ronnie at Laramba on 26th June 2014. See Black notebook ‘June 2014-2015’. Also see Napperby 25 June 2014 pt 1.WAV p.10. This mulga seed site was not Ankwerewenng but Artetyelherel.
267 Napperby 25 June 2014 pt 1.WAV.
(Dreaming narratives) estates, and Dreamings associated with other patrilineal subsection pairs, were not always clearly expressed in Strehlow’s notes. In this case, Strehlow is seemingly aware, but makes no comment on the fact, that the mulga seed Dreaming which belonged to the Penangk/Pengart subsections had travelled to a site in Ngwarray/ Peltharr country. Anmatyerr men were however quick to note and explain these associations.

Back at Ti Tree, Paddy made his relationship to this song and ceremony clear by pointing out that his grandfather’s wife had been a kwertengerl (manager for this country) and his father, Charlie Kanatjukurrpa Pwerrel, had also frequently participated in the singing of the Ankwerewenng songs during ceremonial gatherings. Just as he had done earlier with the Warlapanpa verses, Paddy effortlessly, and with great pride, sang along with the entire recording of the Irippenng (fish) song, as did many of the men at Napperby.

Witnessing men sing over the top of Strehlow’s recordings, and their frequent comments about how ‘clear’ (recognisable) the recordings were, struck me as moments of creative mimesis. Song was taken up and re-enacted as an act of reverent remembrance of ancestors that are eternal in Anengkerr but fleeting when realised through their relatives. But more than this, people’s responses to the material were more often than not declarations of present-time relatedness. People experienced these recordings as actors and not just receivers of information. Songs and ceremonies, as Francesca Merlan (1987) also observed in her work on song in Northern Australia, do not so much designate a pre-existing relationship but play a role in recreating relationships between people and places. As Anmatyerr men switched between singing along with a recording to describing the diverse array of partial entitlements to know and share in this material, their own lived experience also shone through. The recordings were being apprehended not as historical ‘objects’ or even anthropological or literary ‘texts’, as Strehlow would have them, but as embodiments of current connections between places, people and their ancestors.

Valuable and Vulnerable
Across five different Anmatyerr communities, the vast majority of the seventeen ceremonial ‘Acts’, and over twenty different sound recordings were identified and
well understood. The clear retention of knowledge of sites, estates, associated
Anengkerr (Dreamings), the identification of performers as well as their contemporary
kin who have rights to many of these traditions in fact, made working with the
Strehlow collection relatively straightforward. This does not mean however that every
filmed ceremony could be explained by people who had experience of enacting or
witnessing them, or that every song could be sung. Songs were not always passed on
between generations and in many cases ceremonies have ceased to be performed.

The reasons for this attenuation in ritual expertise in Aboriginal Australia are
numerous and have been well documented in the literature. Time spent away from
specific sites and traditional lands (Peterson 2000; Young 1987), high mortality
amongst senior knowledge holders (Bradley & Yanyuwa Families 2010), and
language loss (Donaldson 1984), are perhaps some of the most significant reasons.
Although undoubtedly playing an important part in the social, cultural and political
lives of many Aboriginal people in both Central and Northern Australia, the gradual
reduction of people that can sing and dance expansive repertoires is now a common
tale. Appraising the ‘strength’ or ‘weakness’ of Anmatyerr song or ceremonial
knowledge is however, very difficult, and perhaps serves no useful purpose because it
is what is remembered now that really matters. Anecdotally, people speak of a higher
number of singers and performers across the Anmatyerr region than amongst the
Arrernte, and yet despite this comparative strength, many Anmatyerr people remain
anxious about the future. Younger men speak of an obvious decline in the number of
senior men available to teach younger men and comment that with the passing of each
elder, entire ‘libraries’ or ‘archives’ are being lost.

Don Presley’s earlier reactions upon hearing the Mulga Seed verses from Angenty
encapsulated this tension perfectly. Obviously excited to hear a song to which he
belonged and see a film made of its associated ceremony, Don could not however
disguise his melancholy. Segments of the song were clearly familiar enough for him
to sing along with the recording in parts, but having witnessed the far more active
ceremonial life ‘back in the 1970s’ when it had ‘still been working’, he lamented that
now it was ‘all gone’:\textsuperscript{268}

\textsuperscript{268} Audio File: Paddy Don 10092013 (10th September, 2013) p.16.
I’m excited hey! [...] It’s true. Some of us doesn’t know it [these ceremonies], but… Sometimes when I go out with this old fella [Paddy] you know I get really excited. He [Paddy] shows me other stuff. And that’s the first time [that I had seen these ceremonies]. ‘Cause I didn’t like see it before this [these] sort of things, ever. Yeah. Anyway, he teach me a lot. When’s he’s going [passes away], he’s going to leave that stuff with us…

Ronnie McNamara too, despite personally possessing an expansive knowledge of these songs and traditions, claimed that the frequency and significance of ceremonial activity for the Anmatyerr had certainly diminished. Some of the songs Strehlow had recorded with men that were Huckitta and Ronnie’s ‘fathers’ or ‘brothers’ were completely unknown to either of them. After listening to these recordings, Ronnie responded with great emotion and fragility in his voice. He looked to the ground and shook his head in disbelief. ‘That’s the first time…’ His voice trailed off. A number of the other men, also bemused and saddened that they had missed out on learning these songs whispered ‘Lyetant awem’ [‘The first time I’ve heard this’]. Like many Aboriginal men of this generation that grew up working pastoral leases all over the Northern Territory (Bradley 2010, p.169-88), Ronnie and Huckitta had been caught up in their roles as stockmen and labourers and had limited opportunities to learn from the senior men. Strehlow on the other hand had made following and accumulating knowledge of these songs and stories his life’s work:

Ronnie: ‘In these years, like in 1958 [1968] and the 70s, we were just moving down from the old [Napperby] station where used to live, near the station there. Moving to this place here [Laramba community]. Cleaning up all this one before the housing. Just half of it you know. Half and half. The other mob stayed at the old camp and another mob stayed here doing a bit of work you know? Cleaning it up…That was around 1968 now. Well Strehlow he was still travelling around about that time. ’68 and the 70s. He still bin around’.

269 Audio File: Paddy Don 10092013 (10th September, 2013).
Huckitta: ‘Everywhere he had been travelling around. Getting them [songs] everywhere… I don’t know [these songs] cause I was working everywhere’. 270

Figure 22: Ronnie McNamara pointing to sites along the Napperby Creek (photo: Mick Turner Ngai).

Just as Anmatyerr men - like many in Central and Northern Australia - had been inculcated into the work regimes of cattle stations in the twentieth century, so too they had been introduced to Christianity. On the whole this environment seems to have produced, as anthropologist Diane Austin-Broos has noted amongst the Western Arrernte, a general ‘diversification of knowledge’ (2006, p.8) whereby men certainly sought out Christian knowledge but stayed in touch with their land-based traditions. Like the Western Arrernte, the Anmatyerr had been able to visit sites and thus promulgate this land-based worldview via their work on vast cattle stations (see Chapter 3). But there is no doubting that across Central Australian Aboriginal communities Christianity has become a ubiquitous social, moral and philosophical force (Austin-broos 2010; Myers 2010). Traditional ceremonies are now largely confined to the initiation ceremonies held annually in the summer months, whilst Christian ritual, song and prayer permeates everyday life. As a senior ceremonial expert, former Lutheran Pastor, and former fencing contractor and stockman, Ronnie

acknowledged that the centrality of ceremonial activity had waned: ‘Ceremony side is just like the wind…Christian is alive all through the year’.271

Initiation ceremonies persist with regularity however, and in the lead up to the summer holidays and Christmas break period, Anmatyerr people begin to consider which communities will host these events. As has been observed amongst the nearby Warlpiri/Anmatyerr communities of Yuendumu and Mt. Allan, participation in these yearly initiation events is increasing (see Peterson 2000; and Curran 2011). At Napperby and Ti Tree, some elders talk about the excessive numbers of initiates now ‘going through business’. Jimmy Haines, for example, noted that whereas in the past approximately two to five young men would be initiated at once, today it was not unusual to see fifteen or more.272 As the number of initiates grows, so does the size of the gathering as associated kin travel from across the region to participate. These larger assemblies placed stress on community resources (food, fuel, accommodation) as well as the elderly, senior ritual experts needed to sing and lead in the conduct of the ceremonies. Feeling the pressure, some men expressed a desire to return to the smaller gatherings they remembered from their youths.

‘Country Business’

Outside of the initiation ceremonies, there has been a gradual reduction in performance of what people generally refer to as ‘country business’ (ceremonial patrimony). These are generally the ceremonies and songs that honour the activities of ancestors from particular estates. The enactment of this ‘country business’ requires highly specialised, localised and expert knowledge of songs, ceremonies and paraphernalia. While aspects of these performances are at times enacted in an abbreviated form during the initiation events, they were once fully revealed and explained during the course of the now very rare, if not defunct, akernenty rituals.

271 Pers. Comm with Ronnie, 26th July 2012. There are certainly tensions in Anmatyerr communities though, between those who regard Christianity as annexing more traditional beliefs and those that are wholly committed to it.

272 According to a number of men in Ti Tree, in 2010 a group of men from Queensland were initiated according to the customs of Anmatyerr at Ti Tree. Each of the initiates paid considerable amounts of money to go through the rites. The economic boon of these festivals is considerable and due to its veil of secrecy, has been largely unnoticed by social scientists and policy advisors. At Napperby in 2016, the number of young being initiated was sixteen, at Yundeemu it was over thirty and in the Western Desert where the so-called tyelkath-map (jilkaja) groups travel and gather young men together for ceremonies, the number of initiates in a Western desert community was apparently close to ninety. Pers comm. Jimmy Haines 08/2015.
This attenuation of ‘country business’ and the growing pervasiveness of initiation rituals was something that Strehlow was acutely aware of (see Strehlow 1978a) and was part of the reason he focused his efforts on the documentation of the more vulnerable repertoires. More than this though, Strehlow had also observed that initiation rituals in the Arandic region had been influenced by Western Desert practices (Strehlow 1978a, p.153, 1968b, pp.15–16). Agreeing with Strehlow, senior Anmatyerr men note that annual initiation ceremonies have certainly been influenced in this way, but in communities like Napperby, distinctive Anmatyerr traditions that relate to local estates and Dreaming undoubtedly persist.273

Gauging an accurate picture of exactly which of these restricted male ceremonial genres persist today is an extremely difficult task. The inherent secretiveness of these ceremonies means that they are not easily brought up in conversation, and as noted earlier, experiences with the illicit distribution of recordings made of this material in the past has made people extremely wary of permitting further documentation (cf. Myers 2014 as he cites similar attitudes amongst the Pintupi). As a result, there has been a relative dearth of research into ritual in the Arandic region since Richard Moyle’s *Alyawarra Music* (1986), and more recent research has understandably tended to focus upon unrestricted genres of song and ceremony, primarily amongst women (Turpin 2005, 2013; Turpin, Gibson & Green 2016; Turpin & Green 2011). In light of these sensitivities then, the process of reviewing audio and visual recordings enabled a relatively safe way of exploring these issues and making comparisons between ‘Strehlow-Time’ and today. Without directly confronting the closed domain of contemporary male ritual, discussions could ensue about general changes in cultural practice over time.

With numerous experiences of listening back to Strehlow’s recordings of restricted song and other similar recordings, it is clear to me that while some genres are being actively taught/learnt, others are not. The more specific songs and rituals pertaining to particular estates, known as ‘country songs’, as well as the less ritually charged *althart* (male genre of public song and dance) or *ilpenty* (songs associated with attracting lovers) are less well known by younger men. None of the Anmatyerr-related

273 Details on these ceremonies have been omitted in order to protect cultural sensitivities.
althart recorded by Strehlow (see 1949, pp.85–91) were recognised by men today, although senior men did know many other althart that had not been recorded by Strehlow.274 As althart is a genre of song and dance performance traded between groups, and not ‘owned’ by people from particular estates (see Gibson 2015a), it is not surprising that different repertoires would come and in and out of style.

Songs associated with the public and restricted aspects of young men’s initiation ceremonies are however, more widely recognised and learnt by men from across the generations. When playing back recordings made of these initiation songs over the twentieth century, almost every man I worked with would immediately sing along, demonstrate related dance poses or identify local sites or Dreamings associated with this tradition.275 These suites of initiation ceremonies and songs are shared across many Central Australian communities, ubiquitously known amongst initiated men and commonly heard throughout a male’s lifetime.

‘Country’ songs’, Huckitta pointed out, although being less well known and often reserved for men’s ceremonies, had aspects of them that could nonetheless be used in more everyday contexts. Whilst listening to Strehlow’s 1949 recording of Nathanael Arawe-irreke singing the songs of Huckitta’s country Ilewerr (Lake Lewis), he noted that his Ilewerr songs were a ‘little bit different’.276 While Huckitta certainly ‘owned’ the songs via patrilineal inheritance, some of the Ilewerr songs were sung ubiquitously throughout the western and central Anmatyerr communities during the anmanty (young men’s initiation ceremonies).277 Anmanty is an opening stage of the initiation ceremonies, Huckitta explained, where both men and women participate, ‘When they hear this song, all the women go over there and make ‘em apwelh [the cleared, middle part of the initiation ground’’.278

274 These included an althart for Amakweng, a budgerigar althart from Warlpiri country and a possum althart from the Napperby area.
275 In particular, the recordings made by Spencer and Gillen in 1901, Herbert Basedow’s recordings made in the 1920s, as well as some of Norman B. Tindale’s wax cylinder recordings made at Cockatoo Creek in 1931.
276 This recording, ‘Areanana verses of Iloara’, is on SOU 00014 at the Strehlow Research Centre. Arawe-irreke was conceived in the Ilewerr area.
277 Georgia Curran (2010, pp.126–128) notes that this song series is sung by Warlpiri people living on Anmatyerr territory at Yuendumu and Yuendumu. She refers to this song series as pertaining to Yuluwurr (a Warlpiri rendering of Ilewerr).
278 Huckitta at Napperby, 17th May 2016
Later that year, Huckitta organised a camp at the site of Altywepe keretek so that the *anmanty* songs of Ilewerr could again be recorded. Unbeknownst to him, Altywepe keretek had been the place where his older brother, Charlie Artetyerwenguny, had camped the night with Strehlow during a mapping trip in the region forty-eight years earlier (Strehlow 1968a, pp.48–49). Over a number of nights, Huckitta, Ronnie McNamara, Lesley Stafford, Peter Cole and the younger, Martin Hagan, sang the entire *anmanty* series (Figure 23). During the days we visited some of the key sites referred to in the singing, Kwamparr, Nyepwat and Alparr.²⁷⁹ As the songs were sung either late in the night or just before dawn, the senior men gave explanations of the different ancestors that featured in each of the ‘small songs’. They spoke of the *rtway* (burrowing bettong, *Bettongia lesueur*) ancestors, the *ahenenh* snakes, and an ancestral ‘old woman’ named Arlerl-arlerl Penangk, who had last been ‘angane-irrek’ (spiritually conceived) in Huckitta’s sister.²⁸⁰ Some of the small songs, Huckitta also explained, could be used to heal the sick. ‘These ones belong to the sick… I always use these songs when my grandson gets sick. I sing him with this one now. Every time I use ‘em’.²⁸¹

As Strehlow recorded ‘country songs’ under the overarching rubric of specialised men’s ritual, there was a tendency to miss the various ways in which these songs might be used in everyday social life. When listening to his sound recordings too, I was struck by the absence of background noise, conversation, barking dogs, the clanging of billy cans and so on. With this ‘sociality in sound’ (Feld & Brenneis 2004, p.462) absent, his collection evades any record of these everyday instances of performance. Strehlow certainly did acknowledge the different genres of song and their uses (1971a, pp.254–261), but he remained largely aloof to the use of song, or even aspects of ritual, in less formal settings. As more recent work on Aboriginal song has shown (Wild & Jangala 1990; Furlan 2008; also Rose 1999) multiple genres are sung within ordinary life and not always shrouded in ‘high seriousness’ (Bradley & Yanyuwa Families 2010, p.244). ‘Country songs’ will be sung on the ceremonial

²⁷⁹ These recordings, made between October 31st and November 3rd 2016, were instigated by Huckitta and facilitated by Shaun Angeles at the Strehlow Research Centre. I was invited by Shaun as to assist with the documentation and my involvement was funded by an ARC Linkage project ‘Re-integrating Central Australian community cultural collections’ (LP140100806).
²⁸⁰ Huckitta Lynch May 17th 2016 at Napperby. Huckitta’s sister was Mampey Penangk. Apparently she would listen closely to men singing these verses and make sure they sang her song correctly.
²⁸¹ Huckitta Lynch May 17th 2016 at Napperby.
ground, but aspects of them will also come out when inhibitions are low, whilst sitting quietly, feeling homesick, or when healing sick children.

Figure 23: Singing Anmanty at Altywepe keretek (Oct 16). L to R - Lesley Stafford, Peter Cole, Ronnie McNamara, Shaun Angeles, Huckitta Lynch, Martin Hagan (Photo: Ben Deacon).

Conclusion
Listening back to the audio recordings that I made of my discussions with Anmatyerr men during these groups discussions this sociality of song and ceremony is obvious. The voices of a critically engaged and inquisitive audience can be heard, against a backdrop of car engines, barking dogs and children playing in the distance. People talk in whispers, for example, as a silent film was screened or when the lives of elders now deceased were discussed. During the playback of song recordings, the voices were often raised and excited, especially when senior men began singing along with the tapes. People didn’t sing for my benefit to demonstrate or prove their abilities to me (why should they?), but to declare their relatedness to the people singing, the places and the Dreamings. Hearing the singing voices of Paddy Kemarr, Ronnie
McNamara, Eric Penangk, Ken Tilmouth or Huckitta Lynch merge in unison with informants from the 1950s was an extremely powerful experience. It is an important reminder that these recordings, in moving from the archive back into the sphere of Anmatyerr lifeworlds, can invite powerful local responses. Once understood outside of the archive, and placed within an Anmatyerr terrain of social activity, these recordings can take on extraordinary existential and practical value.

Although I had not intended to test people’s ability to sing or perform this material, the discussions that ensued delivered remarkable insights into contemporary Anmatyerr knowledge of song and ceremony. Severely disrupting any assumptions that song and ceremonial knowledge might be so modified that contemporary Aboriginal elders had little to offer in the curation, interpretation or use of this collection, these discussions revealed a changed, but ongoing, utilisation of these traditions. Even where there has been an attenuation – or, gradual loss in intensity of ritual life – the recordings were seamlessly integrated and made sense of within a familiar web of social, personal, land-based and mythological relationships. Discussing and singing while film and audio were reviewed, evoked a kind of metaphorical journeying through ancestral country, as Anengkerr stories were recounted they were also located in the landscape.

As I listened intently to these discussions and followed what I could, it was clear that learning about song and ceremony could never be contained via simple rote acquisition. Each tradition exists as an element in a system of interrelations between landscapes and the kin, and it was the experience of being with people that enabled different points of connection to be revealed. These recordings also sparked biographical storytelling, social memories, and detailed explanations of Anengkerr and ritual practice. The discussions revealed some of the diverse ways in which individuals work to establish legitimate personal and collective relationships to ceremonial material. In the course of deliberating and examining the recordings not only were direct personal identifications acknowledged, but broader socio-historical contexts were recalled in order to re-contextualise the material in a contemporary setting. It is precisely this intersection of local knowledge and the archival that occupies the following chapter, as we begin to reinterpret the genealogical and biographical material contained in this collection.
Chapter 8: The Intermingling of Intimate Narratives

‘This is a true story about them old peoples hey. Ya. You know that’s where all the stories come from, them old people – or a bit further on [in history/Anengkerr]’ (Don Presley Pengart).282

When my long-term friend and one time Anmatyerr language tutor, Malcolm Heffernan Pengart, requested access to his family’s genealogy from the Strehlow Research Centre in 2012, he already knew much about his own ancestry. But important questions nevertheless remained about the life histories of some of his grandparents. Beginning with his family’s genealogy, Malcolm and I began a collaborative investigation into how Anmatyerr people, steeped in orality and social memory, come to grips with written accounts of their social, ancestral and family histories.

Indigenous people worldwide are increasingly turning to archival records of the past for answers to questions about their cultural heritage (Johansen 2004; Jackson 2007, 2010; Kasten & Graaf 2013; Shryock 1997). In Australia, the records of missionaries and early ethnographers are being used to revive languages (Thieberger 1995; Thorpe & Galassi 2014), reconstruct placenames (Hercus, Hodges & Simpson 2002, pp.157–201), to reimagine cultural practices (Harris 2014), and to trace genealogies (Finlayson 1998). In Malcolm’s case, he wanted to see what information he could squeeze out of the Strehlow archive to further elucidate his family’s history, while I wanted to discover how much authority the archival record had for him. I was interested in how Malcolm and other Anmatyerr men interpreted and contextualized this information according to their lived experiences and within their own cultural frameworks.

T.G.H. Strehlow’s field diaries contain not only details of song and ceremony, but carefully illustrated maps of people’s traditional lands, stories of their recent ancestors and accounts of their interactions and dealings with each other. Intimately linked to these narrative accounts are a series of carefully drawn-up and annotated ‘family

282 Don Presley Pengart, Ti Tree 06062014 part 3.WAV. Anengkerr is a polysemic term involving related concepts of story, Dreaming, history and even dream.
trees’ containing very specific information about people’s relationships to place and Anengkerr (Dreaming). Being with Malcolm and other Arrernte and Anmatyerr people as they carefully examined these records, I came to appreciate the diverse ways in which these texts were discussed and understood.

**Malcolm’s Story**

It was late one afternoon in Alice Springs when I decided to ring Malcolm with news of a discovery that I had made in the Strehlow Research Centre archives. I had dipped into one of the diaries that Strehlow kept whilst engaged as a Patrol Officer, hoping to find out more about his investigations into the exploitation of Anmatyerr people at the Anningie tin mines, to the north of Ti Tree in the late 1930s. During the course of this reading, I stumbled across the story of how Malcolm’s arreng (father’s father) had been killed. I knew that having lost his father to pneumonia at a young age, Malcolm certainly had questions about his grandfather. In particular, he was unsure about when, where and how the he had died. Stories circulated in Malcolm’s family that the old man, known as either Ingkaparleparl or Artetyerwenguny, had possibly been shot and killed during the frontier violence of the ‘killing times’, but nothing specific was ever discussed.

Strehlow’s 1937 diary entry revealed that Ingkaparleparl had not been killed by alhernter at all, but by a Warlpiri man from the near northwest. Unsure how to broach the topic of such a temporally distant death, especially the passing of a significant patrilineal ancestor from whom so much of one’s identity and relationship to land are often based, I felt quite apprehensive about making the call. When I got through to Malcolm, he was at work at the Alice Springs hospital where he served as an Anmatyerr and Arrernte interpreter. Feeling awkward about explaining my finding over the phone I suggested that we meet up later to read through the diary extracts and genealogies together.

Though aged in his 50s, and thus quite a bit older than me, Malcolm had become a close friend over the years. I had particularly come to love his sense of humour, his very gentle spirit and his openness. As someone that had grown up on the northern cattle stations, mostly on his Arrernte mother’s country at Yambah Station, Malcolm’s youth was spent in the bush. The family would however often make the
trip into Alice Springs where they would either stay at the rear of the pastoralist’s town residence, or at Lhenpe Artnte (an Aboriginal camp known as Middle Park located to the south of the Alice Springs Telegraph Station). Following troubled times between his alcoholic parents Malcolm was taken to the Santa Teresa Catholic Mission in Eastern Arrernte territory by his older sister. As a young man, Malcolm would often return to Anmatyerr country to visit his relatives. He later underwent his initiation at Anwekeran (the old ‘native camp’ on Aileron Station) under the close guidance of his uncle and Strehlow informant, Charlie Arteteywenguuny Heffernan Penangk. Charlie taught him about his patrilineal ties to Ilewerr (Lake Lewis), the large salt lake near Napperby Station, and as an adult Malcolm resided on the country of his aperl (father’s mother) at Ti Tree for many years.

Orality, Literacy and Historical Practice
Unlike most of the Anmatyerr people that I knew that had grown up and lived ‘in the bush’, Malcolm had been subject to Western education on the mission. As a result, he possessed a reasonable degree of English literacy and after trying his hand in many different jobs, had become a well respected, professional interpreter with various health services in town. Malcolm was therefore one of the relatively small number of Aboriginal individuals now in their late middle age, whose level of Western education marked them out from the majority of Anmatyerr people. Described by some as ‘biculturalists’ or ‘intercultural adepts’ (Burke 2013), these people were often adroit at working in different linguistic and cultural registers and comfortable with literacy. As one of these people, Malcolm found discussing the contents of Strehlow’s archive, and in particular its textual material, a relatively straightforward exercise.

For most Anmatyerr people though, living in remote, non-urban spaces and where literate culture is mostly a marginal presence, English literacy was poor. Continuing to speak their own language, and often being proficient in a number of other Central Australian languages, Anmatyerr people were often less confident conversing in English. Despite some exceptions (cf. Green 2003; Campbell et al. 2015), most people also struggled with alphabetic writing as institutional education tended to “fizzle out” at the secondary school level in the remote communities.

283 Charlie Heffernan had also been a police tracker in Alice Springs. See: http://www.cifhs.com/ntrecords/ntcensus/titree.html
The promulgation of literacy amongst Indigenous peoples in the colonial era was often focused upon religious conversion or social assimilation, but early on Aboriginal people in Australia began to use both reading and writing as a communication tool, a political weapon and a means of creative expression (van Toorn 2006). Although the tensions between oral and literate societies are far more complex and varied than can be explored in this chapter (see Carlson, Fagan & Khnanko-Friesen 2011; Ong 1988; Olson & Torrance 1991; Goody 1987, 2010a), some of these debates provide an important conceptual backdrop to the discussions that follow. In Aotearoa (New Zealand) for example, Māori were particularly quick to adopt print in order to contest colonialism (Ballantyne 2014), build national cultural consciousness (Paterson 2010), and contribute to intellectual debates (Carey 2014). In North America too, there have been equally powerful attempts by Indigenous people to use text in order to articulate and preserve their languages and cultures (Edwards 2005; Cannizzo 1983). Despite these pragmatic and creative ways in which some have taken up the culture of print, there are nonetheless key differences in the way that predominantly oral societies have experienced the arrival of print culture.

Unlike some Aboriginal groups in Central Australia who were introduced to text and literacy principally via Christian missions (Ferguson 1987; Austin-Broos 2003; Kral 2000), the Anmatyerr had no such experience. Living beyond the influences of mission or government settlements, literacy remained rare up until the second half of the twentieth century when government schooling was eventually introduced. Prior to this, some of Malcolm’s stockman relatives had certainly been exposed to topographical maps (Johnson 1994, pp.79–120) and the biblical texts (Bowman 2015, p.55), but none of his parental generation (or beyond) had ever been literate. What linguistic anthropologist Inge Kral (2009, pp.40–41) has described as the socially or culturally ‘meaningful textual practices’ that accompanied the rise of literacy elsewhere in Australia, were generally absent in this part of the Northern Territory.

The ability of Anmatyerr people to engage with print culture is undeniably critical to how they understand the textual elements of Strehlow’s archive. Like other people

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284 Many Anmatyerr people first learnt to sing Christian hymns and only much later learnt to read from the bible or hymn books (see comments by Janie Briscoe Mpetyan in Bowman 2015, p.55). The innovative paintings of Tim Leura and Clifford Possum did not intersect with literacy but they were informed by their intercultural milieu.
living in predominantly oral cultures, Anmatyerr people tend to preserve their knowledge by embedding it in verbal formulae, by singing it, by finding it rooted in place, or by recalling it via other mnemonic devices. Concealed by what author and translator Robert Bringhurst has called ‘the lumpy colonial carpet’, the achievements of oral-poetics and of social memory have been severely challenged by the predominance of Western literacy (Bringhurst 1994, p.165). One of the more significant writers in this field, Walter Ong (1988), has similarly described these challenges as leading to a ‘shift’ whereby both the psychology and social lives of oral societies are irreparably transformed. As much as anthropologists, linguists, and translators have tried to improve upon the ways that print can convey the oral aesthetic (see Tedlock 1983; Hymes 1981; Blaeser 1999) and its close relationship to bodily gestures and facial expressions (Kendon 1988; Green 2014), most scholars would agree that the oral can never be fully expressed in the written.

Writing specifically about the impact of Arrernte access to extensive genealogical and cultural heritage records of T.G.H. and Carl Strehlow, Anna Kenny, in line with Ong’s hypothesis, has similarly suggested that although the Strehlow archive presents enormous opportunities for people to reconstruct cultural and individual identities, it has paradoxically lead to a transformation of their ‘consciousness’:

No other Indigenous Australian group can draw upon such a rich cultural heritage record and deep and detailed genealogical documentation. Maybe ironically, this record has so impinged on Western Arrernte consciousness that it has become an artefact in their modern culture…(Kenny 2014, p.242 italics added).

Other anthropologists working in the Arrernte area have similarly critiqued the use of the Strehlow genealogies on the grounds that they have been ‘appropriated’ as sources of ‘written proof’ in Native Title and Land Claim proceedings (Wilmot & Morgan 2010). Underlying these concerns is a somewhat static, binary conception of ‘traditional’, ‘oral’ (and thus more ‘authentic’) forms of ‘consciousness’ on the one hand, and a ‘literate’, more ‘modern’ and thus a more ‘impinged’ upon ‘consciousness’ on the other. As Francesca Merlan argues though, while it has been a preoccupation of Australian anthropology to demonstrate the ‘traditionality’ of
Indigenous peoples, this glosses over an ‘analytic understanding of 'tradition' as an inherently reflexive category’ (2006, p.98). As more and more Aboriginal people from across Australia increasingly derive at least part of their cultural knowledge from written sources (see Walsh 1995; Rigsby, Finlayson & H. J Bek 1998) the traditional/modern dichotomy is harder to maintain.

Taking a view that challenges these hard and fast boundaries, others draw attention to the way in which writing will often intermingle with orality in a dialectical fashion (see also Bradley & Kearney 2011; Jones & Russell 2012). Focusing more on the way in which people produce and reproduce social memories and a sense of history via numerous experiential, textual, oral, social and embodied ways, these writers bring a heterogeneity to these processes that need not privilege or essentialise oral-indigeneity (Platt & Quisbert 2007). As historical archaeologists Sian Jones and Lynette Russell (2012, pp.270–71) have argued, orally transmitted social memories ought not be ‘romanticized’ or ‘naturalised’ as isolated sites of ‘subaltern resistance’ to hegemonic print culture. Orality and literacy might better be conceived now as elements in a generative process whereby the past is continually being interpreted and negotiated (also see Buchholtz 2011; and Climo & Cattell 2002). Hokari (2005, p.214) too sees this as ‘a dialogue and negotiation between two historical practices’ (oral/memory and literate/archival) that can share ways of constructing the past.

It is precisely the elaboration of this intersection and interplay between the social, oral, emplaced and documentary materials, which forms the focal point of this chapter. Freed from conceptual binaries and grounded in ethnographic description, one can begin to apprehend the ways in which archival text, orality, journeying in place and social memory intermingle in Anmatyerr ways of historical practice.

**Finding Ingkaparleparl**

The archival discovery of Malcolm’s grandfather’s death in Strehlow’s diary began a chain of events that brought these intersections to the fore. To begin with, Malcolm wanted to make sure that I had in fact correctly identified his grandfather. Returning to the genealogy constructed by Strehlow in collaboration with Malcolm’s uncle, we could see that both Malcolm’s uncle (father’s brother) and his grandfather (father’s father) were all listed under the same name, ‘Charlie Ititjarungunja’
The identical English first names were not unusual, as these were often uncaringly applied to people by pastoralists, and the name that nominally stood as a surname (in this case Artetyerwenguny, meaning ‘belonging to the mulga Dreaming’) clearly indicated their patrilineal connection to an important Anengkerr for the Ilewerr (Lake Lewis) estate. A footnote to the genealogy indicated that Charlie Artetyerwenuny (Malcolm’s uncle) reminded Strehlow that he had investigated the murder of his father (Ingkaparleparl) in the late 1930s. ‘It turned out’, Strehlow wrote, that ‘this Charlie’ Artetyerwenguny was in fact:

…the son of the Charlie Ititjarungunja who had been accidentally killed on the Hanson River’ (allegedly at a place called Ljoljaka [Alywelyek] or Atutagata [Artwertakart]) by Jamatjitjana in the late thirties: I had been present at the exhumation of his body by Sgt. Koop (Strehlow 1968a, p.46).

When I read the above diary entry to Malcolm, he was immediately suspicious. Rumors often surrounded unexplained deaths, particularly those which occurred during the violent colonial past, and there were stories circulating in the family that ‘police’ had likely murdered his grandfather. Huckitta Lynch, the youngest son of Ingkaparleparl, and Malcolm’s angy (father’s brother), alternatively spoke of the old man dying at the hands of an ‘ngkekern’, a ritual assassin endowed with supernatural powers of flight, invisibility and more. Being ambiguous about a death like this was, according to Malcolm, an intentional way of avoiding further retributive violence or family feuds. As it was also customary to place a complete embargo on speaking about a person after their death, rumours and misinformation would often circulate unchecked. Perhaps because Ingkaparleparl’s death had involved an inter-family conflict, it had been unmentionable and become suppressed and shrouded in mystery?

Encouraged by Malcolm and Huckitta’s interest in unearthing more about the

285 See Family Tree IX, 5. According to Eric Penangk, Ingkaparleparl was also known as ‘Big Foot’.
286 This suffix –rwenguny does not feature in the contemporary dictionaries for any of the Arandic languages but it is recorded in both Carl and T.G.H. Strehlow’s work. Numerous Anmatyerr and Arrernte speakers have informed me that this is an older form of ‘ke-artwey’ which is now used to indicate ‘belonging to’ a particular Dreaming.
incident, I began looking more closely at Strehlow’s archive and located a range of journalistic accounts written at the time (News 1937, The Advertiser 1937, Chronicle 1937, The West Australian 1937, The Argus 1937). From these sources, the following story of Ingkaparleparl’s death emerged. At Artwertakert (also known Ardell’s soak) on the Hanson River in November of 1937, a large group of Anmatyerr people had gathered for the initiation ceremony of a young man named Norman Tyapeyart Carter (Strehlow 1968a, p.85a).\(^{288}\) One afternoon a Warlpiri man, known either as ‘Big Foot Jack’ or Yamatjitjana (‘Jamatjitjana’), approached from the north and attacked Malcolm’s grandfather with a boomerang (Strehlow 1937, pp.61–64).\(^{289}\) Following Ingkaparleparl’s eventual death a day or two later, his body was buried in a ‘shallow grave’ partially formed by an ‘old rabbit warren’ (The Advertiser 1937) close to a mature atyarpn (Ironwood) tree.

Accompanying Sergeant A.E. Koop from Alice Springs as an interpreter Strehlow arrived a few days later to help gather evidence from local Anmatyerr residents and witnesses.\(^{290}\) Mampey Penangk, Malcolm’s aunty and the daughter of the murdered man, was amongst those that spoke with Strehlow as he passed through Ryan’s Well on his way to the scene of the crime on Ti Tree Station.\(^{291}\) When Strehlow arrived, he made a sketch map illustration of the location of the burial and the direction from which the attacker had apparently approached (Figure 24). Koop and Strehlow then undertook the gruesome task of unearthing the body so that the Government Residential Medical Officer could carry out a post-mortem.\(^{292}\) Weeks later, Strehlow appeared on behalf of the accused at the inquest in Alice Springs, and although he was not named in the newspaper reports, it seems likely that he also served as an interpreter for the seven Anmatyerr witnesses that gave evidence.

\(^{288}\) Soakage is a term used for a source of water in Australian deserts. For example, water is found by digging into the sand of dry, ephemeral riverbeds. The term ‘native well’ is also used. Anmatyerr refer to these soakages as angenty or atlywen.

\(^{289}\) Malcolm conducted further research that suggested that this man was ‘Bigfoot’ Jack Jangala Brown, from the Paw (Mt. Barkly) area whose conception site was Puturlu (Mt. Theo). The Northern Territory of Australia Welfare Ordinance 1953–1955, Register of Wards, lists Bigfoot Jack Jangala as born c.1910, making him approx. 27 years of age at the time of the incident.

\(^{290}\) Strehlow had travelled into the Anmatyerr region as a Patrol Officer earlier that year when investigating the mistreatment and exploitation of Anmatyerr people by Ben Nicker and ‘Nugget’ Morton (Strehlow 1937, pp.23–29). See also ‘Police Journal, Alice Springs 2/2/1936–30/4/1939’ entries for the 21st – 26th November and 3rd – 10th December 1937. NTAS – NTRS F255.

\(^{291}\) For more on Mampey (Mombi/Mambi) see Turner 1930, p.63.

\(^{292}\) This was carried out by Dr. Reilly. For information on Dr. Reilly, see Place Names Committee for the Northern Territory Reserve List for Alice Springs, 12/05/2010. Alice Springs Town Council.
The reason for the attack however remained elusive and there were differing accounts of the injuries that Ingkaparleparl had received, as well as the time it took for him to die. Many of the Anmatyerr witnesses independently referred to the attack as being ‘apalkel’, meaning without any apparent reason or motivation. But there were some indications that an inappropriate sexual relationship between a relative of Ingkaparleparl’s and a woman named Mary Tjirbmintiri Kemarr, may have been a catalyst. It is also clear from Strehlow’s diary entries that he suspected that some information was being purposefully withheld from him. ‘The local people’, he wrote, ‘had hidden’ under their ‘usual veil of absolute ignorance’. Mary Kemarr (a potentially key informant) had apparently been at Connor’s Well but did not speak to

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293 Strehlow writes ‘balkala’.
him when he passed through and this made him wary (1937, p.62). There was clearly more to the story and Malcolm wanted to dig deeper.

**Questioning the Archival Account**

I photocopied the relevant pages of the diaries and genealogies and left this information with Malcolm to read over and discuss with his family. His initial reaction to the story was mixed. Although pleased to discover more about the incident, he was understandably saddened by the revelation that his grandfather had been killed in what appeared to be an unexplained act of violence. There were important anomalies too, that in Malcolm’s mind needed exploring. Malcolm thought the timing of the attack, which according to Strehlow’s account had been at ‘sundown’, was suspect for in his experience elders normally aired their grievances, or fought, in the early morning only. Other aspects of the Strehlow report also seemed curious given normal kinship conventions. Men of the Penangk subsection such as Ingkaparleparl were usually prohibited from doing harm to their nephews (men of the Ngal subsection) and similarly, these men (such as Yamatjirana) were not permitted to ‘hit’ their ‘uncles’.

These minor yet noteworthy anomalies made Malcolm somewhat distrustful of the account. Coupled with the fact that the fight had occurred during the opening stages of an initiation ceremony, Malcolm became worried that the altercation could have originated in a quarrel over ‘men’s tywerreng business’ (secret/sacred rituals). Venturing further into the details of a tale that involved an indiscretion or violation of secret men’s ceremonial Law - regardless of the antiquity of the story – could, he warned, ‘make men mwekenh’ – a term specifically reserved for occasions when men became incensed about the illicit handling of their restricted cultural information. Malcolm also worried that if these documents were carelessly distributed they could exacerbate contemporary hostilities between Anmatyerr and Warlpiri families who had been warring at Ti Tree and Willowra in recent years (see Sinclair 2013). Given these potential sensitivities, the photocopies of Strehlow’s diaries were not shown to Malcolm’s yay (big sister) and it was understood that any further investigations, at least for the time being, needed to proceed with discretion.
As I travelled between Melbourne and Alice Springs for work on this thesis and in my capacity as repatriation curator with the Melbourne Museum, Malcolm and I often discussed the Ingkaparleparl story, either in person over a cup of tea or on the phone. In September of 2014 Malcolm accompanied me on one of my research visits to Ti Tree so that we could try and locate the gravesite of his *areng*. I could understand why he wanted to be at the place, to feel and know its location and to survey the country and imagine his grandfather’s presence, but I couldn’t see how this would reveal anything more about the historical event.

Regardless, we headed off armed with the original hand drawn ‘mud map’ that Strehlow had produced in 1937, as well as a second map featuring the names of sites along the Hanson Creek that he had drawn during one of his ‘mapping trips’ in 1968 (Figure 25). Being largely unfamiliar with this part of Anmatyerr country, Malcolm saw these maps as being potentially very useful, although he knew that we would need to call upon Anmatyerr people in Ti Tree, who had detailed knowledge of the local cultural and environmental geography, to pilot the way.

Illustrated in his field diaries, Strehlow’s mud maps (sometimes labelled as ‘plans’) plotted places of totemic significance. Created for innumerable locations across Central Australia, these maps are exceptional records of sites, mythological associations, and *anyenheng* (clan) connections down to the smallest details. They were not drawn to scale and lacked geospatial data such as latitude and longitude identifiers, but they did provide enough information to make them useful.\(^{294}\) Unlike the maps that Strehlow (1970b, 1971a, 1978b) and others produced in order to show the trajectories of Dreaming ancestors (Spencer & Gillen 1899; Meggitt 1966; Yanyuwa families, Bradley & Cameron 2003), these drawings were made more to plot sites in relation to river courses, mountain ranges, bores, fence lines, station tracks and so on.\(^{295}\) As such, local geographic and geo-mythological expertise is often required to orient and contextualise their reading. For example, finding a concealed

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\(^{294}\) The bore numbers used to indicate some site locations on Strehlow’s maps appear to be antiquated. Further research is required to see if the older bore numbering system can be matched with contemporary numbering.

\(^{295}\) The maps produced by Olive Pink, often in close collaboration with her Arrernte and Anmatyerr informants in the 1930s are for example not only far more colourful and artistic but plot Dreaming trajectories. These maps deserve far more research.
site like a soakage which has to be dug out of a dry riverbed (and rarely features on orthodox maps) could only be accomplished with the assistance of those who have been shown and told of the site’s significance, have a working knowledge of the local geography and know the station infrastructure and so on.

On our way north to Ti Tree, Malcolm and I stopped in at the Aileron Roadhouse to show these maps to his classificatory father, Eric Penangk. Before the maps could be produced though, both Eric and a younger man in his thirties began describing exactly where Artwertakert, the site of Ingkaparleparl’s burial, was. As many of the men and women living between Aileron, Pine Hill and Ti Tree stations travelled in that area when hunting and knew the area well, Strehlow’s maps appeared to be superfluous.296 They did however spark eager explanations from Eric about the various Dreamings that featured in the Artwertakert area. Trying to get the conversation back on to his grandfather’s death, Malcolm gently encouraged his ‘father’ to talk about the story. Eric seemed to know something, but refused to discuss the matter further. It seemed as if the story of one man’s death was dwarfed by the recounting of bigger things, in this case local Anengkerr and place relationships.

As we left Aileron and continued north along the Stuart Highway, Malcolm reflected that knowledge of sites and Dreamings was robust partly because of people’s increased regional mobility. For someone like Malcolm that now lived in town, away from Anmatyerr country, it was clear that those living in ‘the communities’ continued to learn a great deal about their country. ‘You know how it is Wemeye [using a joking nickname Malcolm had given me meaning ‘that person we are talking about’] ... Mer [country], it is all connected. People move about, visiting families and they use all the roads. They tell stories all the way’.297 It was something I had noticed before and that Minoru Hokari (2005) during his fieldwork with the Gurindji had also understood as being central to the ‘mode of historical practice’ exhibited by Aboriginal people in the Northern Territory. Movement across and within interlinking networks of Dreaming tracks, kin relations, countries and stories, supported a ‘relationalised’ telling of the past. This also produced a relational understanding of the ‘self’ as exemplified in

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296 Blue notebook beginning 25th June 2012. See entry for 25th September 2014. Both Kieran and Eric – and Paddy at Ti Tree - referred to this place as ‘Artwertenh’.
297 Blue notebook beginning 25th June 2012.
Figure 25: Strehlow’s Sketch map of the Hanson Creek area southwest of Ti Tree (Strehlow Field Diary 38, 1968: 85a) (SRC).
Eric’s earlier emphasis on the connections and relationships involving country, kin and Dreaming, rather than narrowing in on the isolated story of one person (Malcolm’s grandfather). This emphasis had clear resonances with the way in which Strehlow had been discussed as an historical figure in Chapter 6, where contrary to Western historical conventions which plotted life histories against a linear chronology, people were instead remembered within broader constellations of relationship, underscored by Dreaming, landscape and kinship.

Anmatyerr people were regularly moving between communities in every direction. The people at Ti Tree would often be heading east to the Utopia homelands, but also west to Napperby, Willowra or Yuendumu for funerals, football carnivals, ceremonies or on hunting trips. Private ownership of motor vehicles, as well as freer access to both pastoral and Aboriginal freehold leases in the region following a number of successful land rights and native title claims (Young 1987), meant that mobility had remained an important feature of Indigenous sociality (see also Memmott, Thomson & Long 2006; and Peterson 2004). This type of wide-ranging travel and kin relatedness, whether by foot, on horseback or in cars, worked to keep tightly interconnected, mythologic, social and genealogical information circulating between communities across the generations (Austin-Broos 2006, p.12). Although many people now lived sedentary lives in communities far away from their ancestral countries, young and old still regularly moved across the region with great regularity (usually in packed cars that would often break down or run out of fuel). It was this mobility, as Malcolm was suggesting, that had played a key role in the learning of familial and Anengkerr relationships between people and places.

When we arrived at Ti Tree, Malcolm and I showed both of Strehlow’s maps to Paddy Kemarr, but also to Jimmy Haines who had just arrived with a delivery of firewood for the old man.298 ‘Ah, Mer Artwertakert. It’s not far… antekerr [south] from Ahapelen. Alhernter call ‘em Waterloo [Bore]’ Jimmy confirmed.299 Exhibiting his customary mastery of local historical and cultural knowledge, Paddy indicated that he knew exactly where the Artwertakert was, but remarkably, he also claimed to have

298 See Orange notebook No.1. September 25th and 26th. 
299 People oscillated between referring to this site as ‘Artwertakert’ and ‘Artwertenh’. There was a hesitancy when using this site name as it referred to female genitalia.
personally witnessed the attack when he was a young boy. Showing little interest in Strehlow’s maps and diary entries, Paddy indicated that we what needed to do was make the short journey to Artwertakert so that he could properly explain what he remembered, and what he had been told about the incident.

Discussions about the confrontation involving Ingkapaarleparl ceased as we drove out of Ti Tree town and south along the eastern bank of the Hanson River. Much like Eric Penangk’s earlier emphasis on Anengkerr and country, what was on the face of it an historical story quickly became subsumed within an overarching discussion of site names as well as land ownership. This propensity to read and name the landscape, described as ‘topographical gossip’ by some (Lewis 1976; Nash 1998), was a common experience with Anmatyerr men and clearly played an important role in the regeneration of historical, social and cultural associations (see also Palmer 1982). Both being in and journeying through ‘Mer’ (place/country) was indeed part and parcel of becoming an Anmatyerr person (cf. Taylor 2013). This was true, not just in the ritual sense of ‘following’ Dreaming ‘tracks’ as discussed in Chapter 6, but was more broadly true where places were experienced as entities inherently animated by Dreaming.

*Mer* (country/home/land) was not something experienced passively though. At specific places, like Malcolm’s country of Ilewerr for example, people interacted with the *merlalp* (spirit beings of the country) who would amongst other things, brazenly steal people’s car keys or make them confused and lost. It was the presence of people, perceiving subjects, that enabled the land to, as Casey would describe it ‘release’ memories amongst the ‘intensely gathered landscape such as that of Aboriginal Australia’ (Casey 1996, 1987, pp.182–194). It was clear from the experience of journeying with Anmatyerr people that *Mer* was something inherently mediated and constituted via social relations and practices (Rose 1992; Myers 1997; Merlan 1998). It was the act of *going to*, or *being at* a specific place, that generated

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300 In fact, Strehlow had been told similar stories during his time at Ilewerr with Malcolm’s uncle decades earlier (Strehlow 1968a, p.48). On this occasion though, the malevolent beings were not described as *merlalp* but *arrenty* (monsters).

301 Place/s were also not something that people regarded as a type of autonomous ‘living entities’ as Rose has suggested (Rose 1996a). Place and their closely connected Ancestors were always mediated and brought forth by people’s knowledge, discussions, explanation and embodiment of these things.
a dialectical relationship between places and people and facilitated discussions and elucidations that otherwise would not have emerged.

Getting closer to Artwertakert, Paddy extended his arm out of the vehicle and gestured towards a seemingly non-descript section of the Hanson River. Calling out over the rumble of the engine he announced our arrival. ‘Mer Atwertakert. Mer ahenpeny. Yanhel live-irretyart. [That’s Artwertakert. An old, disused camp. We used to live over there] … People used to camp here… Make ammanty [young men’s initiation ceremonies were held here]’. After crossing the dry riverbed of the Hanson at the Ti Tree and Pine Hill Station boundary fence, we approached the area where according to Strehlow’s map, Ingkaparleparl had been buried (see Figure 26 for a new map produced after revisiting the site in 2014). Explaining that this country belonged to an arlewayerr (sand goanna, Varanus gouldii) ancestor of the Kemarr subsection, Paddy pointed out a collection of large sandstone boulders immediately to our north. While these boulders were absent from Strehlow’s maps, an annotation on his 1968 map (presumably dictated by his informant Peter Ntaranga Ngal) described the site in this way: ‘on the western bank of the Hanson, from Etutagata [Artwertakert], there is a makamaka, loatjira kwatala indama’ [sacred site where a sand goanna laid its eggs].

Paddy’s description in 2014 of the site was almost identical:

Here’s the amek-amek. Nhenh arlewayerr kwartel intem’ [Here is the sacred place. This is where the sand goanna laid its eggs]. Yewe that amek-amek that’s ker arlewayerr akeweny [Yes, that site belongs to the Sand Goanna, the precious thing]. Arlewayerr belonging to him [to this place and ancestor]. [The goanna travelled] right to Nthwerery. Kwerreng again [again, belonging to this place and person], right through to Pweray [a site further north along the Hanson very close to Nthwerrey]. Kwerreng [associated with] again. That’s his own place.

Mer (Country) could never be a separate entity disconnected from existential and epistemological realms.

302 Paddy explained that Artwertakert was suitable for hosting large gatherings because good quantities of ‘kwaty altywen’ (soakage water) used to be obtained here.
He bin big boss! *Mer akweteth* [a local ancestor and not one that travels widely].

Figure 26: Map of Ingkaparleparl’s burial site on the Hanson Creek, south of Ti Tree.

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Audio File: Paddy on Artetye 1 2692014.WAV page 3. See the Ti Tree Land Claim Land Commissioner’s Report (Maurice 1985) for conflicting evidence re: the subsections for Pweray and Nthwerey. For an historical consideration of the term *(ap)mere akwetethe (pmara kutata)* see (Kenny 2004).
Using place as their starting point, Paddy and the others began filling in the gaps left in Strehlow’s descriptions. These acts of remembrance of past events were, as Miriam Kahn has nicely described in similar practices in Papua New Guinea, organised or anchored ‘spatially’ rather than ‘temporally’ (Kahn 1990, 1996) and with little regard for dates, years or chronology.

The ‘written down story’
Paddy was about five or six years of age when Ingkaparleparl had been killed, and his version of the event - including the direction from which the offenders approached and the context of Norman Carter’s initiation - largely tallied with Strehlow’s report.\(^{304}\) He agreed that the fight was certainly *apalkel* (without reason) – ‘He was killed right there! I don’t know. *Apalkel*. No reason. No reason’.\(^{305}\) He also recalled seeing Ingkaparleparl, whom he recalled as being ‘a big tall fella’ and like many of the men from Ilewerr was known as ‘Bigfoot’, being carried across the wide, deep sandy dry riverbed by many men to his burial under the *atyarnp* tree. Though Paddy had been very young at the time, he had clearly shared in, and been the beneficiary of, a tradition of orality that placed great worth in acts of memory and valued first-hand experience (as is evidenced in his knowledge of song and ceremony demonstrated in the previous chapter). As he constantly reminded us, he had been present - ‘I seen. We were witness. We bin witness. We bin looking at it… cause I bin look all the people. I bin look proper level’\(^{306}\).

There were some differences though between Paddy’s and Strehlow’s accounts and further details that had escaped Strehlow’s diarising. In Paddy’s version of the incident, another man, Bill Ngal Twenperwenguny, had also been injured during the altercation and died later from an act of sorcery, though perhaps not until months or years later.\(^{307}\) Instead of boomerangs, Paddy had heard that stone knives imbued with ‘*arrwengkelth*’ (supernatural poison or sickness) had been used by the ‘*arlper*”

\(^{304}\) Paddy has also recorded stories concerning a tribe from the far west called Warrngarr, coming and attempting to usurp land from Warlpiri, Anmatyerr and Kaytetye people, ‘a long time ago’. Recorded by David Strickland on the 24/1 1/03.

\(^{305}\) Audio File: Paddy on Artetye 1 2692014.WAV.

\(^{306}\) Audio File P- Paddy on Artetye 1 2692014.WAVand Audio File P- Paddy on Artetye 2 2692014.WAV.

\(^{307}\) Twemp was only briefly mentioned in Norman Carter’s courtroom evidence (*Chronicle* 1937b and referred to as ‘Joomba’).
[Warlpiri] soldiers’. Contrary to Malcolm’s doubts earlier about the timing of the attack however, Paddy confirmed that Ingkaparleparl did get his ‘hiding little bit angwerrel [mid-afternoon]’, though he added that Bill Ngal was ‘murdered’ (meaning attacked and fatally injured with the arrwengkelth) the following morning.\footnote{Audio File: Paddy on Artetye 2 2692014.WAV.}

Paddy wanted the discrepancies between versions to be recognised, but also his version recorded. Addressing me using my subsection name and thus reminding me of his fatherly status to me, Paddy stressed the need to record his version. ‘Pwerrerl, that [Strehlow story] is another one… But, you can put ‘em along this paper, mine [my story]. I’ve been telling you straight… Oh yeah, you’ve got to get it right, right, proper right. Arraty [true]’. Then pointing to my digital audio recorder said, ‘We can put that one in there’.\footnote{Audio File P- Paddy on Artetye 2 2692014.WAV.} While challenging the authority of the archive, he was simultaneously appealing to the perceived power of static recordings, both textual and audio-visual, to capture what was arraty (true). Just like all of the men who had worked with Strehlow in the past in having their genealogies, songs and rituals recorded, Paddy also saw the value of these recordings. This was a way of seeing that his version of events, indeed his knowledge, would be treated authoritatively when placed within the mnemonics of literate society.

The slight variance in the oral and written accounts nevertheless led to a lively discussion in the group about what really happened – about what was ‘arraty’ (true) or ‘straight’. Jimmy, approximately thirty years younger than Paddy, and personally unfamiliar with the story, appealed to the perceived truth-values associated with written accounts. Strehlow’s version, he advanced, was surely correct. ‘But that’s the written down story’, he remarked. Still unwilling to accept this, Paddy responded, ‘No, that’s nothing!’ As was generally the case for people who had spent their youths in a more ‘classical’ (though not pre-colonial) version of Aboriginal society (for example see Baker 1999), Paddy saw oral sources as underscoring views of the past, whereas written accounts were inferior. ‘That’s only… That’s not really [correct]… I reckon a little bit wrong there’. It was his memory of the events that was ‘really true, arraty [straight, correct]’.
After a break for lunch we began searching for what could be the precise *atyarnp* (ironwood tree, *Acacia estrophiolata*) under which Ingkaparleparl had been buried (Figure 27). While the tree had probably died or had been destroyed in bush fires since 1937, the plain along the western flank of the Hanson was dotted with hundreds of juvenile *atyarnp* trees.\(^{310}\)

![Figure 27: Malcolm Heffernan at Artwertakert, in the vicinity of where his grandfather was buried in 1937 (September 2014) (Photo: J. Gibson).](image)

We returned to Strehlow’s maps for clues. Apparently, the burial had been slightly north of the Artwertakert soakage, close to where we were sitting and eating our lunch. Surveying the scene, Jimmy spotted a rusted bonnet of an old vehicle, possibly from the late 1930s or early 1940s, amongst the tall buffel grass. We gathered around as Paddy began to reflect on the likely scenario that Ingkapaarleparl’s burial had been covered over with this bonnet after Strehlow and Koop had disinterred the body in 310

\(^{310}\) These assumptions were confirmed as highly likely by Northern Territory Government Botanist Dr. Catherine Nano.
their investigation. The bonnet would have protected the burial from the large numbers of cattle that used to roam Ti Tree Station. Though pure conjecture, it was well founded and, most importantly, enough for Malcolm to start planning the erection of a small headstone in honor of his arreng.

Reading the Family Trees
This interplay of text and social memory, and similar modes of historical practice, were again on display during our collaborative examinations of the genealogies collected by T.G.H. Strehlow. These documents, produced throughout Strehlow’s fieldwork career, were based on a very similar methodology to his father’s genealogies, and are now some of the most regularly viewed documents in the collection. Access to these documents began with the establishment of the Strehlow Research Centre in 1991 and since that time numerous people, mainly Arrernte men and women, have been able to obtain copies of genealogies that are immediately relevant to their particular families (see Malbunka 2004). Very rarely containing any restricted ritual information, they are amongst the safest materials for people to copy, distribute and openly discuss, though they have been wielded during disputes over family lineage and thus rights in land (Wilmot & Morgan 2010).

Individual interest in these documents however varies. Some are simply curious about their ancestry, while others (particularly those of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal descent who have had little contact with their Aboriginal kin) see them as offering important information on colonial family histories negatively impacted upon by government policies (such as the removal of children) (see Kruger & Waterford 2007). Others however, have openly sought out ‘written proof’ of their lineage for use in land tenure and related disputes over ownership and rights in cultural property (Wilmot & Morgan 2010). During the the course of this research, but also during the three years that I worked out of the Strehlow Research Centre, I was often asked by Arrernte and Anmatyerr people to help them interpret Strehlow’s spellings of Arrernte terms and phrases, as well as generally decipher the contents of these idiosyncratic and potentially politically potent documents.

311 Audio File: Paddy on Artetye 1 2692014.WAV transcript Page 5.
312 The Strehlow genealogies have been used by researchers from the Stolen Generations Link Up program in Alice Springs and elsewhere to try and piece together family histories.
When Malcolm Heffernan first accessed his family’s genealogy, which was essentially based upon information provided by his uncle (Charlie Artetyerwenguny), he was initially perplexed. He had been listed by Strehlow as being ‘from’ ‘Alice Springs’. This is wrong, he protested, ‘I’m not from Alice Springs! I’m from Ilewerr [Lake Lewis]. Arrengey atyen nh [My father’s father]. My Mer.’ Although the genealogy provided no information on his Dreaming or ‘totem’ affiliation, Malcolm understood that because he was listed as being ‘from’ Alice Springs, it would be assumed by anyone reading this that he ‘belonged’ to one of the Dreamings that occupied this area. If taken at face value, mere inference of this association could lead to serious political repercussions. Turning to me with a cheeky grin, Malcolm wondered whether ‘people might think’ that he was ‘claiming merek-artwey [traditional owner status] here!’ This was no laughing matter though, as Malcolm knew well that many people had in fact misinterpreted these genealogies before and used them to make claims about belonging to land and Dreaming in ways that they did not understand.

The question remained in Malcolm’s mind though: how could T.G.H. Strehlow, and the relatives that informed this genealogy, have got this information so wrong? In analysing his own genealogy further and after looking at numerous other Anmatyerr family trees, it became clear that this was in no way an error on Strehlow’s part. It seemed to be an artefact of both Strehlow’s particular empirical interests and the way in which past generations of Arrernte (and presumably Anmatyerr people) described personal ties to land, ritual and Dreaming. Significantly, these genealogies were never produced by Strehlow as means of theorising the origins of human social organisation as they had been by earlier anthropologists (Gardner & McConvell 2015), nor were they designed to capture rules of kinship, social structure or even land tenure as they had been by Strehlow’s contemporaries in social anthropology (see Warner 1964; Hiatt 1965; Meggitt 1962). Strehlow was certainly aware of social anthropology’s theoretical interests in kinship but this was not his concern in these genealogies. His genealogies are not abstracted, they have no ‘ego’ reference point, and the people

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313 Phone conversation with Malcolm on 30/05/2014. See Anmatjera Family Tree IX, 5 at the SRC. Added complexity to this story is that the main Dreaming associated with Alice Springs, the ayeparenye caterpillar came to Alice Springs from Malcolm’s mother’s mother’s country, Urlatherrke (Mount Zeil).
314 Malcolm 31052014 part1.WAV.
315 Malcolm 31052014 part1.WAV.
featured in them are named. These were not records of kinship, but of what interested him most, the relationship between person, myth and land. By extension they showed an individual’s rights in ritual knowledge, which did not automatically confer ‘landholding’ rights.  

Most of the 150 genealogies drawn up by Strehlow concern Arrernte families. At the margins of this corpus though are a smaller suite of family trees for a number of other Aboriginal cultural/linguistic groups, including nine that pertain directly to the Anmatyerr. Within these nine documents, which usually begin with an apical ancestor and show membership of a particular anyenheng group, there are approximately 370 individuals listed from across the length and breadth of the Anmatyerr region. The name and subsection of each person is listed, as well as reference firstly to the place where they are ‘from’ and secondly their associated aknganenty (‘knganintja’, which Strehlow abbreviates as ‘kn/kng’), a term that generically refers to an individual’s conception ‘totem’ or ‘Dreaming’. It is the information listed under these categories, ‘from’ and ‘aknganentye’ that resulted in the initial puzzlement mentioned above.

Without an explicit key for these genealogies some Arrernte people have been unsure about precisely what they document (see Kenny 2014, pp.189–193; & Wilmot & Morgan 2010). My experiences with Anmatyerr people however, shows that once this ethnographic and theoretical context is understood people will often take this data

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316 I am indebted to Diane Austin-Broos for these insights.
317 Genealogical information for Anmatyerr people can also be found in *Handbook to Central Australian Genealogies* (Strehlow 1969c), his field diaries and his Patrol Officer reports. While Anmatyerr countries/estates can be identified in his family trees, Strehlow does not name them as such. If estate names could be applied to them they may be called Ywerternt, Akwerrperl or Atwel, Ilkweartn, Ilewerr, Alherramp, Ulem, Nthwerray and Arnmanapwenty.
318 Though the Anmatyerr generally use anganenty, Strehlow uses the Arrernte equivalent Aknganenty. This refers not only to the dreamings inherited through the patriline but can also refer to sites that are the physical signs of particular ancestors from the creation era, including the places from which those ancestors originated. Carl Strehlow’s family trees are different in that they list an individual’s altyerre (‘altjira’, mother’s Dreaming) and arethape (‘ratapa’, conception totem).
319 Detailed footnotes are often appended to the genealogy that provide either additional commentary on individuals, references to other genealogies, marriage details, the location or Dreaming associations of their conception site, and in some cases the colour or so-called ‘caste’ of a person.
320 The Anmatyerr genealogies were originally omitted from the cataloguing of the Name Indexes produced for the Strehlow Research Centre in the 1990s and have as a result been only very infrequently accessed in the last decade. For the first fifteen years of the Strehlow Research Centre, the Anmatyerr – as well as Pintupi, Warlpiri, Alyawarr, Alkutura and Lower Arrernte - family trees were left out of these original name indexes, meaning that Aboriginal clients and other researchers were unaware of their existence.
and begin a process of careful interrogation and reinterpretation utilising the knowledge of senior people. Contemporary understandings of descent, which as is shown below appear to have undergone some change during the twentieth century, are then applied in order to render these documents recognisable.

Figure 28: Tony Ngwarray and Samantha Greenwood reading an Anmatyerr family tree at the Anmatjere Library and Knowledge Centre in Ti Tree (photo J. Gibson).

**The Trouble with Terminology**

The initial trouble begins where associations between a listed individual’s *aknganentye*, their subsection and the place where they are ‘from’, appear incongruous. An example to illustrate: when discussing the genealogy of Bob Malpangk Mpetyan – one of Strehlow’s informants from the 1950s – a number of people were quick to point out what appeared to be a mismatch. Jimmy Haines, for example, had no personal memory of Bob Malpangk, but he knew immediately from Malpangk’s subsection (Mpetyan) that he could not be ‘from’ the Pathantek (Batantaka), a site located with the Arempey estate area belonging to people of the Penangk and Pengart subsections. Where you were ‘from’, almost every Anmatyerr
person assumed, would be a person’s patrilineal connection, their landholding
association which in this case would be country associated with the Mpetyan/Ngal
subsections. As Jimmy Haines put it:

Pathantek. Yeah I know where that Pathantek is!] Yeah, it’s that big
hill there, [near] Arempey (Pine Hill), Penangk, Pengart country. But
he’s not the owner of that mer [place], that bloke. He might have been
just kwertengerl [a ritual manager] … Strehlow mightn’t… he never
might be listen properly intit [do you think]?321

Without denying the wide variety of modes of attachment to land and rights to ritual
knowledge that feature in Anmatyerr and other Central Australian communities
(Myers 1991; Keen 1997; Morton 1997), it is clear that people generally expected that
these family trees would provide information to help them to trace, or ‘go back’ to,
their father’s father’s country. Ordering these relationships in hierarchical terms,
James Mpetyan, a man in his thirties, for example explained that ‘arreng [one’s
father’s father] is first, then atyemey [mother’s father]; they come from the daughters.
They become the kwertengerl [manager or assistants in custodianship of land and
ritual’].322 ‘Your arreng ’ James reiterated (just as Malcolm had earlier) was the ‘main
seat’ or the ‘grass roots’ of your genealogy.323 If Strehlow had ‘listened properly’ it
was assumed that he would have documented these connections.

In order to better understand the distinctions between the inheritance of associations
and the personal attainment of Dreaming affiliations, a fuller appreciation of the
notion of spiritual conception is required. The literature on conception totems in
Australia is extensive and embroiled in historical debates about Aboriginal
procreative beliefs (see Malinowski’s contribution in Montagu 1974; Charlesworth et

321 Audio File: Jimmy Haines 10092013 (10th September 2013). Pathantek is Mt. Finniss.
322 Jimmy Haines also stated that one’s arreng’s country was of the highest priority see Audio File:
Jimmy Haines 10092013 (10th September 2013). See also Field notes 2014 conversation with James
Glenn and Archie Glenn at the ‘Outback Store’, Ti Tree. Malcolm 2nd Dec 2015 suggested that one’s
atyemey (mother’s father) could be highlighted if the person has a white male ancestor (father or
grandfather) but this is second in importance to one’s arreng.
323 26th June 2014, Black notebook ‘June 2014-April 2015’. It is possible that Anmatyerr women may
have reacted differently to this kind of material and that men were specifically focused on matters
relating to land ownership. But Dianne Broos’s (2009) work with Western Arrernte women has
resulted in similar findings.
al. 1984, pp.108–134; Hiatt 1996, pp.120–141; and Merlan 1986; T.G.H. Strehlow 1964c). For the Anmatyerr and Arrernte, the notion of ‘conception’ refers not to a baby’s actual conception or birth, but specifically to the moment of ‘quickening’ as Olive Pink described it (1936, p.288) when an ancestral spirit enters a woman and angane-irrek (spiritually conceives) the unborn child inside her (Green 2010b, p.95). The process is often discussed by Strehlow as being akin to the ‘reincarnation’ of an ancestor (see, for example Strehlow 1978b). As a person’s moment of spiritual conception may occur at any locality whilst a mother is journeying, it follows that the Dreaming ancestor that animates the child may not be associated with one’s father’s country and in fact is more likely to occur in an area familiar to the mother (Hamilton 1998, pp.101–102), but in reality could occur anywhere.

As Anmatyerr families moved around the region, working, hunting, visiting relations and travelling to ceremonies, a given set of siblings could therefore potentially be spiritually conceived, colloquially known as being ‘found’, in different places and thus acquire unrelated personal Dreamings (Rubuntja & Green 2002, p.15; see Austin-Broos 2006, p.111 for an excellent illustration of this). Although senior men played a role in determining which specific Ancestor entered the child at a particular intersection of anengkerr trajectories (Strehlow 1947, p.139; Gillen et al. 2001, p.159), conception sites were/are ultimately an arbitrary attribution. Regardless, the tradition of spiritual conception according to Strehlow was enormously important to an individual’s identity, rights and duties in ritual (Strehlow 1978b, p.26), and as Austin-Broos has added, operated as a way of promoting ‘individuation’ and diversification of relationships ‘among patrifilial relatives’ (2009, p.109). It was this diversification that bound people together within networks of mutual and overlapping ritual responsibilities.

Where you come ‘from’ on these family trees is thus more correctly where one was ‘found’ and the totem listed is the ancestor that angane-irrek (spiritually conceived) the person. Explaining this in a letter to Mervyn Hartwig in 1965, Strehlow wrote that the ‘genealogies can reveal at least certain features of the local organisation in the

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324 It is also accepted amongst some Central Australia Aboriginal people that alhernter too, if conceived in Central Australia, can be incorporated in his system, although never recognised as merek-artwey (boss or owner of a place) (Rubuntja & Green 2002, p.175; T.G.H. Strehlow 1964c, p.731).
pre-white days; the ‘conception site’ is always included. It reveals where the mother was some seven months or so before the birth of each of her children’.325 Anmatyerr speakers however, find Strehlow’s use of the term aknganenty slightly problematic. Aknganenty can just as easily also refer to the ‘country’ and Dreamings one inherits via their father’s father, as much as it can to their personal conception ‘totem’. Other terms like anngirrem or alkngirrenty are much more commonly used to denote spiritual conception (Green 2013, 2010b, pp.95, 122). As Malcom explained, aknganenty could refer to the full range of personal ‘connections’ to ancestral beings that could be associated either to one’s grandparents or implicated in an individual’s personal conception.326

Biography and Becoming

When the particulars of these documents are understood though, Anmatyerr people are relatively quick to make sense of them. I distinctly recall one occasion where a large number of people gathered at the bonnet of my car to read over extracts from Strehlow’s Handbook to Central Australian Genealogies (1969c), a compilation of census data taken by Strehlow during his time as a Patrol Officer, as well as genealogies collected from his informants. Pointing to the documents as I sat in my car at the front of the Ti Tree store, Don Presley inquired ‘Nthakenh. Pepe nhenh iwenheh?’ [What’s happening? What is that document there?]. We laid out the genealogies on the bonnet of the car and on finding reference to his father, Don called over his wife and a younger woman.327 As people passed by us on their way to the store, more and more began to congregate. Don read the documents aloud to a growing crowd. Although he struggled with what he called Strehlow’s ‘German spelling’ of Arandic terms, Don an another man keenly interested in these records experimented with the text, trying various pronunciations of phrases or words until an agreed interpretation of site names or Dreaming ancestors was found.328

On almost every occasion, the group would at first express collective puzzlement over a person’s listed aknganentye, before launching into intricate discussions about how

325 Strehlow to Hartwig 29/07/1965. SRC archives.
327 Don’s father was Donovan Tyaname (Tjanama) (Strehlow 1969c, p.38).
328 Don and others experimented, for example, with adding suffixes to some terms. Adding particular suffixes to some terms can sometimes turn Strehlow’s Arandic spellings into words recognisable to Warlpiri speakers. For example, Akwerlp (or Kolba) in Anmatyerr could become Wakulpa in Warlpiri.
particular people could be associated with the listed place or totem. The most senior people who often personally knew many of the older generations listed on these family trees, were of course the quickest to realise that Strehlow had recorded non-patrilineal associations. As an example, the genealogy of Ingkaparleparl’s killer, Jamatjitana, which described him as being ‘from’ Puturlu (Mt Theo) was immediately recognised by Paddy Kemarr as signifying what he knew was this man’s *menh-menh*, mother’s mother’s ‘country’.

Indeed, on most occasions people attributed the *aknganenty* to a person’s *kwertengerl* (ritual assistant) responsibilities or their ‘mother’s country’.

When Malcolm read his own family’s genealogy, he similarly noted that the *aknganenty* and place listed for his older sister rang true with what she had been told by her parents about her conception:

She told me that she was born… no, not born – *anganek* – at Mer Ywerternt [Laughton’s Lagoon, near Aileron]. It happens before you turn up [before you are born, i.e. conceived]. She is *kwaty-ke-kartey* [belonging to the rain Dreaming] and she was given the nickname *ampelyerrk*. I thought *ampelyerrk* just meant a newborn baby, but she told me that it also means the small cloud that you see before rain.

As these genealogies were ‘worked through’ with senior people, fuller biographies of the individuals listed would often emerge. Going well beyond the minimalist, data-focused records produced by Strehlow, people interspersed their analyses with memories of individual personalities, the stations they worked on, the places they travelled to, the type of work they did and, of course, their familial relationships to contemporary generations. As others have pointed out (cf. Ong 1988, p.97; Rigsby 1998, p.108), the original statements made by informants about genealogies in oral societies are generally couched in ‘narrative terms’ and are very rarely conceptualised in the itemized, tabulated or fixed forms of the ethnographer. Having them re-read by

329 Audio File – Paddy on Artetye 1 2692014.WAV.
contemporary descendants therefore was a means of reinserting this orality and narrativity.

Discussing the aforementioned Bob Malpangk’s genealogy, Paddy Kemarr again became insistent about patrilineal associations. He wanted to make it clear that Bob was first and foremost ‘ahakey-ke-artwey’, an owner of the ahakey (native currant or bush plum, *Psydrax latifolia*) Dreaming ‘from’ his father’s father’s country of Aleyaw (Ti Tree Township). Paddy explained that Bob Malpangk’s father had been Ntapwet Ngal, a man now regarded as an important ancestor for the Aleyaw estate. Gesturing to our north, he pointed out a tall pwernengk (ghost gum) tree that embodied the ‘seed’ of ‘Old Ntapwet’ located between the Ti Tree Roadhouse Pub, and the local Shire office.

That big tree standing there, that white tree, pwernengk, that’s the ‘seed’ for that Ntapwet. That’s ahakey [the bush plum]. Ahakey travelling west. [...] There, look. Right along from the pub. Right along from that roadhouse. Big one. Olden time.

Wanting me to see ‘Old Ntapwet standing up’, we drove over to the site, only a short distance away (Figure 29). The ghost gum tree embodied the spirit of the person and the ahakey ancestor simultaneously. All those descend from them participated in the same essence. But it was Paddy’s use of the English word ‘seed’ and not ‘aknganenty’ to describe this concept, that appeared significant to me. As the Anmatyerr words for ‘spiritual conception – anngirrenty or alkngirrenty’ – have at their root the Anmatyerr term for ‘seed’ (or eye) – ‘annya’ or alknga – I assumed that he was specifically referring to Ntapwet’s conception Dreaming. But since Paddy

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331 Intriguingly, and suggestive of the general shift towards an emphasis on patrilineal connection, Peter Ntaranga gives a different location for Bob Mapangk’s conception site to Strehlow in the 1960s. Ntaranga claims that Malpangk’s site is within his father’s father’s estate at Anakwelp (Nakuilba).

332 Strehlow makes reference to Ntapwet’s (Ndabuta) murder after he had damaged a *tywerreng* object in his published works (1970b, p.117) and his diaries (1953a, p.133, 147a).

333 See Ntabuta (Strehlow 1953a, p.133, 147a). ‘Ntapwet’ may refer to a type of gecko. See Carl Strehlow’s *ntaputatalelena*. Louis was also an informant to Olive Pink at Aileron in 1936. See Olive Pink Notebook ‘Aranda at Aileron 1936’, AIATSIS, A(c)(16)v. p.168, 159.

334 Audio File: Paddy and Don 10092013 (10th September, 2013). Ntapwet was buried at a burial site or cemetery near the old Ti Tree Station homestead, on the (western) side of the Hanson Creek.

335 The ontological connection between ‘becoming’ and ‘seed’ is yet to be properly understood by anthropologists or linguists (Róheim 1945, p.124; Green 2013; Turpin & Green 2011). T.G.H.
had previously described Kwetyaney as being the ‘right seed’ for Warlapanpa, his patrilineal country, then it seemed that this was an erroneous assumption on my part. Paddy used ‘seed’ to refer to one’s patrilineal inheritance.

Figure 29: Paddy Kemarr at the ‘seed’ tree of Ntapwet Ngal (photo J. Gibson, 2014).

It appears that the tradition of conception is in noticeable decline and will make the reading of these genealogies doubly difficult for future generations. At the moment there are men and women that understand and operate according to this tradition but in some parts of the Arandic region the ‘ontology of conception’ (Austin-Broos 2009, p.117) is almost totally gone. Observing these changes amongst the Western Arrernte for example, Dianne Austin-Broos has suggested that the tradition of ‘reincarnation’ (spiritual conception) has almost entirely given way to the ‘forces of inheritance’

Strehlow never discussed this relationship although Carl Strehlow glossed spiritual conception as kinderkeime (Child-seeds).
mostly along patrifilial lines (2009, p.117). Among the principle reasons for this ontological shift she argues has been the rise of monotheism/Christianity, the influence of pastoralism and its highlighting of property (landowning) rights, as well as the way in which sedentary life has resulted in large numbers of children being conceived at a single location (community). The only way to maintain diversification when large groups of children share the same conception site therefore is to emphasise inherited associations.

When gathering genealogies from his informants at Napperby (Leramba) in 1968, Strehlow was told that the ‘anmatjera children’ from here usually ‘inherited their father’s totemic centres and their traditions’ (1968a, p.66). Although he believed that this information was ‘rather doubtful’, to his credit he resisted the temptation to “tidy up” what he had been told. ‘Genealogies are after all’, he wrote:

the property of the heirs that figure in them; and what they know – or believe to know – must take precedence over the doubts and theories of the person who collects’ F.T.s [Family Trees]’

(Strehlow 1968a, p.66).

Armed with their own in-depth knowledge of Anengkerr, family, and social history, these ‘heirs’ are now ready and willing to make sense of this archival work. Their interpretation is not straightforward, but like other ethnographic sources, when read socially amongst senior men and women and with careful explanation of their theoretical context, they can be important resources in the emergence of intimate histories.

**Conclusion**

The text-based records created by ethnographers are particularly significant sites in which the tensions between oral and print cultures play out for Indigenous groups. Dense ethnographic works, like Strehlow’s, certainly have the propensity to

336 Associated with this is people’s contemporary emphasis on ‘boundaries’ between countries. In many ways this attitude is reflected in Strehlow’s anyenheng model of land tenure. Quite unaware of the academic debates in this area (Strehlow 1970b; Peterson & Long 1986; Myers 1991; Sutton 1996; Keen 1997; Morton 1997), Anmatyerr people speak of the way the Arandic region is distinct from their Western Desert neighbours. They recognise the centrality of defined estates with connections across country.
‘textualise’ oral cultures by taking unwritten oral narratives, beliefs or traditions and repositioning them as objectified assemblages of text (Célestin 1996, p.11). Whether it be genealogies or social histories, these texts create new learning contexts (Goody 2010b, p.153 see the next chapter) and challenge word of mouth communication between kin, and across generations.

Anmatyerr people however generally come to this material ready to apply their own interpretative lens. Local, and orally communicated social memories, complete with the challenges of changing ontological frameworks, are used to make sense of these documents on their own terms. An important part of this process for Anmatyerr people was taking these texts back to the locales to which they referred. Mer (country) for Anmatyerr people, is a highly local, social reality, saturated in memories of deaths, births, conflict, peace, journeying, generations of families and the disruptions of colonial history. As the processes of living and moving through mer revealed, these places did not simply ‘gather’ meanings but, as Casey has put it, ‘beckoned’ to its inhabitants to assemble and make meaning (Casey 1996, p.25; see also Myers 1997). Situated in this way, Strehlow’s textual archive was actively intermingled with the geo-mythologies, memories, and the noumenal forces of Anengkerr. I contend therefore that we move away from the notion that access to this material will necessarily negatively ‘impact’ upon the ‘consciousness’ of readers in oral societies, or act ‘as a new form of objectified authority’ (Wilmot & Morgan 2010, p.1). Far from being authoritative, Strehlow’s genealogies, maps and diary extracts were often subsumed and reinterpreted within relational modes of historical practice and individual experience.
...the museum literally takes the world apart at its joints, collects the pieces, and holds them in suspension. Identified, classified, and arranged, objects withdrawn from the world and released into the museum are held in a space of infinite recombination... the museum puts people and things into a relationship quite unlike anything encountered in the world outside (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 2004).

When regarded as an ensemble of distinct archival types and housed in spaces withdrawn from the ‘world outside’, the ethnographic museum collections might easily be described as above. The objects and information contained within these collections become disconnected, fragmented and removed; in this case the ritual lifeworlds of Central Australian Aboriginal people are metaphorically taken apart at the ‘joints’.

The Strehlow Research Centre, at least for some, has come to represent these reifying effects of museums in general:

At the Strehlow Research Centre in Alice Springs, you descend a ramp into a subdued room. The lights are dim. There is a febrile intoning over an invisible speaker system, faking a spooky sense of the spiritual. But there is no evidence of human activity here. Only lifeless objects stripped of their contexts and reinstated in the reverential space of “art” (Jackson 1995, p.171).

Since Jackson’s observations though there have been other engagements with this collection beyond its ‘objects’ and outside the cold world of the museum ‘store’. The museum context has undoubtedly put people and things into a relationship quite unlike anything encountered before, but there is certainly no absence of ‘human activity’. Within this very same storeroom, numerous Aboriginal men have now sung, recounted stories and interacted with their objects collected by T.G.H. Strehlow. In
the upstairs offices, people visit the centre to hear recordings and watch the ceremonial films of their fathers and grandfathers.

Over the last twenty years, the Strehlow Research Centre (SRC) has come a long way amidst the general push towards greater Indigenous participation in the curation and management of ethnographic collections in Australia and other settler-colonial states (Hendry 2005; Stanley 2007a; Lonetree 2012). In these settings, many museums have looked to develop ‘indigenous museological approaches drawing on local indigenous traditions, skills and forms of knowledge, which may complement mainstream, standardised, museum practices’ (Varutti 2013, p.72). At the time of writing, there are three representatives on the Strehlow Research Centre Board from the local Central Australian Aboriginal community, a number of initiated Arrernte men have been employed to work on the collection, and the Strehlow Research Centre Act 1988 has been amended to allow for the repatriation of artefacts to occur.337 And yet, despite these advances there is still, as John Morton puts it, ‘unfinished business’ when it comes to ‘putting the whole of the Strehlow Collection back where it belongs, in the hands of Aboriginal people’.338 While it would be hard to disagree with Morton’s remarks on moral or political grounds, this chapter interrogates the complications of these issues in reality. How would this work in practice?

At the centre of these discussions are a number of fundamental questions about how the collection might be utilised by present and future generations. What role might Central Australian Aboriginal men play in the process of managing and caring for this unique body of predominantly restricted material? Given the absolutely authoritative and in-depth responses to this material given by Anmatyerr men in the previous chapters, it seems fitting to now turn to their views on how the collection should be handled into the future.

337 The Act was amended in 2005. Garry Stoll, a Lutheran lay missionary who had worked at Hermannsburg and learnt the Arrernte language, was for a long time nominated by the people of Hermannsburg as their representative on the Board. Stoll spent 28 years in this role. Stoll is the godfather to young Carl Strehlow. Strehlow apparently considered Stoll as a potential ‘heir’ to the collection after realising in the late 1970s just how knowledgeable Stoll had become of Arrernte language and ritual. Pers comm. Garry Stoll 4th September 2013.
338 See http://www.clc.org.au/articles/info/strehlow/
The principal debates and issues surrounding the prospects of repatriation, Indigenous control and management of museum collections are discussed with direct reference to how the Anmatyerr responded to these issues and opportunities. The description has been assembled by me in dialogue with Anmatyerr (and Arrernte) people, and in the course of a number of actual repatriation endeavours. Out of these experiences has emerged an appreciation that repatriation is more complex and nuanced than the conventional discourses surrounding the role of museums might suggest. The typical argument is that repatriation, meaning the return of objects pertaining to an Indigenous group, might go some way to correcting some of the past wrongs of colonialism. As one former Director of the Strehlow Research Centre noted, the sacred tywerrenge objects of Central Australian men simply ‘don’t belong in museums’ and ought to be returned to the traditional owners (Mitchell 2012). Exactly what this ‘return’ might look like, what effect it might have on those receiving the objects and the variance in opinions amongst Indigenous groups, are however far more difficult issues to address.

Suggesting that the primary interest of collecting institutions should be to ultimately empty their stores of Indigenous collections is short-sighted. This is not to say that the return of cultural heritage to Indigenous communities is not required or desired. Indeed, the process of dialogue and exchange that surrounds these negotiations has lead to ‘mutually beneficial and restorative’ outcomes for all involved (Jessiman 2011). Going beyond the well-intentioned rhetoric, many Indigenous groups across the world now look for ways of engaging with collecting institutions (Chaat Smith 2007; Stanley 2007b) and call for greater recognition of the fact the these collections are inherently entangled. Others point to the ‘pragmatism’ and ‘hope’ demonstrated by many Indigenous elders, museum curators and cultural-resource managers across the world (Brown 2003, p.252) who not only maintain a stand against cultural exploitation and insensitivity, but acknowledge the importance of intercultural, cooperation, dialogue and negotiation.

Strehlow’s Collection?

Exactly what T.G.H. Strehlow had in mind for the future of his collection is hard to determine. His writings on this topic reveal confused and contradictory ideas. On the one hand he promoted the interests of Central Australian Aboriginal people as ‘heirs’
to their own heritage, and praised young men like Ken Tilmouth as being ‘future guardians’ of their traditions (Strehlow 1965d, p.17). At the same though he derided the general abilities of the younger generations to properly understand and care for this material, claiming that they ‘would not carry on, or even value, the traditions of their fathers’ and that ‘there were no worthy dark heirs’ (Strehlow 1968a, p.40). He remained largely silent on the topic of future Aboriginal uses of the collection.

Amassing a large and intricate collection of material culture, audio, visual and textual materials was never at the forefront of Strehlow’s mind when he began his research in 1932. Many of the early objects he collected were sold on to museums and private collectors (see Leo 2008, p.94; Rowse 1999), suggesting that he originally had no intention of making a large collection of material culture. Over time however, his private collection of ritual paraphernalia, including ceremonial poles, head dresses and other ceremonial props, as well as wooden and stone sacred objects (tywerreng), became critical to his practice (Strehlow 1978c, p.6). In the final six years of his life, Strehlow and his second wife, Kathleen, worked towards the establishment of a kind of hagiographical monument to his work, the Strehlow Research Foundation. This was to be the place where all of his collection could be stored but also where the unfinished business of transcribing his field diaries and matching his song recordings and films could be carried out. Seeing himself as the ‘sole inheritor’ of the ceremonies, songs and objects he had recorded and amassed, he envisaged that Kathleen, and their son Carl, were to be the future ‘heirs’ (Hill 2003, p.735; Smith 2009, pp.83–85; Morton 1993, p.38). Although the idea of establishing some kind of access to the collection for Aboriginal people in Alice Springs and Hermannsburg was initially discussed (Hill 2003, p.734), planning went no further than this.

Aboriginal relationships with ethnographic collections (and particularly the question of access to sacred objects) had already been a topic of conversation in Central Australia for a number of years prior to the establishment of the Foundation. Ken Tilmouth’s father, Mick Werlaty, had previously discussed the idea of creating a

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339 Strehlow was also well aware of the Finke River Museum’s practice of selling artefacts to museums and private collectors in the 1930s and sold some of his own collected objects to the South Australian Museum during the same time. He also sold other objects to L.P. Winterbotham at the University of Queensland’s Anthropology (then, Ethnology) Museum in the 1950s. There are also two items in Museum Victoria’s ‘Harry Rainy Balfour Collection’ that were ‘obtained from T.G.H. Strehlow in September of 1937’ (see items X051378 and X051359).
‘sacred storehouse’ with the Reverend Paul Albrecht in the late 1960s (Strehlow 1968a, p.41), and by the early 1970s a ‘Men’s Museum’ had been established at the Yuendumu community in order to house Warlpiri and Anmatyerr sacred items (Carmichael & Kohen 2013; Campbell & Scott 2006, pp.26–28). The Strehlow Research Foundation though was intended to be something quite different. It would be located in Adelaide, 1500 kilometres away from Central Australia, and its primary purpose would be to translate and then publish the entirety of the collected song texts (Hill 2003, pp.734, 751; see also Strehlow 1978c, p.7).

The future of the corpus would more likely resemble the great collections of antiquity that Strehlow so admired at the British Museum. It was envisaged that his materials would one day be used as aesthetic and intellectual inspiration in the development of national cultural identity. Favouring the well established and founding discourses around museum collections that pitched ethnographic collections as part of an international cultural commons (Geismar 2015; Bennett 2013), Strehlow did not embrace the emergent notion of ‘cultural heritage’ being promoted by organisations such as the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) in the 1970s. According to this view, ethnographic collections were the legacy of a particular group or society and therefore carried direct relevance to their future generations (Roy 2015). Convincing himself that the traditions he had recorded now ‘lived on only’ in his ‘pictures and records’ (Strehlow 1978c, p.8) Strehlow viewed his collection as being important to a common human history. The authenticity and value of his collection was also premised on his authority as a collector and expert on the subject of the ethnographic ‘Other’ (Clifford 1988, p.233).

When Strehlow died suddenly of a heart attack, only hours before the launch of an exhibition celebrating his life’s work, the fate the collection became precarious. At the request of his wife Kathleen Strehlow proceedings continued and the exhibition was launched on the evening of his death. Ronald Berndt, one of Strehlow’s few

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340 The building of the ‘Men’s Museum’ in Yuendumu began in the early 1960s, initially with the idea that it would be the headquarters for the Yuendumu Social Club, constituted on moiety/skin-group lines. Darby Jampijinpa Ross was the main proponent for the idea of a museum, largely through his experiences at the South Australian Museum as a guest of Bob Edwards during 1965. When he returned to Yuendumu momentum built for the project to recommence, this time as a museum, which is what opened finally in July 1971. Pers comm Philip Jones 21/02/2016.
supporters within anthropology, delivered an address noting the extraordinary contribution which Strehlow had made (Kirby 1978, p.2) but was later more critical of his old friend for not having properly acknowledged the importance of the collection to present and future generations of Central Australian peoples (Berndt 1978, 1979b, 1979a). The Strehlow Research Foundation soon became the property of Kathleen and all of the materials remained with her in Adelaide.

 Allegations soon emerged that the collection was in danger of being broken up and sold overseas.\textsuperscript{341} With the passing of the \textit{Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Heritage (Interim Protection) Act 1984}, which gave the Federal Government of Australia amplified powers to protect Aboriginal heritage, particularly in relation to sacred sites and sacred objects, the Foundation apparently panicked. The collection was allegedly, secretly relocated to New Zealand, or some other other possible overseas location, while others claimed that the collection never actually left Australian shores. Wenten Rubuntja, the son Bob Rubuntja, Strehlow’s key collaborator in the 1950s (see Chapter 5), pleaded that the collection ‘should not be scattered or allowed to be desecrated’, he was reported as saying in the local press, and it was clear that Central Australian men wanted a say in setting the conditions of use and access to the materials (in Hill 2003, p.733). There was also concern that the collection was being ‘wasted’, perhaps even placed in danger, whilst in the hands of a person without any cultural authority or academic expertise.\textsuperscript{342} Having a woman preside over men’s \textit{tywerreng} was also highly offensive.

 Following years of protracted negotiations (see Hugo 1997), which involved considerable but ‘mysterious’ sums of money being paid to Kathleen Strehlow (Smith 2009, p.88), the Northern Territory Government eventually established the Strehlow Research Centre (SRC) in 1988. The Centre opened its doors as a research repository, conjoined to the Museum of Central Australia, in 1991 (O’Byrne 1993; Schulz 1992) and although the collection now resided in Central Australia questions remained over Aboriginal access. Protesters gathered on opening day, doubting the value of a

\textsuperscript{341} At the same time Carl Strehlow (junior) sold part of his father’s collection to the Central Land Council. This material is now housed within the Strehlow Research Centre.

repository which did not encourage Aboriginal participation or allow for the repatriation of objects (Anonymous 1991; Cohen 2015, p.93). The Centre was seen by many as a sterile, disempowering institution, removed from local Aboriginal concerns.

Both ‘Beautiful’ and ‘Dangerous’

The last fifteen years has seen a shift in the way the Strehlow collection is perceived. Those Arrernte people who have had the opportunity to engage deeply with the collection, tend to speak generously about its contents and the ‘extraordinary achievement’ of its principle maker (Perkins 2016). Shaun Angeles, an initiated Northern Arrernte man who has been working on cataloguing the secret-sacred film collection at the Centre for a number of years, also sees the collection as a ‘beautiful body of knowledge’ (2016). In Shaun’s estimation, while Strehlow was undoubtedly ‘an amazing man’, it is the ‘akngerrepate’ (senior men) that had worked alongside him as ‘co-creators’ who provide contemporary inspiration. The time has come, Shaun argues, for the Strehlow Research Centre to work hand-in-glove with the akngerrepate again:

It is important for us to work very closely with our Elders to realise the collection’s true potential. We have to include our elders throughout every process as they are the ones – and the only ones I might add – who understand its content and are able to enrich it and enrich the lives of our young men who are coming through the ranks. Our elders were left out of the collection for so long, so now we have a perfect opportunity to rewrite this bit of history and involve them with everything we do. We need to find innovative cultural ways to unlock this potential.343

Given the highly restricted nature of the majority of the content, unlocking this potential is fraught with difficulty. The collection is both ‘beautiful’ and ‘dangerous’. The Strehlow Research Centre itself is both a physical reminder of forward-thinking cultural exchange and of cultural dispossession. In the main though, it is seen as a

container of highly ‘dangerous’, ‘tikeley’ (of great sensitivity) material, and a place that needs to be approached with great care. The Centre and its contents are known by Arrernte people as being amek-amek, meaning a place associated with ‘sacredness’ that must be ‘secured against violation or infringement’ (Green 2010a, p.71; Moore 2016). Such references draw obvious analogies with ‘restricted’ places on traditional lands, which are ‘off limits’ to the uninitiated, women and children and are commonly known as ‘sacred sites’ (Biernoff 1978). As one Northern Arrernte elder expressed it, because the Strehlow Research Centre was known by everyone in the local Aboriginal community as ‘amek-amek anthwerr [a highly restricted place]’, it was regarded by many men from the Arandic area as the most suitable institution in Alice Springs to hold restricted cultural collections.

Many men therefore look upon any female staff or Aboriginal women visiting the Centre with a degree of wariness. While they generally do not suspect that anyone is trying to illicitly gain access to male ritual knowledge, they do nevertheless worry that women may be unintentionally exposed to it. They might stumble upon a photograph, walk into a room where films are being played, or accidentally read descriptions of restricted songs or ceremonies. Arrernte women are doubly aware of these protocols of gender segregation, and although their visitation is less common and cautious, they will come in to the Centre to access family genealogies (see Malbunka 2004) and ‘open’ (non-ceremonial) photographs of their male kin (cf. Wallace & Lovell 2009). But on the whole, most Arrernte women refrain from visiting the building. Just as Strehlow’s publications are understood as being ‘closed’ to them (Perkins 2016) so to the Strehlow Research Centre and its surrounds are to be approached with caution. In order to reduce the chance of being exposed to ‘men’s business’, or being accused of attempting to do so, some women will send in

344 Tikeley is derived from the English word ‘tickley’ or ‘ticklish’. Presumably stockmen in colonial times would have used ‘ticklish’ to refer to something that requires sensitive handling or that might cause upset (Macquarie Dictionary) but its meaning has now changed after being taken into Aboriginal English and re-purposed to fit something local. It is most often used when referring to men’s tywerrenge ‘business’.

345 Field notes May 3rd 2013. Melbourne Museum visit. This is issue was discussed with Anmatyerr and Arrernte men only.
alhernter (non-Aboriginal) friends, or other family members on their behalf to request materials.346

Because the Centre holds tywerrenge (sacred objects) from all over the region, its concentration of *amek-amek* material makes it a potentially volatile place. It is for these reasons that Anmatyerr and Arrernte people tend to see this location as an unusually powerful place; a confluence of Anengkerr (Dreaming) vitality from across the region, but also a site where ‘lost’ objects congregate and linger. Like when visiting sacred sites in the landscape, younger men are encouraged to avoid the building unless they are chaperoned by knowledgeable elders. When intending to access ceremonial recordings or objects they will often bring with them the rightful *merek-artwey* (‘owners’) and *kwertengerl* (‘managers’). Centre staff will also request that these cultural protocols are upheld.

**The Logic of Repatriation**

In 2005, the *Strehlow Research Centre Act* was amended to allow for the repatriation of ‘objects’, defined in extremely broad terms as ‘artefacts, notes, diaries, records, films, publications and sound recordings’ to their ‘traditional owners’.347 Since the 1980s and 1990s, museums in settler states like Australia, the United States and Canada, have increasingly developed policies aimed at advancing the return of both human remains and secret-sacred objects to Indigenous groups (Bray 1996, 2001; Fine-Dare 2002). In the United States, the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA) of 1990, provided a framework for this to occur (Brown 2003, pp.17–18; Nash & Colwell-Chanthaphonh 2010). In Australia, the Commonwealth Government’s Policy on Indigenous Repatriation supports similar objectives (Australian Government 2013, pp.5, 7). Once the great accumulators of ethnographica for museums (Peterson, Allen & Hamby 2008b), museum curators and anthropologists are now increasingly tasked with the job of ‘de-collecting’, taking objects back to the sites where they were originally collected (Anderson 1995a; Turnbull & Pickering 2010). It is in this changed policy context that Anmatyerr and

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346 Senior Eastern Arrernte women are particularly uneasy when discussing Strehlow or the Strehlow Centre. These women have even commented to me that he was responsible for ‘killing’ some of the older Arrernte men.

Arrernte today now deal with the Strehlow Research Centre, other museums and their staff.

The complexities involved in the repatriation of objects first occurred to me when Donald Campbell Peltharr, an elderly Anmatyerr man with considerable cultural knowledge, visited me at the Strehlow Research Centre in 2006. Two younger men whom I knew well, had asked Donald to accompany them to the Centre. They knew of the ritually charged material contained within the Centre and understandably did not feel comfortable being in the place without a senior man present. When Don arrived, I began to explain the nature of the Strehlow Research Centre and its collections. Soon after, Don asked if I could help him to locate an object that he knew had been ‘missing’ from a site near Napperby Station for many years. Staff from the Centre were immediately called in and responded to Don’s query by quickly searching their listings for the object that Don described. Unable to find it, the Strehlow Research Centre Director then wrote letters to the other museums on Don’s behalf asking that they also search their collections. I was reminded of the alacrity of the staff of the Centre when I stumbled across one of these letters in the Melbourne Museum archives nearly a decade later.

Although this object was never ‘found’, the process of working with Don and the museum staff started me thinking about the prospects of repatriating this type of material. Did all men want their objects back? What would they do with them once they had been returned? Were museums really comfortable with seeing these items relinquished? These were questions not peculiar to this case nor to the Central Australian context. Issues like this had hung over the relationships between museums and Indigenous communities worldwide since the notion of ‘cultural property’ had been established in international discourse at the end of the twentieth century (Ames 1992; Geismar 2015). Whether it be the repatriation of the G’psgolox totem pole to

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348 The two younger men had urged me to bring in Don to identify people photographed by Pastor P.A. Scherer in the 1960s.

349 They also immediately wrote to the Melbourne Museum with a description of the object and asked if they could search their collections for it. I had forgotten about this exchange but was reminded of it when I came across this letter in the Melbourne Museum archives. The object remains undiscovered though may have sold it to the Lutheran missionary, Pastor F.W. Albrecht by Barney Turner Ngwarray (the father the painter Tim Leura).

350 I came across their letter amongst Melbourne Museum files in 2015.
the Haisla First Nations groups in Canada (Jessiman 2011), or the return of ancestral human remains to the Māori of New Zealand (Stumpe 2005), negotiations between Indigenous groups and collecting institutions were notoriously complex, involving contrasting perspectives on the value of objects and their futures. For many in the museum and archaeological community, these objects represent a common, inclusive, human history that deserves transparent and objective study (Mulvaney 1991; Allen & Murray 1996), whereas for many Indigenous groups, these items are regarded as their personal or collective cultural property.

Since this time, I have been pulled aside by many men aware of my links to museums, asking for help in tracking down items now lost from their country. On one occasion I drove all day with a man of the Pengart subsection to the far Western edge of Anmatyerr territory so that we could visit the site where an object was once located. At this place we would feel the presence of the Ancestors. ‘Anwern arntarnt-arelhetyek, anwern-kenh merlalp map’ [We need to look after ourselves from the Ancestors of our land]. Sadly, one of the objects that embodied these ancestors had been removed and while most guessed that the culprit had been a local pastoralist, without any evidence, people felt powerless to act. This journey to Pengart’s country, underlined the sense of loss and subjection that people felt when this type of theft occurred. These objects were important in terms of their religious and political significance (Spencer & Gillen 1899; Strehlow 1947; Batty 2014) and carried undeniable affective value to personal identity. Much like the grief that Strehlow had witnessed amongst Anmatyerr elders who searched in vain for stolen objects in the 1930s, Pengart felt as though he had failed in his responsibilities to care for these things for future generations.

Some, but certainly not all, of the sacred objects now residing in museum collections were undoubtedly taken via similarly illicit channels. In the case of the Strehlow collection however, it was clear from the stories of exchange and participation outlined in this thesis that the vast majority had been originally sold, gifted or traded. They had not been ‘removed’ or ‘stolen’ but had been acquired within the asymmetrical contact zone of the colonial frontier. Trade in these objects had been an

Another occasion is mentioned in my field notes ‘Alice Springs’ 11/09/2015 at the SRC see page 2.
important feature of early colonial relationships and lasted up until the 1960s and 70s (see Anderson 1995b; Jones 1995a). Aboriginal men that participated in this exchange did so in order to gain access to power, better treatment, rations, foodstuffs, clothing or cash payments. In some cases, men reportedly ‘made special trips by camel to fetch’ objects to sell to the Lutherans at Hermannsburg who would then on-sell them to private collectors and museums. Encouraging this type of enterprise not only helped destabilise local religious beliefs and advance Christian conversion (Rowse 2002, p.82; Austin-Broos 2009, pp.69–70; Batty 2014, pp.306–310), but also assisted in raising much needed funds for the mission.

Most senior Anmatyerr and Arrernte men today acknowledge this complicated history and speak of the difficult position their elders found themselves in. ‘A long time [ago] I think they sell them for tucker and tobacco, poor buggers’, explained Paddy Kemarr. To Paddy, these men were simply struggling to adjust to a rapidly changing cultural, religious and economic world. Evidence of this can be seen in Tom Lywenge’s comments to Strehlow during their first fieldwork journey together in 1932 (see Chapter 5). Perhaps conflicted by their decisions, many of these men appear to have failed to inform their sons of the fate of these objects.

When I revealed to the elderly Archie Mpetyan at Ti Tree that his father Friday Ankerr-raweny Ngal had sold some of his personal tywerreng to Strehlow, he was clearly disappointed and surprised. As I read from Strehlow’s diary, Archie sat up straight so that he good could get a look at the sketch illustrations that Strehlow had made of them. The shape and the specific iconography depicted on each object would reference particular associated Anengkerr (Dreaming) ancestors and sites. As he stared at the drawings I could see he was struggling to make out the markings due to his very poor eyesight. But, the information noted by Strehlow made him wonder if these were the same artefacts that his older brother had in fact been searching for in vain. ‘Bring him back!’ Archie insisted. ‘My old brother was looking for him [the object]. That must be that tywerreng now. We’ve been looking for that one!’

352 Letter from F.W. Albrecht to A.S. Kenyon. Feb 7th 1934. Melbourne Museum Indigenous Cultures. Correspondence ‘Bunker’ Archives, Box 29. Some of the private collectors that developed strong ties with the Hermannsburg trade in these objects were Robert Henderson Croll and Harry Rainy Balfour. 353 Audio File: Paddy Don 10092013 (10th September, 2013). 354 Ti Tree 06062014 part 3.WAV.
the men that wanted their objects back, the original payments made to Strehlow were superfluous to the ongoing, continuous claims they had as senior descendants and owners. If they were returned to their owners, the objects could be brought out again at ‘business’ and used in various aspects of the initiation ceremonies.

For others though, asking for the return of objects that were knowingly sold or traded was inappropriate. Eric Penangk, for example suggested that some sort of recompense ought to be made not to Anmatyerr people, but to the museums that had in recent times repatriated objects. Knowing full well the unequal conditions in which his ‘old people’ had mostly traded or sold these items to Strehlow, Kramer and others, Eric maintained that the moral imperative was to uphold the original agreement.355 ‘They [past elders] sold them for tucker and rations. We can’t ask for them back. You can’t take back what you sold’.356 In a similar tone, Chris Anderson (1995a, p.12), a former repatriation anthropologist with the South Australian Museum, documented cases where senior men insisted on making some sort of compensation to museums for any objects returned to them.

When faced with lists of objects that museums might potentially repatriate, men like Eric understand that repatriation is not entirely about the amelioration of past injustices. In the past, men have been called together for meetings (a typically Western form of group information sharing and decision making), presented with photographs of objects and then than asked to make identifications in a relatively short space of time. It is also not uncommon for the anthropologists involved, who often work in communities across linguistic regions, to be less than proficient in Anmatyerr and thus produce rather dubious pronunciations of key anengkerr association or place names. In scenarios like this, it is very difficult for people to dwell on the contents being presented, to share the material with others that were not present at ‘the meeting’ and come to considered decisions. As a number of people experienced in the return of this material have acknowledged, in these circumstances it is usually the ‘non-Aboriginal people working in cultural institutions’ that feel anxious about seeing objects returned (Galt-Smith 2001). The process of repatriation

355 Eric often talked of the stories of the ‘Ngkart Kramer’ with his covered wagon travelling through Anmatyerr lands. Eric’s remembered that there were biblical excerpts painted on the side.
has been described by the Melbourne Museums Curator for Central Australia as a ‘white redemption ritual’ (Batty 2006a).

There is also an expectation that if barriers to access are removed, Indigenous people will naturally reconnect with materials kept in museum collections. Museum policies have certainly shifted in recent times to encourage this type of engagement with ‘source communities’ (Brown & Peers 2013) and to create exhibitions and research that is far less object-focused and more people-focused (Griffiths 1996, pp.95, 278–82; Edwards, Gosden & Phillips 2006; Hendry 2005), but interaction with collections will come in different guises. Brett Galt-Smith, a particularly pro-active former Director of the Strehlow Research Centre, had initially hoped for a type of deep engagement. When the Centre was established however, senior men did not flood in, in fact they stayed away (Galt-Smith 2001, p.5). Whilst Galt-Smith speculated about some of the reasons for this, he failed to consider the possibility that maintaining distance as well as silence over this material, could be an entirely legitimate reaction.

The expectation that Indigenous ‘communities’ would want to have something to ‘say’ about museum artefacts, and furthermore publically reassert their custodianship over them, may well be a preoccupation peculiar to Western ‘rights’ discourse, a point made by curator Liz Bonshek in her dealings with Papuan communities (2015, p.33, see also 2008). The shift in museum policies towards greater community engagement and their attempts to focus on developing personal relationships (see Scott & Luby 2007; Hafner 2010; and Allen 2016) should be applauded, but room must be made for nuanced responses that might appear an anathema to these expectations.

In my experience, it is not uncommon for people to feel uneasy in museum stores, especially when invited to make statements in regard to these highly charged ritual objects. People often ask that their anonymity be protected. Afraid of being accused of prying into other people’s ‘business’, they often prefer to leave no trace of their interaction and publically ‘say’ little. Most men refuse to touch secret-sacred objects which do not belong to them, and on one occasion I was even asked to turn the pages of a photographic album containing images of sacred ceremonies so as to

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357 Where anthropologists once collected artefacts for museum collections during fieldwork expeditions, they now often carry out the work of giving these objects back to people from the same communities.

358 These experiences were at the South Australian Museum and the Melbourne Museum.
avoid the person’s fingerprints being left on the object. The fingerprints, my companion advised, could be ensorcelled by the people that owned the rituals depicted in the photographs. Only where a personal or kin connection to an object can be established will people feel comfortable about physically interacting with the object or making a public utterance about it or asserting any claim.

Yet another complicating issue is the fact that some objects in the ritual domain of Central and Northern Australian Aboriginal culture are simply too dangerous or anomalous to return to communities. This is particularly the case with headdresses and ceremonial poles in Central Australia that would normally be made for a single performance or rite and then disassembled soon after. People will often express surprise and shock at seeing ritual paraphernalia like this preserved on museum shelves, and in some cases find them so aberrant that, much to the dismay of museum curators, call for these items to be destroyed (cf. Bradley & Kearney 2011, p.35). Once preserved, objects that were meant to be inherently ephemeral and temporary take on a geographically removed and atemporal life that is completely at odds with their original cultural contexts (Classen & Howes 2006, p.215). Being anomalous in this way, they fall outside of the usual rules of care and management for cultural objects and are difficult to work back into contemporary lives and contexts.

Ken Tilmouth’s views on the objects contained within the Strehlow collection are particularly significant. Many of the 32 objects either gifted or sold to Strehlow during the recording of the Akwerrperl ‘inner cycle’ in 1965 were made with Ken’s assistance. Together with his father and a small number of other men, Ken produced numerous fine examples of ritual paraphernalia used in men’s sacred ceremonies. Without going into the details of what these objects consist of or signify – for they are highly restricted – Ken explained that most had been replaced with ‘fresh ones’ soon after their handing over to Strehlow in the 1960s, and used in the enactment of the same ceremonies at a later date.359 While some objects had been offered to Strehlow because they were ‘old’ and in need of replacing, others could simply be remade and dismantled again in accordance with local custom. The objects, stored in acid-free

359 This is not just objects of stone and wood but feathers and other kinds of ornamentation – see field notes may 3rd 2013 notes on X10123. Men explain that they can make ‘fresh ones and replace them back’.
paper cardboard boxes and wooden crates at the Research Centre, were a frozen-in-
time exemplar of what these different types of paraphernalia looked like, as well as a
testament to the interactions with Strehlow.

The idea of ‘giving back’ this type of material then does not adequately account for
these many complexities. On a number of occasions, Strehlow Research Centre staff
have asked Ken if he would like to see the return of objects collected via himself and
his father. Ken’s responses have always been both cautious and guarded. ‘What are
you going to do?’ he asked the Centre’s anthropologist during a meeting at Alcoota in
2013.\(^{360}\) The very concept of ‘repatriation’ itself needed clarification, especially as
Ken had never himself requested that the materials be put in his physical possession
(though he had asked for copies of the film). The option to ‘repatriate’ was mostly
presented to senior men as a positive opportunity by the Centre’s staff who, of no
fault of their own, had put unintentional pressure on the *angerr-pat* to respond. Even
if the ‘repatriation’ was only to occur ‘on paper’, meaning that they would be
registered as belonging to Ken but continue stay in the store, there was uncertainty
about how recognition of his rights to the material by the Northern Territory
Government would work in the long-term and in a practical sense. Ken was unsure
about how future generations might be affected by these decisions.

To date, Ken has reasoned that these objects should be kept at the Strehlow Research
Centre. Here these fragile items could be cared for and kept alongside all of the films,
photographs and audio recordings that documented the Akwerrperl ceremonies as
they were enacted in 1965. Like the men at Napperby whom had agreed that
Strehlow’s collecting had been conducted appropriately because he brought together
suites of related songs, objects and ceremonies, Ken reiterated the importance keeping
the collection united. His preference would be to visit the collection with his sons
whenever necessary, and most importantly ensure that their ongoing rights to the
material were documented and recognised by the Centre:

\(^{360}\) Alcoota Fieldnotes, 15 08 2013.
Well, we can go in there next time. We can have a look and [we can] tell you three [referring to myself, and two SRC staff]. We’ll tell “you can look after this one”, and we can put that arreyn [name], that name there [help you provenance and document the collection]. You’ve got a good place there you know … We can go around there and have a look and sort them out, see?\textsuperscript{361}

Given all of the complexities associated with the idea of simply repatriating Indigenous cultural materials, James Clifford is right to point out that the process of ‘decolonising’ collections will not be an ‘all or nothing, once and for all, transition’ (2001, p.473, and 2013, pp.302, 306). The entangled and intertwined histories of these collections make their reintegration and revivification in contemporary social lives inherently complex. There are signs however, that alternative approaches to dealing with these matters are emerging amongst Anmatyerr and Arrernte considerations.

‘You’re my kwertengerl’

Acknowledging the aforementioned complexities and ambiguities, many senior men now tilt towards an alternative model of care and responsibility that does not necessarily demand the return of objects. This alternative is most desirable when either direct repatriation is not sought after or possible, where definitive ownership cannot be ascertained, or when the knowledge needed to control powerful items exceeds the abilities of present day ritual leaders. In these cases, most men indicate that they expect collecting institutions and their staff to care for the materials in the long-term. Critically though, the way in which this was envisioned by Anmatyerr and Arrernte men was not informed by the discourses of collecting institutions or State sponsored repatriation initiatives, but in terms of Anmatyerr or Arrernte notions of rights, responsibilities and care; specifically, the idea that museums should accept the responsibilities of a kwertengerl (ritual manager). Before I can assess what this process might entail and how it might work, a thorough definition of the term is required.

\textsuperscript{361} Field notes ‘Alcoota 15 08 2013’.
The term *kwertengerl*, and its equivalent in other Australian Aboriginal languages, has been the subject of considerable attention in the past few decades. Often translated into English as ‘managers’ ‘guardians’ or ‘offsiders’ of land and ritual, who work in tandem with their ‘owners’, the idea of a *kwertengerl* denotes an important social role often found in many parts of Australia (Morphy & Morphy 1984; Young 1981; Nash 1982, 1984).\(^{362}\) For Sutton, the dual roles of the ‘manager’ and ‘owner’ are a ‘ritual based system of formalised complementary filiation’ (Sutton 2003, p.194), whereby (using the Arandic terminology) the *kwertengerl* – who are related to the *merekartwey* (traditional owner) via their mother’s and their mother’s brother’s country – manage, advise and protect the ritual knowledge and sites possessed by the *merekartwey*.\(^{363}\) The *kwertengerl* therefore play an important role in helping the *merek-artwey* to maintain the integrity and long-term transmission of their estate-based rituals, songs, dances and so on.\(^{364}\) Likened to a ‘governance structure’ by some Warlpiri people (Pawu-Kurlpurlurnu, Holmes & Box 2008) these complementary occupations ensure that everyone within *anpernerrenty* (the network of relatedness) has a role.

I first heard museum staff and their institutions being likened to *kwertengerl* during Ken Tilmouth’s visit to the Melbourne Museum with six other Arrernte men in 2013. These men had been invited by the museum, using funding allocated by the Commonwealth government’s ‘Indigenous Repatriation Program’, to explore the large holdings of *tywerrenge* collected between the 1890s and the late 1960s. As is the case with many Australian museums now, these objects were stored in a way that mimicked the traditional sacred storehouse; kept in a separate storage area accessible only to a small number of male staff (including myself) (Anderson 1996; Kaus 2008; Stanley 2007a). When the men were first introduced to the primary collection manager who cared for the objects, they immediately identified him as ‘our *kwertengerl*’. As the curator and I were responsible for the research and community

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\(^{362}\) In other parts of Australia equivalent groups are known as *kirda* (Warlpiri), *mangaya* (Warumungu), *gidjan* (Jawoyn), *ngimirringki* (Yanyuwa) etc.

\(^{363}\) This term likely derives from the Warlpiri language (Nash 1982), although was first noted by Olive Pink (1936) and T.G.H. Strehlow in the 1930s. T.G.H. Strehlow noted the term being used amongst Northern Arrernte men (1932, p.159) during his first year of fieldwork.

\(^{364}\) *Kwertengerl* may also be recruited from *classificatory* kinsmen from the opposite moiety with appropriate subsections and knowledge or seniority to fulfil these roles (Kenny, 2014: 211-212). For example, the *kwertengerl* for people of the Pwerrerl subsection are Ngwarray.
consultations relating to this material, we too were described as ‘kwertengerl’, and in effect were being invited to see our professional roles through the complementary merek-artwey/kwertengerl dynamic.365

But it was not until I visited Ken at the Alcoota (Engawala) community later that same year, that I began to consider the use of this designation more seriously. As we discussed the potential of the Strehlow collection for coming generations, Ken reiterated the importance of kwertengerl in maintaining the complexity and reciprocal fundaments of these traditions. Pointing directly at me as I wrote down his thoughts on ownership and rights, he tried to explain the expanded cultural responsibilities of everyone now working with these collections. ‘You’re my kwertengerl akin [as well]. You write this one see. Make ‘em arraty-ilem.’ [You keep accurate/truthful documentation].366 Turning to Adam MacFie, the anthropologist working for the Strehlow Research Centre at the time, Ken reiterated his position. ‘You’re my kwertengerl too. Same. Your hand does this one [making writing motion/gesture] on this one…paper…paper-one… That’s kwertengerl now. They do it that way. Alakenh [that is how it is done].’ 367

The inference was clear, Adam and I (indeed anyone else in comparable positions) were to act in a similar way to Ken’s kwertengerl in the ritual setting. By writing down what Ken as the merekartwey had to say about the collections, and upholding his rights in the objects, (but also the associated audio and film recordings), we would be honouring his social and cultural status. The act of writing too, it must be added, has parallels with one of the key responsibilities of kwertengerl – the art of decorating, often referred to as ‘painting up’ the merek-artwey prior to the enactment of a performance and helping to construct ritual objects (Pink 1936, p.302). In order to do this, kwertengerl must have knowledge of the designs and other aspects of these rituals so they can properly oversee the custodianship of the traditions. By sharing in this knowledge they uphold an ‘owners’ rights over it.

Assimilated into these local frameworks of social relatedness, museums and their staff

365 See field notes ‘Arrernte men 30th April 2013 session 1’.
366 Alcoota 15 08 2013 Notes.
367 Alcoota 15 08 2013 Notes.
were often regarded as ‘working for’ Anmatyerr people. Similar to what Myers observed in Pintupi sentiments towards Western forms of authority being responsible for ‘looking after’ or ‘caring for’ Aboriginal people and their interests (1980, 1991, pp.283–284), the Anmatyerr expect the same from collecting institutions. I had this pointed out to me by a group of senior men at Napperby after playing them recordings of some restricted songs associated with highly secretive aspects of male initiation. It was a dark still night and the glow from the firelight only partially revealed people’s facial expressions, but as the songs played, I could hear the men talking quietly amongst themselves about how many of these songs should never have been recorded.368 I asked what should be done with these recordings. ‘Burn them’ one of the old men replied. ‘Give them to a warlparl [whitefella] to look after. Aboriginal people in town can’t be trusted with these things. They’re too dangerous’.369

In addition to challenging the discourses of cultural preservation (as mentioned above) these statements run counter to the idea of Indigenous self-determination. In its place was a notion that ‘the kwertengerl-map [the managers]’ that ‘work for’ Anmatyerr people, would fulfil their role in protecting the rights of senior ritual experts.370 Some Arrernte men have even even gone as far as suggesting that museum staff be issued with official ‘Kwertengerl’ identification badges so that their role in communities is properly defined!371

If one applies the logic of complementary filiation to the management of the Strehlow collection, then the community of ritual ‘owners’ for the collection are undoubtedly the particular merek-artwey, while the collecting institution/s and their staff become the quasi-kwertengerl. I describe this as quasi-kwertengerl because it would be folly

368 Strehlow notes an almost identical reaction from men listening to similar (perhaps the same) songs that were recorded by Spencer and Gillen’s in 1901. According to Strehlow (see his manuscript for a paper on the Spencer recordings produced in 1968 p. 17), the men were ‘fiercely indignant’ about the recordings and regarded it as ‘sacrilege’.

369 Field notes from Napperby Creek 2nd November 2016. I have decided not to name people given the sensitivities associated with these recordings. See black notebook June 2014 – 2016. The recordings discussed were not made by Strehlow but Paul Albrecht.

370 17th May 2016 Bruce ‘Pweng’ Brown Peltharr at Napperby. See orange notebook. Some had performed and explained their antenh possum ceremonies to Strehlow in the 1950s and his older brother, Tim Leura depicted realistic scenes of men’s ritual in his early acrylic paintings (Kimber 1995; Johnson 2010, pp.96–99; Myers 2014).

371 This comment was made during a discussion of museum responsibilities to these objects at the Strehlow Research Centre, 9/8/15. This might even be seen as a reversal of the breast plates that were issued to selected Aboriginal men and women in the colonial period (Kaus 2006).
to take these suggestions too literally. An institution, composed of men and women mostly unrelated to these Aboriginal communities, can never operate as the genuine kwertengerl themselves. The metaphor is worth pursuing though, for even where ‘misunderstandings’ or ‘misinterpretations’ may occur, these types of interactions can nonetheless cultivate a useful space of new cultural production in cross-social and cross-political contexts. As White’s theorisation of the ‘middle ground’ posits, this is not necessarily ‘acculturation’ or ‘compromise’, but a process whereby people adjust their differences through a process of creative, and often expedient, misunderstandings and misinterpretations (see Deloria 2006, p.16). Writing of similar ‘disjunctive spaces’ between different interpretative communities and their approaches to museum collections, Morphy (2010a, p.281) similarly suggests that new ways of caring for these collections may be emergent.

As challenging as it may be for alhernter individuals and institutions to satisfy local Aboriginal governance and epistemological frameworks, the expectation that they will at least make the attempt persists. Writing about the ‘intellectual toughness’ of Aboriginal people ‘steeped in the classical traditions’, Sutton correctly points out most will expect scholars working in their domain to uphold the integrity of these traditions (2010, p.81). But what would it really mean then for the Strehlow Research Centre, or any other collecting institution, to take on a kwertengerl role? The relationship between the kwertengerl and the merek-artwey is fundamentally a reciprocal one centred on ‘ritual co-operation’, so if taken seriously neither the merek-artwey (the ritual owner or community of owners) nor the kwertengerl (in this case, the collecting institution) would predominate. As the kwertengerl/merek-artwey system works to integrate and bind together the two groups in accordance with their distinct roles and responsibilities (Pink 1936, p.300), both would have to share in the responsibilities of caring for the tangible and intangible cultural material contained in these collections. In the context of managing ethnographic collections, ‘ownership’ would need to unequivocally remain with the merek-artwey, while the collecting institutions, anthropologists or museum specialists would have to act as kwertengerl by caring for ceremonial knowledge, artefacts and recordings. Perhaps with the addition of some very specific items being returned to ‘owners’, this model comes
very close to what many Anmatyerr men expect to see from the Strehlow Research Centre and other museums today.372

‘We Still Working’
It is the ongoing ritual lives of individuals, outside of any dealings with collecting institutions, that takes precedence in the care of ceremonial matters. Senior ritual specialists who are kalty anthwerr (very knowledgeable) and confident in their ceremonial knowledge, see the Strehlow and other relevant collections as ultimately peripheral to their everyday lives. These men are not in a position where they need to look to Strehlow’s collection for ‘meaning’, and make it very clear that their energies are focused squarely upon current and ongoing ceremonial responsibilities. Unlike other Indigenous groups who now use archival sources to revivify song, language or ceremonial traditions (Kahunde 2012; Treloyn & Emberly 2013; Thorpe & Galassi 2014), for these older Anmatyerr men like Ken Tilmouth, the collection, whilst certainly edifying and important, is secondary to more immediate concerns:

Just leave it there [Strehlow’s collection]. This mob [the men of Alcoota] is alright. Everyone know this country, our country. No worry because this mob know you see? All the youngfellas. We’re teaching them all the time you see? We teaching them akiw [in the ceremonial camp for young men]. Akiw! They can work with us like that now.373

Ken reiterated his point again during another conversation in the previous year:

‘We got everything there. Mer [In the land]. We’ve got all the songs from there [the site of Akwerrperl]. I got all the songs from the bush [sites, away from the community] too, on my side anyway ... We still working. Same again [as when Strehlow was here]. We still got it all. We got song and all. He’s right here … Artwampw map alyelhem

372 The complexities of how the Centre might better operate in this way are beyond this thesis and require further research.
373 Alcoota 04062014 part 3.
arrrey[n [the older, senior men singing these songs]. We got all the song
here. We can alyelhem [sing], anyway.374

Many other senior knowledge holders, while happy to receive copies of recordings if
offered, reiterated that it was better if this material was kept safe in collecting
institutions. ‘Kele [No], Leave it there… more better if you leave it there’, Harold
Payne commented on the films and song recordings made of his father.375 Like Ken,
Harold continues to educate younger generations in contexts that have little or nothing
to do with collecting institutions and much of this ceremonial activity endures in
social spaces now rarely observed by alhernter.

This is not to suggest that male ritual knowledge is not under considerable strain in
Central Australia, just that sending archival recordings into these contexts will have
limited effects. Tamara Bray (1996), an anthropologist working on similar issues with
First Nations people in North America, makes a similar point with her assessment of
repatriation and ‘the politics of the past’. According to Bray, the idea that the return of
museum artifacts will do much to help maintain cultural practices is ultimately
‘misguided’ (1996, p.442). Cultural identity, she argues, does not reside in either
artifacts or recordings, and the preservation of these materials is often not a high
priority for marginalised groups. What takes greater precedence is the upholding of
the underlying relationships, social contexts and practices that ultimately give
meaning to this archival material. Moreover, the idea of simply returning cultural
content (be it objects or recordings), of putting them ‘back in their place’ in an act of
cultural ‘restoration’ (Forrest 2012, pp.132–223), supports an ideological view of
Aboriginal culture as impervious to change.

The social forces of pastoralism, settlement and Christianity alone in remote
Aboriginal Australia have however, produced considerable change. The return of
ethnographic materials that were collected in pervious historical contexts therefore
need to proceed in ways that are very much aware of contemporary assumptions.
‘Acting as if nothing had happened’, Jean Baudrillard warns of repatriation

374 Ken Tilmouth at Alcoota on the 15th August 2013.
375 Harold’s response may have been because he wasn’t merek-artwey (owner) for the songs recorded,
but merely a kwertengerl.
endeavours, is a type of ‘subterfuge’ or ‘retrospective hallucination’ where the complicated past is ‘effaced’ (1994, p.11). Tasked with returning ceremonial objects to Aboriginal communities in Western Australia, for example, the anthropologist Kim Akerman found a remarkably changed attitude to ritual when he was told, ‘You Keep It - We are Christians Here’ (2010). In the Anmatyerr region also, in the decades since Strehlow’s recordings, people made choices about which traditions to carry on with. As discussed in Chapter 7, certain genres of song and performance were sustained, some were known only to a handful of senior men, and in other cases only knowledge of the relevant sites or ancestral stories remained.

These socio-cultural changes are most apparent when museums try to reintroduce materials that can no longer be definitely claimed by senior people. This scenario usually arises when items with provenance to sites or estates that no longer have contemporary senior knowledge holders are discussed. While the presentation of this material might spur significant interest, ultimately Anmatyerr people appear to be focused on what is currently in social circulation and being actively performed. A number of the ceremonies and songs recorded by Strehlow, for example, relate to places (estates) that no longer have active ceremonial leaders. When discussing the prospect of returning film and song recordings from sites nearby to Aileron with Eric Penangk, he was noticeably saddened by the situation. He and his father’s generation had ‘held’ the knowledge for these places for decades, but as they were strictly not merek-artwey, he felt very uncomfortable with the idea of receiving responsibility for objects or recordings from the area:

They’re all gone!’ Merekartwey ityakwet [There are no owners left]. You can’t see [any] young generation. Their father’s, their mother’s all bin finished [have died] in Alice Springs somewhere. They never turned back to country… No one is alive for [estate name removed]. Everybody’s been going that way [to Alice Springs] and finish up [died] somewhere there.376

376 Aileron 05062014 part 2.WAV. It is common for people to ask that objects remain in collections when there is ‘no one left’ with the appropriate lineage of knowledge to take them. See field notes 3rd May 2013 at Melbourne Museum.
Although some of the mythologies and sites relating to these recordings or objects were well known to people associated with these areas, an absence of senior experts that ‘belonged to these places’, had effectively created what Deborah Bird Rose (2004, pp.34–52) has described as a ‘wounded space’ both in terms of landscape and social fabric. Though these ‘wounds’ can sometimes be mended by expert *kwertengerl*, and others that assume responsibility and care for certain traditions (see Young 1987; Morton 1997, p.114; Sutton 1995, p.151), for most Anmatyerr men the preference is to remain focused on nourishing practices and performances that remain central to present day ceremonial responsibilities.

**Teaching with ‘Content’**

This is not to say that the revivification of traditions from archival material is a completely repudiated idea. On the contrary, there is growing interest, particularly amongst younger generations of men, in utilising every resource available to them in order to fill gaps in their learning. Men aged in their thirties for example, who in addition to having been initiated and educated by elders, are equally eager to retrieve whatever additional material they can, including archival song recordings, films and ethnographic texts, to help augment their learning.\(^{377}\) The changed nature of Indigenous social life, including it’s ‘darker side’ - alcoholism, unemployment, incarceration, domestic violence and declining health conditions (Starn 2011) - has undoubtedly led to declined opportunities for the teaching and learning of song and ceremony amongst people of Central Australia. Exactly what the Strehlow collection might actually offer future generations, and how it might be used to educate younger men in ritual performance, is difficult to predict.

Despite the confidence and authority exhibited by some senior men in regard to song and ceremony, there nevertheless remains an anxiety for many others. The anxiety is felt by both young and old. The elders feel both the responsibility of teaching younger generations and the pressure of younger men wanting to learn. The younger people too feel apprehensive, not only about the frailty and small numbers of their senior people, but also their abilities to carry on with these traditions. This type of anxiety

\(^{377}\) When planning a fieldwork trip to record songs with some of the elders from Napperby in 2016, one of these men urged me to bring various archival recordings that he knew about (Tindale’s films from Cockatoo Creek in 1931 and Paul Albrecht’s song recordings from the 1960s).
appears to plague every generation, and even senior men with considerable knowledge like Eric Penangk (now aged in his 80s) comment on the absence of ‘strong leaders’ like he knew in his youth. What both generations admit is that as fascinating and edifying as Strehlow’s collection may be, its contents can never replace the performativity and tacit knowledge at the heart of song and ceremony. As Bradley, an anthropologist that has devoted decades to seeing his own in-depth documentation of language, song and myth returned to its relevant communities (Yanyuwa families, Bradley & Cameron 2003; Bradley & Yanyuwa Families 2010; Kearney et al. 2012) has noted, this type of content can only ever act as an ‘aspirational motivator’ (2011, p.9) and its effects will be determined by larger social factors.

It was precisely these issues, and the way that future generations could potentially misuse this material, that occupied Malcolm Heffernan Pengart’s mind during one of our trips on Anmatyerr country together. Malcolm and I had just set up our camp in the dry creek bed at Mer Atwelengkw (Queensland Gully) under the shadow of Amakweng (Central Mount Stuart), when we started discussing the songs that his uncle Charlie Artetyerwenguny had recorded with Strehlow in the 1960s. Reclining on his swag, Malcolm was in a reflective mood and began talking about his childhood. He remembered the way that old men such as the Rice brothers (Freddie and Willie) and Tim ‘Cowboy’ Riley used to ‘sing lots of different country lines’ during the early morning. They would do this with young men like Malcolm sleeping close by at the arnkenty (single men’s camp). ‘I was only twelve or thirteen at the time. Before my apwelh [circumcision ceremony]. The singing would begin in the morning, before the sun had come up, aherlkenty-aherlkenty [pre-dawn]. They would end when the sun was just up’. At the time, Malcolm resented being woken so early, but realises now that this had been the manner in which he had acquired song knowledge and it was thus their way of trying to teach him in spite of changed social rhythms found on settlements.

378 Aileron 05062014 Notes and recording.
379 Notes from 20/05/2015 at Mer Awetelengkw (old shepherd’s camp, ‘Queensland Gully’). Huckitta Lynch sang these songs at Mer Artwertekart on the Hanson River on April 21st 2015.
Learning songs from recordings made by Strehlow however, was a very different proposition. It was clear to Malcolm that men like his uncle were aware of the changes that were taking place in Anmatyerr and Arrernte society in the mid to late twentieth century. Younger generations were increasingly being brought into western educational contexts and missing out on a particular style of learning that had been modelled by past generations. One of the reasons why Malcolm resented being woken by the old men was that the interruption caused him to go back to sleep and consequently be late for school at the Santa Teresa Mission. His uncle’s recordings with Strehlow then, in Malcolm’s view, were a ‘good’ or ‘safe’ option of preserving material that, if in the hands of those not properly educated in men’s Law, could potentially be very ‘dangerous’. In Malcolm’s view the older men had been mindful of the social changes occurring around them and had used their time with Strehlow as an opportunity to free themselves of a burden. ‘I think that’s why they were trying to get rid of it’. They wanted the recordings put in ‘a safer place … they told Strehlow that it was sacred, and they wanted to get it locked away somewhere’. At the time of our conversations, rumours were circulating that some Arrernte men were accessing the collection as a way to attain ritual knowledge and using it for malevolent ends. These stories made many men extremely anxious.

To my knowledge, the Strehlow collection has never been used to revive a neglected song or ceremonial tradition. Some people can certainly see the tremendous opportunity that the collection offers in this respect, but to do this would be extremely brave given the considerable ‘power’ embedded in these practices. More than this though, questions persist about exactly how the performative, linguistic and other deeply affective aspects of practice can be taught via mediated content. These questions are often asked by those working on projects aimed at assisting the ‘intergenerational transfer’ of ‘knowledge’ in remote Aboriginal communities (see Holcombe 2009; Verran et al. 2007; and Christie 2005). Crucially, most agree that ‘knowledge’ is fundamentally inseparable from its instantiation in practice, not

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380 Ceremonial material is mercurial in that it can only ever be properly understood when its context, significations and its linkages are explained by senior ritual specialists.
381 Notes from 20/05/2015 at Mer Awetelengkw (old shepherd’s camp, ‘Queensland Gully’).
382 It has been alleged that a number of senior Arrernte men have used *Songs of Central Australia* as a tool, not for learning song performance itself, but for studying context. I have also heard some Arrernte men claim that they intend to introduce elements of certain ceremonies depicted in Strehlow’s films into their ceremonies.
something that can be parcelled and delivered to subjects in a mediated form.

The concept of ‘tradition’ is equally bound to its reproduction in these contexts. As folklorist, Barry McDonald (1997) has argued, traditions are based in personal relationships, shared practices and a commitment to the endurance of both. In order to learn the complex interrelations between totemic geography, song, body paint and more, one has to not only listen carefully and observe patiently but also allow the cumulative effect of being-with others to enable knowing (Jackson 1998, pp.180-181). As indicated by the significance of spatiality (journeying and being in place) and interpreting (via oral memory and other means) described in chapter 7 and 8, the continuance of a tradition rests upon the ability to socialise the next generation of learners so they can identify these relationships (Myers 1997, p.109). Malcolm fears that where these underlying factors and commitments are absent, the ‘unlocking’ of the Strehlow collection will be fraught.

**Tin Boxes and Digital Files**

Indigenous communities across Australia and the globe now find themselves in a position whereby collections are being returned to them at a steady rate. Not only are collections being made more and more accessible via the ubiquity of digital technologies (Devlin-Glass 2002; Glowczewski 2005; Gibson & Batty 2014), but contemporary researchers are being encouraged to return their raw data to ‘source communities’ as a part of decolonising research methodologies (Harris 2014, p.8; Barwick 2004). Database solutions have also been specifically designed to hold digitised Indigenous cultural materials for improved local access (Christen 2005; Christie 2005; Gibson 2007; Dallwitz & Hughes 2007). While the search for local technological solutions are important, there has been a dearth of ethnographic research on the existing strategies people have put in place to store, manage and utilise repatriated or returned objects and recordings in their local communities.

In Central Australia, and particularly amongst Arandic speakers, the idea of ethnographers making photographic and other recordings of ceremonial material is not new. It was in the 1890s that Frank Gillen presented prints of some of the photographs of men’s sacred ceremonies to his Arrernte interlocutors in Alice Springs. Being afforded a similar status to the stone and wooden tywerreng, these
photographs were soon after secreted in a remote location and protected in a ‘shallow tin case’ (Gillen et al. 2001, p.157). Over one hundred years later, cassette tapes, DVDs and USB flash drives are being managed in very similar ways. Copies of Strehlow’s films, for example, have been ‘buried’ or stored in caves for safe keeping (Hersey & Cohen 2004, p.183) and I have seen ‘repatriated’ CDs of song and archival maps of sacred sites being stored alongside tywerreng recently repatriated from museums. Galvanised metal tool boxes, lockable and secure, are often the vault of choice for Anmatyerr men and it is not uncommon for these mini-collections to be further hidden away in dilapidated caravans, broken down cars, or in the home of a senior man.

Over time though, these boxes and their contents become dirtied, dusty and worn in the extreme desert climate. In the winter the boxes reach freezing point and in the summer they boil. Museum curators and archivists everywhere would be aghast. But without adequate storage infrastructure and conservation skills in these very remote and small communities, it is likely objects will be kept in this grassroots way for many years to come. More importantly though, as much as men express interest in establishing a ‘cultural centre’ or some other facility to store their collections, the very notion of ‘preservation’ as advanced by bodies such as the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, and museums in general (see Edwards & Stewart 1980; Stanton 2011), sits uncomfortably with their purposes. Over the past decade, I have sat with men in their camps discussing the various schemes and ideas hatched by local and territory governments to establish museum-like facilities, and yet at the same time have witnessed these men using these collections in ways that are antithetical to preservation.

Managed in these ways, ethnographic materials are elaborated on by Anmatyerr men and employed in their everyday lives. These items aren’t just being stored away, they are being circulated and shared. Anmatyerr men who have been given access to very specific aspects of the Strehlow collection have, for example, taken DVD copies of filmed ceremonies and shared these between ritually affiliated men across

383 Anthropologist Fred Rose also noted the way in which the audio tape recordings he had made of sacred songs at Angas Downs had to be wrapped and ‘put under lock and key’ (1968, p.244). See my notes from 26th June 2014, Black notebook ‘June 2014-April 2015’.
Films like this are also finding their way into the primary, large-scale initiation events held annually across Central Australia. Because these ceremonies bring people from multiple communities together, large groups of men are able to sit in secluded ‘bush camps’ and discuss and respond to these recordings in ways that explain their significance to younger generations. At this grassroots level, people are indeed taking it upon themselves to personally look after this material and manage its dissemination.

**Conclusion**

This final substantive chapter charts its way through the complex terrain of the future of the Strehlow collection. While the logic of repatriation remains the primary rhetorical device through which the return of secret-sacred objects is often discussed in academic and institutional circles, the Anmatyerr clearly think about these materials and interact with them in far more nuanced ways.

Collecting institutions and their staff are being quietly encouraged to alter their ways to accommodate, in fact emulate to some degree, the systems of complementary filiation (the *merek-artwey/kwertengerl* system) that governs the handling and dissemination of secret-sacred material. If collecting institutions wish to handle restricted material like this with sensitivity, they must develop protocols that not only incorporate local Aboriginal epistemological frameworks (see Myers 2014), but acknowledge the entangled relationships between collectors, collecting institutions and contemporary ‘owners’ and ‘managers’ of ritual practise. By extension, this will require ongoing negotiation rather than occasional consultation and requires more than simply ‘handing back’ specific objects. As Morphy has noted, the integration of Aboriginal concepts and interests like these could in fact lead to a ‘transformation of the concept of the museum’ (2010b, p.159, see also 2006) and result in greater mutual understanding of each other’s motives and objectives.

The Strehlow collection sits at the periphery of far more significant factors in Anmatyerr people’s everyday and ritual lives, but if the trajectory of other Indigenous groups in Australia and elsewhere is anything to go by, there may be a time when

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384 See SRC 13 June 2014 part 1.WAV page 2 of transcript. Including men from Arnmanapwenty (Long Range) and Arempey (Pine Hill).
these collections assume a greater significance. If the Strehlow Research Centre is to shift from being a research centre to a resource centre for Central Australian Aboriginal people, then it seems clear that not only will formal policy changes be required, but long-term relationships will need to be fostered across the Arandic region. It will undoubtedly be a significant challenge for a bureaucratic institution, and its staff, to handle the fluid and relational ways in which practices of custodianship over ritual knowledge are conferred. As interest begins to coalesce around the collection, particularly from younger men, there is a real need to find ways of responding. The responses from Anmatyerr men give an indication of some of the potential ways forward.
Conclusion: Singing in Roadhouses

I opened this thesis with reference to a discussion I had with two Northern Arrernte men regarding the history of ethnographic inquiry and collecting in their region. As we looked through museum collection stores, ferreted through the archive and discussed people’s attitudes towards these collections, the stories uncovered were always found to be complex. Like so many of the Anmatyerr and Arrernte men I have spoken with over the years, these men knew that the Strehlow collection had emerged out of a deeply complex relationship between alhernter and their ancestors. The most complex of these relationships was that between T.G.H. Strehlow and the large numbers of Central Australian Aboriginal men he worked with over four decades.

In this thesis, I have presented an account of the relationships established, evoked and negotiated in the course of making arguably, the most complete collection of cultural material of any Indigenous people in Australia. But there are two stories conveyed here. The first is the story of how this collection was made via a prolonged and deep interplay with an idiosyncratic ethnographer and an array of Aboriginal participants. The other story addresses what these events meant, and continue to mean, for those either implicated in the original exchanges or culturally invested in the collection’s contents and future. Inspired by Anmatyerr men who spoke with confidence and pride about their knowledge of mer (place), tywereng (sacred objects, rituals and songs) and Anengkerr (Dreaming), I wanted to know to what degree Anmatyerr (and to a lesser extent Arrernte) people aided Strehlow in his project. Just as importantly, I also wanted to know what relevance the collection held for them today. This introduced my proposition that the Strehlow collection could most fruitfully be understood as a co-production, originally emergent from dialogical encounter and best interpreted in relational terms. The resulting analysis focused on Anmatyerr people’s relationships to each other as well as to T.G.H. Strehlow and his legacy, but also to myself, a researcher whose intervention brought this material to people’s attention.

In the final phase of drafting this thesis, colleagues and friends often asked me what my research had covered. I usually gave a pared down answer; the research was fundamentally about the relationships between an Aboriginal group in central
Australia, an ethnographer and the collection that they produced. I explained that I wanted to understand how Aboriginal people had contributed to the making of this collection, but also how they understood and responded to its contents today. After being prompted further, and often asked to define what these relationships were like and what did Anmatyerr people make of the collection, I often struggled with producing a neat summary. Having been immersed so deeply in the intricacies of this story, I was naturally wary of the kind ‘specious mastery’ that Adorno (2006, p.82) warned of, when the contradictions and ambiguities of social reality are glossed over. My synthesis needed to accept contradictions, interminglings and ambiguities.

Those who knew the rudiments of the T.G.H. Strehlow story, his controversies and the drama of his biography, would nod and signal their understanding of the topic, but they often had little idea that he had worked with the Anmatyerr. Coming at Strehlow’s ethnographic work from this angle, I was aware of the need to build a better picture of Strehlow as a regionally focused researcher who followed travelling stories and focused on a socially saturated landscape entwined in networks of ritual knowledge. His Anmatyerr ethnography was not as extensive as his work amongst the Arrernte and nor was he as personally invested in it. But this is its charm; it sheds light on previously unexplored aspects of this significant collection, and adds to a rather meagre body of literature on the Anmatyerr.

After all this time spent with Anmatyerr men – travelling with them, hearing them sing and sharing in their explorations of the field diaries and recordings – I had to ask myself if I had come any closer to an answer to these central questions about agency, dialogue and co-presence? When considering this, an array of poignant imagery came to mind. Each was suggestive of the numerous archival and fieldwork findings that gave partial answers: the congregations of Anmatyerr and Arrernte people interpreting anthropological inquiries as urrempel festivals; Tom Lywenge urging and prompting informants to sing for Strehlow in the 1930s; Bob Rubuntja, ‘the King’, organising truckloads of Anmatyerr men to attend the ceremonial festivals at Werlatyatherre in the 1950s; Ken Tilmouth, providing explanations of the films that Strehlow had made of he and his father the 1960s; Paddy Kemarr singing along with Strehlow’s wire recordings; and standing with Malcolm Heffernan at the site of his grandfather’s burial. Taken together, these historical and contemporary experiences
exemplified the links between the making and interpretation of this collection.

‘The relationships with Strehlow weren’t as bad as people might imagine’ I would try to explain to people. Yes, it seems that he was haughty and officious in his dealing with people and there were undoubtedly unequal power relationships, but this had not negated the interests and motivations of his many informants. Their interests, as varied and complex as they were then, as they are now, were perceptible. But it was my experiences with Anmatyerr people that made me read Strehlow’s collection in a new light, looking for traces or insights into their agency as well as evidence of the way that Anmatyerr people negotiate these histories and interactions on their own terms.

**Reflecting on Methods**

Coming to understand the way Anmatyerr people saw their exchanges with anthropologists enabled me to understand that this collection, and the history of its making, could never be reduced to simple political pronouncements. Nor would they contain its explanation and interpretation within historical chronologies. The Anmatyerr and Arrernte men that I knew, tended to speak quietly about these exchanges, remained focused on their own local knowledge and interpreted this material through their own personal life experience. The history of anthropology’s encounter with its subjects in this part of the world was not therefore something that I could easily explain via purely structural analyses alone. Anmatyerr participation in Strehlow’s project was not an exemplar of hegemonic compliance, domination or even collective agency and ‘resistance’. Instead, my conversations, archival research and collaborative examinations led me to see these interactions as inhering in what Jackson (2015, p.294) describes as the oscillations between structure and agency. Although historically located and socially constituted, this work was also established in the very particular encounters between Strehlow and his various informants.

The biographies and commentaries written about Strehlow over the years had nevertheless largely ignored the story of his informants. Assuming that present-day Arrernte people knew too little to make a contribution to illuminating this corpus, and confronted by the protocols and restrictions surrounding the majority of the contents of the collection, few had ever ventured to ask what these people might think of the
collection today. Moreover, past emphasis on Strehlow’s biography and his connections to the Arrernte at Hermannsburg, meant that no one had envisioned broadening the scope to include people from neighbouring and related groups like the Anmatyerr.

The serendipitous events that led me to see this collection in a new light were in many respects catalysed by Anmatyerr elucidations. Their perspectives urged me resist dwelling on the biography of this controversial linguist and anthropologist, and to instead explore the ‘human encounter between researcher and researched’ (Toren & Pina-Cabral 2011, p.2). The contents of the collection and its production was as much a part of their story as it was a part of his.

Strehlow was just one person in a long procession of ethnographers throughout the years who have sought to record and understand the ritual lives of Aboriginal people. His arrival on the scene was prefigured by social and historical conditions defined by early colonial violence and dramatic social change. As his work continued throughout a less violent, but still tumultuous period for Central Australian Aboriginal people, it documents a changing social milieux. However, despite the vicissitudes of these decades, Anmatyerr people today continue to discuss their knowledge of kin, country and ceremony in comparable ways to their forbears. Furthermore, the utterances of past generations retained in Strehlow’s archive are made intelligible and confidently interpreted by their descendants today.

But had I actually grasped the character of the relationships at the heart of ethnographic encounter? By analysing the historical archive, I could see the contexts in which people interacted. Occasionally Strehlow’s diaries revealed the humanity of both the observed and observer. But the gravitational pull of the prevailing alhernter narrative is strong, and maintaining a focus on informant agency and motivations was a challenge. Their story can be easily overwhelmed by the spectre and scope of such an enigmatic figure as T.G.H. Strehlow. It was only by welcoming the nuanced perspectives of Anmatyerr people, as they recalled, imagined and affirmed their own entangled participation in these events, that a fuller picture of this ethnographic encounter could emerge.
Reflecting on Strehlow

In 1968, Malcolm Heffernan’s uncle, Charlie Artetyerwenguny travelled from Napperby to Coniston Station with T.G.H. Strehlow in his Land Rover. On the way out of Napperby, near Gidgee Bore, Charlie pointed to a number of possum and other sites. Reading the landscape and the people like historical sources, Strehlow described these sites in his diary as something of the past: ‘all this country had been possum country’ he wrote (Strehlow 1968, p.47 italics added). The fact that they were significant for Charlie at the time, and that they might be of some ongoing importance for Anmatyerr people, was never seriously entertained by Strehlow. As shown repeatedly throughout this thesis, Anmatyerr men forty years later point to many of the same sites, sing many of the same songs and relay many of the same stories. Thus, when I read Strehlow’s diary entries I wonder why he, someone with considerable linguistic ability and an eye for detail, had failed to notice the sharing of information between generations.

Although we know that Strehlow had a deep knowledge of Arandic ritual and song, and in some cases significant personal ties, it was his personal accrual of ethnographic information (Clifford 1983), his denial of coevalness (Fabian 1983), and a primitivism borne of his passion for classical studies, that spoiled his efforts as an ethnographer. Framing his interactions as a kind of crossing of cultural divides in order to salvage cultural data he overlooked the conditions of everyday existence. Ethnographic projects construed in this fashion, spend little time grappling with the concepts of sociality that draw in and hold researchers and their interlocutors together over time. I am not suggesting that Strehlow did not understand the significance of being incorporated into the world of his informants, he clearly did. What I contend though is that he stopped short of theorising the basis of this incorporation, his reciprocal response to it, and how this shaped his knowledge of that world.

Strehlow’s commitment to particularism, transcription and translation has nonetheless provided a tremendous resource for professional scholars and oncoming generations of Central Australians. Just as he had argued during his time in London in 1950, his work concentrated on what his informants themselves considered to be of critical importance; the social ‘laws’ and ‘customs’ grounded in Dreaming and conveyed in song, dance, story and ceremony. These particular aspects of Central Australian
tradition remain central to group and individual identity today, if not always in practice, then certainly at the ideological level. The historical period following Strehlow’s time, the era of land rights anthropology where Aboriginal people all over the Northern Territory were required to demonstrate their traditional links with land, accentuated this emphasis. Song and ceremony were accepted as evidence in land claims and discussed as ‘title deeds’ to land (Rose 2000; Merlan 2007; Koch 2013). Given this currency of Indigenous value and belief now present in Western legal-political contexts, it is unsurprising that Strehlow’s work continues to have tremendous salience, either as a form of evidence, or simply as ‘grist for the mill’ in local discussions.

As shown throughout this thesis, description is never a naïve or innocent procedure. The genealogies produced by Strehlow, for example, were read by Anmatyerr people today in ways that introduced additional and unexpected layers of social memory. They also revealed evidence of ‘shifting ontologies’ (Austin-Broos 2009) associated with inheritance of Dreaming affiliations. Cartographic, audio and visual materials were also seen as requiring a filtering through the contemporary perspectives of senior experts. Rather than producing an infallible repository of cultural and linguistic knowledge, Strehlow’s commitment to the ‘full details’ of ‘mythological and sociological information’ (Strehlow 1971, p.xviii), eventuated in an oeuvre ripe for critical interpretation and reuse when intermingled with the orality and social memory.

The name ‘Strehlow’ carries with it a number of connotations across Central Australia that cannot easily be encapsulated. It references a family lineage associated not just with anthropology and linguistics, but also with missionising, biblical translation and literature. Members of the Strehlow family continue to write about the legacies of their forebears in Central Australia (Strehlow 2011), and even use the collection’s content with either little knowledge, or regard for, contemporary Aboriginal sensitivities (Strehlow 1996). For the Anmatyerr however, the name represents a period in their lives when salvage ethnographic filming and recording of men’s ritual

385 Strehlow’s work was resource for documenting some later claims under the Act but was unavailable in the early claims. His site data is still used by the Central Land Council and intermixed with their own data collected in the past thirty years.
was often supported and encouraged by colonial authorities. ‘Strehlow-time’, as they refer to it, signifies not just the presence of the linguistically adept T.G.H. Strehlow as the principal documenter, but a period in history when Anmatyerr, Arrernte and other Central Australian men would readily share their ceremonies and songs. Their motivations appear to have included a willingness to document and preserve and just as importantly, a desire to demonstrate, proclaim, dialogue and share.

The Future of a Co-production

If we consider these collections as not derived solely from the toils of a solitary, ‘heroic’ scholar, but as co-produced via active engagements of informants, then the future handling of all of this material needs to be reassessed. This includes thinking deeply about the moral imperative to ‘repatriate’ or ‘return’ ethnographic collections to their traditional owners. While in some cases repatriation may be desired, in others we need to leave space to reinterpret these collections as the outcomes of long-term intercultural processes. Being part of what Merlan describes as the liberal states ‘project of recognition’, whereby Indigenous minorities are defined ‘in determinate ways, not unboundedly’ and continuing to ensure that the worlds of Indigenous and non-Indigenous people are kept apart (2006, pp.98–99), museum policies often fail to acknowledge this entanglement. Repatriation initiatives then, although well intentioned, were often met with ambiguous responses from senior men. The adoption of Christianity, sedentary lifestyles, changed ceremonial practices, and intergenerational differences have influenced the way these returned collections are received (Batty 2006; Akerman 2010). There is a need to address, more openly and intelligibly, questions of the qualitative diversity in historically-shaped, Indigenous-non-Indigenous relations in different parts of Australia and new ways of caring for these complex collections.

As this research shows, it was often those men who actually made ritual paraphernalia or sang for Strehlow that showed the least interest in having this material returned to them. There are two principal reasons for this. Firstly, men like Ken Tilmouth and Harold Payne made their exchanges with Strehlow with their eyes wide open. They had watched their fathers interact with Strehlow and they also knew the terms and conditions of these dealings. Reflecting on these interactions today, they accept that what now resides in the Strehlow collection stands as a kind of historical testimony to
the exchange. Secondly, as these men are armed with the detailed knowledge of ‘the Law’ and possess song and ritual knowledge to reproduce these objects, teach these songs, show younger people the significant sites and help enact ceremonies, they look forward rather than backwards. In spite of Western society’s continued obsession with the ‘primitive’ and ‘preservation’, ‘hope does not lie in the reproduction of the past’, as Bessire has observed, but in people’s ‘capacities to endure and transform the worlds they inhabit’ (2014, p.21). Senior Anmatyerr men see their primary role as one of supporting current younger generations in learning the songs and ceremonies that are currently pertinent and enduring. Rather than resurrecting aspects of traditions that may have fallen to the wayside or can no longer be reintegrated into networks of social relatedness, they look to maintain cultural traditions with little or no influence from the outside.

In many cases, reintroducing this material when there are no longer younger people with the full requisite knowledge to contain its power, presents serious dangers. Songs and ceremonies, particularly the type recorded by Strehlow, as much as they may be learned in pragmatic fashion, conceal a myriad of meanings beyond the literal. Songs will contain an esoteric language that needs to be explained so that their hidden associations, their ‘super-vital’ powers (Bradley 2014), can be apprehended. There are fears amongst some that recordings of song can turn into dangerous forces if used in ignorance or with malice. Seemingly innocent songs, such as songs for the rain for example, can turn into dangerous forces if used with malice as Eric Penangk explained at Mer Ywerternt. As we walked through a site where large chunks of quartzite representing hail stones were left scattered in the Dreaming, Eric explained that those who owned these songs had the power to unleash storms as weapons against their enemies.386 Having knowledge of songs and ceremony therefore came with a tremendous responsibility. It is for this reason that some Anmatyerr men would prefer to see the ritual content collected by Strehlow confined to the Strehlow Research Centre.

But it is not just the abilities of contemporary generations to contain the power of these rituals that concerns some senior men. They also want to safeguard the integrity

386 Eric Penangk at Mer Ywerternt 6/6/2014.
of this collection and expect collecting institutions, and their staff, to help them do so. Public and professional debates about repatriation have however reinforced the broad perception that most ethnographic collections in colonial states were both unfairly acquired and unjustly kept. Despite all the examples of collecting and recording mentioned in this study, there are very few examples of blatant theft of objects or the coercive extraction of information, although as Thomas has noted (2000, pp.273–74) the fairness of the original exchange often matters little to Indigenous people who want access their materials today. Strehlow’s collection was certainly amassed within unequal conditions of power but we cannot ignore the active participation of his informants. In fact, this is partly the reason why Anmatyerr people feel so sure of themselves in making the case for the Strehlow Research Centre to respond to their epistemological frameworks and protocols.

The task now is for institutions like the Strehlow Research Centre to respond. Meeting this challenge will require what Morphy (2010) calls a ‘stepping back’ from the usual ‘dispositions and pre-suppositions’ of the institutions that administer these collections, and entering into the ‘disjunctive space’ between Arandic and alhernter communities. The ethnographic account presented here, of how this collection is valued and interpreted, is just the first step. While some progress has been made in this area, the Strehlow Research Centre will need to reconfigure its practises to ensure that it responds to Indigenous understandings of ownership, responsibility and care. Under this rubric, objects and information derive their value not via their accumulation but their dissemination across generations. In Central Australia, this includes a willingness to work within dimensions of complementary filiation, upholding the rights of both mered-artwey (owners) and kwertengerl (managers), and furthermore, adding the museum itself or the museum professional to an adoptive responsibility of kwertengerl (manager, caretaker). Accepting such a proposal would not only defend the rights and interests of traditional owners, but increase an acceptance of the relational and fluid ways in which Aboriginal ideas of custodianship are negotiated. The ongoing social and ritual activity of the Anmatyerr (and Arrernte), will make tracking and understanding these relationships an extremely challenging task for the institution.
**Alhernter Encounters**

When Strehlow began his documentation work, Aboriginal people all over Central Australia had already begun explaining their religious life to outsiders and allowing photography and filming. Of course, this sincerity and general enthusiasm to display one's own prowess as a singer, performer or guide through country, had to find ways of fitting within existing cultural protocols. Anmatyerr and Arrernte men allowed uninitiated men like Strehlow, and earlier Spencer, Gillen and Tindale, to record their most treasured and secretive material. Within the ‘contact zone’ of ethnographic practice, conventions around gender segregation and initiatory status were suspended or reworked to enable interaction and to enhance people’s positions in relation to *alhernter* as opportunities arose.

All of this is suggestive of a people looking to recognise crucial others, and shape them as responsive, sympathetic interlocutors. Critical to these interactions succeeding though, was at least a partial willingness on the part of *alhernter* to recognise and at times deploy Central Australian concepts such as an *ingkart* (a ceremonial leader) or *urrempel* ‘festivals’ (ceremonial gatherings). As much as these terms may have been misunderstood or misappropriated they did nonetheless operate in a way that aided dialogue around ritual matters. Strehlow took things much further than this via his willingness to promote his ‘spiritual conception’ at Nthareye to legitimate his handling and reception of ceremonial knowledge. For the Anmatyerr though, when *alhernter* wanted to record their ceremonies, this was seen as either a form of support for their *urrempel* gatherings, or in the case of Strehlow, was further justified in more intimate terms involving kin and Dreaming relationships.

A key point that emerges from this observation is that the cultural traffic between actors produced new contexts of exchange. The cultural and social changes that eventuated in relation to the sharing of ritual knowledge were thus partly borne out of the assertion of precolonial, Indigenous concepts. Cultural continuity and change are not, therefore, clear-cut opposites but are intimately inter-related and co-exist. In fact as Sahlins would argue, ‘the transformation of a culture is a mode of its reproduction’ (1985, p.185). New forms emerge to deal with novel interactions while old ones also continue to exist; cultural categories and concepts are amended and changed. Anmatyerr men responded to probing ethnographers according to their own
customary conceptions and interests. By encompassing these ethnographic documentation events in traditional cultural forms, they recreated and reinforced the relationships that originally defined the diffusion of this knowledge. But once the conditions of contact with *alhernter* progressed, new forms of ritual teaching developed, as well as an unexpected reification of tradition in the form of museum collections.

With the passage of time, Aboriginal people in many different parts of remote Australia have become deeply and rightly distrustful of ethnography’s gaze. Strehlow’s errors and hubris have played a significant part in this, but he was not alone in his insensitivity. A long history of appropriation has had its toll, where knowledge and objects have been taken away as possessions without recognition of ongoing relationships. Despite early participation in a program of salvage anthropology, from the mid 1970s onwards Aboriginal people in Central Australia began to refuse access to their secret-sacred ceremonies and content (Morphy & Morphy 2013; Merlan 2013). As discussed in Chapter 5, growing socio-economic independence and mobility had given people the confidence to, at least from Strehlow’s perspective, ‘disown’ him as someone with ceremonial authority.

The Anmatyerr today adopt a far more stringent attitude towards the sharing of the ritual knowledge. Fiercely guarding that which is considered ‘proper dear’ (meaning revealed only to those that make significant ritual payments), ‘tikeley’ or ‘dangerous’, the filming or recording of secret-sacred material is now rare. To my knowledge, restricted ceremonies have not been professionally filmed in the region since Strehlow’s time and the contents of this collection, I suspect, will be *amek-amek* (off limits) for many years to come.

**A Shared Social Field**

It goes without saying that the exchange between Strehlow and his informants involved people from different cultural backgrounds, but conceiving of this interaction in binary terms, involving ‘Indigenous’ and ‘non-Indigenous’ worldviews, is far too simplistic. While I have not specifically addressed larger debates about whether these interactions are best categorised as involving ‘relative autonomous’ groups or those enmeshed in pure inter-culturality (Merlan 2013; Morphy & Morphy
2013), I have clearly tried to stress the importance of intermingling and relationality. As this study has shown, neither Strehlow nor his informants existed in self-referential or autonomous domains during their original interactions, but occupied a shared social field. Strehlow was undoubtedly influenced by his deep involvement in Arandic lifeworlds, whilst at the same time trying to create distance from it. His interlocutors also, were keenly influenced by the dominant society around them, but these interactions did not negate their agency, their social relations and general value orientations.

The manner in which Anmatyerr people engaged with this collection today did nonetheless reveal entangled, long-term intercultural processes. Anmatyerr people, like Strehlow, grew up on the colonial frontier, spoke an Arandic language (as well as English) and shared an experience of remote, arid Australia. Strehlow certainly came to these interactions with an idiosyncratic conceptual and personal purview, with links to colonial authority and a regional history of missionising, but his induction into ritual and classificatory kinship makes his involvement far more ambiguous. The Anmatyerr too clearly embodied a radically different ontology but they had eked out a marginal place in the local pastoral economy over a number of generations. It was this type of cultural ‘traffic’ that produced the unique, local and regional cultural identities that typified colonial interactions (Beilharz 1997, pp.46–47) and continues to express itself in the way that Aboriginal people in Central Australia have responded to the dominant Euro-Australian society.

Anmatyerr people today uphold the ideal of transmission of knowledge from the old people through orality and memory, but they also willingly respond to written and other sources. Added to this is an environment where Europeans have been inducted into ritual, classificatory kinship and imbricated into social relationships and it seems difficult to dispute the idea that ‘natives’ and ‘settlers’ are indeed interdependent and mutually constituting (Sullivan 2005, 2006; Merlan 2005). While ‘cultural difference’ certainly exists, the complex entanglement of Indigenous and non-Indigenous lifeworlds, generations of shared lives, and the mutual occupation of country in the Anmatyerr region, cannot be unseen.
It may seem that by arguing for the recognition of the entanglement in ethnographic collections I have inadvertently minimised the claims that Indigenous groups might make over these materials in the long-term. On the contrary, what I am suggesting is that Strehlow’s informants did not exist as ‘Indigenous subjects’, ‘out of time’ or beyond the influences of social and historical processes. The historical and contemporary explorations of this collection reveal that while anthropological and museological discourses might stage the appearance of neatly divided groups or people (between researcher/researched or collector/object) the reality is often far messier.

A Relational Mode of Inquiry

There was something distinctive about the way in which these historical and ethnographic objects were dealt with by Anmatyerr people. Each item was voraciously taken up and used in a kind of mimetic performance, either by visiting ancestors that were embodied in the country, re-enacting song performances or gesturing to, or journeying towards particular places where memories and stories could be revived. The collection’s contents were interleaved into social spaces where people experienced life and where reflection took place. Trying to understand this collection from the viewpoint of Anmatyerr men, and not simply from the perspective of the observer, I strove to recount the processes whereby meaning was made.

The collection was not first and foremost apprehended as an exemplar of an authoritative past, as Strehlow may have liked, or others have since worried that it might become, but as a source from which a range of relationships could be explored and declared. As these recordings and artifacts travelled with me to different places, their substance flourished amongst the sites, people and ancestors that they referenced. ‘Old Kwetyaney’s’ dancing which was captured on film at Alice Springs in the 1950s for example, was reanimated as soon as the dancer’s identity was known and people could re-imagine the ceremony as it was performed in its proper locale. From here, connections were quickly made to the related estates and sites connected to the two travelling rain Ancestors that the song and ceremony honoured. Social histories of the assimilationist period and the amalgam of anthropological and administrative power known as ‘Strehlow-time’, as well as biographies of individuals and families, also surfaced.
The layers of meaning supplied by Anmatyerr responses certainly enhanced and added complexity to Strehlow’s original documentation, but the actual collection items themselves offered something back. The return of Strehlow’s sketch maps of Artwertakert for example, were used to stimulate the unexpected retelling of an unspoken, and concealed family story of violence and death. As we revisited and traversed the country with these documents in hand, the intertwined nature of social held memories, personal recollections and Anengkerr narratives became clear. The process also revealed intra-community and inter-generational debates about the efficacy of oral and written testimony. Anmatyerr people’s questioning of this collection involved a kind of triangulation, or reeling-in, of relationships between various aspects of Anmatyerr lifeworlds. A person’s response or critique was thoroughly dependent upon their own (kin) position within an interlocking set of affiliations, involving the axiomatic Anengkerr narratives, but also their personal associations through spiritual conception, inheritance, seniority and residence.

Much more than simply inserting ‘missing histories’ or ‘counter narratives’, these perspectives offered a way of enlarging our understanding of how ethnographic collections might be alternatively understood. Hokari (2005) comes close to describing something similar to this in his ‘mode of historical practice’ exhibited by the Gurindji. Focused on a conceptualisation of ‘history’, Hokari described how these people tended to create and maintain a sense of the past through a complex web of relationships between entities, such as people and ancestral beings and significant places. These would be reaffirmed and brought into the present via performative acts such as storytelling, singing and travelling. Similar characteristics are also evident in the ways that Anmatyerr people make sense of the past. But rather than confining this ‘mode’ to the purely historical, I suggest that this is a more holistic, relational mode of inquiry that incorporates not just the temporal, but a wider nexus of relationality that is anchored in mer (place/country). As a methodology for making sense of both past and present phenomena, this mode of inquiry firstly locates entities within this web of associations, and then strives to realise their points of interconnection.

**Singing in Roadhouses**
Throughout my research, I was continually reminded of the ongoing relevance and currency of song and ceremony to Anmatyerr men across the generations. I rarely
went looking for this evidence, but it was often hard to miss. On one such occasion, a middle-aged man from the Coniston area who I had not seen for many years and his atyewe (age-mate) approached me at the Ti Tree Roadhouse. He had been out most of the day working on a nearby cattle station and was rounding the day off with a beer with a friend. As I knew both men, we started chatting and although we began by reminiscing about our past travels together to Aboriginal communities in the ‘Top End’ (Northern Australia) a decade earlier, we soon moved on to more local matters concerning country, song and Dreaming. In this unlikely place, the young man in his early thirties spoke about an ancestral pelyakw (grey teal, *Anas gracilis*) from the Coniston area and began to sing a snippet of its song. He described the bird’s peregrinations as it moved between a number of sites and named some of the senior men who had taught him these things. He spoke softly so that others in the pub nearby wouldn’t be able to hear. Both men were earnest in what they communicated and they smiled with pride.\(^{387}\)

It would be naïve and inaccurate to suggest from these vignettes, and the other examples presented in this thesis, that these traditions are not severely threatened. The entire Australian continent was once alive with song and ceremony and the diversity and number of these traditions has been greatly diminished. The status of Anmatyerr traditions are far from secure. The situation for the Anmatyerr is not however, as dire as some might expect. At Ti Tree, Napperby, Alcoota and Aileron, there are men of all generations knowledgeable of significant sites (including many never mapped by Strehlow) and local *Anengkerr* mythologies are reasonably well known. Detailed ceremonial knowledge and the ability to sing numerous songs for ‘country’ are however known only by the most senior men, and even in these cases their full repertoires are often recalled in an attenuated form.

As so many older Anmatyerr men reiterated, there is now far less depth of learning. Reviewing these recordings made with their fathers and grandfathers, these men made it clear that while they had retained a great deal compared to some of their neighbours, the opportunities for young men to learn are now greatly reduced. As young men they would learn whilst gathered together with older men in stock camps

\(^{387}\) 17\(^{th}\) May 2016, R.C. and D.P. at Ti Tree. See Orange notebook.
or when travelling the country on foot or on horseback – all in a time before the ubiquity of television, radio and all of the other accoutrements of Western society. Young men are now primarily learning and being exposed to song and ritual at the annual initiation events, which according to Ronnie McNamara, merely come and go ‘like the wind’ and compete for ontological primacy with Christianity. Beyond this there are limited opportunities to practise and there are fears that one day there will not be enough young men confident in these traditions for them to continue in any form.  

As I sit at the computer writing the final paragraphs to this conclusion, I get a phone call from Malcolm Heffernan. He has bad news. Jimmy Haines Ngwarray, one of the men that so kindly befriended me, showed me his country and shared in these explorations of the Strehlow collection, passed away aged 63. Jimmy was one of those people who quietly possessed his expertise and never pretended to be an authority, but whose passion for local cultural knowledge was infectious. His familiar greeting, ‘Hey pwerrerl, nthakenh-athek? (where you going?) and his constant reminders to ‘ingkwernem-ilem’ (put it in writing), make me think of the energy of Strehlow’s interlocutors like Tom Lwenge, Ken Tilmouth, Mick Werlaty and Bob Rubuntja. I hope that this thesis will help reframe the Strehlow collection as a testament not to a heroic individual, but to the cohort of urrempel men that both made it and continue to make sense of it.

388 Field notes made November 13th 2016.
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Appendices

Appendix I: T.G.H. Strehlow Fieldwork (1932-1974)

1932
(a) Northern Trip: Ti Tree, Stirling, Barrow Creek, Mt Peake, Mt Solitary, Woola Downs Stn, Harpers Spring, Woodgreen Station, Bushy Park, Hann Range.
(b) Western Trip [with E. Kramer]: Rubuntja (Mt Hay), Redbank, Mt Zeil, Mt Liebig, Putati Springs, Waterholes north of Mt Liebig, Worumba, Lake Eaton, Illpila, Walunguru (Kintore), Mt Udor, Mt Wedge, Napperby.
(c) Round Trip: Napperby, Coniston, Mt Leichardt, Ti Tree, Stirling, Harper’s Spring, Woodgreen, Alcoota, Mt Riddock, Abalindum, Arltunga, Loves Creek.
(d) Western Aranda: Hamilton Downs, Mt Hay, Charlie Gap (Mt Chapple, Ulamba), Napperby, Redbank, Ormiston, Glen Helen, Ntaria.

1933
(a) Alice Springs and vicinity: Alice Springs, Bond Springs, Boen Hill, Burt Well (Ilbalintja), Hamilton Downs, Alice, Harry and Burt Creek, Painters Springs, Jay Creek, Owen Springs, Doctors Stones, Renner’s Rock Stn, Henbury, Idracowra, Horseshoe Bend, Old Crown Station, New Crown, Charlotte Waters, Chambers Pillar, Horseshoe bend, Alice Well, Maryvale stn, Doctors Stones, Alice, Hermannsburg.

1934
(a) Ajantji with Prof Whitridge Davies: Hermannsburg, Gosse range, Carmichael ck headwaters, haasts bluf, Mt Liebig camp ajantji.

1935
(a) Camel Journey: Hermannsburg, jay creek, Alice Springs, Jessie gap, Undoolya stn, Airltunga, Paddys rockhole (inirintin), Atnarpa stn, Iljimbala waterhole on hale river, rar ilba (near Mt Aralka), inijajamala (illogwa creek), arkeranja, claraville and ambalindum, arltunga.
1935 Car Journey: Henbury, Titra well, Erdunda, Lyndavale, Napple bar hole, Middleton ponds, Angas downs
(b) Camel Journey: Kernot range, Ayer’s rock, Angas downs, Middleton ponds,
(c) Car: meteorite reserve, Dr Stones, Owen springs, Hermannsburg, Arltunga,

1936
Camel with Bertha: Hermannsburg, boggy hole, running waters, Henbury, Britannia, Idracowra, horseshoe bend, yellow cliffs, new crown, charlotte waters, abminga, bloods creek, Stevenesn creek and Hamilton creek, Macumba, bloodwood bore, umbiarra, kugera, kulata springs, pukura, lyndavale, anari well (mt conner), Punitjarra soak, undiara, allanah hill, fosters cliff, armstrong river, pilkadi, mt olga, ayers rock, old angas downs stn, middleton ponds, ilbilla creek, palm valley, Hermannsburg.

389 Information is taken from T.G.H. Strehlow's field diaires gives only a general idea of areas he visited. The original list (1950-1974) was compiled by Chris Toralch in 1995 an was later amended and added to by Jason Gibson.
1948
Documenting ‘Legends and Chants’ at Jay Creek with Rauwiraka and others.

1950
At Iltirapota (Fish Hole)—Jay Creek—Ceremonial camp. No travels per se.

1950-1952
(a) London – London School of Economics. (b) Europe (Belgium and Germany).

1953
(a) At Taka—Maryvale—Ceremonial camp.
(b) "Tour of Southern Aranda area along banks of lower Finke River…”.
(c) Visit to Chambers pillar [1st ever in a motor car].
(d) At Wolatjatara—Alice Springs Telegraph station—Ceremonial camp.

1955
(a) Trip to "eastern portion of Simpson desert…” including Old Crown, Charlotte Waters, Andado, Mt. Dare and Pmar Ulbura on Finke River.
(b) Haasts Bluff, Areyonga and Hermannsburg.
(c) At Wolatjatara Ceremonial camp.

1958
(a) Trip to east MacDonnell Ranges including floodouts of Todd River and Hale River.
(b) Trip to "all ceremonial sites in Western Aranda/Kukatja area…” through Haasts Bluff Reserve.
(c) Trip north-west of Hanns range in Unmatjera area.

1960 Visits "important Aranda ceremonial sites" at;
(a) Napipa (on border of Northern Aranda and Eastern Aranda areas).
(b) Southern Aranda areas of Irbmanaka, Rekuura, Inkeera and Imanda (on Finke and Hugh Rivers).
(c) Emily and Jessie gaps.
(d) Ulamba (Western Aranda); Kaput Urbula (Northern Aranda); Ilbila/Ilamata (Western Arrernte and Matuntara areas)
(e) Ajura (Amoonguna) Ceremonial camp.

1962 ceremonial sites visited at;
(a) Western Waterhouse Ranges.
(b) Santa Teresa—Lower Todd River.
(c) West MacDonnell Ranges between Mt. Heughlin and Hugh River valley.
(d) Ajura Ceremonial camp.

1964
(a) Eastern MacDonnell areas of Utjitja and Uraiura swamp [Todd River station area].
(b) North-east of Alice Springs in "… headwaters of the Hale and Sandover Rivers" at Uletjapota.

1965
(a) "Mapping in lower Southern Aranda area (Andakirinja and Jankuntjatjara tribal areas…) Including Goyder River, Lilla creek, Horseshoe Bend, Idracowra, Kulgera, Victory Downs, Musgraves, De Rose Hill, Tieyon.
(b) Goyder Ceremonial camp.
(c) Trip along the Palmer River and middle Finke River (upper Southern Aranda and Matuntara areas).
(d) Alcoota (‘Unmatjara’ area) to record Korbula series.

1967
Mapping information from Mick McLean and others at Port Augusta, but not travelling.

1968
(a) Mapping information and songs from Mick McLean. Mapping trip along Stuart highway and from Kulgera to Finke siding.
(b) Mapping in the Anmatyerr region; Aileron, Napperby, Mt. Allen, Ti Tree, Coniston, Mt. Dennison, Mt. Doreen, Yuendumu. And In North-east—Utopia, Ammeroo, Huckitta, Barrow Creek and Harts Range.

1969
(a) Mapping Ayer’s Rock—Mt. Olga area.
(b) Trip from Port Augusta through Maree, Oodnadatta, Todmordeu, Lambina, Granite Downs, Kulgera to Finke siding.
(c) Mapping through lower Southern Aranda area to Charlotte Waters, Bloods creek, Abminga, Dalhousie.

1970
Mapping from informants at Port Augusta but not travelling.

1971
Alcoota. Visits sites in Southern Aranda and Eastern Aranda areas on Lower Hugh River and lower Finke Rivers—and along edge of Simpson desert east of Maryvale and Deepwell stations.

1974 Short mapping visits to following;
Hermannsburg, Amoonguna, Santa Teresa, Maryvale, Harts Range, Indiana station, Huckitta creek, Jinka, Jervois, Lucy creek, Atala station; Maryvale and Rodinga; and Idracowra station.

1977
Hermannsburg to attend centenary celebrations.
Appendix II: Strehlow’s Anmatyerr Informants (1932-1971)

Strehlow worked with approximately 56 men for all corners of the Anmatyerr region over the time of his research. His genealogies list over 370 individual Anmatyerr people, and there are more mentioned in both the Warlpiri and Arrernte family trees.

1932
1. Sambo Ultambaraunja [Rltwamparwengeny] Kemarr
2. Remalarinja Purula [Aremerlareny Pwerrerl]
3. Ilbaljurknga [Arlpalywerrng] I
4. Ilbaljurknga [Arlpalywerrng] II
5. Paddy Kaltjirbuka [Kaltyirrpek] Pengart
6. Tommy Kaltjirbuka [Kaltyirrpek] Ngal
7. George Baranngarinja Ngal
8. ‘Friday’ Angararaunja [Ankerrawenye] Ngal
9. Ngaltaraunja- [Angelthe-raweny]
10. ‘Baldy’
11. ‘Jacky’ Urartjaraunja, ‘Urartja’ or ‘Eroartja’ [Urarty or Urartye-raweny]
12. ‘Jim’
13. Mary Purvis
15. Alice Pwerrerl Stafford.

1933
2. Kinto Iljoa/Ilio Ngal aka Iloja, Iloaia
3. Moari Ilbaljurknga III

1937
1. Jim Tjukutai [Tywekertay]
2. Mary Tjirbmintiri Kemarr
3. Norman Tjabiata [Tyapeyart]
5. Tom Ara Kurka [Aherre kwerrke]
6. Norman Carter ‘Wiggin’ Peltahrr
7. Nellie Kaltika
8. Jamatjitjina Ngal
9. Mampey (Mombi) Penang
10. Old Jack Gurra (Norman Carter’s father)
11. Napperby Bill Tjonba [Tywemp]

1953
1. Bob Pmalbunga [Malpwengk]
3. Kutjania Ngala [Kwetyaney Ngal]
4. Albert Par Erula [Parirrweltye]
5. Old Antana [Antenh]
6. Old Irbannga [Irrpenng] aka Jack Irrpenng Peltarr
7. Franco Jack Antenh Peltarr aka topa-tataka [artep-athethek]

1955
1. Old ‘Lame’ Tjila
2. Bob Pmalbunga [Malpwengk] (as above)
3. Peter Tjangkala [Ngal]
4. Ingkaia from ‘Lalkeritjinga’ [Alalkeretyeng]
5. Biltaria,
6. Ntjimba Ngal,
7. Ilkunkaka [Ilkwengkek] Mpetyne
8. George Kamburknga [Kampurrkng]
9. Awota [Iwert] Angale

1958
1. Tom Iliakwata [Arleyekwart] Pengart
2. Bob Rubuntja [Urepenty] Penangke
3. Tom Utntenja [Uneynt] Pengart
4. Jiramba [Yerramp] Pengart
5. Atnara

1965
1. Mick Wolatja [Werlaty] Pengart, aka Kampurrkng
2. Peter Kola Kola [Urrakwelakwel] Ngal
3. Ken Tilmouth Penangk
4. George Jiramba [Yerramp] Pengart
5. Sandy White Penangk
6. ‘Lame’ Tom Etarilkaka [Itarerlkek] Ngal
7. Reilly Kukatja [Kwekaty] Pengart
8. ‘Long Tom’ Rukara [Raekwarr] Pengart
9. Johnny Utantimara
10. Frank Intjarangkaka Penangk
11. Ronny Yerramp
12. Dick Ilbotakilbota [Alpwertek-alpwert] Pengart

1968
1. George Pengart Lungubiltjia [Rlwengapeltyey]
2. Toby from the ‘Atnumba’ area
4. Tom Rukara [Raekwarr] Pengart
5. Tom Utnentja [Uneynt] Pengart
6. Mick Kampurrrkng Pengarte Werlaty
7. Bruce Pengart Campbell [Angenty-areny]
10. George ‘Happy’ Yerramp Pengart
11. Silas Tjangantjukurba
12. Joey Tjimba Tjakara [Kemarr], Mt Allan, from Ngama
13. Peter Ntarana Ngal
14. Mick Walungana Ngal
15. Louie Kaltjirbuka [Kaltyirrpek] Penangk
16. Sonny Jim
17. Tom Bird Mpetyan
18. Tjulama [Tywelam]
20. Walter

1971
1. Sandy White Penangk
2. Kenny Tilmouth Penangk
4. Dick Ilbotakilbota [Alpwertek-alpwert] Pengart
5. George Yerramp
6. ‘Lame’ Tom Etarilkaka [Itarerlkek] Ngal
### Appendix III: Glossary of Key Anmatyerr Terms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TGH</th>
<th>Glossary</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>akernenty</td>
<td>Akern' meaning ‘high’. Equates to Warlpiri ‘Kankarlu’, or secondary stage of men’s initiation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>akiw / akawe</td>
<td>akewa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>akepenh</td>
<td>The act of reciprocity. ‘Square them up’.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>akuny/akeweny</td>
<td>Poor Thing', 'Dear thing'.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>altwerl</td>
<td>West</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>anwakerrakeye</td>
<td>nuakerakia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>amek-amek</td>
<td>makamaka</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>amarleyarr</td>
<td>maliera</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ampa</td>
<td>Child, young boy or girl</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>aleyaw</td>
<td>(i)leoa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>alhernter</td>
<td>lintera</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>anganenty</td>
<td>knganintja</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>atnengkerr</td>
<td>tnangkara</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>arlewatyerr</td>
<td>loatjira</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>arreng</td>
<td>Father's father</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>atyemey</td>
<td>Mother's father</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ankeperr</td>
<td>ankebera or ankapara</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>anengkerr</td>
<td>Dreaming story</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>antyeper</td>
<td>ntijera</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>anyematy</td>
<td>Witchetty grub</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>anngirrenty</td>
<td>The ‘seed’ or ‘spirit’ where a person is 'found' or conceived.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>anganenty</td>
<td>knganitja</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>anpernerrenty</td>
<td>anbirnerintja</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>arlweng-rlperr</td>
<td>Fish, Desert mogurnda (Mogurnda larapintae)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>apelkel</td>
<td>balkala</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>apwelh</td>
<td>apalla</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>arreny</td>
<td>Song, name, word, verse, tune etc. (there is no general Anmatyerr word for ‘song’, only songs of particular genres)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>arathap</td>
<td>ratappa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ayerrrerr</td>
<td>jirera</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>awely</td>
<td>Women’s ceremony</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>awely-awely</td>
<td>Lightning and thunder</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ilak-akey</td>
<td>People in the same partimoity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ilep</td>
<td>Axe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>irpenng</td>
<td>irbanga</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**itya** | **itja** | No, in answer to a question
---|---|---
**kapert** | **kaputa** | Head
**kweny** | **kunja** | Night-time
**kwertengerl** | **kutungula** | Manager, police man, assistant, servant, offsider.
Complimentary to merek-artwey. Derived from Warlpiri tem 'kurdu' (child) 'ngurlu' (from). People with matrifilial rights.

**irntang** | **Hill**
**mer** | **pmara** | Country, place
**mer akweteth** | **pmara kutata** | A person or ancestor that stays in one place, forever.
**merek-artwey** | **Country-owner.** People descended from a paternal grandfather and his brothers and who belong to a particular estate (Kenny: 255).

**mwekart** | **Hat**
**ngayakenh** | **Woman (respect language used by men).**
**ngkwarl** | **Sweet, alcohol, honey**
**nhenh** | **here (in close proximity to the speaker)**
**ntapetny** | **ntapintja** | Bony Bream (Nematalosa erebi)
**ntharey** | **Ntaria** | Hermannsburg. Ntaria.
**ntwerleng** | **a special relationship between people made through ceremony**
**pantyey** | **Brother-in-law**
**perrepperr** | **Australian owlet-nightjar, also know as the fairy owl**
**anyenheng** | **njinanga** | father / child, intergenerational patri-pairings. Also the system of descent and inheritance, where children inherit a skin name in line with their father’s. More conventionally known in anthropological parlance as an estate, or partilineal land tenure.

**thep** | **thipa** | flying animals including birds and bats
**tywenp** | **tjonba** | Perentie
**tyewarrely** | **tjoarilja** | food used as a gift for someone who performs a ceremony
**-rwenguny** | **-rungunja** | A word ending possibly equivalent to –areny, ‘belonging to’.
**tywerreng** | **tjurunga** | Sacred or precious object, performance, song, place etc.
**purrk** | **borke-raka** | Often used when referring to the state of the ancestors when they cease their ancestral wanderings increase rites/ceremonies
**intety-iwem** | **ulem** | Cough
**urrempel** | **urumbula** | The Anmatyerr men I have spoken suggest that the urrempel was a generic term for a large ceremonial gathering where men would learn ritual knowledge. Most people glossed the term with an English equivalent such as ‘men’s university’, ‘University College’ or ‘high school’ and referred to the urrempel as being comprised of ceremonies relating to ‘travelling’ ancestors. Although the Urrempel (Urumbula) is often described in the Arabana and Southern Arrernte area as referring to non-restricted traditions associated with travelling atyelpe (quoll) ancestors (Hercus 2009, Wallace & Lovell 2009 and Strehlow 1971), Anmatyerr people were very clear that in their area these ceremonies were for men only and...
covered a range of ‘travelling ceremonies’. There is also an association between urrempel and atyelp ancestors that instigated the rite of subincision. Róheim’s gloss for urrempel as ‘fire urine’ suggest this also (1945, p.124).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>warkwetem</th>
<th>warkutnuma</th>
<th>a style of ceremonial dance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>yeway, yewe, ya, yaw</td>
<td></td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix IV: Anmatyerr Ceremonies Recorded by Strehlow

1. Antana Ceremony of Erultja – Wolatjatara 1953. [Antenh (Brushtail Possum) Ceremony or Irrwelty]
2. Apma Ekulungka shields of Uluma – Alcoota 1971. [Apma Ikwelengk (King Brown Snake) shields of Ulem]
5. Awungatara Act (two Utunutunga red ant women) – Wolatjatara 1955. [Utern-utner ants at Awengatherr]
7. Eritja Act of Eritjapuntja – Ajura 1960. [Irrety (Eagle) Act of Irretyepwenty (Mt. Boothby)]
11. Irbanga Ceremony of the Unmatjera and Southern Aranda – Wolatjatara 1953. [Irrenng (Fish) Ceremony of Ankerewenng (Napperby Creek)]
12. Ititja Ntanga Ancestor Act of Ititjalirala – Wolatjatara 1953. [Artetye ntang (Mulga Seed) ancestor of Artetyelherel (Napperby Creek)]
15. Two Mana Anatja Men Act of Kolba – Wolatjatara 1955. [Two Merne Anatyre (Bush potato) men act of Akwerlp]
18. Tjilpa Inkata at Aljitjarinja Act – Wolatjatara 1953. [Atyelp Ngkart (Western Quoll Boss) at Alyetyaren]


20. Tonanga Ceremony of Ilapatutjata – Wolatjatara 1953. [Atwerneng (Flying ant) Ceremony of Ilepatwetyart]


