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ISA International Guest Lecture

Time, history and innovation in Aboriginal song texts from the Kimberley region of Western Australia

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Institute for Social Anthropology (ISA)
Seminar room 1, Apostelgasse 23, 1030 Vienna

During the second wave of military occupation of his country (1941-45), Alec Wirrijangu, a Ngarinyin *barnman* (composer-cum-healer) living in the Kimberley region of Western Australia, dreamt a series of new songs that spliced together three catastrophic epochs: the locally experienced effects of World War II, the violent settlement of the Kimberley at the turn of the twentieth century, and the cosmological conflict between humans and Wanjina (ancestral beings) during *Lalarn*, the originary epoch. This paper traces these songs' "biography" - that is to say, tracing a life of the songs through exploring their effects upon those who come into contact with them (Luckmann 1991). By beginning my analysis from performances in the present as "the source point of all temporal positions" (Husserl xxiv) the "multi-stranded nature of temporality" (Goodwin 2002:19) is made visible rather than being eclipsed by some of the commonly assumed orientations towards the past or the future respectively ascribed to Indigenous and European cosmologies.



Since 1994, Anthony Redmond has conducted ethnographic research with the Ngarinyin people in the Kimberley region of Australia, focusing on economic transformation, traditional cosmologies, sung traditions and bodily experiences of time and country, as well as conducting applied lands rights research. He is currently Visiting Professor at Ca Foscari University, Venice. His most recent work explores death and grieving, the comic in everyday life, the social and ritual importance of body fat, and a phenomenology of traveling in community trucks. Recent publications include: *Meetings With and Without Meat: How Images of Consubstantiality Shape Intercultural Relationships in the Northern Kimberley Region of Western Australia* (2015), *The Australian Journal of Anthropology*; 'Tracking Wurnan: Transformations in the trade and exchange of resources in the northern Kimberley' (2012), in N. Fijn et al, *Indigenous Participation in Australian Economies*.