

# **WE ALL ONE MOB BUT DIFFERENT**

## **GROUPS, GROUPING AND IDENTITY IN A KIMBERLEY ABORIGINAL VILLAGE**

**Bernard R. MOIZO**

**A thesis submitted for the degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy  
of the Australian National University**

**October 1991**

## **DECLARATION**

Except where otherwise indicated  
this thesis is my own work.

**Bernard R. MOIZO**

October 1991



## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

---

Initial research towards this thesis started in 1980 at the Department of Anthropology, University of Sydney. I was then a postgraduate student from the Département d'Ethnologie et de Sociologie Comparative, Université Paris X Nanterre, and I had been offered a Postgraduate scholarship from The Australian Department of Education under the European Award Program scheme. The year I spent at Sydney University has influenced my future research in Aboriginal Studies and I would like to take this opportunity to express my gratitude to all the members of the Sydney Department for their encouragement, support, and friendship at the time, in particularly Richard Wright, Peter White, Les Hiatt, Donald Gardner, Douglas Miles, Peter Hinton, Paul Gorecki, Paul Alexander and Francesca Merlan; I have to thank Alan Rumsey for drawing my attention to Fitzroy Crossing as a stimulating research area.

The first fieldwork I carried out in late 1980 and early 1981 at Fitzroy Crossing, West Kimberley, Western Australia, was made possible by a grant from the New South Wales Department of Education. This field trip inspired me to come back for further research in the same area.

In mid-1980 I visited the Australian National University for the first time. During my stay in Canberra I had the opportunity to meet Howard Morphy and Nicolas Peterson from the Department of Prehistory and Anthropology, Faculty of Arts. I also conducted library work at the then Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies, where I met Myrna and Robert Tonkinson, and Penny Taylor. Despite the shivering experience of my first winter in Canberra, the warmth of their welcome convinced me to choose Canberra if I were able to return to Australia.

In 1985 I was granted a Ph.D. Scholarship from the Australian National University and joined the Department of Prehistory and Anthropology for 3 years. From the day we arrived my family and I have been taken care of in such a way that we always felt almost at home, and many of the Department staff became friends, making it a difficult time when we left.

I carried out extensive fieldwork supported by the Faculty of Arts, Australian National University and a grant from the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies.

During fieldwork many people contributed to making our stay in Fitzroy Crossing a memorable one and almost as many supported me in my field research. It would be too long to list all those whose friendship played a major role during those 16 months, but they all should be thanked here and more particularly Rob Imber, Julie McCarthy, Wayne Jeffrey, David and Christine Wilson, Wayne Howard and the School staff.

All Junjuwa residents have been at one stage or another involved with my family or myself, either during leisure or work activities. I valued above all the friendship, kindness and patience of some of them to whom I was very close, mainly the Brooking family, the Andrews family, the Oscar family, the Green family, the Brown family, the Marr family, the Williams family, the Holloway family and the Middleton family. Without them this thesis would not be, and like the words in the song 'Fitzroy Crossing' of the Warumpi Band: 'I am sure I will be back again some day...'

In writing this thesis I am primarily indebted to Nicolas Peterson, my supervisor, for a close and stimulating supervision that followed me everywhere: I tried unsuccessfully to get away from it in New Caledonia, France, Thailand and the black and cold corridor of Childers Street. Nicolas Peterson extends his responsibilities as a supervisor far beyond the A.D. Hope building and his concerns for the well-being of my family and the kindness he displayed to us on many occasions has been mostly appreciated.

Debbie Rose and Howard Morphy were both my advisers but unfortunately, for different reasons and above all because of the delays in writing up, could not remain with it up until now. Howard Morphy's insightful comments and criticism on my pre-fieldwork research proposal helped me to clarify and expand my argument at the time. Debbie Rose's answers to my field reports were extremely valuable and helped me a lot in collecting the right type of information. Later, her encouragement in convincing me what I had to say was a thesis worth writing were crucial.

During the critical and sometimes traumatic moments of writing up over the years I benefited from the support of many fellow students. I am particularly grateful to Françoise Dussart always ready to cheer me up; to David Martin who introduced me to the mysterious world of computers and shared much information from his own fieldwork; to Julie Finlayson for her moral support; to Libi Gneccchi-Ruscione for her help during the latest stage, and finally to Margaret Burns for her careful proof-reading on the final draft done in record time.

Being a long-timer in the Department of Prehistory and Anthropology I had many occasions to appreciate the ever readiness to help and consistent good mood of Debbie McGrath and David McGregor who have both become good friends.

All the maps and figures have been drawn up with remarkable skill by Khun Nayana. I have to thank the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies for granting me permission to use some of the photographs from the 'After two hundred years' photographic project.

Finally, I want to dedicate this thesis to my wife Christine and my daughters, Elodie, Geraldine and Mathilde who had to undergo the very traumatic experience of having me doing a second Ph.D., I should apologise to them for being so selfish in doing so but their love was what eventually got me through.



## **ABSTRACT**

---

This thesis examines the development and maintenance of a fragile group identity at the community level among Aboriginal people in the West Kimberley in Western Australia. It focuses on the town-based Aboriginal settlement of Junjuwa in Fitzroy Crossing.

With no indigenous political structures relevant to the permanent co-residence of several hundreds of people the development and maintenance of a community sentiment powerful enough to allow the effective operation of the community as an administrative unit is problematic. While the material constraints of successive government policies have been a key limitation on people, indigenous identities, groupings and associations which pose obstacles to sustaining a commitment to the community are always present and constantly threatening it.

This thesis explores the bases of cohesion at the community level and the constant tension with sub-community loyalties of one kind or another. It begins with a consideration of aspects of the historical background that are crucial to understanding the contemporary situation, paying particular attention to the transformations in residence patterns brought about by the pastoral industry. The emergence of Junjuwa is described in the context of the pastoral industry in the 1960s, which forced many Aboriginal people into Fitzroy Crossing. This is followed by an analysis of the community constitution, the physical structure and the resident population. In the subsequent Chapter, the bases of group sentiments and the circumstances in which these were expressed and operated are analysed. Chapters six and seven examine the sub-groupings, associations and identities that are in constant tension with the community identity. Chapter eight concentrates on the leadership in the community and Chapter nine on the consequences of external interventions. In the final Chapter I discuss why the factors that make the emergence of a community sentiment at the level of associations like Junjuwa are not, at present, exportable to a regional level.





# TABLE OF CONTENTS

---

<i>Declaration</i>	<i>i</i>
<i>Acknowledgements</i>	<i>iii</i>
<i>Abstract</i>	<i>vii</i>
<i>List of illustrations</i>	<i>xv</i>
<i>List of abbreviations</i>	<i>xvii</i>
<i>Foreword</i>	<i>xix</i>
<b>CHAPTER ONE</b>	
<b>THE PROBLEM</b>	<b>1</b>
1.1 The Noonkanbah affair	1
1.2 Aboriginal groups and aggregations	6
1.3 Outline of thesis	13
Endnotes	14
<b>CHAPTER TWO</b>	
<b>HISTORICAL OUTLINE</b>	<b>15</b>
2.1 Pre-contact period	16
2.2 The pastoral industry	22
2.3 Fitzroy Crossing and the United Aborigines Mission	33
2.3.1 Fitzroy Crossing	33
2.3.1 The United Aborigines Mission	36
2.4 Aboriginal groups in Fitzroy Crossing	39
Endnotes	44

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **THE TOWNSHIP OF FITZROY CROSSING 47**

#### **3.1 Fitzroy Crossing during the wet season 1980/1981 47**

##### **3.1.1 The main centres 49**

##### **3.1.2 The minor centres 52**

##### **3.1.3 The Aboriginal population 53**

#### **3.2 Fitzroy Crossing between December 1985 and March 1987 54**

##### **3.2.1 The main centres 55**

##### **3.2.2 The minor centres 59**

##### **3.2.3 The Aboriginal population 61**

#### **3.3 Employment opportunities at Fitzroy Crossing 64**

#### **Endnotes 68**

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **ONE TOWN-BASED COMMUNITY: JUNJUWA VILLAGE 69**

#### **4.1 The origin of incorporated Aboriginal communities at Fitzroy Crossing 69**

#### **4.2 Junjuwa community incorporated's constitution 72**

#### **4.3 Junjuwa village and its population 80**

#### **4.4 Living conditions 83**

#### **Endnotes 95**

<b>CHAPTER FIVE</b>	
<b>JUNJUWA COMMUNITY AS ONE GROUP</b>	<b>97</b>
5.1 "In Junjuwa we are one mob, all mixed, we all stop here for good long time ago" (Carol)	98
5.2 "In Junjuwa we are one mob, all related" (Arthur)	105
5.3 "In Junjuwa we all stand up for each other" (Joe)	111
5.4 Conclusion	122
Endnotes	124
<b>CHAPTER SIX</b>	
<b>VARIOUS KINDS OF GROUPINGS WITHIN JUNJUWA</b>	<b>125</b>
6.1 "In Junjuwa there are too many people from different mobs, they don't listen" (James)	125
6.2 Cultural divisions within Junjuwa	126
6.3 Linguistic divisions within Junjuwa	130
6.4 Sub-groups within linguistic units	138
6.5 Conclusion	147
Endnotes	149
<b>CHAPTER SEVEN</b>	
<b>INFORMAL ASSOCIATIONS</b>	<b>151</b>
7.1 Gender based action	152
7.2 Generation based action	158
7.3 Christian people	163
7.4 Full and mixed descent	167
7.5 Gang based action	171

7.6 Drinking associations	177
7.7 Conclusion	182
Endnotes	183
<b>CHAPTER EIGHT</b>	
<b>LEADERSHIP IN JUNJUWA</b>	<b>185</b>
8.1 Aboriginal leadership	186
8.1.1 Community councillors	187
8.1.2 Sub-groups leaders	192
8.1.3 Community Chairman	194
8.2 Non-Aboriginal leadership	203
8.2.1 "If you want to get something from these bastards, you have to kick them in the ass" (Russell)	204
8.2.2 "I am happy to help Junjuwa people to achieve something, but I'll never put my own ideas in their minds" (Jeff)	207
8.2.3 "I know that they all think I am a missionary, but I am not, I am Junjuwa project officer" (Mark)	209
8.2.4 A personal experience	213
8.3 Community leadership	216
Endnotes	223
<b>CHAPTER NINE</b>	
<b>JUNJUWA AND EXTERNAL INTERVENTIONS</b>	<b>225</b>
9.1 Interventions from other Aboriginal settlements	226
9.2 Interventions from Aboriginal organisations	236
9.3 Non-Aboriginal interventions	243
Endnotes	257

<b>CHAPTER TEN</b>	
<b>CONCLUSION</b>	<b>259</b>
<b>APPENDIX ONE</b>	<b>269</b>
<b>APPENDIX TWO</b>	<b>275</b>
Endnotes	286
<b>APPENDIX THREE</b>	<b>289</b>
Endnotes	306
<b>BIBLIOGRAPHY</b>	<b>307</b>



## LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

---

### FIGURES

Figure 1: Kin connections in the village	104
Figure 2: Kin connections in the Bunuba section	133
Figure 3: Kin connections in the Walmajarri section	134
Figure 4: Kin connections in the Wangkajunga section	137
Figure 5: Bunuba kin groups	141
Figure 6: Walmajarri and Wangkakjunga kin groups	142
Figure 7: Kin connections of council members	189
Figure 8: Seating arrangements	198
Figure 9: Kin connections of chairmen	199
Figure 10: Kimberley hierarchical organization	205

### MAPS

Map 1: Kimberley area	19
Map 2: Distribution of Aboriginal languages	20
Map 3: Cattle stations in the Kimberley	24
Map 4: Fitzroy Crossing 1970/1976	34
Map 5: Fitzroy Crossing 1985/1987	62
Map 6: Three bedroom house	84
Map 7: Junjuwa village	87
Map 8: 'Countries' of sub-groups	148
Map 9: Main drinking spots	181

### PLATES

Plate 1: Bird's eye view of Junjuwa	43
Plate 2: Sign-board at the main entrance to Junjuwa	67
Plate 3: House in the Bunuba section	94



<b>Plate 4: 'Handing out cash'</b>	<b>102</b>
<b>Plate 5: Pension day</b>	<b>103</b>
<b>Plate 6: Initiation ceremony</b>	<b>120</b>
<b>Plate 7: Initiation ceremony</b>	<b>121</b>
<b>Plate 8: 'The Rebel's car'</b>	<b>175</b>
<b>Plate 9: Graffiti</b>	<b>176</b>
<b>Plate 10: Fencing team at work</b>	<b>221</b>
<b>Plate 11: Burawa store</b>	<b>222</b>
<b>Plate 12: Rehearsing a Jumba</b>	<b>249</b>
<b>Plate 13: Council meeting</b>	<b>250</b>
<b>Plate 14: Handing over of UAM lease</b>	<b>255</b>

#### **TABLES**

<b>Table 1: Junjuwa population 1985/1988</b>	<b>90</b>
<b>Table 2: CDEP work attendance</b>	<b>283</b>
<b>Table 3a: Household composition</b>	<b>290</b>
<b>Table 3b: Household composition</b>	<b>291</b>
<b>Table 3c: Household composition</b>	<b>292</b>
<b>Table 3d: Household composition</b>	<b>293</b>
<b>Table 4a and 4b: Parents' linguistic identity</b>	<b>297</b>
<b>Table 4c and 4d: Parents' linguistic identity</b>	<b>298</b>
<b>Table 4e and 4f: Parents' linguistic identity</b>	<b>299</b>
<b>Table 5: Language groups and marriages</b>	<b>304</b>

## **LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS**

---

<b>AAPA</b>	<b>Aboriginal Affairs Planning Authority</b>
<b>ADC</b>	<b>Aboriginal Development Commission</b>
<b>AIM</b>	<b>Australian Inland Mission</b>
<b>ALS</b>	<b>Aboriginal Legal Service</b>
<b>ALT</b>	<b>Aboriginal Land Trust</b>
<b>AMAX</b>	<b>An American Mining and Exploration Company</b>
<b>CDEP</b>	<b>Community Development Employment Projects</b>
<b>DAA</b>	<b>Department of Aboriginal Affairs</b>
<b>DCH</b>	<b>Department of Community Health</b>
<b>DCS</b>	<b>Department for Community Services</b>
<b>DCW</b>	<b>Department for Community Welfare</b>
<b>DNW</b>	<b>Department of Native Welfare</b>
<b>DSS</b>	<b>Department of Social Security</b>
<b>FCPA</b>	<b>Fitzroy Crossing Progress Association</b>
<b>JCCM</b>	<b>Junjuwa Community Council Minutes</b>
<b>KCF</b>	<b>Kimberley Christian Fellowship</b>
<b>KLC</b>	<b>Kimberley Land Council</b>
<b>KLCC</b>	<b>Kimberley Law and Culture Centre</b>
<b>MWW</b>	<b>Marra Worra Worra</b>
<b>NAC</b>	<b>National Aboriginal Conference</b>
<b>SHC</b>	<b>State Housing Commission</b>
<b>UB</b>	<b>Unemployment Benefit</b>
<b>UN</b>	<b>United Nations</b>



## FOREWORD

---

The short glimpse of fieldwork that I had during my first visit to Australia when I was working on a theoretically oriented library thesis in French on Aboriginal mortuary customs inspired me to return to do research based on my own ethnographic work.

Knowing from experience the strong Anglo-Saxon empirical tradition I knew I had little chance to be recognised prior to proving myself in the field. This is why I came to enrol in a second Ph.D.

The fieldwork experience I subsequently had was so powerful and intense that I decided to include in my thesis a lot of everyday ethnography in order to have the reader share some of it with me. Further, I have often been frustrated while reading anthropological works by finding that the raw material, upon which this research is based, has been smothered by jargon, something I have been determined to avoid.

Although many references have been made to Aboriginal people I have used pseudonyms to preserve their anonymity, for two reasons. First, because most of my informants did not wish to be identified; second, because Fitzroy Crossing is a small remote town and what the people said to me might conceivably be used against them if taken out of its particular context, although with the passing of time this becomes less and less likely. For this same reason I have used pseudonyms for non-Aboriginal people as well.

Finally, the way I have transcribed colloquial English spoken by the people in the Kimberley is not the standard form of 'Aboriginal English', but corresponds to the way I heard it then with the local expressions that give to this form of English a distinctive flavour.



---

# CHAPTER ONE

---

## THE PROBLEM

---

The problem I want to address in this thesis relates to understanding why Aboriginal people in the Kimberley have found it difficult to develop and maintain a regional political consciousness. I became interested in this question as a result of my first visit to the Kimberley in December 1980, only some months after the climax of the Noonkanbah affair which had projected Aborigines into the national and even briefly the international news. During my short visit then, I quickly became aware of the fact that even though the small group of one hundred Aboriginal people from Noonkanbah cattle station had given rise to the first regional Aboriginally controlled organization, the Kimberley Land Council, and had drawn financial, political and moral support from across the nation in what was seen by outsiders as a major land rights battle, any sense of regional solidarity there might have been had already evaporated. The Noonkanbah crisis seemed to reflect a common process in the formation of Aboriginal groups and Aboriginal community life which allows larger grouping only a short life. A brief history of the Noonkanbah affair will help to illustrate the point.

### 1.1 The Noonkanbah affair

The growing development of mining interests in the Kimberley in the late 1970s, from which the area had hitherto been largely protected, resulted in the international consortium, AMAX Petroleum, gaining an exploration licence on Noonkanbah. The company planned to drill an exploratory oil well in the

## *Chapter One*

vicinity of Pea-Hill, a sacred site on the station. AMAX's actions fuelled misunderstandings, setting the scene for a major conflict. This took on national significance with the aggressive intervention of the State Government, overriding Aboriginal concerns about the sacred sites and using police to enforce the AMAX drilling programme. At this period when the Federal Government had put uniform national land rights on the agenda the whole matter became highly sensitive (Kolig 1987:133-137). Ultimately, despite a nationwide campaign and a trip by an Aboriginal delegation to the UN, Yungnora people were unable to obtain a moratorium on the drilling, but AMAX abandoned the well soon after the drilling had started because no oil worth exploiting was found.

Almost since Noonkanbah Station started in 1887, there had been a group of Aboriginal people living permanently on the station. Originally they were all Nyikina<sup>1</sup>, most of the Noonkanbah lease being on Nyikina country, but speakers of that language gradually mixed with Walmajarri who moved into the area from the 1910s onwards. Between 1949 and 1960, the Department of Native Welfare censuses<sup>2</sup> show that the permanent Aboriginal population at Noonkanbah Station was about 80 people. During this period the group living at Noonkanbah was made up of an equal number of Nyikina and Walmajarri people and called itself Yungnora. Living conditions on Noonkanbah station were precarious and relations between the people and the manager tense. For example, by as late as 1970, there were only two steel-frame rain shelters with dirt floors to accommodate some fifty people then living at Noonkanbah, and the only facility was one pit latrine (DNW, Noonkanbah 8/10/1970). As far as relations with the manager were concerned, an incident in which an old woman was fired, for wasting water while watering flowers next to the homestead, said it all (DNW, Noonkanbah 18/8/1971). According to a 1970 report from the DNW<sup>3</sup>, the rations provided by the management to people were so poor that supplementation from bush foods was essential.

In August 1971, after some incidents between Aboriginal people and the manager, the Yungnora people did something that showed the coherence of the group and the solidarity of its members: during one night the entire Aboriginal population left the station. The "walk off", as such actions are called, was facilitated by some Yungnora people's relatives, living at Fitzroy Crossing, who provided vehicles to transport people from Noonkanbah to the town. Between 1971 and 1976, members of the Yungnora group lived at a temporary camp established in Fitzroy Crossing by the Department for Community Welfare (DCW). Noonkanbah's manager attempted on a few occasions to get the people back on his station, but the leaders of the Yungnora group were determined and refused categorically to return to Noonkanbah as long as he remained manager.

In 1976, Noonkanbah station was purchased by the Aboriginal Land Fund Commission (ALFC)<sup>4</sup>. The Noonkanbah lease was vested in the Aboriginal Lands Trust of Western Australia (ALT), who subsequently offered it to the

### *The Problem*

Yungnora people. Firstly, they refused because the Department of Aboriginal Affairs (DAA) intended to appoint a white manager to supervise their activities there, even though they were now legally incorporated as the Yungnora Community and were about to become leaseholders of the station. They eventually agreed to move back when a management committee was set up to advise them on the running of the station. The creation of this committee was initiated by the district officer from the DCW. Apart from him the committee included local pastoralists, an accountant from Marra Worra Worra (MWW), an Aboriginal Resource Agency in Fitzroy Crossing, and members from the Yungnora group.

By 1978, a new leader emerged within the Yungnora group. He was then the spokesman for the group and retained this position during the crisis. He was in 1985 Noonkanbah community chairman, even if his leadership was eroded and his influence was continually diminishing. It seems now that the starting point of the entire Noonkanbah controversy was a succession of misunderstandings (Kolig 1987:137). Several mining companies had permits for prospecting in the area and one of them decided to start a survey prior to further mining in the Noonkanbah vicinity. Apparently it was prepared to negotiate over conditions for mining with the Aboriginal communities concerned, but from the very beginning the negotiations went wrong. These negotiations were led by junior representatives of the mining company, who knew little if anything about the way to deal with Aboriginal people. These junior officials received an agreement to start exploration and mining but it was signed only by a former community spokesman no longer considered as a leader by the rest of the Yungnora group. It is not surprising, then, that the Yungnora people did not feel bound at all to the company by an agreement signed in their name by a non-representative leader. The detailed history of the subsequent two year conflict is documented in other places (Hawke & Gallager 1989, Kolig 1987), so I will not go into it here.

It was at Noonkanbah in 1978 that the first Aboriginal regional organisation, the Kimberley Land Council (KLC), was formed. The main purpose of that organisation was to bring all Aboriginal people from the West Kimberley together and to be fully representative of all Aboriginal communities. Therefore the KLC executive committee included representatives from nearly all the Aboriginal groups from the Fitzroy Valley area, who in turn elected their own chairman. Once created, the first task of this Aboriginal organisation was to gain the support of the state opposition for its struggle with mining companies and to bring the mining controversy to the attention of the media. From that point, the KLC became, for many, the official representative of the Yungnora group and acted as a political broker between the Noonkanbah people on the one side, and mining companies and State Government on the other, during the entire Noonkanbah crisis.

Between 1978 and 1980, many important religious ceremonies were held at Noonkanbah, which brought a lot of Aboriginal groups together, partially



## *Chapter One*

reviving the importance of the place for ceremonial gatherings (Kolig 1981:121). But a new dimension was added, because Noonkanbah also became the site of numerous political gatherings. The Noonkanbah people, through the action of the Kimberley Land Council, gained support from unions and churches across Australia; they also acquired, through the media, the image of a small group of Aboriginal people fighting and struggling for their land against a giant international industrial body, as well as against government policies and politicians. The height of the controversy was reached in August 1980 when a convoy of trucks under police protection, carrying mining equipment, was stopped by a crowd of local Aborigines, with black and white supporters, on the only road that gives access to Noonkanbah. In a dramatic confrontation the blockade was removed, many people arrested and the convoy forced through<sup>5</sup>. The full coverage of the events by the Australian media was relayed overseas. Further international publicity was gained when a KLC representative visited Geneva to address a United Nations commission on the events, drawing attention to the state of black/white relations in Australia and the problems faced by Aboriginal people.

In Australia, there were two main views of the Noonkanbah events. For those in sympathy with the Aborigines, the Noonkanbah people became a symbol of the entire Aboriginal population fighting over land rights issues. By contrast, for those against any land rights policy there was a tendency to condemn anything that was related to the Aboriginal position on Noonkanbah. Locally, things were totally different: once the drilling started the Noonkanbah people bitterly realised that they had lost their fight almost as quickly as they had lost control of the original situation.

When I returned to the Kimberley in 1985, I could see that the Noonkanbah controversy had split people in the area rather than brought them together. For example, the group which returned to Noonkanbah in 1976 was no longer a unified group but was now divided between four discrete settlements on different stations. These residential divisions were mainly caused by deaths of several prominent group members. Ironically, at the same time as the initial Yungnora group had split into smaller residential units, more people than ever associated themselves with it, in the sense that they claimed to belong to one or more of these residential sub-groups (McMahon 1984:12). Even the group that now lived at Noonkanbah was far from being united in the way it had been in 1971. The cattle station, still run by the Yungnora Association, was struggling with financial and administrative difficulties. Aboriginal groups living in the area blamed these difficulties on the Noonkanbah controversy, which they said had divided people and given rise to bad relations between Aborigines from the area and the government.

Relations between the KLC and the Noonkanbah people had also deteriorated, apparently beginning in 1981, and were very irregular and tense at the time of my second visit. Although since the Noonkanbah events the Kimberley Land Council had been openly used by local Aboriginal

### *The Problem*

communities as a service agency to cash their social security cheques, to pay their registration for motor vehicles, or to get legal help or advice, the people refused any other types of involvement through the KLC, especially in political matters. According to the chairman this lack of political awareness was particularly evident in the Fitzroy Valley area. He suggested it was caused by government policies that encouraged competition between communities through the allocation of resources on a community by community basis (defined according to government criteria). This meant that each of these communities wanted to deal individually with the government, neglecting their common interest at the regional level as well as organisations such as the KLC. The chairman did not relate these circumstances to the Noonkanbah crisis in any way.

By contrast, for an anthropologist<sup>6</sup> then employed by the same organisation, the Noonkanbah affair was an important element that partly explained the lack of support from Aboriginal groups in the area for the Kimberley Land Council. In his view, the Noonkanbah events involved too many people and became too important for the Aboriginals at the origin of the crisis. He also emphasized one other important factor: although the controversy over prospecting at Noonkanbah, as elsewhere in Australia, was closely associated with the nationwide interest in land rights issues, the Yungnora people did not see their struggle as related to this wider political controversy. Even though the Noonkanbah people became a symbol for the land rights movement across Australia, land rights were not the origin of the dispute, at least as far as Yungnora people were concerned. Members and leaders of the Yungnora group, and others directly involved, blamed outside influences (including some members of the KLC, the media, and black and white activists) for manipulating their own struggle for other purposes. Moreover, under the label of 'Noonkanbah events', the Yungnora people found themselves associated with people unknown to them and ideas they did not share and refused to promote. The anthropologist agreed that the Noonkanbah crisis provided an ideal platform for promoting the KLC as an Aboriginal organisation representative of all Aboriginal groups living in the area, on the one hand, and on the other hand as a privileged political interlocutor acting as a mediator between government and mining companies and the Yungnora people. But once the events were over, the KLC failed to achieve both roles. As a result Noonkanbah people felt betrayed by the KLC, for the prospecting started precisely when the KLC representatives were away at Geneva in an attempt to gain international support over the events. The Yungnora people interpreted this trip as a promotional campaign for the organisation over the Noonkanbah crisis, since it had failed to stop the prospecting from taking place, which in their view was the main issue.

On the other hand, during the year following the Noonkanbah crisis, the KLC relied on Yungnora people to support and promote its political views and ideas. KLC members felt that because of the important role the KLC had

## *Chapter One*

played in supporting the Yungnora community during the whole affair they had a right to expect strong support of the Council by the community. For various reasons, some of them already mentioned, this support did not eventuate; as a result the KLC lost its regional importance, almost as fast as it had acquired it. Further, the Noonkanbah controversy represented a new phenomenon that reached such a point that it gave local Aboriginal people the feeling they did not control the situation any more.

Beyond the controversy itself, what I found puzzling was that, at the very time various Aboriginal groups and organisations had demonstrated their ability for mobilization in a coherent and successful movement that may have succeeded beyond expectations, it started to collapse, leaving behind nothing but bad memories.

There were certainly external factors as well as the internal tensions that could explain both the success and the failure of this movement, but I believe there are other and deeper reasons as well.

The Noonkanbah crisis is an illustrative example, in the political field, of how in contemporary remote Australia Aboriginal groups are formed, the ways in which they come together, develop specific links and show their solidarity. Once one looks at this aspect of Aboriginal society, it is clear that such social groups have limits, for example in their coherence, duration and perpetuation, and that to some extent the very same forces that bring people or groups together can potentially split them apart<sup>7</sup>.

## **1.2 Aboriginal groups and aggregations**

Of course, the kind of grouping the KLC sought to establish was at an unusually broad level, but even at the more localized "Aboriginal village or community" level similar problems occur. It is at this level of a localized residential population that I sought, on my return, to obtain an understanding of political and group dynamics. Settling in Fitzroy Crossing, the town to which the Noonkanbah people had moved when they walked off the station in 1971, I addressed the problem by looking at the formation, composition, and organisation of this so-called community. I was immediately confronted by a range of questions. What is an Aboriginal community in the Kimberley today? How did people come to live together at a specific location and what keeps them together on a permanent basis? How cohesive are such "communities" and what are their internal sub-divisions? On what basis is there cooperation between sub-divisions? What are the impacts of internal conflicts? These were some of the questions that I would have to explore, if I were to come to grips

with the internal dynamics of social group formation. But, it was also clear that in order to understand the process fully it was crucial to include external factors in the analysis; that is to say, constraints imposed from outside that influence people's views and have to be accommodated. In particular, this concerns relations between the Aboriginal groups and local whites, local and regional representatives of government bodies and agencies, as well as government policy itself at the state level.

The nature of Aboriginal social groups has been investigated frequently by anthropologists, particularly as they relate to traditional territorial organization, and recent research linked to land claims have greatly contributed to new perspectives on the issue (Keen 1988: 108-109). I will not recapitulate the history of the investigation of these researches but rather focus on some general issues and concerns with post-colonial social groupings.

Anthropological views on Aboriginal forms of social grouping have changed at least as much as the object of study itself, from a very static and functionalist model of "horde or band" (Radcliffe-Brown 1931), to an ephemeral model "mob" (Sansom 1981) or even a manipulated form of social formation, "community" (Trigger 1987).

As noted by Merlan (1981:145), it seems important that one should distinguish between change in social forms that are closely related to contacts between Aborigines and Europeans, and those that result from the internal dynamics of Aboriginal society and history. In other words, one should assume that change, in most aspects of Aboriginal life, did occur in pre-contact times as well as in post-contact times. The historical dimension is an important element in the study of the structure and identity of social groups. It is particularly relevant in today's situation if we accept that history is best understood as 'common shared experiences' and is one of the main components in the processes of formation and maintenance of social groups in Australia (Sansom 1981:260, Trigger 1987:223, Merlan 1981:141).

It is in recent history, during the past one hundred years, that traditional Aboriginal society has undergone the most profound changes. European colonization of Australia and white settlement in remote areas of the continent have heavily affected Aboriginal traditional society in many ways, and introduced dramatic change in Aboriginal people's lives. Of those who survived the first decades of white settlement, some had to migrate because of pressure from European expansion, some were displaced on purpose, and others were attracted to new areas. This was the case in places where missions, cattle stations, mines or small towns offered what seemed to be an easier way of obtaining food. These migrant Aboriginal groups generally settled in residential units larger than those they were used to. Most of them settled down and gradually developed a strong dependency on products available from white people. Apart from a very traumatic change, when people moved into portions of land unfamiliar to them, leaving behind highly 'significant' places,

## *Chapter One*

the main effects of sedentarisation on Aboriginal society were probably on local organisation and economic life (Berndt 1977:4-5, Tonkinson 1974:5).

Aboriginal groups did not remain passive to these changes. Long before the arrival of Europeans, Aborigines had developed ways to link widely separated groups. Usually, these groups shared mythological and ritual sequences and were tied through trade and marriage links. These links were not restricted to groups linguistically or culturally close one to another. In some areas, links bridge cultural and linguistic differences. In other words, to be in contact with groups geographically distant and culturally different was not a new phenomenon for Aborigines; it was amplified only as a result of settlement in new areas and in different forms. Accordingly, cohesive forces of the past followed a similar trend in order to cope with the new situation (Shaw & Toby 1980:6-7).

Traditional ways of setting up and maintaining inter-groups links have been shown by a number of researchers to be used to create new forms of social groups in post-colonial times (e.g. see Anderson 1989:81, Berndt 1977:2, Chase 1980:4, Duncan 1975/6:62, Kolig 1977:39-43, 1981:2, Tonkinson 1974:140, 1988:4-5). Indeed, it seems right to assume that as a result of recent history Aboriginal social identity has changed considerably and that sentiments of belonging to one group are now expanded to larger units. But, within these new groupings internal differences, still based on traditional affiliation but this time to a restricted group of people, are maintained and perpetuated, as noted by several researchers (Anderson 1989: 81-83, Chase 1980:4, Duncan 1975/6:59, Kolig 1981:25/26, Sansom 1982:137, Tonkinson 1974:46, 1988:14-15).

Movements of the Aboriginal population, settlement in new locations and changes caused by Europeans then gradually contributed to the development of new and wider concepts of identity (Berndt 1977:7). Novelties from the white society were interpreted into something coherent, that in turn became part of the ideology used by Aborigines to assert relations between groups and localities (Trigger 1987:220). It is very common to hear Aboriginal people assert that 'we are all the same'. In saying this they attribute new elements and changes to white people, as if they themselves had no influence on the new situation, neglecting the fact that their traditional values and practices influenced the whole process and its outcome (Shaw & Toby 1980:15). In a way, it is possible to say that 'people are all the same' precisely because they have changed. This contradiction is central to the discourse of Aborigines, explaining their survival in a completely different context through conformity to ancestral values and beliefs.

People did not become sedentarised once and for all at the same location. Throughout their life, they usually experienced various settlements, different living environments and several working conditions. Either on their own or with immediate relatives, they frequently moved from one place to another. These movements were accompanied by two main restrictions: they were

### *The Problem*

regulated by outside decisions (cattle station managers, missionaries, seasonal work), and occurred within a limited geographical area. Within a given region, groups of Aboriginal people accumulated similar working experiences, shared the same living conditions, and developed ties to the new locality in a more traditional way. Even if the historical dimension of all this was driven by forces external to Aboriginal society, the way these forces were internalized constitutes the basis of their contemporary associations (Chase 1980:2, Kolig 1977:36).

A 'common shared experience' is not simply a basis for Aboriginal social groups within a specific area; in some cases it gave rise to regional expressions of identity. For example, in various places in the north of Australia, the emergence of a regional identity was closely linked to the cattle industry. Such identities took several forms and have been observed in various areas: for example, 'countrymanship', in the Darwin hinterland (Sansom 1978, 1981), or 'Walmadjerisation' in the West Kimberley (Kolig 1977, 1981). Cohesive forces that contributed to the formation of regional identities are similar, even if differences in their expressions are noted. Overall, the entire process is an expansion of boundaries of exclusiveness that delimited small groups in the past, progressively extended through 'common shared experience' to wider groups. The distinction between self and others, instituted by these boundaries, remains as a strong element of identification for these new groups, even if it is in no way as exclusive as it used to be (Sansom 1978:89, 1982:118; Kolig 1977:37-38).

According to Sansom, all those who identified themselves as countrymen share the same Kriol and a common working experience within the same geographical area. These new elements are mixed with traditional components of group formation that now regulate relations between groups of countrymen, such as marriages, ritual activities, and access to financial resources (Sansom 1978:90). In Sansom's analysis, these groups of countrymen are called 'mobs'. The notion of mob, although central to contemporary Aboriginal social grouping, has different meanings in different areas of Australia: for example, Tonkinson links the emergence of a mob with the process of sedentarisation amongst Aboriginal people from the Western Desert (Tonkinson 1988:4-7). In north Queensland, where people were traditionally more sedentary, Anderson shows that there is continuity with the pre-colonial period in contemporary residential units. For those mobs, staying in one place was less important than with whom people co-resided or why they did so (Anderson 1989:67-70). Thus, the mobs found in the Western Desert and in the Darwin hinterland represent a new Aboriginal social group which in a contemporary form is still made up of components that characterised traditional social groups: it is not a rigorously defined, structured and unchangeable group, but a fluid and fluctuating association of individuals brought together on the ground of their commonalities and a localised identity (Sansom 1978:101, 1981:258-259; Tonkinson 1988:5-7). In Sansom's view, the main bond between mobs of

## Chapter One

countrymen is the reflection and interpretation of their common history through language, and, according to him, the Aboriginal view of history as interpreted in Kriol fulfils for contemporary Aborigines the same role that myths did in the past (1978:120-121).

The development of 'Walmadjerisation', analysed by Kolig, is very similar to Sansom's definition of countrymanship. Walmadjerisation arose from a common history of several distinct Aboriginal groups being brought together in the same area. But, in Kolig's perspective, what bound people together was the emergence of new forms of religious activities (Kolig 1981:1-2). Kolig's entire argument is based on a Durkheimian model that social bonds are primarily represented by religion. In his analysis, religious beliefs and practices that, prior to white settlement, bound Aboriginal people together in small groups to localised sites (Kolig 1981:2), were 'reshaped' mainly as a result of change in Aboriginal living conditions (1981:5). Then, a 'reshaped religion' became the vehicle of change but retained its main characteristic: it grouped and unified people, but on a wider basis (Kolig 1981:37). Despite the fact that the central element of the entire dynamic is religion and not language, Kolig shares most of Sansom's views on mobs (1981:27-30) and countrymanship (1981:117-120).

Elsewhere, Kolig has suggested a further development of his notion of Walmadjerisation to "supra-tribal identities", when one religious system is associated with one particular language, which in turn propagated bonds and unified wider units, in a movement that eventually will become a common Aboriginal identity or Aboriginality (Kolig 1977:45). The 'commonality' described by Sansom in the Darwin area (Sansom 1982) is probably a step towards a pan-Aboriginality, among Aborigines over a wide area who share some common cultural features today. 'Commonality' was prompted by white settlement but, according to Sansom, is not a direct result of it for its main components were rooted in the Aboriginal traditional ways of 'doing business' (1982:117). This commonality is expressed Australia-wide, despite local differences, by contemporary Aboriginal individuals and groups. For example, countrymanship is a local and/or regional expression of the Aboriginal commonality in which Australia-wide sentiments take a specific form relevant to the region where it is expressed, here the Darwin hinterland (1982:126). These similar sentiments enable cooperation between and amongst mobs and give to the notion of countrymanship its coherence (1982:34). Thus, in his view, countrymanship and like notions underwrite an Australia-wide Aboriginal commonality. The overall dynamic of this movement is paradoxical by nature, for it restricts its cohesion at the same time as it expresses it:

The Aboriginal commonality of fellow feeling and similar understandings contains the countervailing forces that would need to be overcome if a pan-Aboriginal ethnogenesis were to be achieved (Sansom 1982:135).

By this, Sansom suggests that the same elements that enable people to come together restrain them from forming a permanent, coherent and

### *The Problem*

structured unit which, for example, would have found its expression in the political arena. The main reason for this is that the basis of Aboriginal commonality, the mob, is a particular set of countrymen bonded together through a complex web of relations that generate debts amongst them. Countrymen realised their countrymanship through these owner/debtor relationships. Such a system is only operational if it is limited and localized, which works precisely against a wider ethnogenesis:

Because people who are 'all same' in the modalities of their social expressions are 'different really' when their loyalties and ties of indebtedness are considered as bases for their association (Sansom 1982:137).

Sansom and Kolig have noted the limits of both movements they analysed but failed to provide a contextual account of these limitations. They acknowledged that recent history gave Aboriginal groups the opportunity to conceptualize and partially express their similarities, but were unable to show the link between the maintenance and perpetuation of traditional categories and internal divisions on the one hand and contemporary constraints on the other. In an analysis of a new Aboriginal settlement, Trigger made that link, when he noted that in Aboriginal villages formed in the mid-1970s of people from diverse linguistic backgrounds, and where sentiments of countrymanship are strong amongst members, there are definitely new tendencies amongst people to form corporate bodies on a linguistic basis or even on a more restricted sub-unit (Trigger 1987:229-231).

The significance of the linguistic factor in the formation of social identity in Aboriginal Australia is discussed in details by Merlan, who stressed that native linguistic ideologies cannot be overlooked in this process (Merlan 1981:133). In Merlan's paper, the Western Roper River example (1981:141-145) is particularly relevant to this study, because it shares historical similarities with the Kimberley area (See Chapter Two). Merlan states that the establishment of stations by white settlers had radical repercussions on the Aboriginal local organization, and resulted in attracting distant Aboriginal groups to move into the area, while 'people identifying with indigenous Roper-region socio-linguistic groupings have to a large extent, remained in the immediate area on cattle stations and settlements' (1981:141). Another common element to both areas is the use of one single name to define one language and the area in which speakers of that language lived (live) and had (have) totemic affiliations.

...Unless a particular circumstances is immediately affecting the levels at which oppositions regarding affiliations to land are being expressed, in general a specific linguistic/cultural identity is projected onto a large land area within which, in theory, speakers of that language reside and to which they are totemically affiliated (Merlan 1981:144).



## Chapter One

But like in the Kimberley, there is a difference, in the Western Roper River, between individuals' linguistic affiliation and their proficiency in that language (Merlan 1981:144-145).

In the Kimberley area, most Aboriginal people can speak more than one language, and the one in which they are the most competent is not necessarily the one they are affiliated to. Further, nearly all young Aboriginal people speak a form of Kriol, common to the entire Kimberley area, but their knowledge of other Aboriginal languages is very limited and sometimes nil, nevertheless, they all are affiliated to language-groups. A similar situation occurs in other areas of Northern Australia, such as the North-West Queensland for example, where elements other than language proficiency determine an individual's language affiliation.

...A person's competence in speaking a language is largely an issue independent of his affiliation to that language name, and to the territory affiliated with that language name (Trigger 1987:220).

Some languages' names, which in the past did not correspond to a broad form of grouping, became institutionalized as such after the white settlement (Merlan 1981:140), and more recently developed into language-groups to form corporate Aboriginal bodies in order to attract government funds and resources such as housing (Trigger 1987:231). Thus, for some contemporary Aboriginal people language affiliation represents a way to express a social identity used to deal with the Australian bureaucracy (Trigger 1987:232). For Trigger, these groupings, formed in response to external elements, were unlikely to develop into 'stable sociopolitical units' (*ibid*).

In Junjuwa, language-groups or linguistic units did represent a kind of grouping that existed locally prior to the formation of an incorporated body (see Chapters Two and Six). Later, these linguistic affiliations have provided a basis for the development of a community-village identity characterised by opposed although not conflicting elements: the shared sentiment of being 'all mixed' as a result of affiliations to new countries, and mixed marriages (Merlan 1981:142, Trigger 1987:231), for example; the preservation of differences, at a more inclusive level of groupings, which cannot be obliterated no matter how well the immigrants are integrated (Merlan 1981:145, Trigger 1987:221).

Such movement, which operates against other recent modalities of group formation, is partly a response to a government decision to give access to funding to Aboriginal groups on a 'traditional basis' rather than on a 'contemporary basis' (Trigger 1987:231-2). Therefore, if external influences have indeed facilitated the expansion of Aboriginal social identity in larger units, they can also stimulate and encourage a reverse movement. Ironically, it seems that it is only when Aboriginal people have 'internalised' one form of grouping as a response to outside elements that they have to 'conceptualize' another one to cope with other pressures.

### **1.3 Outline of thesis**

In Chapter Two I outline the history of the Kimberley area. I concentrate on several aspects which are crucial for the understanding of contemporary Aboriginal grouping in the West Kimberley. Then I describe Aboriginal groups in Fitzroy Crossing prior to the construction of Junjuwa village. In Chapter Three I focus on Fitzroy Crossing by providing a description of the township, concentrating on the importance of the local Aboriginal population in the town's development. Chapter Four deals with Junjuwa community: I look at Junjuwa from its origin until my first field trip. I focus on the community constitution, then I describe the village design and its resident population. In the next Chapter I present cementing elements that have made possible for the notion of Junjuwa as one group to develop. I discuss the bases of group sentiments within Junjuwa and the circumstances in which these notions were expressed and operated. Chapter Six shows that although Junjuwa could operate as one group, its residents had preserved various forms of groupings based on several criteria, that existed before they had moved into the village. In Chapter Seven I discuss associations that provided the basis for group actions amongst Junjuwa residents other than those presented in the previous Chapter. Chapter Eight concentrates on leadership in Junjuwa. I provide a description of the nature and role of leadership at the community level. Chapter Nine deals with external interventions. I discuss the origins and nature of various external interventions and their impact on the community. In the final Chapter I discuss why the cohesive elements that made possible the notion of Junjuwa as a group were not expendable at the regional level.

## **Endnotes - Chapter One**

1 All names of Aboriginal groups, languages and settlements are spelt according to Hudson & Yu 1987.

2 After World War 2 the Department of Native Welfare conducted surveys of the Aboriginal population and their living conditions on cattle stations twice a year, until 1974.

3 In 1974 the Department of Native Welfare (DNW), merged with another state department and became the Department for Community Welfare (DCW), which in 1985 was changed to the Department for Community Services (DCS).

4 For the details of the purchasing of the Noonkanbah Pty Ltd by the Aboriginal Land Fund Commission, see Hawke & Gallagher 1989:81-85.

5 For the details of this incident, see Hawke & Gallagher 1989.

6 Bill Arthur personal communication Kimberley Land Council Office, Derby, 18/01/1986.

7 A similar dynamic has been noted by Tonkinson regarding Aboriginal people from the Western Desert (Tonkinson 1988:14-15).

---

## CHAPTER TWO

---

### HISTORICAL OUTLINE

---

The town of Fitzroy Crossing is located on the Fitzroy River in the West Kimberley district, in the north west of Western Australia. The nearest towns are Derby on the northwestern coast of Western Australia (265 km west), and Halls Creek, which is part of the East Kimberley (300 km east). There is one main road access (The Great Northern Highway) that links Western Australia to the Northern Territory through the Kimberley (Map 1).

Three quarters of the residential population of Fitzroy Crossing is Aboriginal. During the sixteen months I spent at Fitzroy Crossing (December 1985 - March 1987), there were about 600 Aborigines in town and 200 Whites. In government censuses, people living in an area up to 150 km around Fitzroy Crossing are added to the town population. The combined figures reached a total of nearly 300 non-Aboriginals as against 1200 to 1300 Aboriginal people (1473 according to the 1986 Census)<sup>1</sup>.

I concentrated my field research on the village of Junjuwa, the oldest and largest of the four Aboriginal settlements established in the town. The rest of the Aboriginal population in the area lived either in similar settlements away from town, on Aboriginal cattle stations such as Noonkanbah, or in outstations or other 'bush camps'.

White settlement in the Kimberley has had a strong impact on Aboriginal people of the area. These external influences on Aboriginal groups ultimately resulted in the creation of villages like Junjuwa, with a residential population of mixed linguistic and regional origins. Prior to European arrival there was some linguistic and cultural variation even within the area around Fitzroy, but as a result of colonization the present day population of the same area is much more

culturally heterogeneous than it ever was in the past. Initially, Aboriginal groups scattered over a very wide area with distinctive cultural and linguistic traditions, were brought together in relatively permanent associations on cattle stations. Later on they were drawn into larger multi-language groups on missions, which were eventually dismantled, giving way to communities like Junjuwa.

Prior to any analysis of these contemporary settlements, commonly known as communities, it is important to understand the historical processes that have led to their creation. For this purpose I will outline in this chapter the successive phases of the regional history and evaluate their impact upon Aboriginal groups. Firstly, I will present the pre-contact distribution of language groups, in so far as it is possible to reconstruct it. Secondly, I will describe the establishment of the pastoral industry, its development and its impact. Thirdly, I will concentrate on Fitzroy Crossing itself and the establishment of the United Aborigines Mission. Finally, I will turn to the history and development of the Aboriginal population at Fitzroy Crossing.

## **2.1 Pre-contact period**

There are few reliable sources that cover the pre-contact period in the Kimberley. Most published work that deals with first contact between Aborigines and Europeans is based on settlers' journals (Lamond 1986, Buchanan 1933). They concentrate on the harsh living conditions faced by the settlers and trouble caused by 'blacks'. Early anthropological records exist (Mathews 1900, 1901), but unfortunately are too general and not of much use to our present concern. Nevertheless, if one combines later anthropological works (Elkin 1932, Elkin & Capell 1936, Kaberry 1936, 1937, 1939, Love 1936), with personal reminiscences of the older Aboriginal people living in the area about their parents' life, one can gain a reasonably clear idea of the situation prior to 1880. Most of the information available concerns matters such as pre-contact distribution of language groups and types of relationships between these groups, both of great importance for a better understanding of today's situation.

Many members of linguistic groups living today in the Fitzroy area were originally established elsewhere. Only Bunuba, Gooniyandi, Kija and Nyikina were living in the Fitzroy Valley prior to white settlement in the area, but their pre-contact location does not correspond to their contemporary distribution (see Map 2). For example, the Bunuba, although traditionally located on the west side of the Fitzroy river, were further north, and the Nyikina occupied the lower and middle part of the same river but on the south side. The Gooniyandi were established in an area delimited by the Christmas creek and the Fitzroy

river on the east side of the latter, and finally the Kija were found on the east of a triangular portion of country formed by the Margaret and Fitzroy rivers (see Map 2a). According to Kolig (1981:18), the Djaba, a distinct linguistic group which disappeared as early as 1880, lived where the town of Fitzroy Crossing is now located and as such were the original occupants of the area<sup>2</sup>.

Bunuba, Gooniyandi, Kija and Nyikina present themselves as 'river people' as opposed to 'salt water people' and 'desert people'. The term 'salt water people' is used to refer to speakers of languages who were established on coastal areas either north (Worrorra, Warrwa) or south (Bardi, Nyulnyul, Jabirjabirr) of the mouth of the Fitzroy. In contrast, 'desert people' applies to languages whose speakers lived well south of the Fitzroy. Those languages are Mangala, whose speakers lived south of the lower Fitzroy, and Jaru, whose speakers occupied an area east of the Fitzroy Valley. These were the closest. Other 'desert people' lived far south in the Great Sandy Desert; they were Walmajarri, Wangkajunga and Kukatja. These three broad groupings were not distinctive coherent cultural or linguistic blocks but reflect the way the contemporary Aboriginal Fitzroy population perceives people's affiliations.

River people (Bunuba and Gooniyandi) had a lot in common, apart from the fact that their languages were closely related (Hudson and Richards 1984:3). For example, they had similar myths for the origin of their country, language and people. In both cases, ancestral beings came from a long way up north, on the other side of the King Leopold Range. Once they reached the Fitzroy, these ancestral beings took different directions. In the Bunuba mythology they followed the river downstream until they hit the Erskine Range, then went north again and disappeared near the west side of the King Leopold Range. Gooniyandi ancestral beings followed the Margaret river upstream and disappeared somewhere near Jaru country. Bunuba and Gooniyandi were also involved in trading activities as well as in joint ritual and social gatherings, at least as asserted by people today, for groups living in neighbouring areas.

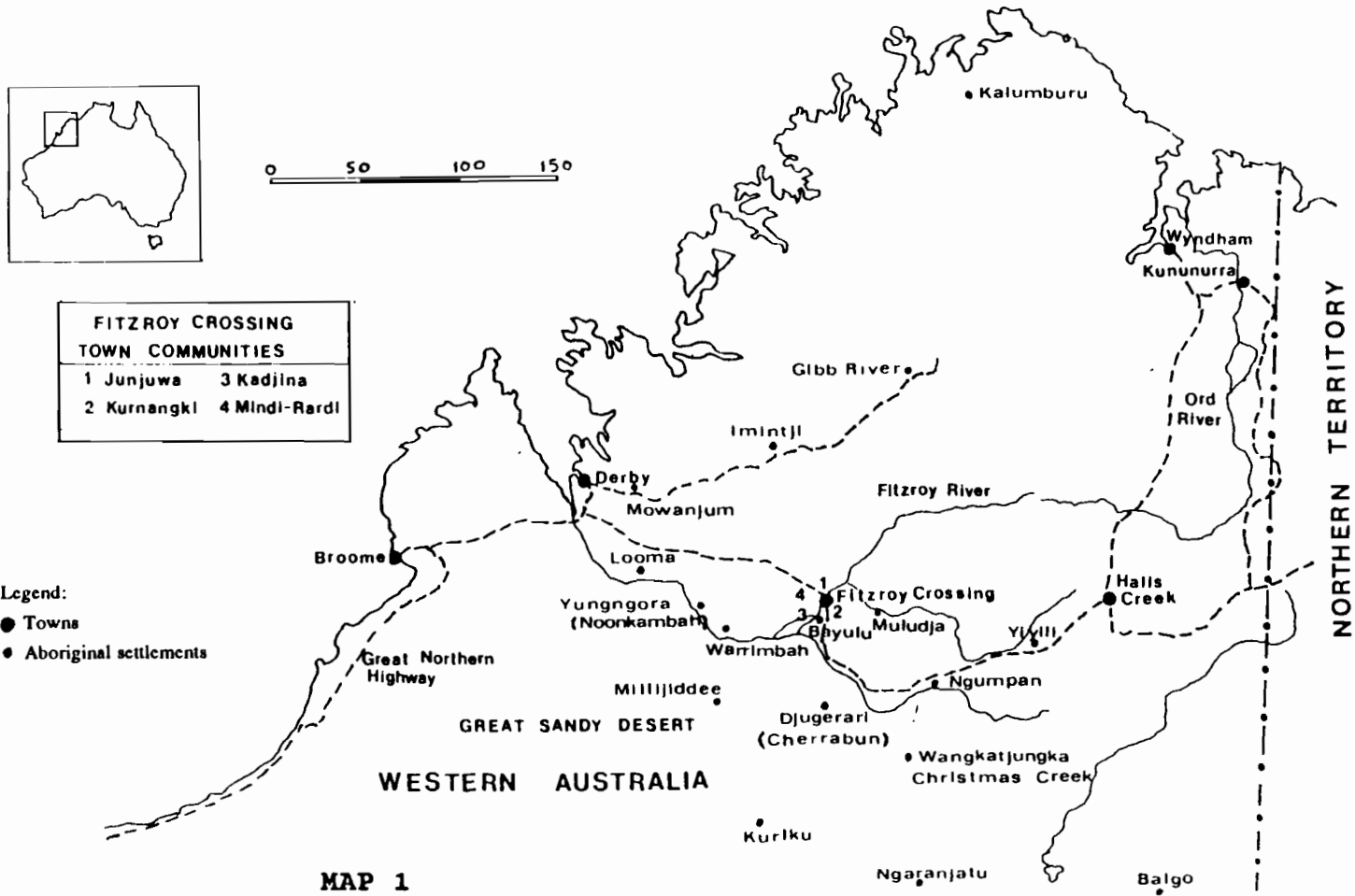
It would be wrong to assume that these relationships were limited to groups of people affiliated to these two languages. Bunuba living in the north of the 'Bunuba country' were involved in similar relationships with Unggumi and Ngarinyin who lived respectively south and north of the west part of the King Leopold Range. The same groups of Bunuba were also trading, mainly for sea products, with coastal groups speaking Worrorra and Warrwa languages. To the south east of the Bunuba country, groups of Bunuba had regular contacts with Nyikina. Before white settlement, Nyikina seemed to have acted as cultural and trade brokers between coastal groups established in the hinterland area from Broome to One Arm Point (Karajarri, Yawuru, Junkun and Nyulnyul) and groups of 'river people'. For example, years before white settlers entered Bunuba country, the Bunuba knew about guns and the European practices of abducting Aboriginal people in coastal areas for labour in the pearling industry (Pedersen 1984:7). Highly praised sea products, such as

mother of pearl, were traded alongside the Fitzroy basin as far as the upper Margaret river, and further north east, where Kija lived.

These cultural and material exchanges were directed in various ways along the Fitzroy Valley. Movements seem to have been oriented in the following main directions: from the coast towards the inland, and vice versa, on the one hand, and from the river area towards the north on the other, once again in both directions. In contrast, there is no evidence of formal contacts prior to white settlement, either in anthropological works or in people's reminiscences, between river or salt water people and desert people. In many instances, Bunuba and Gooniyandi people described to me the Fitzroy river as separating river from desert country, for them it was a "...proper fence, like this one you gotta on stations...". Even if groups of Walmajarri, as stated by Kolig (1974:38), started to migrate northward prior to contact with Europeans, they did not cross the Fitzroy until around 1910<sup>3</sup>.

Other factors besides group distributions and geographical features may have impeded contacts. For example, the marked differences in social organization may have been obstacles to contact and exchanges between groups living on the north of the Fitzroy basin and those established on the south of it.

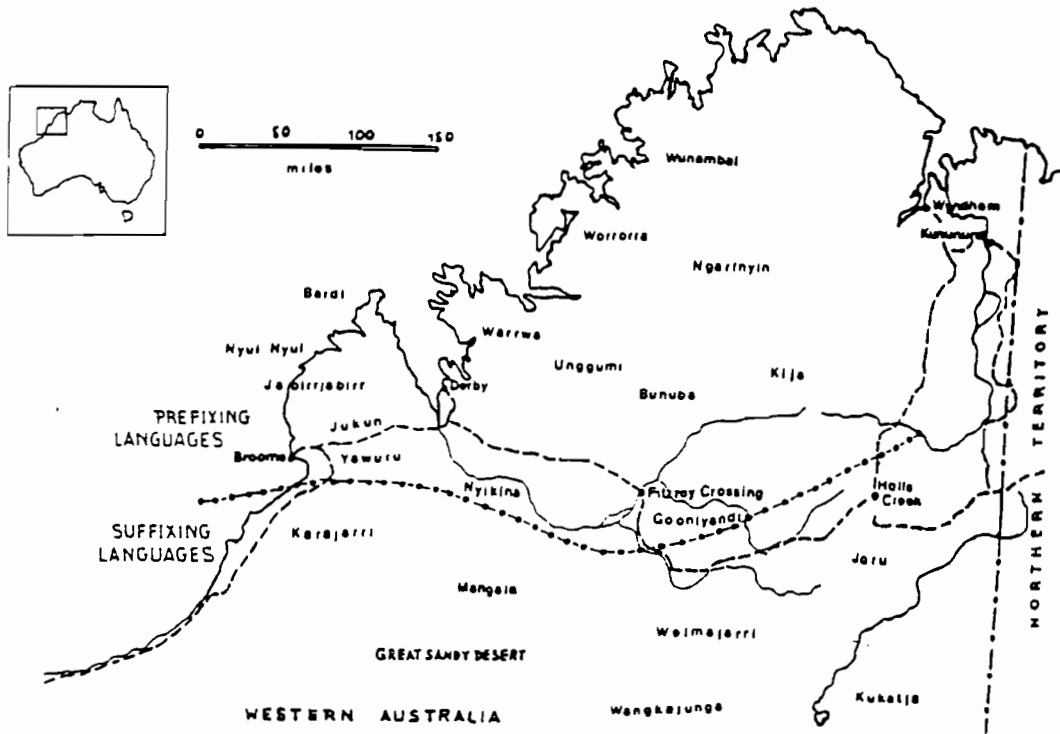
Two papers published five years apart in the 1930s deal with social organization in the Kimberleys (Elkin 1932; Kaberry 1937). Although they are both based on fieldwork carried out well into post-contact times<sup>4</sup>, Elkin's paper can be used to support an understanding of certain aspects of social organisation in pre-contact times. Elkin was able to observe differences in types of social organisation, kinship systems and marriage rules in the Fitzroy Basin (Elkin 1932:297), differences which Kaberry does not report although working only ten years later (Kaberry 1937:440). Elkin's paper is centered around differences between various types of social organisation, which sometimes led to incompatibility between one type and another (Elkin 1932:317-330). Despite these differences, Elkin presented "inter tribal-influence" (1932:317-320), as well as illustrating his point with systems developed by groups with different forms of social organisation, adjusting their systems one to another (1932:325). The most interesting point in Kaberry's paper is the growing influence of desert groups' social organisation in the area. For example, Wolmeri (Walmajarri)<sup>5</sup>, are barely mentioned by Elkin, but they are given a central position in Kaberry's analysis, where most of the groups then living in the Fitzroy Valley had adopted their subsection system (Kaberry 1937:400). Elkin's analysis of the social organisation in the Kimberley shows clearly that the influence from the south and east relayed through the Fitzroy river to the coast was already notable in the late 1920s but not completely established (Elkin 1932 :296-297).



General map of the Kimberley with the principal Aboriginal settlements



Chapter Two



Map 2a

Approximate Distribution of Aboriginal Languages  
in the Kimberley, pre-contact period



Map 2b

Main movements of Aboriginal populations  
after White settlement

### *Historical Outline*

In the Fitzroy basin, various forms of social organisation observed by Elkin show differences which coincide with others already mentioned in this Chapter. For example, groups living in the area, including the hinterland of Broome, and the Fitzroy valley up to the top of the Margaret, had the same type of social organisation<sup>6</sup>. In the same coastal area, two other types existed. One amongst Bardi and surrounding groups, the other amongst Karajarri and neighbours. Elkin stated that neither of the two were significantly different from the first mentioned. In fact, in his analysis one (Bardi) is presented as an archaic form of it (Elkin 1932:310-312), and the other (Karajarri) as a modified (probably transitional) version of it (1932:308-310). Still on the coast but north of Derby, mainly amongst groups of Worrorra and Ngarinyin, another type of social organisation prevailed. Once again, this type was not radically different from those found elsewhere in the area. But in that case, specific marriage rules made interactions with people having other forms of kinship system not compatible, especially those found further south of the Fitzroy (Elkin 1932:315). Finally, all groups established east and south of the Fitzroy basin shared a common type of social organization. This type was very similar to those found further east around the border between the Northern Territory and Western Australia, as well as in Central Australia.

Linguists usually classify the languages spoken in the Kimberley area into two groups: northern languages (Bunuba, Gooniyandi, Kija, Nyikina, Nyulnyul, Bardi, Worrorra, Ngarinyin) and southern languages (Walmajarri, Wangkajunga, Jaru) (Hudson and Richards 1984:3). The main difference is that the northern languages are prefixing languages, while southern languages are suffixing languages. This does not mean that there was a total similarity amongst languages within either area.

For example, there were four families of prefixing languages, which include all languages spoken north and near the mouth of the Fitzroy. These four families were

1 The Nyulnyulan family to which are affiliated all languages whose speakers were established in the hinterland of La Grange and Broome, as well as the Nyikina.

2 The Worrorran family, including Worrorra, Ngarinyin, Wunambal and other languages in coastal areas north of Derby.

3 The Bunuban family, to which only Bunuba and Gooniyandi were affiliated.

4 The Djeregan family, whose languages were spoken in the Halls Creek/Kununnura area as well as on the other side of the Northern Territory border. This family includes Kija (Yallop 1982:42).

Languages from one family are not intelligible to those from another family. Nevertheless, these linguistic barriers have faded in places where groups of speakers from different families had regular contacts. For example, in the case of the Bunuba, they distinguished various forms of their language:

## *Chapter Two*

'light' Bunuba as opposed to 'heavy' Bunuba, and a 'long form' as opposed to a 'short form' for many words in the same language<sup>7</sup>. These dialectal forms of the same language were spoken by groups of Bunuba in contact with either Ungarinyin to the north, or Nyikina in the lower Fitzroy. I am not suggesting that local groups had developed common languages by mixing two different languages, although they could certainly communicate with one another, but that differences that existed between languages were in practice denied by people. Bunuba people who came from the north of the Bunuba area frequently told me that Bunuba and Ngarinyin were 'one same language', probably on the basis that in the past small local groups of people of both languages used to interact intensively. On the other hand, that 'similarity' was strongly denied by Bunuba born and reared elsewhere.

As far as southern languages are concerned, they were all related to the Pama-Nyungan South Western family, either as languages (Jaru, Walmajarri) or as dialectal forms of other languages (Wangkajunga, a dialect of Yulbaridja) (Yallop 1982:48)<sup>8</sup>. In the pre-contact period most southern language speakers were scattered in small groups throughout the Great Sandy Desert far south of the Fitzroy Valley. There was only one area where speakers of northern and southern languages were in contact. This was in the East Kimberley where there were contacts between groups of Kija and Jaru<sup>9</sup>. The level and regularity of their interactions is not well documented but there is nothing to suggest that they were different from those between other small groups elsewhere in the area. Jaru, in many ways related to desert people, were ideally placed to provide desert groups with access to the Fitzroy valley area and to gradually influence its local Aboriginal population. This was undoubtedly facilitated by white settlers, who entered the area mostly from the east.

## **2.2 The pastoral industry**

White settlers who moved up to the Kimberley after 1880 were all pastoralists and the cattle and sheep industries were for many decades the main industry of the entire area. The pastoral industry had a strong impact upon the Aboriginal population of both the West and East Kimberley, and still has a major influence in the life of many local Aboriginal settlements.

The first attempt to stimulate settlement in the north west of Western Australia between 1860 and 1870, after Grey's expedition in 1837, was a failure (Bolton 1958). The second attempt proved to be very successful. Forrest and his party surveyed the Kimberley district in 1879, mainly exploring the Fitzroy, Margaret and Ord river valleys, for the party was unable to find a passage through the King Leopold Range (Bolton 1953:27). Back in Perth, Forrest produced an enthusiastic report in which these valleys were each described as

### *Historical Outline*

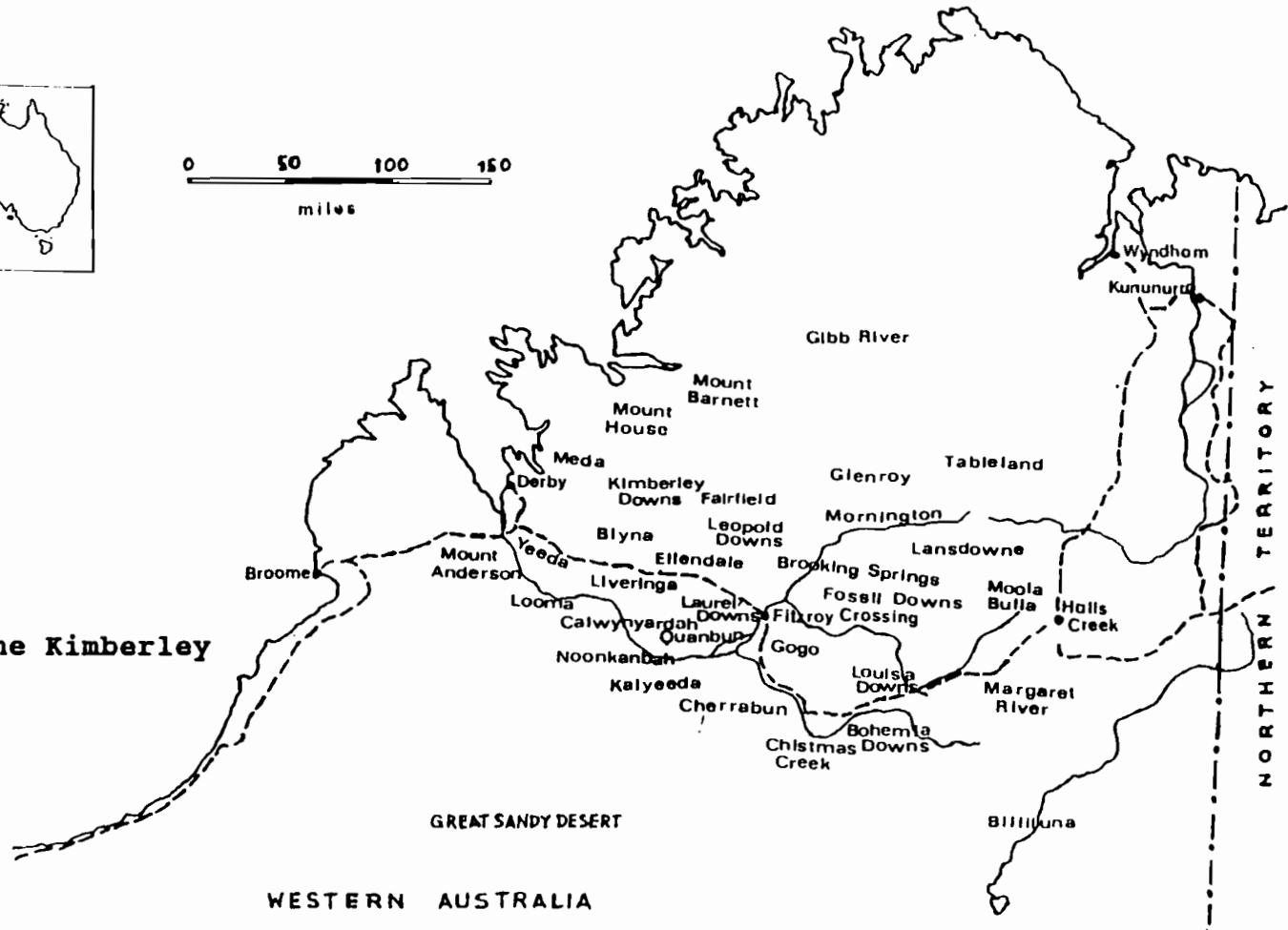
"capable of pasturing a million sheep"(Forrest, quoted by Bolton 1954:10). This report had a strong impact amongst Western Australian sheep farmers, who at this stage were looking for expansion northward, but also on cattlemen from Queensland and New South Wales who were tempted by the north west venture, as well as on capitalist investors from Sydney and Melbourne. As a result, the Perth administration was submerged with applications for leases between 1882-1883 (Bolton 1953:29). Preference was given to local applicants. In 1881, Yeeda Station, named after a tributary of the Fitzroy, was established in the Derby area (see Map 3 for the location of the main cattle stations). The establishment of the first stations was a slow process that accelerated dramatically during the late 1880s. By 1895, all the most suitable areas were occupied by pastoralists. The last vacant blocks, located north of the King Leopold Range, were taken in the years following the turn of the century.

Settlement started in the West Kimberley, on the coastal area. The first stations, all sheep stations, were created by syndicates of young men from Western Australia. They were sheep graziers whose economic activity was based on the export of one single product: wool. Forrest, later joined by his brother, engaged in an early financial participation in the West Kimberley pastoral industry. The settlement grew slowly alongside the Lennard, Meda and Lower Fitzroy rivers. In 1883, Forrest surveyed the stations established around Derby. This survey confirmed hopes placed in the area for pastoral use, but suggested that leasing conditions should be eased as expenditure was higher than expected (Bolton 1953:34). Applications for land dropped between 1883 and 1887, due to a national economic recession. In the same period a local 'distractive factor' also had a significant impact: the gold rush in the East Kimberley. The rush was ephemeral (1885-1887), and only beneficial for cattlemen freshly arrived in the area who had not expected this sudden local market. Nearly all stations in the eastern part of the West Kimberley, as well as those in the East Kimberley, were started by 'overlanders'. They were given this name because of the overland trips they undertook, with their families and cattle, from Queensland, Victoria and New South Wales to reach the Kimberley. These long journeys took years to complete, the best known overlanders were the Duracks and the MacDonalDs. The MacDonalD family left Victoria in 1881 and established Fossil Downs Station, on the Margaret river, in 1885. The Duracks started a station on the Ord river, in the East Kimberley, after a three year journey from Queensland. Pastoralists in the East Kimberley were nearly all of Irish and Scottish origin. They had a long experience in the cattle industry in the eastern states where a traditional 'open range' grazing was practised. In contrast, West Kimberley pastoralists were from Western Australia, born in the Swan river colony. They were woolgrowers and their grazing method required the use of paddocks. The cattle industry proved to be the more adaptable to local conditions, and developed extremely rapidly from the 1890s onward (Bolton 1954:16-18). It gradually overtook the sheep industry, which declined (mid 1920s) and was eventually abandoned (mid 1950s).



**MAP 3**  
**Main cattle stations in the Kimberley**

Legend:  
 ● Towns  
 - - - Great Northern Highway



### *Historical Outline*

The decade after the gold rush (1887-1897) was marked by a growing control by banks and financial companies over pastoral leases (Bolton 1953:54). This was mainly due to the first local recession (1887-1890) caused by a combination of several factors. In the West Kimberley, sheep grazers had enormous losses amongst their flocks as a result of attacks by wild dogs, epidemics of scab, and poisonous plants. In order to limit their losses, pastoralists diversified their economy by acquiring cattle and moved to an area free of poisonous plants and disease in the middle Fitzroy (Noonkanbah and Liveringa in 1887). Both moves proved to be successful and the west pastoral industry expanded towards the upper Fitzroy between 1888 and 1890. In the East Kimberley, the disappearance of the local market, once the gold rush was over, together with a severe drought, took their toll. Most of the smallholders were forced to sell to large companies which expanded their holdings and moved further west. The era of absentee owners of properties had just started. By 1895, the pincer movement which started a few years earlier from both ends of the Kimberley district was almost completed. It left virtually no 'unsettled' land in the entire area outside the extreme north, a mountainous and rugged country, where the pastoral industry proved to be inappropriate. It was certainly not a mere coincidence that the heaviest losses due to cattle killing by Aborigines were recorded at this time, between 1895-1900 (Bolton 1953:55). This was certainly not a new problem, but it worsened with the development of the pastoral industry to a point which became fatal for most of the Aboriginal population in the area.

If Aborigines remained passive, and were described as 'friendly' when Forrest surveyed the Kimberley area (Bolton 1953:27), they put up a strong resistance during the early years of settlement. Sheep killings were recorded soon after Yeeda station started (Shacklatch 1950:166). The following year, in mid 1882, a white settler was speared to death by an Aboriginal man (Bolton 1953:32). This was an isolated incident, but reprisals were promptly organised and several conducted by a posse of policemen and settlers. Very soon, Aboriginal inhabitants of the lower Fitzroy found themselves confronted by two unprecedented facts: they were deprived of their land and its best waterholes, and their most courageous men had been shot or taken away and gaoled for years. They had little alternative but to move to settle near homesteads where they were given flour, tea, sugar and tobacco in exchange for their labour (Read & Japaljarri 1978).

In other areas, where the country offered a natural retreat, Aborigines resisted longer. For example, Bunuba could hide in the ranges north and west of the area they occupied. One of them Jandamarra, known as 'Pigeon', was the leading figure of the Aboriginal rebellion during the second part of the 1890s. As soon as stations were established in the Bunuba country (Lillimoorra and Lennard River Station in 1884), its original inhabitants started feeding regularly on sheep (Pedersen 1984:8). They firstly pretended to accept the settlers, and often through women, sent near the homestead with children and old people, the Bunuba acquired a good knowledge of station life. Once a raid was

## Chapter Two

conducted against a station and the settler openly challenged, Aborigines retreated into the ranges where it was almost impossible to track them. In 1890, stock killing was such a problem in the West Kimberley that pastoralists obtained from the Western Australian government the establishment of a police station near Windjana Gorge (Pedersen 1984:10). In the following years, many of the sheep spearkers were killed or arrested and gaoled. Still, a group of about forty men and women, most of them Bunuba, led by Pigeon, controlled the Oscar and Napier Range area. They were armed with rifles and extremely skillful and experienced<sup>10</sup>. Their resistance was an obstacle to the expansion of the pastoral industry to the other side of the range they controlled. It was three years before the police eventually captured Pigeon. During this period, numerous retaliations were carried out against local groups of Aborigines who lived in the area and the number of Bunuba, Nyikina, Unggumi, Ngaranyin and Gooniyandi decreased dramatically.

By 1905, stock killing had ceased in the West Kimberley, and was limited to the outskirts of the settlements in the East Kimberley. Cattle killing in the East Kimberley lasted longer and its impact was heavier on pastoralists whose cattle were already decimated by disease. The police did not seem to be as efficient as they were in the West Kimberley, where government pressures were stronger<sup>11</sup>. It did not take long before the East Kimberley pastoralists took matters into their own hands. They conducted bloody reprisals, that once again decimated local groups (Bolton 1981:126). However, nearly everywhere in the Kimberley, pastoralists also needed Aboriginal labour to survive (Bolton 1953:56, Biskup 1973:35, Pedersen 1984:8). That probably saved the remaining part of the Aboriginal population from total destruction. Local initiatives by pastoralists to control cattle killing by having Aboriginal groups settled on stations and feeding them, inspired the State Government to adopt a new policy to stop a new wave of cattle killing. Between 1906 and 1909, the number of Aborigines arrested for cattle killing in the East Kimberley nearly doubled (137 in 1906 to 219 in 1909, Biskup 1973:99). In order to solve the problem once and for all the Western Australian government purchased a station (Moola Bulla) that became an Aboriginal reserve, the first of its kind in the state. Moola Bulla means "plenty tucker" in Kija, and its aims were to be a "self supporting institution for the relief of indigent natives" (Biskup 1973:100). In this enterprise the government wanted at the same time:

a\ to feed the Aborigines so they would not kill cattle any more;

b\ and to train the Aboriginal population for employment in the pastoral industry.

The cattle killing dropped significantly. All 'bush Aborigines' and cattle spearkers were taken to Moola Bulla, but many of them ran away (Elkin 1932:329).

The period between 1905 and 1919 was prosperous for the pastoral industry, which became increasingly dependent on Aboriginal labour. This

dependence grew during and after the First World War, for there was then a shortage of experienced white workers. In 1917, the Kimberley pastoral industry employed 277 whites, 803 male and 560 female Aboriginals (Bolton 1954:29). Cattle killing reappeared firstly in the West Kimberley (1917), then in the East Kimberley (1920), and in both cases the most southern stations were affected (Biskup 1973:104). It coincided with a northward migration of groups of Desert Aboriginals. This migration probably had several causes:

Either in response to drought or shortages of game, or else impelled by curiosity and a desire to see new regions, migrant groups of Aboriginals were continually drifting west and north from the Desert areas to make contact with established camps at station homesteads, and missions. Although at first regarded as visitors, such migrants frequently settled down and assimilated with the station Aboriginals (Bolton 1981:140).

The Canning Stock Route, found by Canning in 1911, when pastoralists needed a major outlet from the East Kimberley to the Murchinson gold fields, barely used before, was reopened between 1928 and 1930. The route cut across the Great Sandy Desert and movements of cattle as well as gifts of good from the drovers might have stimulated migration (Read & Japaljarri 1978). In places, pastoralists organised expeditions and rounded up 'bush Aboriginals'. They were taken back to stations where they were forced to settle (Merlan 1978). This settlement on stations was also facilitated by the fact that large portions of country were empty of their original inhabitants because of massacres and displacement of population through white settlement, thus making the social life of the cattle station camps attractive.

Linguistic and cultural differences between Aboriginal local groups appeared to have been preserved on stations, because Aboriginal people settled and remained at stations established in or close by their territory. Moreover, even if living and working conditions were hard and unpleasant there was little direct interference in their daily life and practices outside work demands (Green 1981:109). People on stations relied heavily on rations for the main part of their diet, but at the same time they still had periods of intensive hunting and gathering activities, especially during the lay-off times (Bolton 1981:140), and ceremonial activities were rescheduled to coincide with the slack season on stations.

The Aboriginal station population was still increasing through migration during the late 1920s, but the pastoral industry was stagnant and started to decline a few years later. By this stage the distribution of various Aboriginal groups and sub-groups was clearly established. Apart from other migration from the desert area, it did not change much afterwards. Groups based on stations, made up most frequently of speakers of the local language(s) (pre-contact distribution), and of first migrants from the desert, were firmly settled. New residential groups had merged as a consequence of settlement and life on stations, and such groups were maintained until the late 1960s. This is



## *Chapter Two*

confirmed by censuses carried out on most of the West Kimberley cattle stations between the late 1940s and 1974. They show that a core of individuals, usually speakers of one language, remained on the same stations. Movements related directly to pastoral activities or due to ritual or social events occurred, but coherent residential units appeared clearly in these censuses.

Tribal and linguistic identity gave way to a new identity as small groups of people became known by the station where they lived and worked (Green 1981:109).

Groups of migrants, usually less skilled and probably not yet comfortable with their new social and ecological environment, did not settle at once. They were often 'passed on' from one station to another, especially between stations of the same company, where they formed a pool of extra labour. Most of their members were still oriented towards hunting and gathering activities, and these skills were really appreciated by managers in difficult periods.

Pastoralists could not entirely support the increasing needs of their labour force. Aborigines in the cattle industry did not receive any wages in cash before 1950, but pastoralist associations had always maintained that the cost involved in clothing and feeding the Aboriginal station camp was very high (Bolton 1981:152). The Western Australian government decided in the late 1920s to start a chain of feeding depots ('ration camp'), to regulate and control the Aboriginal population on stations. The main idea was to ameliorate their living and working conditions. Some groups, mainly those freshly arrived from desert areas, left the cattle stations and camped near the ration camps. These ration camps closed between 1945 and 1955, and were transferred to various churches to be run as missions (Biskup 1973:106). In the meantime the pastoral industry in the Leopold region was abandoned. The mainly Bunuba, who had lived most of their lives on these stations, moved to Fairfield and Brooking Springs.

From the start of the feeding depots period to the early 1970s, there were two main tendencies amongst the Aboriginal population of the area. One part of the population, which had lived on stations for years, remained associated with the cattle industry; they were mainly river people and people from the desert who had moved into the area long ago. The other part, mainly recent migrants from further south, settled at nearby ration camps and later on moved into missions. All these people met and interacted regularly but did not live together on a permanent basis. Despite the emergence of new residential units on stations, in most areas linguistic differences were very often preserved. The pre-contact distribution of languages was generally respected on stations. Most of the Walmajarri remained on stations in the south, Wangkajunga were concentrated at Christmas Creek, Bunuba worked at Brooking Springs and Fairfield, while Gooniyandi were employed at Fossil Downs and mixed with Walmajarri at Gogo.

The final impact of the pastoral industry on the Aboriginal population of the Kimberley dated to the late 1960s.

### *Historical Outline*

In 1965, a Federal court handed down an award which prescribed that by the end of 1968 all Aborigines employed in the pastoral industry should receive the same wages as other workers (Bolton 1981:166).

Desert migrants were the first victims of the Pastoral Award. Most of them were paid off or sacked and had to leave the stations where they had settled and moved in towards urban centres. The constraints of the award, combined with declining export prices in beef, saw the labour force that had permitted the pastoralists to succeed being forced to leave the cattle stations. Many qualified stockmen lost their jobs and their families had to move. The migration towards missions and local urban centres intensified and these camps became heavily overpopulated. In the Kimberley many Aboriginal people moved in to camping places on the outskirts of such townships as Fitzroy Crossing and Halls Creek (Bolton 1981:168).

In order to illustrate the main movements of population during this period between cattle stations, the lengths of stays and reasons for moving in or out, I have selected several individuals, whose years spent on stations were representative of the major migration patterns of speakers of their respective languages.

Ralphie, a Bunuba, was born in 1931 on Leopold Downs Station near the old homestead. His parents had already been living on that station for over 10 years. He stayed at Leopold until 1940, then he was sent by his male relatives to Fossil Downs for two years. During this two year stay he was circumcised in a Wangka ceremony (see Chapter Five), led jointly by Bunuba men from Brooking Springs Station, and Goonyandi males from Fossil Downs, amongst whom was Ralphie's older sister's husband. He returned to Leopold Station with his parents for about four years. His whereabouts are not recorded between 1947 and 1951, but according to him, he was in the bush with other single Bunuba men somewhere on the old Oscar Range Station. From 1951 to 1955, Ralphie worked at Leopold Downs as a stockman. Then he went to Brooking Springs for two years. It was during that stay that he got married to a Bunuba whose parents and herself had all been born at Brooking Springs. Ralphie and his wife moved to Leopold Downs for one year, then they returned to Brooking Springs for two years (1959-1960). In 1961, Ralphie underwent subincision at Brookings Springs ceremonial ground<sup>12</sup>; amongst those who played a major role in the ceremony was his wife's father. From 1961 until 1967, Ralphie worked on contract as a drover for Kimberley Downs Station; meanwhile, his wife and first child were at the Fitzroy Crossing UAM Reserve. The family met again at Leopold Downs in 1967, where they stayed for one year. Then from 1968 until 1974, they lived and worked at Brooking Springs, where Ralphie's four other children were born. In late 1974 the entire family moved into the UAM reserve and subsequently to Junjuwa where they are still living today.

## Chapter Two

Arthur was born on Brooking Spring Station in 1924 at the junction between the Fitzroy and Pigeon creek. His parents were at the time both working at Brooking Springs, but they had only moved in recently. Prior to this they lived at Glenroy Station, where Arthur's mother had been born, while his father had spent most of his life at Tableland Station. Arthur remained at Brooking until the late 1930s; during these years he spent most of his time with his mother in the bush. In 1939 he went to live at Leopold Downs Station for one year with some of his father's male relatives. When he returned to Brooking he was circumcised by Bunuba men from Leopold. During World War II he was droving cattle between Leopold Downs, Derby and Broome. Then he spent about two years in Derby, at a ration camp, with some Walmajarri and Kija who formerly resided at Moola Bulla station. He returned to Leopold for one year (1949) and then to Brooking Springs (1950). In order to avoid forced enrolment in the native police force he hid in the bush for two years (1951-1952). The following year he moved back and forth between Brooking Springs and Jubilee Downs, staying only a few months each time. During one of his stays at Jubilee, he underwent subincision, in a ceremony led by Walmajarri men from Noonkanbah and Cherrabun stations. He spent all of 1954 at Leopold. During 1955 he went to Cherrabun Station to 'pick up' his promised wife, a Walmajarri born at Cherrabun whose parents had spent many years at Moola Bulla. From 1956 to 1959 they lived at the UAM reserve. In 1960 they moved for one year to Leopold Station. Then they lived at Brooking Springs for five years (1961-1965). They moved into to the UAM reserve for two years, and in 1967 Arthur returned to Leopold Downs for two years on his own. In 1969 and 1970, Arthur and his family (six children) lived at the UAM reserve. Once again Arthur went to work on his own for two years, this time at Brooking Springs. In mid-1973 Arthur settled at the UAM reserve and later moved to Junjuwa with his extended family; his father was the first appointed community chairman.

Scotty is a Goonyandi, he was born in 1925 on Fossil Downs Station. His parents had lived all their life at Fossil Downs. After his first ten years spent with his parents on Fossil Downs, he was sent to live with some of his mother's relatives on Gogo or Margaret Downs Station for a few years (1935-1939). During that period he was circumcised by Walmajarri men from Gogo but who originally came from various areas in the vicinity of Lake Gregory. He returned to live with his parents on Fossil Downs until the end of World War II. From 1947 until 1950 he lived in the bush in the northernmost part of Fossil Downs. Then he worked as a stockman at Fossil Downs for two years and moved to Gogo the following year (1954). He remained at Gogo during all of 1955, during which he was subincised by the same groups of Walmajarri men who circumcised him. He got married the following year to a Walmajarri woman whose mother had been born on Gogo but whose father had moved from Billilluna into the Fitzroy Valley in order to get married. In 1957 there was a bad influenza epidemic on Gogo; Scotty and his wife left the station for the bush for about a year and a half. In mid-1958 they went to Fossil Downs and

### *Historical Outline*

stayed there until the end of 1959. From 1960 until late 1963, the couple lived at Gogo Station until their fourth child, a three month old baby boy, died. They moved into the UAM reserve for a year, then to Noonkanbah for another year. In 1966 they returned to Gogo and the following year they lived at Fossil Downs. In 1968 they moved to the Gogo ration camp which was independent from the station and had been established for Aboriginal people leaving the stations after the implementation of the Pastoral Award. In 1970 Scotty and his wife went to live at Fossil Downs but their five children were at the UAM hostel. In 1972, the family were re-united on the UAM reserve. They moved to Junjuwa where they are still living, but they reside from time to time at Muludja a small Community near Fossil Downs Station.

Sydney was a Walmajarri. He was born in the bush somewhere between Lake Gregory and the Canning Stock Road, sometime around 1913. He lived in the bush with his parents until 1920. Both his parents were shot by a posse of policemen and station employees tracking Aboriginal cattle spearkers. Sydney was handed to an Aboriginal tracker who brought him back to Christmas Creek Station. He lived there for a few years with some relatives he had met. In 1925 he ran away and killed a bullock next to Tunnel Gorge. The police arrested him several weeks afterwards and gave him to an old white man who was a bore specialist. Sydney camped with him for two years at Chesnut Windmill on Cherrabun Station. In 1928, some of his father's relative, who knew his whereabouts, came to pick him up and took him to Gogo where he stayed until 1935. Once there he was circumcised by Walmajarri men from his father's country, and learnt about station work. From 1935 until 1941-2 he lived in the bush at the border of Gogo and Cherrabun stations. He was taken for two years to Cherrabun (1943-1945) and was subincised by another group of Walmajarri (related to his mother). In 1947, Sydney's knowledge of the Canning Stock Road area won him a job as a drover. For three years he drove cattle between Fitzroy valley cattle stations and Broome or Wyndham meatworks. Then during a two year period he lived successively at Glenroy and Yeeda Stations, Derby and Gogo Station. In 1953 he worked for a full year at Fossil and got married to a Bunuba, whose parents previously worked at Gogo Station. She had been promised to another Walmajarri man who had died in the meantime. The following year they moved to Leopold Downs for one and a half years. After the birth of their first child (1955), they lived on the UAM reserve for two years. From 1957 to 1959, they lived at Brooking Springs; in 1960 they moved for one year to Kimberley Downs and then returned to Brooking Springs where all of their 7 other children were born. They lived sporadically at the UAM reserve in 1963 and 1964, and later (1973), they moved into the mission for good. Sydney's family was amongst the first to move into Junjuwa. Sydney died in early 1987, before he had any chance to fulfil his life dream: to set up an outstation in his father's country.

Mervyn is a Walmajarri who belongs to the generation of desert people born on stations. He was born in 1948 on Noonkanbah. His birthplace was

## *Chapter Two*

fortuitous: his father, who had two wives, had been working on Christmas Creek since he settled on a station (1920). His father was a wood cutter, who moved in to Gogo Station in 1935 with the opportunity of becoming a stockman. Several years afterwards, Mervyn's father was involved in cattle killing and he ran away from Gogo to live in the bush on Noonkanbah Station (1942-1948). Once Mervyn was born, the family went to Gogo for one year; unfortunately, Mervyn's mother died, and his father left for Christmas Creek with his second wife and four children. They stayed at Christmas Creek for two years, and in 1949 they returned to Gogo. During this period there were many problems between Goonyandi and Walmajarri people living at the station. Mervyn's father sent him to Jubilee Downs as a stockboy (1950-1951). Mervyn returned to Gogo in 1952, where he was circumcised by a group of Walmajarri and Wangkajunga men from Jubilee Downs and Christmas Creek. He worked at Gogo until 1954, then he went to live in the bush for three years and returned to Gogo for another year (1958). From 1959 to 1961 he lived with his family at Cherrabun and moved to new Cherrabun in 1962. Then Mervyn got sick and had to stay in the Derby Leprosarium for three years (1963-1966). Once he had recovered he went to Gogo for a year and the following year (1968), he was subincised at Christmas Creek by the same people who circumcised him. He remained at Christmas Creek for two years and in 1971 he worked the full year at Meeda station (next to Derby). He got married in 1972, to a Walmajarri woman whose country was the same as his father's. Mervyn had to take her from school at Fitzroy Crossing and they went to live at Jubilee for one year, before they moved into the UAM reserve the next year (1973), and later into Junjuwa.

James is a Wangkajunga who, with his family (two wives and three children), was amongst the group of 'natives from the bush' who moved into Christmas Creek station between 1961 and 1962 (DNW, Christmas Creek Station, September 1961). James was born somewhere in the bush, sometime around 1920. This last wave of desert migrants from the Canning Stock basin lived in canvas tents for a few weeks. After one month, James and his family were sent to Cherrabun Station. The Cherrabun Aboriginal population rejected the newcomers and threatened to walk off if they remained. The manager did not want to lose well trained workers and James' family along with others were sent to Gogo. At Gogo similar problems occurred and they were sent back to Christmas Creek. Some of the former population of Christmas Creek, most of them Wangkajunga, had already left the station for Fossil Downs and Jubilee. In less than one year James' family had been displaced three times and still could not contribute effectively to station life. In mid-1963 most of the newcomers moved into the UAM reserve, where some of their relatives resided, and settled until 1975. They were amongst the people most reluctant to leave the UAM reserve for Junjuwa village.

These life stories show that patterns of residence and migration during the cattle station era diverged between people from different cultural categories:

people from the desert settled and moved between stations to the south of the Fitzroy Valley, while river people resided mainly, and for longer periods, on stations located to the north of the Fitzroy. Those of the people from the former who married into the latter gradually settled in the river country while others remained on stations associated with the desert people. Trips to other stations were undertaken for several purposes: male initiation, marriage arrangement, funeral ceremonies, visits to relatives. They seemed to have been taken most of the time at Aboriginal initiative. Births and various initiations on specific stations had contributed to reinforce or develop strong bonds between Aboriginal groups and these stations. These associations were perpetuated once people had settled in Fitzroy Crossing.

## **2.3 Fitzroy Crossing and the United Aborigines Mission**

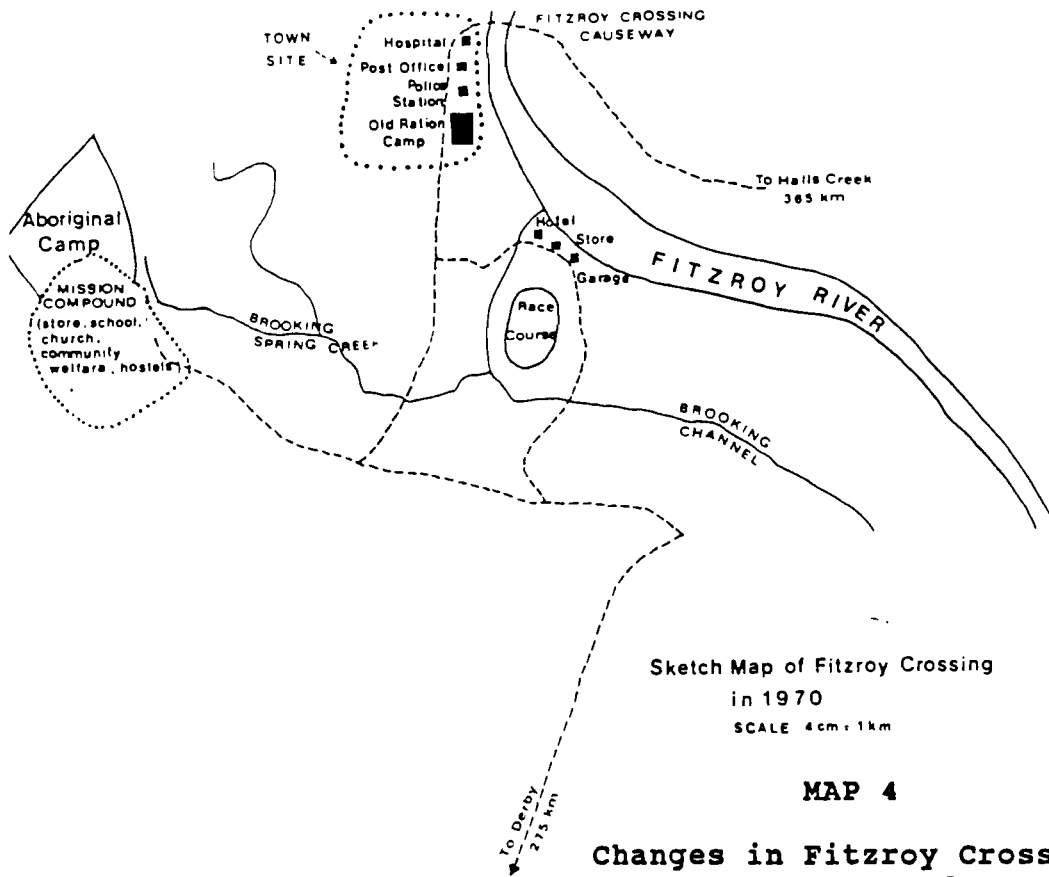
### **2.3.1 Fitzroy Crossing**

The first building erected where the town of Fitzroy Crossing stands today was a telegraph depot. It was built late in 1893 near the ford across the Fitzroy River. The following year, during the dry season, the depot was attacked by a group of Aborigines (Lamond 1986:60). It was probably a group of Gooniyandi and Bunuba, who used to set their seasonal camp in the area every dry season. Not far from the telegraph depot was also an important ceremonial ground which is still in use today (see Chapter Six). Fitzroy Crossing, as a town, started the same year: Joe Blythe, owner of Brooking Springs Station, established a small store and an hotel there.

At the spot where the prospectors had crossed the Fitzroy on their way to Hall's Creek there was now a Telegraph Station and a homestead shanty cum hotel run up by Joe Blythe who then little knew he had founded the town site of Fitzroy Crossing (Durack 1959:344).

Joe Blythe sold his pub and kept the store. The pub was moved about half a kilometre downstream on the same bank of the river. Fitzroy Crossing's hotel (known as the Crossing Inn) stands today on the very same spot. In mid-1894, Fitzroy Crossing got its first police station. The town was started by a policeman named Pilmer, who terrorized local Aborigines and killed many of them (Pedersen 1984:11). During the rebellion led by Pigeon, Aborigines were not welcome near to the newly created town. In 1896, about seventy of them who attempted to set up camp next to the pub were dispersed "by means of extreme measures" (Biskup 1973:22). Around the turn of the century, several buildings were added and formed the police station compound: a gaol, and a courthouse also used to accommodate police trackers.

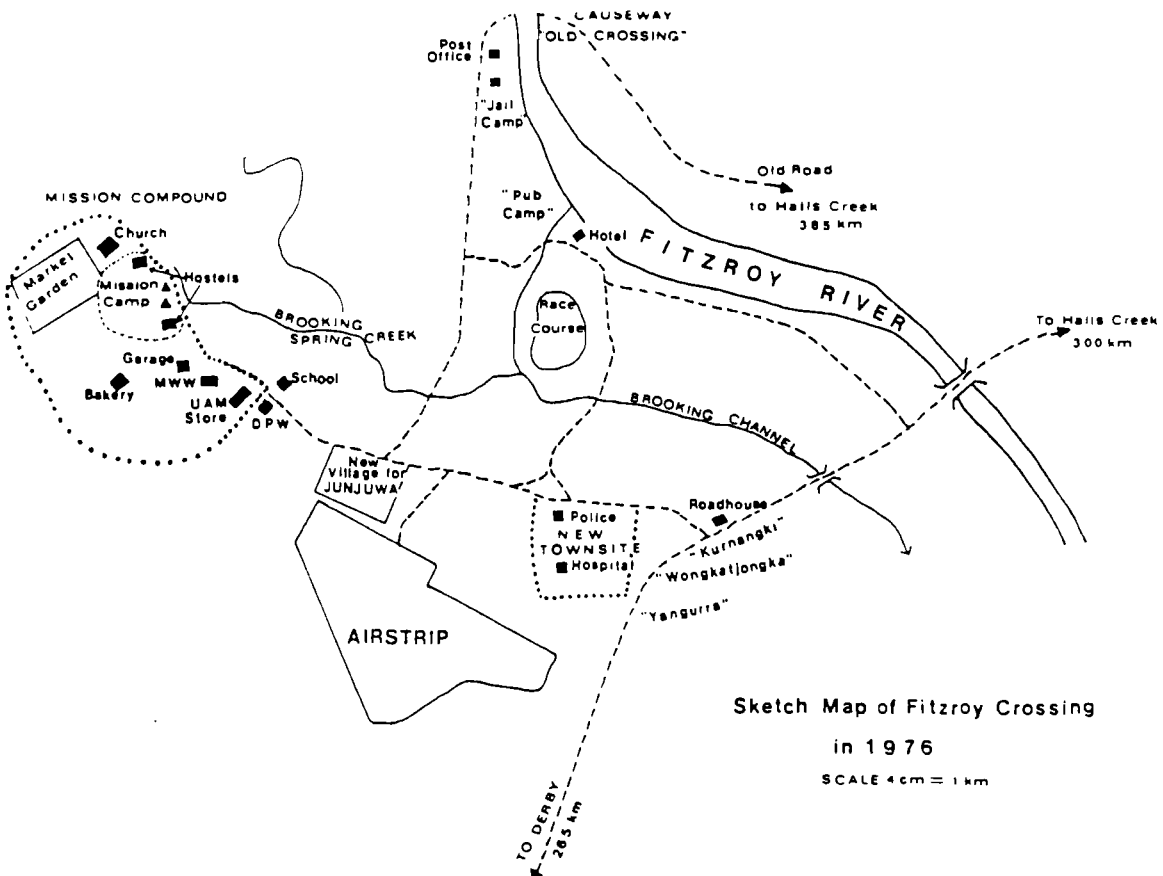
Chapter Two



Sketch Map of Fitzroy Crossing  
in 1970  
SCALE 4cm = 1km

MAP 4

Changes in Fitzroy Crossing  
between 1970 and 1976



Sketch Map of Fitzroy Crossing  
in 1976  
SCALE 4cm = 1km

### *Historical Outline*

The development of Fitzroy Crossing stopped here for a while, and the town, known as the Crossing, remained little changed until the late 1930s. In that time, in most of the surrounding cattle stations, owners and managers had their own market gardens and raised chickens and pigs. Nevertheless, they relied on the Fitzroy Crossing store for the supply of other goods (flour, tea, coffee, tobacco, blankets and cloth), used on stations to feed and clothe the Aboriginal labour force. The establishment of a ration depot for Aboriginal people, in 1935, was the next step in Fitzroy Crossing's development. The depot was located near the police compound. This ration depot (locally known as the 'ration camp') was the first official Aboriginal camp in town.

The local pub was also very popular. For many white people, mainly those employed in the pastoral industry, this was the main reason to visit Fitzroy Crossing. The arrival of the United Aborigines Mission in 1952 and the establishment of the mission compound constituted the main change faced by this small town since its foundation. Not only was the ration camp moved, but the town centre was also shifted to the mission area. A post office, a nursing post and a school were part of the compound. The mission was not very popular amongst pastoralists as it was seen as attracting the labour force away from their stations. The hospital was built next to the crossing in the mid 1950s. It remained in that location, under the control of the Australian Inland Mission, until 1971. Although the future expansion of Fitzroy Crossing had been planned for in the 1950s, with the town centre located next to the hospital and the police station, it was not until the mid-1960s that the first building was shifted from the mission compound to the new site.

The planned town centre proved to be inappropriately placed, partly because the area was frequently flooded, but mainly because the new route for the highway took it away from the town. Before this second major change Fitzroy Crossing's peculiar location (next to the only ford across the river), and its isolation gave to it the role of urban centre in the Fitzroy Valley area. Most of the surrounding cattle stations relied on Fitzroy Crossing for their food supply as well as other services provided by the hospital, the post office, the police station and above all the local pub. A bridge was built across the river in 1971, as part of the upgrading of the Great Northern Highway which now passes south of Fitzroy Crossing. This resulted in the town gradually losing its importance.

From 1972 the town changed rapidly and by 1976 it presented a completely different aspect (see Map 4). The new town was built to provide accommodation for all the non-Aboriginal people now established at Fitzroy Crossing. Changes in policy towards Aborigines in various areas (health, education, welfare) were accompanied by the creation of many local working opportunities which did not exist previously, and most positions available at Fitzroy Crossing came to be related in one way or another to the Aboriginal population. Without the Aborigines, the entire town economy would collapse today. The social security benefits paid to the Aboriginal population provide



the town with a regular fortnightly cash flow of about \$150,000, of which 90% is spent locally<sup>13</sup>. Even the tourist industry, started in the early 1980s, is too seasonal to ensure the town a regular income that could match these figures. What attracts tourists to Fitzroy Crossing mainly now is the Geikie Gorge National Park, on the Fitzroy River 16 km north-east of town. Each year between mid-April and mid-October about 8,000 people visit the park<sup>14</sup>. For the majority of them, stopping in Fitzroy Crossing is a matter of hours, as they only stay long enough to go on the guided tour boat in the Gorge. A small minority will camp at the Gorge, but the longest stays never exceed a few days.

### 2.3.2 The United Aborigines Mission

The United Aborigines Mission (UAM) originated from a split in the Australian Inland Mission (AIM), in 1928. The Australian Inland Mission, founded in New South Wales in 1905, was known for its fundamentalist approach to Protestantism.

(It was) A non-denominational society backed largely by the smaller non-conformist churches, especially the Baptist (Marks 1960:72).

Once on its own the UAM decided to start mission posts in Western Australia which so far had been neglected by mission societies. By 1935, the UAM had become the largest missionary society in Western Australia (Biskup 1973:124). The success of the UAM was due to three main factors:

- It did not have any overall policy. The head administration, based in Melbourne, gave local superintendents complete control over their own mission. Free of administrative pressure, these superintendents applied what seemed to them the best policy for local conditions.
- Because of its financial and administrative autonomy UAM went to places where other missions would not. The fact that UAM did not have any local challenge, was an important element in its success.
- Major Protestant societies were on the one hand largely involved in the south seas and on the other hand not interested in setting up missions in Western Australia. Consequently, most members of non conformist churches financially supported UAM as their own church was not part of this particular mission venture (Marks 1960:77-80).

Despite the lack of overall policy, most UAM missions operated in a very similar way. At first, food and clothes were given away free to attract Aborigines. Then, once people were settled on the mission, they were required to work in exchange for food. This policy of 'no work, no food' was applied rigorously, together with a strong evangelism. The UAM was opposed to any

### *Historical Outline*

form of traditional ritual. Evangelism was based on the abandonment of ritual life and supported with long and numerous religious services.

It is clear that the more forthright radical policy of the UAM resulted in a more rapid change in the Aboriginal traditional life (Marks 1960:84).

Despite that radical policy and a rigorous discipline in its missions the UAM proved to be successful in a lot of places. This success was mainly due to one mission (Mt Margaret) where the superintendent (Schenk) showed interest in the welfare of Aborigines, the education of children and the training of adults, nearly 20 years before anyone else in the state (Marks 1960:91). Schenk insisted that his staff should speak the main Aboriginal language from the area and believed strongly in the training of Aborigines in fields other than the pastoral industry. His motives were more practical than philanthropical. The isolation of Mt Margaret, the lack of financial support and the large Aboriginal population settled on that station in the late 1930s were key factors. In order to succeed, the mission had to be self-sufficient: Aborigines were trained as mechanics, bakers, cooks and gardeners, for Mt Margaret relied on them to survive.

The lack of central administrative control contributed to poor relations between the state government and the UAM. Western Australian politicians were attracted by the Mt Margaret example. They attempted to establish close relations with Schenk's mission, but Schenk feared losing his autonomy and was not prepared to have anybody interfering with the way he was running the mission. He categorically refused any government involvement or supervision at Mt Margaret. The UAM was also very hostile to anthropologists. Anthropological research was seen as a threat for, in the UAM view, it incited Aborigines to renew traditional ritual activities (Bolton 1981:149). Operating on its own, the UAM achieved most of its goals, and in the late 1940s the UAM missions were said to be the best in Western Australia. A change in government policy and a financial crisis for the UAM, however, brought the mission into closer cooperation with the Government. In 1948, Middleton was appointed commissioner of Native Welfare. Middleton had experience of fifteen years in New Guinea where he had worked closely with missionaries, and was keen to promote education and training for Aborigines. In the early 1950s, Baptists as well as other non-conformist churches decided to conduct mission activities in Western Australia. As a result, the UAM lost nearly all its financial support and its state-wide dominance (Marks 1960:84). But the UAM had a lot of experience in Western Australia: its methods were reliable and the staff used to working with Aborigines. These two elements put UAM in an ideal position to collaborate with the government.

Between 1950 and 1955, the government decided to hand over feeding depots to missionary groups. In the Fitzroy area the UAM were the only group interested in taking over the depot. From a financial point of view it was

## *Chapter Two*

probably cheaper for the government to use a structure that already existed (feeding depots), and employ experienced people (mission staff), rather than build new places and train new people.

Missions had changed their policy. There was less evangelizing and more practical training, as well as an increasing emphasis on work with children (Biskup 1973:254).

The newly created UAM missions in towns did not face a financial problem any more, as they were subsidised by the government. If they could provide the settled Aboriginal population with accommodation, schooling, sanitary and ablution facilities, nursing posts and recreational activities, missions received from the Western Australian government as much as five shillings per week per adult and twelve shillings and six pence per child; this subsidy nearly doubled in 1953<sup>15</sup> (Marks 1960:86; Biskup 1973:253).

The UAM took over the Fitzroy Crossing ration camp in 1952 and moved it to a new site, starting a construction program that took nearly three years to complete. The UAM aims were not simply to evangelise the Aborigines, and by 1954 the mission was running a general store and a hostel, had constructed a garage and workshop, had a fairly big market garden, and was operating a school. The ration camp Aboriginal population was therefore moved to the Aboriginal camp part of the mission compound. Most of the ration camp residents were reluctant to move but had no alternative. The entire Aboriginal population was actively involved in building houses as well as in other mission activities. People remember this time as something quite different from what they had previously experienced both on cattle stations and at the ration camp.

The influence of the UAM at Fitzroy Crossing, both on the Aboriginal and white population, was considerable between 1952 and 1974. From 1975 it started to decline as UAM reduced its staff, as gradually State Government bodies took over the mission responsibilities with the Fitzroy Crossing Aboriginal population. When this transfer of responsibilities had been fully completed in 1983, the mission role changed to a weaker 'moral and physical presence' until February 1987. Still today in both communities many people associate themselves with the UAM. People such as the roadhouse's manager and staff, and the Junjuwa project officer, are religiously affiliated to the UAM. Amongst the Aboriginal population, all Junjuwa council members, including the chairman, are members of the Kimberley Christian Fellowship created by the UAM.

Since the end of 1986, the local superintendent is officially the only UAM representative appointed by the head office. Changes in the number of staff appointed by the UAM head office in Melbourne to Fitzroy may be seen as follows:

### *Historical Outline*

- 1950 to 1975 .....15 staff + 1 superintendent
- 1975 to 1983 .....3 staff + 1 superintendent
- 1983 to 1986 .....2 staff + 1 superintendent
- From 1987 .....1 superintendent

As far as Junjuwa is concerned, most of the old people are very confused about the origin of the village. It is frequently attributed to the Mission people who are often referred to by some Junjuwa residents as "Those who helped us" or again as "Those who gave us what we have today: Jesus and Junjuwa". Moreover, until Junjuwa was funded by the federal Department of Aboriginal Affairs (DAA) to appoint its own project officer in 1981, the UAM superintendent was literally running the place, even if theoretically Junjuwa was jointly controlled by the UAM and the Department for Community Welfare (DCW).

## **2.4 Aboriginal groups in Fitzroy Crossing**

Before turning to the origin of Junjuwa and discussing its composition in Chapter Four, I will briefly outline the main phases of the formation of Aboriginal groups in Fitzroy Crossing.

Prior to the establishment of a government ration camp in the late 1930s, no permanent camp existed for Aboriginal people at Fitzroy Crossing. While I was collecting life histories amongst the oldest people of Junjuwa, several of them referred to a 'camp' located next to what is known today as the old crossing (see Map 4) occupied mainly by Bunuba and Gooniyandi people. This camp was used sporadically when people were staying in town between two mustering campaigns or for other reasons. Another town based camp was located next to the pub and was occupied on and off by a small number of Aborigines employed seasonally by the publican who at that time had a vegetable and fruit garden and raised pigs and chickens. Even while the ration camp was fully operating (1940-1951), a small, tightly knit group of Aboriginal people was living permanently at that settlement.

The third component of Fitzroy Crossing Aboriginal population was provided by the influx of desert migrants, mostly Walmajarri and Wangkajunga. Apart from short and very specific periods of time<sup>16</sup>, Walmajarri and Wangkajunga would not stay in town. It is possible to distinguish various 'waves' of desert migrants, which gradually brought Walmajarri and Wangkajunga groups to Fitzroy Crossing. A first migration, mainly of groups of Walmajarri, occurred in the 1920s. Another important movement of population is recorded

## *Chapter Two*

in the early 1950s. This one was initiated by Wangkajunga people living further south in the desert. They are said to have 'pushed' Walmajarri groups further west, i.e. towards Fitzroy Crossing, when they settled on cattle stations to the south of the Fitzroy Valley. The last movement was not directed towards stations but rather towards urban centres and took place in the mid 1960s (Kolig 1974:38). When they came to Fitzroy Crossing, members of linguistic groups other than Bunuba and Gooniyandi established their temporary camps on the other side of the river. During the day they would cross the river and stay in town but at night they would return to their camps. The only time they would remain on the west side of the Fitzroy was if they were invited to participate in joint ceremonial activities.

Between 1950 and 1954 the majority of the Aboriginal town based population changed from Bunuba and Gooniyandi to Walmajarri. As a consequence of these changes the permanent Aboriginal population increased rapidly and then stabilized at around one hundred until 1969. The opening of the mission school certainly had an important influence on movements of population towards Fitzroy. But also, UAM staff started to learn Walmajarri as soon as they established the mission in Fitzroy Crossing. From then on Walmajarri became a lingua franca spoken by most UAM people; religious services were conducted in Walmajarri<sup>17</sup>.

This last element partly explains the influence of Walmajarri people on the Aboriginal as well as white population, in town from this period until the present. When the school started, most of children aged between 6 and 15 whose parents lived and worked on stations in the Fitzroy Valley were required to attend. As already mentioned, linguistic differences were broadly respected on stations. Bunuba, Gooniyandi and Kija lived on the stations closer to town and more accessible by roads than those where Walmajarri and Wangkajunga were employed. Also, and this is important to remember, nearly all stations where the labour force was constituted by desert groups were part of a single large company, Emmanuel Brothers Ltd. (Christmas Creek, Cherrabun, Gogo). On those stations lived a large Aboriginal population, managers were frequently changed, and living conditions were very poor. In contrast, river people were employed on family-owned cattle stations where they lived in small groups and experienced a long term relationship with the same manager and his family. Often in those stations managers' wives used to run a 'station school' attended by employees' children. Station schools did not exist before 1957 on any of the Emmanuel properties (the first one was on Gogo Station in 1956). Schools were started primarily as an attempt to retain a permanent Aboriginal population on stations, for by then most people had shifted to Fitzroy Crossing. Then, firstly because families were broken up since the opening of the school in Fitzroy, and secondly because parents had heard about better living and working conditions, a large number of Walmajarri moved to Fitzroy and settled at the Mission Camp. By then the UAM had started a bakery and a butcher shop which operated with Aboriginal employees, and the mission was now able

### *Historical Outline*

to compete with the rations provided on stations. Meanwhile, Bunuba and Gooniyandi who decided to remain in town occupied camps already mentioned: the old crossing and the pub.

The Mission school was handed over to the Western Australian government and became a State School in 1965, and ten years later DCW took over the hostel. Between 1971 and 1973, the mission camp became overcrowded. People from all stations in the Fitzroy Valley moved into Fitzroy to stay at the Mission Camp, mainly as a consequence of the Pastoral Award. Prior to 1974, 80 % of the one hundred people living there were Walmajarri, but in 1974 there were two hundred and fifty adults permanently at the camp, and most of them came from different traditional and cattle station backgrounds. To use McMahon's religious classification, the Mission camp was made up of 'Christians' (mainly Walmajarri), 'agnostic Bunuba' and 'pagans' who were Wangkajunga as well as Walmajarri from the last migration (McMahon 1984:7). The Walmajarri held a prominent position within the mission camp, as they were all employed by the UAM and had lived there for years. Bunuba were thus confronted by a situation described by some of them as being as bad as massacres perpetuated by White settlers early in the century. The situation could be summarized as follows:

- Walmajarri had become 'boss' on Bunuba land
- important Whites (missionaries) spoke Walmajarri and could not communicate with other groups other than through Walmajarri translators
- Walmajarri were running the mission camp.

If we assume that Kolig is right when he stated that in 1972 the mission camp was considered by Bunuba as "the last outpost of their traditional territory" (Kolig 1974:37), for them to see that Walmajarri were boss was probably a fatal blow.

In order to address the problem of Aboriginal overpopulation in Fitzroy, Kolig, an anthropologist from the AAPA, and McLaren, a regional officer of DCW, were asked to conduct a census and survey, and to submit two separate reports to the State Housing Commission of Western Australia.

Kolig distinguished two main residential units in his survey (Kolig 1975): one was living at the UAM camp and was known as the 'Mission mob', the other was located where Kurnangki village was built in 1985 (see Map 5) and was known as the 'Fig-tree mob'<sup>18</sup>. The Fig-tree mob was formed of two sub groups. The first was a relatively coherent group whose members had walked off Christmas Creek Station; they were mainly Wangkajunga and Walmajarri who called themselves the Yulbaridja group. The other group was less structured and was an amalgamation of people from various stations. This sub-

## Chapter Two

group was living in what is known as Windmill Reserve (see Map 5). Apart from those main groups, Kolig mentioned three smaller units:

- the Kadjina mob, mostly people from Noonkanbah, who were camping on the shore of the Fitzroy near today's new bridge.
- the Pub mob, made up of a few families, located next to the pub, and more variable in size as well as in duration.
- the Jail mob, mainly drunkards and other people frequently arrested for various offences, even more ephemeral and variable than the previous one (Kolig 1975:7-12, 1981:26-27).

In his report to the State Housing Commission, Kolig insisted very strongly on one point:

On account of the district particularism prevailing among Fitzroy Aborigines...planned change, be it in terms of housing, acquisition of land, economic enterprise or whatever, that does not take this diversity specifically into account, is doomed to absolute failure (Kolig 1975:20, emphasis in the original).

These diversities were indeed taken into account by DCW which was given the responsibility of relocating various sub-groups in different settlements according to the number of distinct Aboriginal groups identified in Kolig's and McLaren's surveys (Kolig 1975, McLaren 1975). Various community development programs were initiated by DCW in the mid-1970s. Some have not yet been completed, some have failed, some were abandoned, and others, against all odds, seem to survive: Junjuwa is one of the survivors.



**Plate 1**

A bird's eye view of Junjuwa Village taken in January 1987. It is possible to identify the three sections of Junjuwa: The Bunuba section (three rows of houses on the left), the Walmajarri section (two rows of houses on the right) and the Wangkajunga section (one row of houses in the background). In the foreground of the picture are the garage and workshop (right) and the two water tanks (left). In the middle of the picture the Junjuwa office and the Junjuwa community health centre. In the background of the picture to the right of the Wangkajunga section in the Junjuwa's people Church.



## Endnotes - Chapter Two

1 These figures give a higher percentage of Aboriginal population for Fitzroy Crossing compared to other towns from the Kimberley, which has one of the highest regional concentrations of Aboriginal people in Australia (Heatley 1982:78).

2 Kolig does not give any evidence but mentions that a few speakers of that language were still alive at Fossil Downs Station in the 1930s.

3 One informant, a Bunuba man born around 1910, told me that just before his birth his grandfather was amongst the Bunuba who organised the appropriate ritual to allow Walmajarri to cross the Fitzroy River, which according to him not a single Walmajarri had done before.

4 Elkin spent a year in the Kimberleys from October 1927 to November 1928, and Kaberry conducted her research in the same area between May 1935 and June 1936 (Elkin 1932:299; Kaberry 1937:436).

5 Wolmeri is one of the alternative name for the Walmajarri (Tindale 1974:258).

6 Nyulnyul with sections, according to Elkin's typology; see his paper for more details on the subject (Elkin 1932).

7 Although I was not able to fully identify the differences that existed between the older dialects of Bunuba as opposed to the language spoken by Junjuwa residents, the distinctions they made showed that linguistic differences existed between Bunuba speakers in the past which seemed to have gradually disappeared, to give way to a 'common Bunuba' but these differences were still remembered.

8 Tindale identified Walmajarri as a an alternative group of Kokatja and Wangkajunga as eastern Walmajarri (Tindale 1974:245-246).

9 On the importance of the East Kimberley area as a ritual, and cultural crossroad, see Rowse (1987:94) and McConvell (1985:1).

10 Pigeon had been employed as a police tracker before he became a renegade. See Pedersen 1984, for details of the story.

11 Mainly because of the Forrest brothers' financial involvement in the pastoral venture in the West Kimberley, the area received more support from Perth.

12 This ceremonial ground is essentially associated with Bunuba groups which did not intermarry with groups from the desert: all male Bunuba members of these groups were either circumcised or subincised there. It was located next a permanent waterhole on the Fitzroy called Bungarri.

13 This figure is based of the cash drawn by MWW each fortnight from Derby and Junjuwa payments of social security benefits.

14 These figures, established from questionnaires given to tourists visiting the park, are from the Geikie Gorge National Park ranger's office and relate to the 1986 tourist season.

15 In order to give a comparison in 1953 mature male Aboriginal stockmen employed on stations were paid between 15 shillings and L 2.10 a week according to their working experience (DNW files:1953).

16 This was mainly at Rodeo time twice a year in June and in September, as well as when people were on their way back to stations if they had had to go to Derby usually, for medical purposes.

### *Historical Outline*

17 Missionaries did not learn Bunuba for two reasons: first because very few Bunuba people were living in Fitzroy Crossing at the time and second because most of the UAM people had access to material produced by Schenk which could be used to learn Walmajarri also since this language was related to those spoken by Aboriginal people settled at Mt Margaret.

18 Kurnangki is a Bunuba name which means fig-tree. It is also the name of the site where Kurnangki village was erected as there is a big fig-tree at a nearby spring. They were both created by a mythical ancestor. This was a traditional Bunuba camping place but now the entire population of Kurnangki village is Walmajarri.



---

---

# CHAPTER THREE

---

---

## THE TOWNSHIP OF FITZROY CROSSING

---

In the previous chapter I outlined the regional history of the West Kimberley. I focused on the historical process that led Aboriginal groups of different cultural and linguistic backgrounds to live together in town based villages. At this point, it is crucial to make a clear distinction between the town of Fitzroy Crossing itself and Aboriginal villages within it. Although both are intimately linked in their development, and depend upon each other to survive, it would be a mistake to amalgamate [conceptually] the township and the communities.

This chapter provides a descriptive account of the township of Fitzroy Crossing at the time of my two field trips. Firstly, I will describe the town as I saw it during a short field trip I undertook between December 1980 and February 1981. Secondly, I will give a more detailed account of Fitzroy Crossing between December 1985 and March 1987, emphasizing the town's development since 1981. Finally, I will discuss the employment opportunities in town. I will show that while white people represented only 20 to 25% of the permanent population they occupied all the main positions in the social, economic and administrative life of town.

### **3.1 Fitzroy Crossing during the wet season 1980-1981**

Before I describe the township, I want to point out some of the conditions of my first stay in Fitzroy, for they have influenced the way I saw the town at this time. This first field trip was brief, I conducted it on my own, it took place during the

### *Chapter Three*

wet season, and I lived permanently at Junjuwa village. During the wet season, which usually extends from one to three months between mid-December and mid-March, the town becomes almost a 'ghost town'. Most of the places around which the town life is centred during the rest of the year are either closed or operate with minimal staff. For example, the school was closed, the mission store, the roadhouse, the hospital, and the police station were lightly staffed. At this time of the year, partly because of the climate and partly because of Christmas Holidays, up to half of the white people were in the south of the state where they nearly all came from. It was also the slack season in the cattle industry and many of the surrounding cattle stations were looked after by a handful of caretakers who conducted basic maintenance and repair work around the homestead, as travelling by road becomes impossible at times. Thus there were only forty white people living in town at the time of my stay<sup>1</sup>. The fact that I was on my own did not facilitate my social integration within the town's white community, as nearly all permanent residents had their family with them. Not being a 'local' and living on my own was bad enough, but moreover I came for only a short period and I was living with Aboriginal people. This last element would not have been entirely negative at other times, but the Noonkanbah events were very much present in people's minds and in their view anyone involved with the Aborigines in the area had to be an activist of some sort. Accordingly, it is not difficult to understand that my contacts with the white population were infrequent, distant and tense at times. The conditions and the timing of the field trip combined to give me an 'Aboriginal' view of the township that might have been different in other circumstances.

In December 1980, Fitzroy Crossing was half way through the planned development started in the mid 1970s. Prior to this, the town had even less to offer. The town centre was located near the Fitzroy Crossing causeway across the river and its new location followed the upgrading of the Great Northern Highway. From then the town changed rapidly and took on a new face which was the one I saw when I arrived in early December 1980.

At the end of 1980, the Primary School was struggling with several problems. It was short of staff: there were five teachers in charge of nearly two hundred children of primary school age. The building was quite old and inappropriate for the number of pupils but it was to be upgraded at the end of the 1981 school year. The school also faced a problem with children living in settlements away from town who needed to be brought to school. During the previous school year, the Primary School was financed for a bus service to the outlying settlements, but it had to be stopped due to escalating costs. The Education Department refused to subsidise the service on the grounds of the unstable nature of these settlements (NACOC 1981:2). This refusal had two consequences:

- Town based communities like Junjuwa became overcrowded during the school year, as Fitzroy Crossing Primary School was the only one in the area.

#### *Fitzroy Crossing*

- Numerous school age children missed school as they were not provided with the required bus service to attend it.

### **3.1.1 The main centres**

Living in Junjuwa, I was able to distinguish three main and three minor centres of activity in town, a distinction based on how heavily patronised the centres were.

The closest to Junjuwa and probably the most popular centre in town was the UAM store (see Map 4). It was popular for several reasons. Firstly, its location within the mission compound, together with the other facilities there (Department for Community Welfare office, bakery, butcher shop, church, Summer Institute of Linguistics office, Marra Worra Worra office<sup>2</sup>) together attracted many people, making it a privileged location to meet people and to socialise. This location was also close to the old Aboriginal camp where nearly the entire Aboriginal population of Fitzroy Crossing had lived at some stage or another during the last twenty years: the old camp was regularly visited by its former residents, for many of whom it represented the first contact with the town. Secondly, people from remote settlements came to consult the DCW officer or visit the MWW office to obtain advice. It was, therefore, one of the best places in town to obtain news from distant settlements and to keep up with, for example, the ceremonial life in the area. Thirdly, the mission was one of the three places in town where people could cash their social security cheques. If one was hanging around the store, one would know if a relative was in possession of some cash from which one could benefit. Finally, the mission store had the widest range of items available in town, ranging from fresh products<sup>3</sup> and basic food supplies to 'ringer's' clothes and camping equipment, all of which attracted people. Even when cash was scarce, there was always the chance of meeting a more fortunate relative<sup>4</sup> who, once his/her shopping was done, would give away some food items or soft drinks, which could be repaid on a better day.

Another feature of interest in this same area was the DCW office. At the time there was only one person employed there and he was involved almost entirely with Aboriginal settlements outside town. The UAM had run two hostels in the past, one for single Aboriginal males and the other one for females. One of them had been handed over to the DCW a few years earlier and was about to be renovated. The other was not operating any more as an hostel, but was used to accommodate staff from the mission. Amongst the remaining buildings owned by the mission were a bakery and a 'butcher shop'. The bakery was started in 1975, and was operated by Junjuwa people supervised by staff from UAM. Most of the bread was for Aboriginal consumption, and

### *Chapter Three*

the sales barely covered the costs of ingredients and wages. Although it had apparently not been a very successful enterprise during its five years of existence, it was allocated two loans for new buildings and equipment in 1981, and the UAM store started to sell its bread (NACOC 1981:3).

The 'butcher's shop' was run by Junjuwa. It was the old kitchen where meals, served to the mission camp residents, were prepared prior to the construction of Junjuwa village. Its operation was basic. The Junjuwa chairman would withdraw some money from the community bank account, and then go to Brooking Springs Station, ten kilometres to the north-east of the town, and buy half a 'bullock'. The meat would be taken to the shop, where it would be cut up into pieces by two or three men. These men would then drive around the community and sell the meat from the back of a utility vehicle. The entire process was done with little if any health control, and for that reason it was shut down by the regional health inspector. The butcher shop was not a viable enterprise, for once the chairman and his 'workers' had taken their share of meat as payment for their work, the sales rarely covered the cost.

At this time MWW employed two white people: an accountant and a field officer. The accountant was supervising and advising local Aboriginal groups in financial matters. The field officer was in charge of remote settlements, which he visited frequently in order to evaluate people's needs as well as their desires regarding the place where they would like to settle down. Following its close involvement with the KLC during the Noonkanbah crisis, some local Aboriginal groups started to withdraw from MWW. It was also possible to cash cheques at the MWW office.

The second main centre was the roadhouse. It was located on the Great Northern Highway at the town centre turn off (see Map 5). This roadhouse offered the same services as any roadhouse in remote parts of Australia. It was Fitzroy Crossing's bus station, it had a food store, eat in and take away food, and was a service station with a workshop. The store attracted many Aborigines, and although prices were 20% higher than those at the mission store, the take away shop was the only one in town and was very popular. Once again, the roadhouse was an ideal place to obtain news from other towns and settlements as well as to meet people. The garage and workshop were also frequently crowded as the number of privately owned cars was increasing rapidly amongst the Aboriginal population of town, and most if not all of them needed frequent repairs. The manager and most of the staff from the roadhouse were closely linked to the UAM, which facilitated their relations with Aborigines who were also encouraged by the mission people to have their cars fixed at the roadhouse rather than at the other garage in town. Another important factor that made the roadhouse popular was that credit facilities were easier to obtain here than elsewhere. Once again, through the mission store, it was possible for the roadhouse manager to have access to people's money when important bills were overdue. Finally it was a strategic place to observe people's movements in and out of town. For example, by simply sitting

### *Fitzroy Crossing*

for a few hours at the roadhouse, one would know who had left town, with which vehicle, who was in the vehicle and in which direction it went. Also when people came into town, one could spot immediately what sort of game or food, if any, people had brought back. This kind of information is much valued by the people.

The last main centre was the Crossing Inn Hotel. It was located next to the junction of Brooking Creek and the Fitzroy River. There was direct road access to the pub, from one dirt road that linked the new bridge to the new town centre. Fitzroy Crossing pub had a garden bar, a lounge bar and an 'Aboriginal' bar. Next to the pub there was also a store, a motel, and a caravan park all owned by the publican. The pub was the third place where it was possible to cash a cheque either at the bar, or in the store. Rooms at the motel would only be occupied from time to time by government workers or public servants passing through Fitzroy Crossing. The store had a good range of items, mainly tinned food and basic products. It was the cheapest place in town to buy food, but not many Aborigines did their shopping at the pub store. There were two reasons for this. Firstly, people who did not drink would not go near the pub lest their 'non drinker' status be questioned. Secondly, if one were to shop at the pub store, one would be approached by a relative, likely to be intoxicated, and be asked for money or food. This second point was illustrated to me by Junjuwa chairman's oldest son. I went fishing with him at the junction, which was a very good spot, and on the way back to Junjuwa he stopped at the pub store and asked me to join him to do some shopping. Before we left the store, he gave me the box with all his shopping and the change and said:

Bernard, carry it to the car for me. You know these drunks outside, some are my relatives. If they see me with the box, they will humbug me for tucker or money. If you carry the box, they will think it's all yours and they be too ashamed to ask a whitefellow (Andrew).

The Crossing Inn was famous for its bars. Officially Aborigines were not banned from access to the lounge or garden bar, but anyone barefooted was not allowed in them. However, in Fitzroy the only people not wearing shoes were the Aborigines. It was unlikely anyway, that Aborigines would try to get in these two bars as they restricted themselves to the infamous 'Blackfellow' bar, or drinking in the bush. The 'Blackfellow' or 'Aboriginal' bar was a large dark room with high concrete walls that separated it from the garden bar. There were no lights, no tables, no chairs, only two wooden benches. A huge grid, welded at the top of the bar on one end and fixed at the ceiling on the other end, symbolised quite clearly the racial relations within the pub. Aborigines handed the money through the square holes of the grid and were handed back glasses of beer. I went a few times to the 'Aboriginal' bar during this first stay at Fitzroy and every time I was struck by the atmosphere. Between twenty and thirty Aboriginal, men and women, most of them drunk, were shouting, arguing, swearing or fighting each other. The noise was amplified by the size of the room and the concrete walls. The ambience was pathetic, but it got worse when



### *Chapter Three*

the iron curtain dropped down on the bar without any notice and the police walked in. In 1980, the Aborigines were fully aware of this negative image of themselves, and some preferred to buy a carton of beer and take it to a shady spot in the bush to drink. Unfortunately, this behaviour somehow reinforced the negative image of Aborigines, who in the garden bar are said to be 'good at nothing but drinking beer'. In the garden bar things were different: a few non-Aboriginals would enjoy their beer under the cool shade of centenarian trees. Here there was no shortage of tables, chairs or bar stools. Inside, in the air conditioned lounge bar, the walls were ornamented with ancient tools of the early days of white settlement, and a few customers emptied their stubbies, commenting on the toughness of the town. Patrons in the garden and lounge bar were probably as drunk as were the Aborigines, but they were quiet and enjoyed their drinks in a pleasant ambience.

## **3.1.2 The minor centres**

The first one was the hospital. It was the 'new' hospital called Mindi Rardi after the Bunuba name of the location where it stood. It had been built next to the new town centre, between the power station and the Kindergarten, in the mid 1970s, once the old AIM hospital located at the old crossing had been pulled down. The 'new' hospital was officially opened in 1976, and in 1980 the hospital administration and the hospital clinic were attended to by the only doctor in town. The same doctor was also employed by Community Health, together with two nurses in charge of the Aboriginal settlements in and outside town. Apart from the doctor, the hospital was staffed by six nurses. Even though it had operated for four years, the hospital was not visited frequently by Aborigines despite their serious health problems. Most Aborigines, especially the old people, seemed to miss the AIM hospital, and were reluctant to pass through the new town to reach the hospital. The hospital offered very good services given the size of the town, but the doctor himself admitted that he was achieving better results by visiting communities, even those established in town, with the community health nurses. The people were happy to be treated and showed confidence in the European medicine, but they did not go to the hospital. Even when someone was hospitalised for a few days, their relatives did not visit them as frequently as they would have done at the AIM hospital.

The second minor centre was the police station. It was even newer than the hospital, for it had been built in the late 1970s. The old police station at the old crossing was now used by Geikie Gorge National Park's ranger. The police compound comprised the court house, the police station, the lock up, and the sergeant's house. In 1980 the sergeant was assisted by two constables, whose main duties consisted in patrols around the pub to pick up intoxicated

### *Fitzroy Crossing*

Aborigines. Both constables as well as the sergeant stressed to me the preventative aspect of these arrests; nevertheless, people arrested frequently spent a few days in gaol and were usually fined afterwards. Even if the police were called to go to Junjuwa or to one of the other Aboriginal camps, they were reluctant to answer the call for it would have constituted, according to them, interference in community life. The wet season was a very difficult time for the police force because the Aboriginal camps in town were overcrowded as people from various places in the surrounding region moved into Fitzroy. Disputes and fights occurred regularly between different groups, with or without the influence of alcohol. The Fitzroy Crossing lock up was small and inappropriately designed for the hot climate. It was regularly full and during the day time the heat rapidly became unbearable. The sergeant found a compromise: prisoners were allowed to stay outside in the police compound providing they remained within the fenced area. Then, prisoners could play card games, receive visitors or talk with relatives. As soon as it was known that somebody had been arrested, their families would visit them in the morning and try to find out if they had been involved in a fight and with whom, in order to take appropriate action or retaliation against the culprits or their families. People would also go to the police station for other reasons, for example to obtain a driving or a firearm licence.

The last minor centre was the post office, the only building left at the old town centre. Its location was important and would have attracted a lot of people had it not been so isolated. The mail was sorted only once a day at 3 p.m., and most of the mail for the Aboriginal settlements was picked up by somebody from MWW. Then it was taken to MWW office where people would collect it. Occasionally, people would cash cheques there but as this was not done without proof of identification few Aborigines used this facility. Next to the post office was one of the two public telephone booths in town, but it was not used as much as the other one located next to the roadhouse. The post office offered banking services but Aborigines preferred to use the mission store for such facilities.

### **3.1.3 The Aboriginal population**

About 600 people lived in Junjuwa village in 1980, with the remainder of the town's Aboriginal population, between 200 and 300 people, living in four other settlements. One group was established at Windmill Reserve which was controlled by the Department for Community Welfare. This reserve was built in the early 1970s to accommodate the transient Aboriginal population that had left cattle stations after the implementation of the Pastoral Award. Next to this reserve was Fig Tree camp, or Kurnangki, where about fifty people lived permanently in humpies and tents without any facilities. The two other camps

### *Chapter Three*

were Kadjina, located next to the new bridge, and the Old Camp, behind the UAM compound, exactly where the Aboriginal Mission Reserve had been prior to the construction of Junjuwa.

Despite the Pastoral Award, in 1980 there were still people living permanently on the two cattle stations closest to town. A group of about thirty Bunuba was at Brooking Springs Station, while some fifty Walmajarri and Gooniyandi lived at Gogo Station. This last group camped at the location of the planned Bayulu village to be erected on a piece of land excised from Gogo Station Pastoral lease.

As far as entertainment was concerned, there was not much to do. Movies were shown once a fortnight, usually the night after pension day at Junjuwa Hall. The UAM people were in charge of these movie nights and they usually screened old westerns from the early 1950s. The Mission people also organised, once a year, an Aboriginal sports day as well as a Christmas party at which food and refreshments were given away free to Aborigines. Inside Junjuwa village some parties were organised when the community account was critically low. The persons in charge of the party would play 'rock and roll' tapes, and would provide some food and drinks, usually a stew and cordials. These parties took place in Junjuwa community hall and people had to pay to get in.

## **3.2 Fitzroy Crossing between December 1985 and March 1987**

When I returned to Fitzroy Crossing for sixteen months in December 1985, the town had changed considerably (See Maps 4 and 5). It is again important to stress the conditions of that second stay in Fitzroy, because they influenced my perception both of the town and its population. Firstly, it was a longer stay. In a town like Fitzroy, where the average stay of Europeans employed in town was about twelve months, a person who stayed for over a year became a 'local'. As a direct consequence of that turn over, many people who already lived in Fitzroy for a year or more when I arrived were about to leave town. My arrival was well timed for I was introduced to the European social life of the town by those who were leaving. For some of them it was a real relief to have an outsider to talk to and their open confidences gave me an immediate inside perspective on the town. This also gave me some advantage over the people appointed to vacant positions in town who arrived at Fitzroy after the wet season, by which time I had been living there for three months. Those who had not left at the time of my arrival left Fitzroy prior to the completion of my field trip. As a result, only thirty of the two hundred white people were in town before I arrived and remained there after I had left. Secondly, my family accompanied me during this trip. Therefore, through my wife and daughters, I

### *Fitzroy Crossing*

had access to several European and Aboriginal activities in Fitzroy that a single man would have missed. Finally, during these sixteen months we rented two houses. The first one, rented for six months, was located in the town centre, where most of the non-Aboriginals lived. The second house, in which we lived for nearly ten months, stood in the mission compound, and was definitely in the Aboriginal part of Fitzroy. Although Fitzroy was still a small town, life at these two ends of town proved to be rather different.

### **3.2.1 The main centres**

In 1985, Fitzroy Crossing Primary School was in the process of undergoing renovations. It had a newly built section, especially designed for Secondary Applied Technical School classes (SATS). There were around two hundred children at Fitzroy Primary School, of whom only 10% were non-Aboriginal. Boys and girls who had completed primary school were attending the SATS classes. There was still no high school in Fitzroy but one was greatly needed. The closest college was at Port Hedland some 700 km south west of Fitzroy. Nearly all the children who had left town to continue schooling had returned home before completing their qualifications or had failed. This was a major concern both for parents and the school authority, who were asking for a high school in Fitzroy as soon as possible. A school bus service was operating around town as well as at the closest settlements. By now, many remote Aboriginal settlements had their own community school and government primary schools had started in other Aboriginal villages of the Fitzroy Valley. There were approximately the same number of children in 1985 as in 1980: by contrast there were three times more people employed at the school. There were definite improvements in ideas and views about the education of Aborigines, but many problems remained and were not about to be solved easily. In my view three problems particularly need to be noted. Firstly, the majority of teachers had no previous experience with Aboriginal children, many of them had just graduated and Fitzroy was their first working experience. They were not aware of the town's main social problems and had very little knowledge of local history. Secondly, children who spoke their own Aboriginal language or Kriol at home were banned from using these languages at school. Knowledge of English is important for acquiring an education in Australia, but the absence of a bilingual program seemed a serious deficiency given their effectiveness in the Northern Territory. Finally, none of the teachers I met was trained in teaching English as a second language.

The roadhouse was still a main centre in 1985/1987 and the most popular part of it was still the take away shop. Since 1981, Aborigines in Fitzroy seemed to have developed an almost immoderate taste for take away products. The

### *Chapter Three*

store had been expanded and offered a wider range of products. It remained the most expensive shopping place in town. The garage and workshop had also been enlarged, and there were now two full time mechanics employed permanently. The garage was fully booked for up to a week in advance. Credit facilities were not granted as easily as before, but the roadhouse was still attracting a lot of people. It was especially popular on pension nights as it closed later than the other stores. It had the same manager as in 1980: he was a well known man and was respected by almost the entire Aboriginal population. The roadhouse constituted more than ever a strategic place to observe people's movements in and out of town, since the village of Kurnangki had been erected on the other side of the highway and a new MWW office had been built next to the village (see Map 5).

It would be easy to guess that during the five years the Crossing Inn had not lost its popularity. This time I mostly frequented the lounge or garden bar. It was the place to be on Friday nights at 'happy hour' time, when the prices were lower and it was not uncommon to meet almost half of Fitzroy's non-Aboriginal population. 'Happy hour' did not apply in the 'Aboriginal' bar and this part of the pub was often closed on Friday nights<sup>5</sup>: even when it was open, very few Aborigines came on that particular night. However, by 1985, it was common to see Aborigines in the lounge or garden bar. The same rules as before applied to barefooted people, but many Aboriginal people of the younger generation frequented this part of the pub regularly. Most of the Aboriginal patrons in these bars were those regularly employed in town or on cattle stations, people who had attended high school in Perth, or were of mixed descent. The 'Aboriginal' bar was as pathetic as before but from mid 1985 became less frequented. The main reason for this was that a taxi service became available in town then so that Aboriginal people used the pub more as a bottle shop, and would very rarely drink on the spot. They called a taxi, were driven to the pub, bought a carton of beer and were dropped off in one of the many drinking spots in the bush around town. This presented some definite advantages. Firstly, one could choose with whom one would drink. Secondly, it was easier to flee into the bush when the police arrived or when a fight was about to start.

The pub store had closed down in 1984, and the caravan park had been partly transferred elsewhere. The only people living permanently in the caravan park were the pub's employees. The motel's rooms had been slightly upgraded but they were still very irregularly occupied, and when they were it was mainly for overnight stays. The tourist trade had increased but most of the tourists were likely to stay at the new Caravan Park in the town centre or camped at Geikie Gorge Caravan Park, started in 1984.

In contrast with 1980, the hospital was now a main centre. Aborigines were extremely familiar with the health system and queued every day in the casualty corridor. The hospital had new wards built and its bed capacity had doubled since 1980. Unfortunately, there was still only one doctor in town, but

the hospital was adequately staffed as far as nurses and administrative staff were concerned. The doctor was still employed by the Department of Community Health. The staff at the DCH branch had tripled since 1980 and it had established transportable health units, that did not exist before, in most of the Aboriginal settlements of the area. Nurses from the DCH visited outlying settlements every day, and when necessary people were brought to Fitzroy Hospital. This presented an opportunity for Aborigines from town to visit nurses or new patients, and to get some news from other places. Aboriginal women frequently accompanied nurses during their visits to remote places, such as Noonkanbah, Wivili, Warrimbha, Djugerari or Christmas Creek. They acted as interpreters and guides but this represented for them an opportunity to visit relatives or to be taken to a particular place. Aborigines were definitely aware of local health problems and expressed particular concern especially with sexually transmitted diseases and child health. Few Aboriginal families had lived for a couple of years in the town centre; they all had relatives in various town's settlements, who had visited them many times. Therefore, people were not as reluctant as before to pass through Fitzroy's town centre to go to the hospital. The casualty waiting room was always a great place to socialise, but the hospital had more to offer. For example it was fully air conditioned and for this reason attracted many people during the hottest time of the year prior to the wet season. Several refrigerated fountains were also very attractive. I often saw people who left Junjuwa for a quick drive to the hospital where they filled up a couple of billy cans with ice cold water. Finally, and this posed problems to the hospital administration, many people had realised that it was fairly easy to obtain a 'free meal' if you timed the visit to a patient when meals were served in the wards. The hospital's matron showed me figures which indicated increasing demands for hospital admissions on a fortnightly cycle tied into the scarcity of cash at the end of the second week of the pay cycle. When I left Fitzroy, a second doctor was due in town the following week, and a branch of the Aboriginal Medical Service was to start in town in late 1987.

Marra Worra Worra's new office was officially opened in early 1986. It was located within an entirely new building that stood by itself between Windmill reserve and Kurnangki village. MWW had become one of the main centres in town. Four Aboriginal people were employed fulltime as well as five non-Aboriginals. It was still the only Aboriginal resource agency of the Fitzroy Valley and as such was extremely busy. MWW was, amongst many other duties and responsibilities, supervising the bookkeeping of six to eight remote settlements. People living in these communities, as well as all those who wished to, received their social security benefits at MWW. Individual cheques were handed over the same day, and Aboriginal bookkeepers from each of the concerned communities came once a fortnight to organise the payment in cash of social benefits. Also, chairpersons and council members of remote settlements visited MWW office frequently for various reasons. These reasons could cover many fields: from simple advice on how to get a loan, to problems experienced with the community school. There were many other reasons that

### *Chapter Three*

made this place an attractive one. Firstly, cheques and cash could be collected. Secondly, one always had the chance of finding a lift to remote settlements if one wished to visit them. Thirdly, town based people could always meet relatives living in outlying communities and exchange news. Fourthly, at a weekly meeting of MWW council, members of staff and some members of all communities involved discussed local and regional problems as well as commenting on new state or Federal policies. Finally, a two way radio was in frequent use to inform people about important events such as deaths, ceremonies, meetings, or simply to communicate with remote communities outside the Kimberley area and in the Northern Territory.

The last main centre was entirely new to me. It was a shopping complex built in late 1983 and owned jointly by the publican and the owner of Fitzroy Crossing Enterprise. It included a post office (re-located in 1984), a supermarket, a butcher shop with take away products, a video shop, and a caravan park. The complex was located next to the town centre, and a further development of Fitzroy, with more new houses, was planned nearby. During week days this was probably the most frequented spot in town.

The post office was attracting many Aboriginal people, who started to wait outside the building often a few hours before the mail was even sorted. All Aboriginal communities, as well as many individuals, had their own private mail box. Those waiting outside could easily find out if they or one of their relatives had received their social benefit. Once collected, the mail was taken either to Junjuwa office in the case of mail for persons living in Junjuwa, or to MWW office where all mail for people from other communities was kept. Those with a private mail box cashed their cheques immediately at the supermarket. Banking facilities were available at the post office but less than 5% of the Aboriginal population had saving accounts. It was possible to cash a cheque at the post office but only for people who had saving accounts.

The supermarket manager agreed to cash cheques on condition that people would buy something. The supermarket had a wide range of food items (fresh, tinned, and frozen), as well as a reasonable variety of non food items, considering the remoteness of the place. Prices were the cheapest in town<sup>6</sup> and the supermarket greatly benefited from its central location.

The butcher shop was the only place in town where it was possible to purchase fresh meat<sup>7</sup>. The butcher had a licence to slaughter cattle and process meat. Cattle station managers were only allowed to kill a few head of cattle per year for their own consumption, and it was now illegal to buy meat that had not been processed at the local abattoir. The butcher's wife was running a take away shop at the same location, which made more profit than the butcher shop.

The video shop offered a great variety of products, none of them available at Fitzroy in 1980. It supplied electrical equipment, audio and video material, household items and toys. Video recorder sets had appeared in Fitzroy the previous year. In 1987 the town was still not connected to the national

### *Fitzroy Crossing*

television network<sup>8</sup>. Due to the absence of any television channel, video cassettes rapidly became popular with both the Aboriginal and white population.

The caravan park was full during the tourist season. Tourists who travelled in the Kimberley usually stopped for a couple of days at Fitzroy Crossing, mainly to visit Geikie Gorge National Park. The caravan park offered a safe, convenient and central place to stay for those passing through.

## **3.2.2 The minor centres**

The police station had remained a minor centre in town. Two Aboriginal police aides and two extra constables had joined the previous staff of three. The lock up had been expanded, but the 'tradition' of having prisoners outside during the day had survived. This was still what attracted visitors regularly. Some periods were busier than others, for example on pension night or when a magistrate came to town. A magistrate was needed to deal with other crimes as well as with juvenile offenders. He came once every three weeks. There were three Justices of the Peace residing in Fitzroy Crossing who sat in court for minor offences; all were non-Aboriginal even though 95% of people appearing in court were Aboriginal people. It seemed that there was more cooperation than before between the police force and Aboriginal communities' leaders. When I left Fitzroy, Junjuwa Council was considering an application to enforce its own 'by laws'.

The UAM store was not as predominant as it had been. Firstly, most communities cashed cheques for their members either at their own office (Junjuwa) or through MWW (Noonkanbah, Yiyili, Kurnangki, Kadjina). Those who had their own mail box or received their mail at the post office could cash their cheques in many places. Only a few people, mainly the oldest in town, had kept the UAM store as their postal address and still used the old 'banking' system. Secondly, the shopping complex and the roadhouse had diverted many patrons from the UAM store, mainly because both offered take away facilities, and also because they sold cigarettes and tobacco, that were not available, for religious reasons, at the mission store. Thirdly, a lot of places that previously attracted people to the mission compound, had either been moved (bakery, MWW office, church), had disappeared from town (Summer Institute of Linguistics, 'butcher shop') or had become minor centres on their own (Department for Community Services office). If the UAM store had lost its position as the main retailing store in Fitzroy Crossing it had instead become the main wholesale supplier of community stores to many Aboriginal settlements of the Fitzroy area. It seemed that the UAM store allowed easier repayments and better credit facilities to community stores. There were never



### *Chapter Three*

as many people socialising around the mission store as there had been in 1980. Nevertheless there were a few periods of the day when people came in numbers. At lunch recess or immediately after school, many children went to UAM store to spend their pocket money. Other regular customers were Aborigines employed at the nearby Department for Community Services office, at the Primary School, or those who worked on a casual basis at the second hand shop located behind DCS block. At the mission store they could meet old people and relatives from town who were attending classes at the Karrayili school.

Karrayili was an Aboriginal Education Centre that had been operating for two years. It was located within walking distance of the UAM store. Classes were attended by old people from Junjuwa, Kurnangki, and Windmill Reserve; after the class they always stopped at the mission store because for most of them it was still their 'bank'.

In February 1987, the UAM store was transferred to Junjuwa Community, and was renamed Burrawa store, after the Bunuba name of the two hills behind the mission compound. A new manager was appointed by the Junjuwa council. The community had its own store within the village, and intended to keep Burrawa store as a regional supply centre for Aboriginal community stores.

The Department for Community Services, located next to the mission store, had become a minor centre on its own. There were several reasons for people being found at the DCS office. Firstly it employed a majority of Aboriginal people (five Aborigines and one non-Aboriginal). All but one were from the area and had different linguistic backgrounds. Each of them received many visits from close or distant relatives, often to demand privileged services which they thought they were naturally entitled to receive. Secondly, the DCS dealt with juvenile delinquency, domestic violence and other alcohol related problems, which were all common in town. Thirdly, DCS was still closely involved with several community development schemes, with about ten Aboriginal groups established within the town or in outlying settlements. Members of these groups visited the DCS office a few times a day. Finally, whenever there was a shortage of cash in town, some Aboriginal families attempted to obtain 'food vouchers' from the DCS district officer. In the recent past these vouchers were still handed out generously, but the goals and aims of the DCS were by now quite different, although few people in town seemed to have understood the changes of DCS policy and demands for food vouchers remained numerous though unsuccessful most of the time.

Another minor centre in Fitzroy Crossing was the second garage in town with its mini shopping complex. The garage was on one side of the building, and a store was on the other side. This store sold clothes, toys, tackle and fishing gear, hardware, firearms and ammunition, as well as audio and video materials. It was also the second video club in town. It had more non-Aboriginal customers because of its hardware and tackle sections. It was a bit

### *Fitzroy Crossing*

isolated for it stood away from the town centre or any main centres in town. This presented an advantage for Aborigines who regularly patronised the store after pension day. Because of the relative isolation of the place, they had a chance to avoid demands for food or money from relatives. Further, when people were no longer accorded credit facilities at the roadhouse, they would try to have their cars fixed at the second garage.

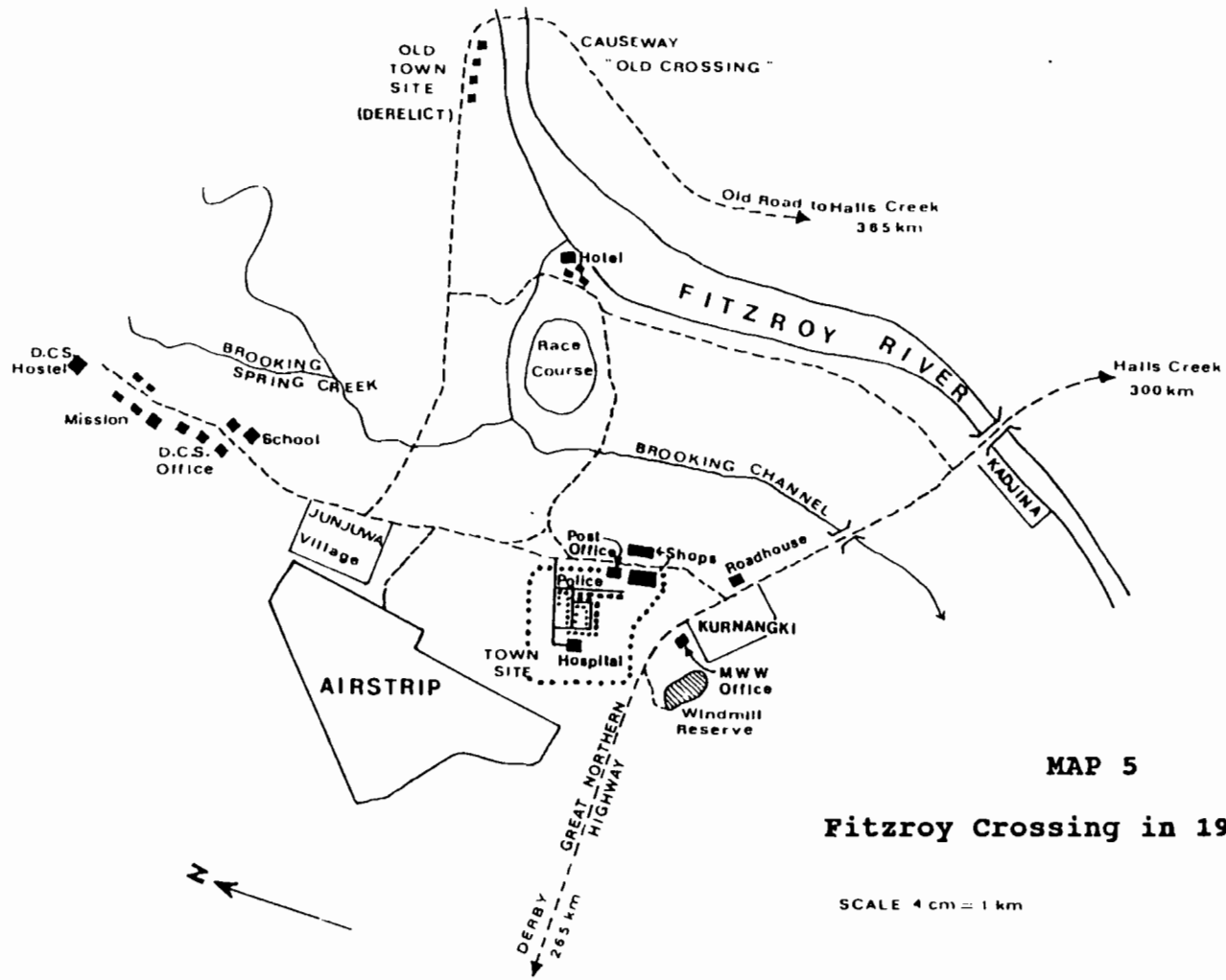
The last minor centre was in fact two different places that I present together for they were both second hand shops. Both were open only two days a week. The first one was located in the Catholic church, built in 1984 in the town centre. It was run by two Franciscan sisters based in Fitzroy Crossing for a few years. It was basically a second hand clothes shop, and was extremely popular not only amongst Aborigines, but among the white population as well. The other was an Aboriginal cooperative enterprise, supervised by the doctor's wife. The shop employed two Aboriginal women on a part-time basis. Clothes were available as well as second hand furniture and household items. It was only patronised by Aborigines and was seen as a threat by local white store managers. It had suffered from management problems and it did not seem to be a viable enterprise at the time of my departure.

### **3.2.3 The Aboriginal population**

There were between 300 and 400 permanent Aboriginal residents at Junjuwa during 1985-1987. The population fluctuated according to various factors during the 16 month period I lived in Fitzroy (see Table 1 in the next Chapter). Many people had left Junjuwa since 1981, moving into other villages recently built in town or in the area. Junjuwa now had its own community store, a building had been erected for the bakery, and the church had been pulled down from its previous location and rebuild within the village. When I left, more people were planning to move out of Junjuwa.

Kurnangki village had been completed in early 1985, and about 100 people had moved in. Most of Kurnangki residents previously lived at the same location, then called Fig Tree camp, and had moved into Junjuwa while their village was undergoing construction.

Windmill Reserve was renamed Mindi Rardi<sup>9</sup> when it was transferred from the DCS to Junjuwa Community. A group of closely related Walmajarri people lived there. They left Junjuwa in early 1986 and were attempting to start their own community at a location 150 km south east of Fitzroy Crossing. Meanwhile they lived at Mindi Rardi. The houses were old and many had been vandalised; an upgrading program was scheduled for early 1988.



MAP 5

Fitzroy Crossing in 1985/1987

SCALE 4 cm = 1 km

### *Fitzroy Crossing*

Five houses in the town centre, out of thirty, were occupied by Aboriginal families. All these families had at least one of their members regularly employed in town. These houses were State Government houses and were allocated to those who worked for a government body in Fitzroy Crossing.

Two Aboriginal families lived in houses located in the mission compound; both men were employed by the UAM.

The Aboriginal camp at Brooking Springs Station no longer existed, all its residents having moved into Junjuwa village.

Bayulu Village had been completed in the early 1980s, and about 200 people were living there permanently. It had its own community store, its own sports ground and benefited from its relative isolation from town (15 kilometres away). Most of the children attended Gogo Primary School, located next to Gogo station homestead, a couple of kilometres away from the village.

As far as entertainment was concerned, even though I stayed for more than a full year this time, I realised that there was still not much to do. Most of the organised sports events, as well as the races and rodeos, existed five years before. The main new entertainment in town was the 'video'. Video sets and video cassettes were introduced when the shopping complex opened. During the first six months it did not seem to be popular amongst Aboriginal people but this changed rapidly. For example, when I arrived in December 1985 there were eight sets at Junjuwa<sup>10</sup>, and when I left sixteen months later there were sixteen. Figures were similar for Kurnangki: four sets in late 1985 and nine sets in early 1987. The average consumption of video cassettes per day per family was between four and five at the beginning of the fortnight and none to one at the end. Membership of the video hire service cost \$85 (\$50 of which was refundable when the membership contract was terminated) and cassettes were hired at between \$5 and \$7 each per day. The range of cassettes available was limited: the two video clubs offered basically the same things. More than 70 % of the stock available were violent or war movies (Rambo and Kung fu type...).

Movies were still shown once a fortnight. By now the school was in charge of this activity, and movies were screened at the primary school. They were usually recent pictures and each session attracted large crowds, mainly Aborigines, from town. Other fortnightly movie nights were organised on a different day at Gogo primary school but they were far less popular amongst town based Aborigines. Junjuwa now had its own 'Rock and Roll' band and disco nights were organised regularly in town. It was possible to distinguish two types of disco. Those initiated by a local association or the school people, for which one had to pay to get in, and where food and drinks were available for sale inside, alcohol was banned, and police supervision was available. The 'improvised' discos were often practice sessions of local bands which were joined freely by large crowds. The second type was banned by the police after a few incidents. Once a year, in June, Fitzroy Crossing school organised its sports

### *Chapter Three*

carnival and a month later the Fitzroy Valley School Sports Carnival took place, when children from the entire Fitzroy Valley competed for their own school. Regular sports events such as the Basket-Ball Starlight Carnival or the Aboriginal Sports Day had existed for decades and were previously organised by missionaries. Now they were initiated by local associations or the Karrayili Education centre. Fitzroy's most famous events, rodeos twice a year and a yearly race day, attracted nearly the entire population of the Kimberley to town; they had been organised for decades and the tradition was perpetuated by the Fitzroy Crossing Progress Association.

## **3.3 Employment opportunities at Fitzroy Crossing**

My first field trip was too short to evaluate all employment opportunities at Fitzroy Crossing. Nevertheless, it was clear that job opportunities were greater for non-Aborigines. It was a fact that all white people living in town had permanent jobs. As far as the Aborigines were concerned, employment opportunities were scarce. At the time of my stay, only six Aboriginal people out of the Junjuwa population were employed in town (three at the UAM store, two at the hospital and one at the DCW office). There would have been a few more jobs available for Aboriginal people on a casual basis, for example at the school, at the kindergarten or with the Summer Institute of Linguistics, but I did not have the chance to investigate these opportunities.

In 1980, the cattle industry was still the main provider of job opportunities in the area. These opportunities were nowhere near what they had been prior to the implementation of the Pastoral Award. Nevertheless, a few permanent positions were still available for Aborigines in some stations of the Fitzroy Valley. Both women and men were employed: women were housekeepers, cooks or cleaners and men were employed in gardening, fencing, or butchering tasks. Seasonal employment was also available at the time of the mustering season (April to October). Demands for seasonal workers were irregular; at times a station would be in need of three mustering teams with ten to twelve 'ringers' each and at other times less than ten men would be involved in a joint mustering campaign that covered two cattle stations. When extra labour was required, the station manager would send one of his full time Aboriginal employees to recruit required workers at Fitzroy Crossing.

Between 1985 and 1987, I had many chances to investigate employment opportunities in Fitzroy. Overall, the situation was much the same. All non-

### *Fitzroy Crossing*

Aborigines were employed and only a small minority of Aborigines had jobs. For many positions people had to be recruited outside the Kimberley region. The region was lacking in qualified doctors, nurses, teachers, mechanics, bookkeepers, accountants, electricians, and plumbers, and vacant positions were advertised at least at the State level. Although there were still employment opportunities for local people, chances for non-Aboriginal locals were much higher. The situation was obviously more complex than a simple correlation between identity and employment. Nearly all jobs available locally circulated amongst local Europeans, elsewhere already employed (or their spouses) without being advertised. For example, two part time positions at the primary school (secretary or librarian) were 'transmitted' from one constable's wife to the next. In Junjuwa village the community adviser's wife was doing the bookkeeping for the community. Some nurses worked part time at the video shop or at the roadhouse take away shop. The monopoly by white people was not limited to jobs, as almost all local enterprises and business were owned by only a handful of non-Aboriginal people. For example, the publican also owned the supermarket, the caravan park, and the shopping complex site. He also had shares in a town based building enterprise (Fitzroy Crossing Enterprise). This enterprise had the monopoly for plumbing and electrical repairs and maintenance contracts, construction and upgrading of buildings, road maintenance and repairs, for it was the only one in the area. Fitzroy Crossing Enterprise was also the depot and only agent in town for transport by road. The enterprise owner had also a few houses for rent in town, as well as the video shop in the shopping complex.

It was difficult for Aborigines to break through this monopoly in order to get better access to jobs. But it was true that many factors within the Aboriginal population also made it difficult for people to get a job. There was an extremely high level of illiteracy: qualifications were rare and when held were often inappropriate. Finally, potential applicants suffered from a lack of confidence or had difficulty coping with pressures from relatives and peers. For example, the DCS advertised a position for which preference would be given to a local Aboriginal woman. At least six women were qualified for the job, four applied but none of them came to the interview. For a few weeks several people tried to bolster the applicants' confidence; eventually one came for an interview and was offered the job. She accepted it, but never started. The position remained vacant for six months until DCS, desperately short of staff, offered it to a non-Aboriginal woman.

In 1985-1987 there were thirty positions occupied by Aboriginal people in Fitzroy Crossing outside those available through Aboriginal Incorporated Communities. Six were casual jobs, two at Geikie Gorge National Park during the tourist season, and four at the pub for weekly rubbish collection. Employees were all male for these six casual jobs as well as three other positions, and the remaining twenty-one Aboriginal people regularly employed were women. These figures did not include employment offered by Aboriginal

### *Chapter Three*

communities. For example, Junjuwa employed twelve persons, six of them full time (three office workers, one trainee project officer, two shop assistants), and six part time (two apprentice bakers, four rubbish collectors). Occasionally, specific training schemes were available for a limited period of time. For example, when Junjuwa houses were upgraded in early 1987, eight young men from the community worked for twelve weeks on the program.

Seasonal employment in the cattle industry was still available, but all permanent positions had been eliminated. At the peak of the mustering season, up to sixty men from Junjuwa village were employed in various cattle stations. One difference between 1980 and 1986 was that since 1985 Aboriginal men had the choice of working for an Aboriginal cattle station. These stations were also in need of extra seasonal workers, and one Aboriginal man tried to create his own enterprise. This Junjuwa man had been eager to have his own mustering team which he planned to hire out to stations that required extra seasonal labour. He was offered a chance in 1985, when he had a very successful mustering season. Unfortunately, due to management problems and financial difficulties, he experienced a heavy deficit during the 1986 mustering season.

In 1985-1987 there were more employment opportunities for Aborigines than in 1981; nevertheless, self-determination policies had brought more non-Aboriginal people to town and employment opportunities for Aborigines had not kept pace<sup>11</sup>.

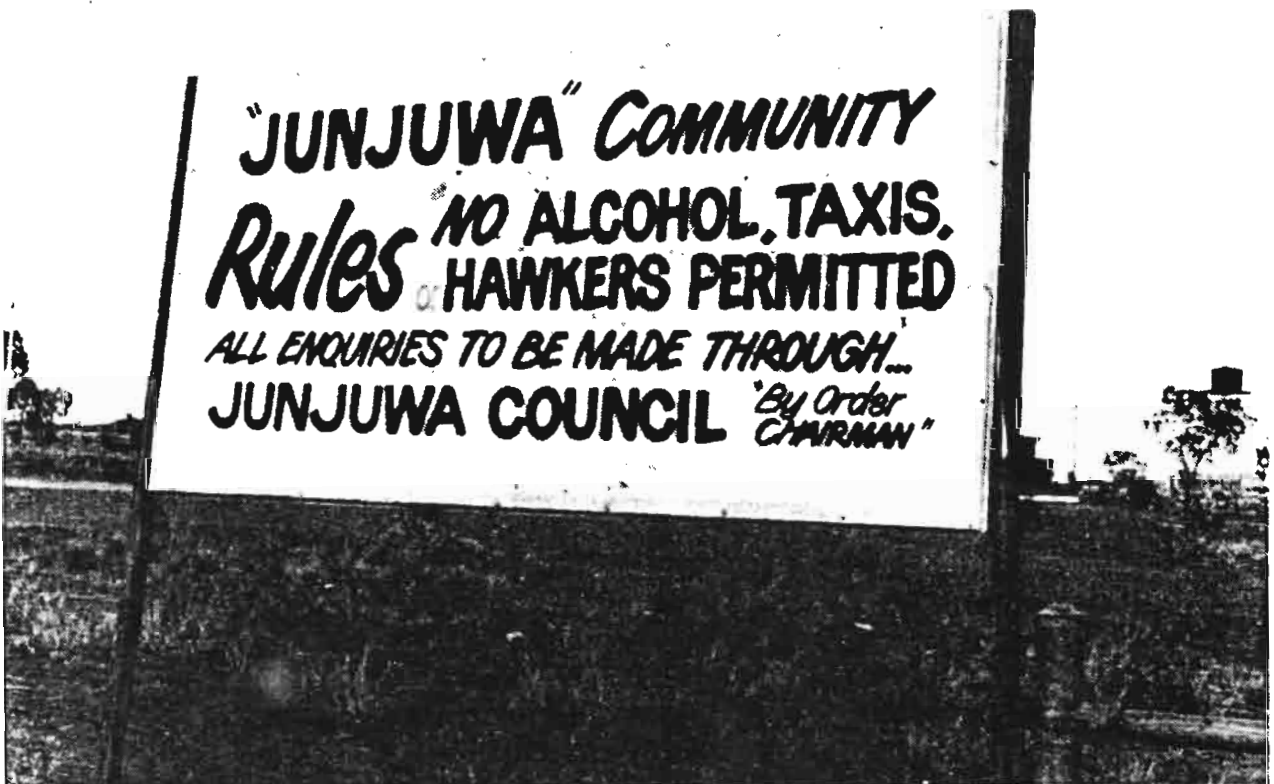


Plate 2

Sign-board at the main entrance of Junjuwa community. It was at this main entrance that Junjuwa councillors were on duty at night to check residents, outsiders and vehicles entering Junjuwa in order to keep alcoholic beverage outside the village.



## Endnotes - Chapter Three

- 1 Fitzroy Crossing's white population in 1980/1981 was between sixty and seventy.
- 2 Marra Worra Worra is a resource agency for the Aboriginal settlement of the Fitzroy Valley area.
- 3 Fresh vegetables and fruits were only available from time to time at the Mission store in 1980.
- 4 Many people, especially the old ones, banked their cheques at the mission store. Every time they did some shopping, money was taken directly from their account.
- 5 In one instance a group of nearly forty Aborigines walked into the garden bar to protest against the closure of the Aboriginal bar. They asked the publican to reopen it and forced him, supported by garden bar patrons, to apply 'happy hour' prices in the Aboriginal bar as well. This was the only 'happy hour' that the Aboriginal bar has ever had. After this incident, a police patrol was at the pub every Friday night.
- 6 A local association known as the Failure to Thrive Committee was concerned with the cost of living at Fitzroy Crossing. It conducted a survey to evaluate the cost of a 'market basket price list' done according to local Aborigines' eating patterns for a family of four for a fortnight. The basket included food items as well as non food items. The survey was carried out in July 1986. The results were: roadhouse \$298.77, UAM store \$273.49, Supermarket \$269.22.
- 7 Frozen meat was available from both the supermarket and the roadhouse.
- 8 The 1981 census figures gave a permanent population of 428 people for Fitzroy Crossing. Only the Aboriginal population of Junjuwa was taken into account as a permanent population, so it was estimated that the cost of the town's connection to the Australian network was not worth as there were not enough residents in town.
- 9 Windmill Reserve was given the same Aboriginal name as Fitzroy Crossing Hospital because they were both included in the area called Mindi Rardi by Bunuba.
- 10 By set I mean a video recorder and a television set; the average cost of a complete set was between \$1200 and \$1500.
- 11 Fitzroy Crossing was in that matter fully representative of the lack of employment opportunities in the Fitzroy Valley area. For more details on this issue, see Arthur 1986.

---

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

---

### **ONE TOWN BASED COMMUNITY: JUNJUWA VILLAGE**

---

In the previous Chapter I described changes that occurred at Fitzroy Crossing between 1980 and 1985. I also discussed changes that affected the Aboriginal town population. It is clear that although the permanent Aboriginal population of Fitzroy Crossing dropped by nearly 1/3 between 1980 and 1985 (from approximately 900 to around 600, DCS Censuses), the town facilities, whose purpose was mainly to service the Aboriginal population, had increased a great deal. Most of the Aboriginal people had no alternative but to be recipients of social security benefits, since there were very few job opportunities available to them.

In this Chapter I concentrate on Junjuwa Community, the oldest and largest of the town based communities. I begin by examining the process that led to the creation of Junjuwa as an incorporated Aboriginal community then look at the Constitution and finally describe the village, the population and the living conditions.

#### **4.1 The Origin of Incorporated Aboriginal Communities at Fitzroy Crossing**

In the last section of Chapter Two I presented the successive moves of various Aboriginal groups towards the township of Fitzroy Crossing. These groups gradually settled in distinct areas of the town. The last and the most important

#### *Chapter Four*

migration of Aborigines to town was the result of the implementation of the Pastoral Award in the cattle industry between 1968 and 1972. Over this period award wages for Aboriginal people were phased in, resulting in most cattle stations dispensing with Aboriginal stockmen, who were encouraged to take their families with them to town. As a result:

Between 1969 and 1975,...the Aboriginal population of Fitzroy Crossing increased four-fold from 200 to 800 people. This in turn altered the socio-economic fabric of the town and how social services could be delivered (DCW 1976:4).

Neither the camps into which they moved nor the town were adequately equipped or serviced to deal with such a sudden influx of population. Moreover, these unemployed people had, from now on, to rely on Government for income in the form of various social security benefits. The situation deteriorated rapidly, until a ministerial visit to the Kimberley, in late 1974, recommended that the State Department for Community Welfare initiate Community development programs in the Fitzroy Valley, and more particularly at Fitzroy Crossing (DCW 1976:4). The DCW had been formed two years prior to this, after an amalgamation of the Department of Child Welfare and the Department of Native Welfare. Both had had a long involvement in the area, although their goals were different from those of DCW. Prior to 1972, they were concerned with enforcing regulations, mainly with regard to Aboriginal employment and health, and protecting the individual. Once formed, the DCW claimed new goals aimed at:

...helping people help themselves to reach the family and community goals which they select (DCW 1976:3).

Many recommendations in that document show that these programs were not aimed at meeting either the individuals' needs or those of the Aboriginal population as a whole, but their purpose was to strengthen family and to reinforce community ties (DCW 1976:9-10). DCW's first task was, therefore, to establish how many groups of the latter kind existed amongst the Fitzroy Crossing's Aboriginal population, because these communities required a legal status without which they could not have access to State and Federal funding. These communities also needed appropriate housing because existing facilities were overstretched.

I have already indicated that two surveys were conducted separately to cover the first aspect and to evaluate the second (Kolig 1975, McLaren 1975). It was concluded that there were seven distinct groups in Fitzroy Crossing. However, the nature of these seven groups varied widely and temporary residential units were confused with more coherent and established ones. Some examination of these various groups is important to demonstrate just how varied they were. At the time of the surveys, the group that was to become Junjuwa had a population of approximately 250. All these people lived on the Aboriginal reserve within the UAM compound. Most of them had settled there recently, between 1970 and 1973, although a minority had elected to live in this

### *Junjuwa Village*

reserve for more than a decade<sup>1</sup>. This proposed community lumped together speakers of at least six different languages (Bunuba, Walmajarri, Wangkajunga, Gooniyandi, Kija, Jaru), and the Aboriginal leadership, although not the majority of the people, had come under strong mission influence. The surveys identified two other town based groups: Kadjina and Yungnora. Each of these groups had approximately 50 members. Both were coherent from a linguistic point of view, for their members were Walmajarri and Nyikina only. Moreover, these two groups originated from a split in 1973 within the Aboriginal population that had lived on Noonkanbah station until 1971 (Kolig 1987: 92-94). By contrast with Junjuwa, these two groups and their leadership were self-defined and relatively free of non-Aboriginal interference. Thus, the mission reserve group was quite different in nature, history and composition from these latter two groups. Despite these marked differences, each of the three groups, together with four others, became seven separate and autonomous communities, each an equal part of the DCW program.

Recording Kadjina and Yungnora as two separate and distinct groups was surprising when they had so much in common. It seems that this was because:

The two groups made their camp at different spots on the bank of the Fitzroy River, thus clearly demonstrating that they did not form one coherent community (Kolig 1987:96).

However, it is one thing to say that residential patterns mark a distinction between groups, but quite another to assume that each camp is a single and coherent entity in itself. Although approximately 250 people lived in the mission reserve camp, the internal organisation was such that the residents distinguished at least five distinct sub-camps. This was pointed out to me on numerous occasions when I visited the old mission camp with various Junjuwa residents. At each visit people insisted on showing me the site of their former house or camping place and said that "at the mission reserve each language had its own boss and its own camp". I did not collect any data nor did I hear any statement that suggested people living at the mission reserve in 1975 saw themselves as one group prior to the start of Junjuwa as an incorporated community. People always showed full awareness of the circumstances that had brought them to the mission reserve and insisted on the temporary aspect of their settlement together there. Unfortunately, the internal organisation of the mission reserve was either neglected or seen as not significant, and thus the resident population was depicted as forming one community.

The future consequences of this arbitrary way of defining Aboriginal communities were certainly underestimated at the time. It appears that pragmatic factors played a large part in defining the communities, especially in the case of the overpopulated Mission Reserve which needed help rather quickly. In this context it must have seemed to the local advisers that a co-resident group of 250 people had more chance of being recognised as a

community and provided with decent housing than several separate sub-groups of this one residential group.

## **4.2 Junjuwa Community Incorporated's Constitution**

In this section I examine Junjuwa's constitution with special reference to the administrative constraints that made it difficult for the Aboriginal groups to maintain their previous internal organisation once they had moved to Junjuwa village.

One of the two Fitzroy Crossing permanent DCW officers instigated the incorporation of the residents at Junjuwa as a 'community'. He explained to people present at the first community meeting (2/5/1975), the steps required to be taken for the legal incorporation of the community<sup>2</sup>.

- The Association needed to have a name
- A constitution should be drawn up to describe the Association's activities
- A Council should be formed
- The Council should appoint a Chairman and officers (secretary, treasurer).

Then an application could be submitted to the Crown Law Department to have the group incorporated (JCCM 2/5/1975).

An unincorporated Aboriginal group is not eligible for access to government funding nor to receive a grant from other non-governmental sources. Furthermore, vesting a lease or sublease for a particular reserve or portion of land requires an incorporated Aboriginal group to hold it. Typical of the problems faced by Aboriginal groups that failed to understand these legal requirements was the experience of the Kurlku group.

The Department for Community Services had initiated in 1986 a state-wide program in which it planned to hand over to Aboriginal groups all the reserves it was still controlling: at Fitzroy Crossing the Windmill Reserve came under the program. A prior agreement had been reached between leaders of the local Aboriginal communities to rename the reserve with its Bunuba name (Mindi Rardi), and for Junjuwa to obtain a 99 year lease to it which in turn they would sublease to Kurlku<sup>3</sup>. This group was made up of about thirty people and was named after the area from which the people had originally come. In moving to town, the people had become split between various camps and were keen to be reunited at one spot. Unfortunately, on the day of the official handing over the Kurlku people failed to receive their sublease for they were not an

### *Junjuwa Village*

incorporated body. Although, this did not interfere with the agreement reached between the local Aboriginal leaders, the failure to receive the sublease document was a great disappointment. The group had been advised by the regional DCS officer, who had only been in town for 6 months, and thought that because Kurlku was a very coherent and well organised group, it was incorporated.

The residential group from the mission Reserve decided to be known as Junjuwa. Junjuwa is a Bunuba name of a particular area of the township of Fitzroy Crossing, delimited by a crescent shaped rocky ridge: the mission compound, DCS hostels and office, Fitzroy Crossing school, Junjuwa village and a part of the town air-strip fall within the Junjuwa area (See Map V). The agreement on the choice of the name Junjuwa as well as the use of the Bunuba term by non-Bunuba was a recognition of the traditional rights of the Bunuba over the area and of their position as 'boss' or leading group in Fitzroy, although they were a minority of the population. The use of the 'proper' name, that is to say the name of a place in the language of the original occupants of the area (or those seen as such), is a mark of respect that clearly indicates that the traditional rights over a particular area are not challenged, at least openly. The choice of a Bunuba term and the official unchallenged recognition of Bunuba people as the leading group in Junjuwa have led to several misunderstandings.

The same DCW officer who instigated the incorporation, wrote the constitution on the behalf of the community<sup>4</sup>. He stated in the minutes of Junjuwa's first council meeting that the constitution was explained to people and their comments included:

This followed a series of meetings at which the various points of the constitution were discussed at length (JCCM 2/5/1975).

Despite discussion, none of the Junjuwa people fully understood the content and the meaning of their constitution. Further, by the very nature of such a document it was inevitable that there was a great deal of input by the adviser, the significance and the subtlety of which escaped the Bunuba. For the Bunuba it was "Junjuwa law", and as Arthur (a former Junjuwa chairman) told me:

That Junjuwa law came from Whitefellows, they gave it to us just like that with that new place and the houses, altogether at the same time you know when the mission time was over.

A quick reading of the constitution suggests that the "document had been weighted in favour of the Bunuba" (McMahon 1984:8), but a deeper reading and knowledge of the community past and present shows that the influence of the constitution and 'privileges' it is said to have given to Bunuba people (McMahon *ibid*) have been overestimated.

#### *Chapter Four*

The constitution defines the aims of the Association in terms of the following purposes :

1. Development
2. Self-management
3. Education, job training, health and housing
4. Self-determination and land rights
5. Traditional culture
6. Relationship with other groups
7. Access to Government funding

It seems certain that the aims of the Association were inspired by the DCW and not defined according to the desires of any particular community. In fact, these headings appeared in the same order in a DCW report on future Community Development projects in Fitzroy Crossing (DCW 1976) and were included in each 'standard-type' constitution of further incorporated local Aboriginal groups. It is also interesting that the last priority is in fact the most important as none of the other goals could be achieved without Government funding. Clauses five and six define the conditions for membership of Junjuwa Community. The first of these two clauses is divided into two sub-clauses:

5 The members of the Association shall be those Aboriginals who are of the (a) Bunuba tribe, or are related, (b) other tribes of the Fitzroy Crossing area, or are related, and who are not members of any other Association, and who live by the rules of the Community (Junjuwa Community Constitution).

According to 5(a), any member of the Bunuba tribe<sup>5</sup> is automatically a member of Junjuwa Community. This was always denied by all the Bunuba leaders I approached on the subject. That is to say that they did not and would not recognise an individual or a group as a Junjuwa community member, simply because they were Bunuba. Movements of Aboriginal population that followed white settlement in the area had scattered Bunuba people over a wide area, some groups settling in the Fitzroy Crossing area, and others ending up in various places such as settlements alongside the Gibb River Road or even as far to the north as Kalumburu (see Map 1). Others again, moved to town centres to the west (Derby), or further south (Broome, Port Headland). A few individuals did try to return to Bunuba country but they all failed mainly because none of these 'expatriate' Bunuba was ever recognised as a member of Junjuwa Community on the basis of being Bunuba, although Bunuba leaders in Junjuwa saw themselves as related to these people and their groups.

This clause also makes all Aborigines related to the 'Bunuba tribe' members of Junjuwa Community. It should be clear from what has already been said that there is a distinction between people who see themselves as

### *Junjuwa Village*

related to Bunuba people resident at Junjuwa and membership of the same community. Nearly all Aborigines living at Fitzroy Crossing are 'related' to the Bunuba people of Junjuwa in one way or another, therefore they could all be members of Junjuwa community. Interestingly, the constitution was drawn up by the same person who had distinguished seven distinct 'community' groups in the town. A distinction between membership and relatedness is essential because the latter is too loose and too complex to be taken as the basis of group membership. I believe this sub-clause is meant to make a distinction between speakers of languages who lived in the area prior to white settlement, and Walmajarri and other migrant groups from the desert<sup>6</sup> who were in the Fitzroy Valley. But even this distinction is somewhat arbitrary because sub-groups of Aborigines from the river country had developed close links and ties with sub-groups of the desert migrants. This process has reached a paradoxical situation where in some cases differences are more clearly marked within the same linguistic unit than between members of linguistic groups of the same or even different background<sup>7</sup>:

It did not take long for indigenes and immigrants to intermarry and soon they formed, on most stations, a tightly knit affinal fabric which over the years became an even closer consanguineous network (Kolig 1987:37).

This sub-clause emphasises difference between people who have traditional rights over a particular area, for which they were the original occupants, as opposed to migrant groups and denies the internal Aboriginal dynamic of the acquisition and transmission of rights to places through birth, intermarriage, and kinship.

The same notion is even looser in clause 5(b). If it were to be fully applied, it would give membership to Junjuwa Community to any Aboriginal person who had left his own community, anywhere in the northwest of Western Australia. It seems again that what should be understood here is that groups other than those originally from the Fitzroy area can be members of the community if they are recognised as such by the Council and abide by community rules (clause 6)<sup>8</sup>. The reference to dual membership is interesting because it has never been an issue. People have only left Junjuwa, either by choice or because they were forced to do so, for another group to which they were affiliated which represented a better opportunity for them. I could not find a single case where somebody who was a member of another community attempted to settle in Junjuwa and was then recognised as a full member.

The register of members, which according to clause 6 should be updated regularly, was initially made in November 1975 when it contained 140 names of adult people, officially members of Junjuwa Community. I was able to verify that this list is exactly the same as the previous mission reserve residents' register. The Junjuwa register has been revised twice. Firstly, when there were rumours that the Fossil Downs people, up till then members of Junjuwa, might be granted an excision on Fossil Downs Station (JCCM 24/5/1976). But these



#### *Chapter Four*

people remained in Junjuwa for several years as the excision was not granted before 1983. Even when this block of land was granted to start 'Muludja' community, some of the people stayed in Junjuwa and were still living there in 1987, even though their names were deleted from the register. This was done for purely administrative and legal purposes in conformity with the Junjuwa constitution, and does not seem to have been an Aboriginal decision.

For a similar reason more names were deleted and some were added in late 1977 (JCCM 26/9/1977). The names added were not those of people new to Junjuwa Community, but those of people who were already considered community members but did not actually live in Junjuwa, who later on moved into the village. By 1977, Junjuwa village had been completed and it offered better facilities and better living conditions than those on stations, so people started moving into town. Since that time the register has no longer been updated. During my fieldwork I was approached several times by a DAA regional officer and Junjuwa Community adviser, and asked to make a new list of Junjuwa members. My lack of understanding of community dynamics at that time led me to be surprised at how complicated and difficult a task this was. I took the old census list, which I subsequently updated every second month, and visited all houses asking people who was or who was not a Junjuwa member. This was a confusing question for people to answer and depending on whom I was talking to names were added, deleted and omitted. People who had been living in Junjuwa almost since the community was started were not listed as members and others residing elsewhere, in town or in even other places, who had occasionally visited Junjuwa Village were given as members. It became even more complicated when the former chairman, a Bunuba, unanimously recognised as one of the founders of the community, stated that he belonged to another group:

Well, you know that place right here Junjuwa, my old man and myself started it. We told all these whitefellows that we needed houses, and land just for us for Junjuwa people. We had a hard time but we got it. My father, myself and all my mob we are really Junjuwa people. But my proper place the one I really belong to is Millillinyi, you know that Pigeon Creek, my sisters and brothers and my kids all the lot we are properly Millillinyi people, one day we will have a place on our own down there at Millillinyi (Arthur).

For such an artificially formed community, a list of members has little sense for Aboriginal people, but because such a register of members is required, a list was made although it was no more than the register of recognised permanent residents.

The next clause in the constitution deals with the role, the eligibility for and the nomination to the Council of leaders. Clause 8 states that "any member may be a leader". This is a very democratic view of leadership but it does not coincide with the local Aboriginal perception of what a leader is. In Junjuwa a leader is first of all a spokesperson who has limited authorisation from some

### *Junjuwa Village*

people to talk in their names on some topics, and whose leadership and representativeness is acknowledged by other leaders. Many factors come into play in the choice and the emergence of a leader and I will look at these in detail below (see Chapter Eight). For the moment, I shall only say that although every person has the right to talk in meetings, only few are seen as leaders and only what these few say is important. The way this clause is formulated could lead one to expect that over the years leadership would have been shared amongst a number of people. This was not the case. The first list of councillors (JCCM 9/5/1975), is almost identical to the one which resulted from the Junjuwa annual general meeting in late 1987 during which the council was elected for 1988. The only names missing were those of people who had died between 1975 and 1988. The new names that appeared on the list were names of young men who were 'given a go' by the leaders, but their leadership only had significance on paper. This monopoly of leadership was made possible by clause 9:

In the choice of the leaders there shall be an equal number of those chosen from the Bunuba tribe as the total of those chosen from the other tribal groups of the Fitzroy Crossing area (Junjuwa Constitution).

This again seems to give all the powers over the council of leaders to Bunuba. It sounds very much like a democratic European interpretation of the fact that all other groups recognised the Bunuba as the leading group. Therefore, there should be at least 50% of Bunuba on the Council. Bunuba people were in 1975 a minority in Junjuwa yet the constitution made them the majority (McMahon 1984:9-10). A closer look at the list of leaders shows that once more the Aboriginal people had organised themselves without paying much attention to the constitution. For example, amongst the 'Bunuba leaders' right from the beginning there was a Walmajarri man who, despite intimate kin and ceremonial links with Bunuba, never claimed to be a Bunuba and would not have been labelled as such by the Bunuba themselves. The group of leaders, labelled 'others' in the constitution (JCCM 9/5/1975), included three Wangkajunga men and two Walmajarri. Thus overall, the Junjuwa council of leaders was made up of four Bunuba, three Wangkajunga and three Walmajarri, that is to say there was no simple Bunuba majority on the Council.

The foregoing indicates the ability of the Aborigines to manipulate to their own end some administrative rules and raises several points about the government understanding of the situation. Firstly, it shows that white people involved in the DCS scheme had a poor knowledge of peoples' linguistic identity, and that their views on 'tribal' affiliation were rather limited. Secondly, that in 1975 the apparent affiliation of people to one language group may not have been as significant for Aborigines as it was thought by white people. What is more revealing about the Aboriginal leadership is that nine of the ten councillors (the tenth one was the son of the older leader) were already 'leaders' at the mission reserve. Each of them was the spokesman of a sub-

#### *Chapter Four*

group organised on grounds other than linguistically defined tribal groups. It can therefore be said with some confidence that Junjuwa was never a single coherent unit in the Aboriginal people's minds.

Clause 9 again makes a clear distinction between Bunuba and others, that is to say between the original occupants of the Fitzroy Crossing area and the migrants. The emphasis in several parts of the constitution on the 'traditional owners' is not a surprise. The document was written by a European, who probably had sympathetic views towards Aborigines, in the mid-1970s immediately before the 1976 Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act 1976 was passed. At this time many people involved in the implementation of the self-management policies thought that similar rights would be extended to the states. Therefore, the emphasis on the 'tribal group' which originally occupied the Junjuwa area is understandable, in the light of the possibility that people might be able to lodge land claims. Clauses 10, 11 and 12 are purely administrative and therefore do not need to be discussed here.

Clause 13 requires the Chairman of Junjuwa to be elected each year during the Annual General Meeting. In practice, things are done differently. The choice of a community leader is made by the councillors<sup>9</sup>. In November 1986, Junjuwa Community held its Annual General Meeting. More than one hundred community members were present, as opposed to the average of fifteen to twenty people regularly attending fortnightly council meetings. I was asked by the community adviser and the chairman to take the council minutes. In the first part of the meeting, the chairman, who sought an extension of his position, nominated the councillors. His nominations were seconded by other councillors who, in doing so, supported each other, and the result was that nearly the entire council was reelected for another year. Some Bunuba councillors who had been on the Community council for several years decided to step down, so that younger men from the same linguistic group, who often complained that the same people were leading the community for years, were offered an opportunity to be elected. Then the time came to elect the chairman. The chairman was challenged by a young Bunuba male who had the support of his peers. The two candidates stood up and faced the bough shade under which people had gathered. One by one the reelected councillors stood up and lined up behind the candidate of their choice. Most of them supported the chairman, who had confirmed them in their positions. Then, the rest of those in attendance lined up behind their own leaders. Thus the choice of the Council was made by the chairman, who was in turn re-supported by most of those he had chosen and by their relatives.

Apart from an Annual General Meeting, Junjuwa council "shall meet for business as often as necessary at such time and place as it may fix" (Junjuwa Constitution, clause 10).

This became institutionalised as a fortnightly meeting. It took place every second Monday, during the afternoon while Junjuwa community members were

### *Junjuwa Village*

still living at the mission reserve, then it was organised on the same basis but in the community hall once Junjuwa village had been built. The reason for these 'compulsory' meetings was that prior to the incorporation of Junjuwa community business was discussed informally by community leaders without any external influence at all, decisions were taken and choices made with the same informality. An incorporated community is bound to keep minutes of all council meetings however (Junjuwa Community, clause 34, a/b/c). So in order to keep records of meetings, to expose community business to councillors and in some ways to influence the process of decision-making, MacLaren and all subsequent community advisers controlled the organisation of council meetings. This put a considerable pressure on councillors, not only when they had to take decisions but they all had to be present at the same time and place. Nonetheless, they met regularly and informally outside council meetings.

In order to receive government funds, and in accordance with clause 23, Junjuwa kept several bank accounts under its name, and official accounts kept for all money received and spent by the community. Prior to 1975, a very small minority of Aborigines in the area had any experience with finance or paperwork. In the cattle industry the Aborigines had certainly some autonomy over their life within the Aboriginal camp but they had had no chance whatsoever to acquire skills in fields other than stock work in the case of men and domestic work in the case of women. The life on mission reserves did improve the level of literacy amongst Aborigines of the older generation who happened to be those in control of leadership in the newly formed communities but still in Junjuwa, and for several years, administrative tasks, bookkeeping and paperwork were considered as 'whitefellow business' and left to European community employees.

Clauses 23 to 31 deal with financial matters and are complex enough to restrict the bookkeeping to a fully trained bookkeeper. These requirements together with the Administration of the Council and day to day business ensured the involvement of non-Aborigines in community business. This likelihood was recognised in clause 32 which states that officers (secretary and treasurer) do not need to be members of the Association. This involvement of whites in Aboriginal community affairs has not decreased over the years. Despite the fact that the expertise of non-Aborigines is no longer required in minute-taking or bookkeeping, for by now many Aborigines have acquired the required skills, European presence and control over community finance, councillors and management was, in the case of Junjuwa, much higher in 1987 than in 1975. There were differences with regard to the appointment of European Community employees: between 1977 and 1985 community advisers were either chosen or employed by Government bodies, but in 1986, Junjuwa chose its own 'project officer' who was also employed by the community.

In this section, I have shown that the constitution of Junjuwa community is not congruent with many Aboriginal views on important issues such as group membership, relatedness, leadership, decision-making and the conduct of

community business. It is clear that Aborigines have found ways to overcome this lack of congruence and remained in control of most issues. Nevertheless, they have remained dependent on non-Aboriginal professional help to run the council until recently.

### **4.3 Junjuwa Village and Its Population**

While the incorporation of Junjuwa as a legal body got under way, a DCW regional officer was involved in the planning of a new village for Junjuwa members. The State Housing Commission (SHC), was in charge of the housing of Aboriginal people in the Kimberley area. During the mid-1970s three villages were erected in the West Kimberley, one of which was Junjuwa village. The local consultant for SHC acted as a liaison officer between the Aboriginal population and the state body. The latter seemed to have been favourably impressed with her work for she became subsequently an adviser on Aboriginal village housing for SHC (McMahon 1984:8).

Two representatives from SHC attended a council meeting in mid-1975 as a part of developing plans for the new village. During this meeting Junjuwa elders took them to the site they had chosen for the village (JCCM 9/7/78). The spot selected was next to the airstrip, within the UAM area, on one of the few high spots in the town. There were several reasons for the choice amongst which two of the main ones were:

- the fact that the village would be within the mission area. People had been living on the mission reserve for the past fifteen to twenty years and did not want to cut their links with the UAM people by selecting a site at the other end of town
- the elevation of 'Junjuwa' ridge at this particular spot offered a safe place from Wet season floods when many places in Fitzroy Crossing were often submerged<sup>10</sup>.

The SHC people collected information on family size and the estimated Junjuwa population. The community leaders made known their wish to have a community hall built in the centre of the village. Two months later, models of houses were shown to the council. The chairman called for a general meeting during which these models were displayed and accepted by everybody. A telegram was sent by the community leaders to SHC saying: "Houses very very good, people very very happy" (JCCM 11/9/75), and the construction started within a few weeks. It is not clear now how the general ground plan for the village was arrived at, although the SHC liaison officer consulted extensively with people at the mission. Somehow it was decided that Junjuwa should be divided in three parts: one for the Bunuba, one for the Walmajarri and one for

### *Junjuwa Village*

the Wangkajunga. I could not find out who initiated this particular decision, but it needs to be commented on. Firstly, it is evident that it does not fit with the community's constitution which only recognised two groups (Bunuba and affiliated vs others, cf previous section). Secondly, it appears as if the division was a fairly arbitrary one based on language difference. However, the people themselves acted within this tripartite framework on several occasions, such as when the council decided to have three women "one of each group" (JCCM 19/1/77), trained as camp nurses. Or when three lawn-mowers were purchased, each one for the exclusive use of members of the three groups (JCCM 10/4/78). Or again, when three second hand vehicles were purchased by Junjuwa Community. It was recorded in the council minutes that each vehicle was for the use of one "tribal group" only and should be driven exclusively by a member of that group (JCCM 11/1/82).

It was also a council decision at this time that Junjuwa would be represented at important meetings by three men, one for each of the three main language groups. Whether or not the division into the three main language groups was relevant prior to the move into Junjuwa village, it was one of the outcomes of the growth and stability in residential groupings.

It is apparent that there was confusion among the white people who administered and advised the Junjuwa community on its internal organisation. This was evident when some councillors were labelled as speakers of one language but affiliated to another, or when residents of one section of the village were systematically associated with this section's language even though they spoke another language and were living there for other reasons. All of the people who lived in a section attributed to one language were not necessarily speakers of that language. Although it was true that overall there was a predominance of speakers of the same language in the same section, some Walmajarri were living in the Bunuba side, and not all occupants of houses in the Wangkajunga row were identified as Wangkajunga. Those who occupied houses in the part of the village that was not congruent with their language affiliation had good and specific reasons to do so. Censuses and interviews made it clear that the reasons for co-residence are far more complex than simple language affiliation. Many factors such as marriage, childhood residence, non-Aboriginal parent, caretaking (as opposed to biological parenting), personal choice, ritual prominence, self-identification (as opposed to identification by others), death of spouse, mortuary customs, language affiliation (as opposed to language fluency), consequences of decisions made in previous generations etc..., all influenced residence patterns. This suggests that the fluidity and change were more likely to be typical of residential composition than fixed residential patterns on the basis of any simple formula, further raising the question of how the tripartite division was arrived at. Movements within the village occurred differently for distinct linguistic groups. They were 'internal' for Bunuba (they moved within the Bunuba area), and 'external' for

#### *Chapter Four*

Walmajarri and Wangkajunga (they moved out of Junjuwa). Very few people moved from one section to another within Junjuwa.

Thus if the subdivision into three main sections was in some way more appropriate than the constitutional division into two groups, it still did not reflect very well the way people actually sought to group themselves. Further, as with the constitution, people tended to ignore the imposed divisions in their residential arrangements.

Fifty six houses were built in Junjuwa village, but this was twenty four short of the original number planned to house the whole population. The difference between the number of houses planned and the number completed was apparently due to insufficient funding of the project. Thus not only were the houses inadequately designed for Aboriginal families but there was a shortage of houses resulting in immediate overcrowding of most of them. Nevertheless, when they moved into the new houses people had facilities (electricity and running water connections) and living conditions that they never had had previously. The previous living conditions on the cattle stations were described as appalling (DNW 1948-1972), and the situation on the mission not much better:

On this part of the reserve there are about twelve small one-room houses, a three roomed house (type 111) and a five-roomed house. To house the remaining population, substandard dwellings such as bough shelters, tents and other old iron constructions are used. Community showers and toilets are used by the residents (McLaren 1975:4).

It was not surprising therefore that the Junjuwa people accepted enthusiastically the two, three and four bedroom houses as soon as models were shown to them (JCCM 11/9/75).

The village represented for them the first ever opportunity to live in decent houses with individual facilities. Since the original move the council has been trying to have the remaining twenty three houses built but all attempts have been unsuccessful so far.

The allocation of houses was decided by the leaders of each sub-group of the three sections. Once a decision was taken, it had to be approved by the entire council. To my knowledge, none of the leaders' decisions was challenged by any of the councillors. There was a sort of reciprocal agreement between leaders and councillors not to interfere in decision-making within other areas of Junjuwa, even though some people such as the chairman's closest relatives, and siblings of councillors were in a privileged situation as far as access to houses was concerned<sup>11</sup>. For example, the chairman and his two oldest married children were allocated one house each. In contrast, a less prominent Walmajarri man had to share his house with his three married children, their spouses and children, and two of his wife's siblings. These privileges in access to facilities and over control of resources were in that case reinforced by the

### *Junjuwa Village*

fact that, while the total number of houses planned for the Bunuba section had been built, it was not the case for the Walmajarri section. This was not done on purpose but simply happened because the Bunuba side was the first one the builders worked on. The problem was that the tripartite division was made prior to the start of the construction program, and no changes were made despite the fact that, because of insufficient funding, fewer houses could be built for Walmajarri people although they were more numerous than Bunuba. These advantages were never discussed publicly by non-Bunuba, for to do so would have been a direct challenge to Bunuba traditional rights, something that neither Walmajarri nor Wangkajunga were prepared to do.

Each part of Junjuwa managed its own affairs internally. Each 'house's boss', that is to say the person to whom the house had been allocated, was responsible for its occupants. In case of trouble, such as drunks abusing people or fights between members of the household, the house boss was supposed to settle the argument. If it went on and seemed to get out of control, then the row boss or the leader from the sub-group formed by several households would intervene and try to settle the dispute. If this were not successful a few councillors, preferably from the same linguistic group as the occupants of the house where the trouble started, and the chairman would be called in<sup>12</sup>. Some houses in each row were regularly the source of conflicts that extended within and sometimes between linguistic groups. These houses were likely to be occupied by single men only (each part of Junjuwa has its own single men's quarters), who often brought alcohol back into the village and caused disturbances that could potentially turn into big fights in which nearly all Junjuwa members were involved.

## **4.4 Living conditions**

Though the models of the houses looked really attractive, once the people moved into their new homes, they soon realised they were not as appropriate as they had initially thought. The houses were wrongly designed both for the Aboriginal occupants and for the climatic conditions of the area. Moreover, it took several years before the SHC acknowledged its mistakes and in the meantime other villages were built and similar errors were repeated. It seems the well intended but personal interpretation of Aboriginal ideas and statements was the source of the misconceptions in the design of houses. For example, when the SHC officer had collected data on the size of families that would move into Junjuwa village she was working with a European notion of the nuclear family and accordingly proposed that two, three, and four bedrooms houses should be built. This ignores completely sleeping arrangements that can be observed in an Aboriginal camp, and which are quite different from European ones<sup>13</sup>. Aboriginal parents sleep in the same room as their children

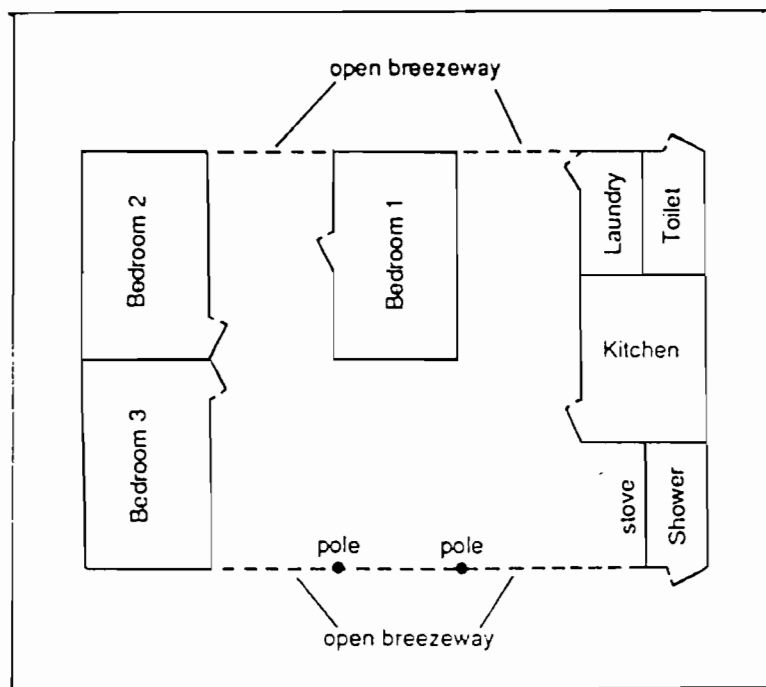


#### Chapter Four

until they reach puberty; afterwards, male children sleep in their own room, and females in another room. Although grown up daughters usually do not live permanently in their father's house, they frequently take meals at their parents' house, sleeping with a father's sister or a mother's mother. Similarly for single men who leave their parents' house and live with other single men.

The houses had the living room separated from the sleeping quarters by an open breezeway (see Map 7, plan of 3 bedroom house), as suggested to SHC by their consultant. She recommended such a design on the basis of having observed Aborigines in the mission area who were taking their meals or resting during the day in a shady spot where it was possible to feel some breeze. The fact was that, given the facilities available on the mission reserve, people did not have much choice about having their meals outside their houses and picked a shady tree next to where they lived to do so. The idea of a breezeway was certainly good, but the project was poorly executed and the final result was not quite what was expected. The open breezeway did indeed provide a shady spot in the house, but the general orientation (north/south) of the village exposed it to the dominant winds in the area. What made things worse was that all natural protection (trees, scrubs), had been bulldozed to level the site of the village:

The central living area is open to the elements, especially dust and rain. Some families have attempted to screen this area off by growing creepers or hanging canvas. No maintenance seems to be done on the houses... The houses are practically impossible to keep clean because of the design. (McMahon 1984:22)



MAP 6

Sketch map of a three bedroom house  
(not to scale)

### *Junjuwa Village*

This particular problem was about to be partially resolved in early 1987, ten years after the completion of Junjuwa village. DAA funded a project for an upgrading of Junjuwa houses. After several meetings, it was decided that there were two priorities. Firstly, an overall upgrading of the electricity and plumbing systems. Secondly, that the open breezeway should be closed off and the living area extended on both sides of each house by a slab of concrete protected by a verandah. Despite its poor design, the open breezeway had become the main living area, mainly because the bedrooms were too small, too dark and too hot. In almost every house beds and mattresses were taken into the front or back yard during the hottest months (October - March). Even when people slept inside the houses, it was not in the bedrooms, which were mainly used when it rained during the hot months or when nights were cold in the dry season (May - September). In many houses the cooking was done outside as well, usually on open fires and meals were taken next to the cooking spot. There were several reasons for this. Firstly, the wood stoves provided with the houses in 1977 were all derelict or out of order by early 1980. They were of poor quality and when used the heat was unbearable. Secondly, many households had acquired electric cooking stoves or electric fry pans, but electrical circuits were not wired to support such equipment so the fuses kept blowing. An upgrading of the electrical circuit was scheduled in 1983, but it did not take place when the technician from the State Electricity Commission sent to Junjuwa realised that most wires and appliances in many houses were infested with ants. This caused permanent short circuits and the entire village circuit needed to be redesigned and changed. Thirdly, people cooked large pieces of meat (legs of beef, occasionally hill wallaby), or large fish (sword fish, barramundi, sting rays) that in any cases would not fit into a conventional wood or electric oven. Finally, houses were badly ventilated and the heat created by cooking a meal took the temperature up to an unbearable level. Thus most of daily activities took place outside the house, that is to say in full view of at least three or four neighbouring houses. Junjuwa residents always complained that the houses had been built too close one to another (56 houses for a total area of 1.6 square kilometres), and that fences between them were too low. Fences were put up in 1980 but dogs or children could easily get over them. People had more privacy at the mission reserve, where tall and thick bushes were used to fence each house.

Other elements that caused living conditions to deteriorate in Junjuwa were the choice of building materials. Most materials were either inappropriate for the climate or too cheap to last for more than a few years. I will take only two examples. SHC builders decided not to use glass for windows because many Aboriginal kids and teenagers were expert in the use of slingshots and glass windows were one of their favourite targets. Therefore, window glass would have been costly for the community and dangerous for the residents. Instead of glass SHC building advisers suggested using a thick plastic material easy to cut to measure and almost unbreakable. The main problem was that this type of plastic did not resist the heat well, turned dark after few

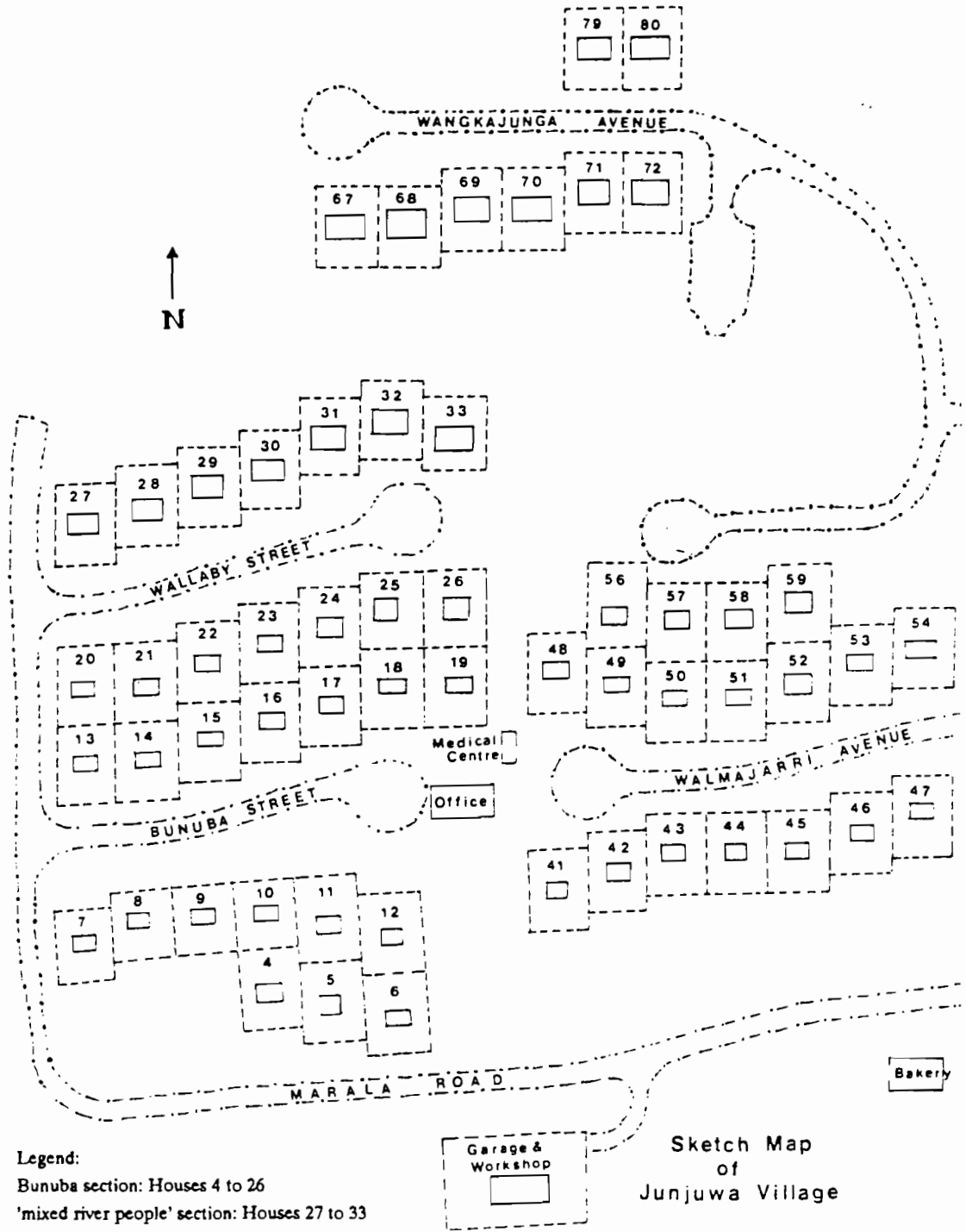
#### *Chapter Four*

months and eventually cracked. This reduced the sunlight in bedrooms, where for reasons already mentioned electric lights could not be used. Most materials used in the plumbing of the kitchens, laundries, toilets and showers were very cheap and certainly not designed to last long under conditions of constant use by two or three times the number of people usually planned for. Blocked drains, leaking taps, and broken water pipes caused severe problems with the water supply as well as creating a constant health hazard. The village had its own water supply, for there was water ground next to the village site. One large tank was built and water was pumped into it by a diesel pump. The pump was not sufficient to cover the village water consumption because of the overpopulation and plumbing problems. In late 1980, Junjuwa was frequently without water for several days in a row. This was not because the diesel pump was not powerful enough, it could easily fill up the tank at night for the daily consumption, but because only one person, a local European appointed by the Water authority, had access to the pump. When the pump broke down or ran out of diesel at night or during the weekend, it meant no water in Junjuwa. The tank was enlarged in 1984 and an electric pump added. When the two pumps were running they could fill the tank up in twenty four hours. Theoretically, this tank at its full capacity, contained enough water for 500 people for a week, but because of the derelict plumbing a full tank never lasted more than two days. In February 1987, when the electric pump broke nothing could be done until the local SEC electrician in charge of the pump, who had the only key to it, could be found. As the diesel pump could not meet the consumption demands, Junjuwa was without water for two days at a time of the year when the daily temperature was in the mid-forties. The electricity bills for the pump when it was working were very high.

The design of the village, size of the houses, poor living conditions, overpopulated houses, heat and shortage of water were some of the factors that made Junjuwa village a difficult place to live in, but even so as many as 600 people made it home over the last decade.

Even when Junjuwa was less populated, there was still an average of eight persons per house. For example, in April 1986 census figures show that there were 431 people in Junjuwa (see Table 1) and only 53 houses were occupied at the time: two were derelict, and two others empty because of mourning. Overall there were fourteen two bedroom houses, thirty three bedroom houses and ten four bedroom houses. Detailed censuses of each house indicated a wide variation in occupancy (for details, see Appendix 3). Figures ranged from one person (two cases) to fifteen persons (three cases) in a three bedroom house. But as indicated earlier, sleeping arrangements and constant movements of people between houses have to be taken into account before any conclusion should be drawn up from such figures. Further, groups of residents within one section of Junjuwa would be likely to cooperate and act on the basis of house clusters, therefore households as one single house were in many cases artificially delimited social units.

Junjuwa Village



Legend:

- Bunuba section: Houses 4 to 26
- 'mixed river people' section: Houses 27 to 33
- Walmajarri section: Houses 41 to 54
- Wangkajunga section: Houses 67 to 80
- 'border houses': 6, 12, 19, 26, 33, 48, 72

MAP 7  
 Sketch map of Junjuwa Village in 1985  
 (not to scale)

#### *Chapter Four*

In Chapter Two, I described the mission reserve Aboriginal population that moved into Junjuwa village in mid-1977. I have already emphasised several factors such as linguistic and cultural differences, and the varied backgrounds to the moves to the mission settlement, that influenced the social groups which were combined to form a large residential group united only by their co-location. This residential unit became Junjuwa Community and moved to live in the newly built village. The move was not conducted without reluctance on the part of some. Some sub-groups within the mission reserve refused to move into the village. About sixty Walmajarri and Wangkajunga individuals, all strong Christians, only agreed to be displaced after promises that the SHC would build them a church in the new village (McMahon 1984:9). However, this did not eventuate and they built their own church with the help of local UAM people in 1983. When I asked some of these people why they refused to leave the mission reserve they gave me reasons other than Christianity. Firstly, they had brought with them from the desert their sacred objects. They were hidden on the top of a hill next to the mission reserve. People did not want to leave these objects behind and refused to store them with those from other groups next to Junjuwa village. Secondly, they argue that as the Bunuba would be the boss in Junjuwa they should be left behind. Thirdly, they thought that so many houses would attract a lot of people who would get drunk, and fight all the time. The two last points might be a retrospective analysis that goes with a nostalgic view of the peaceful and better life on the mission reserve. Nevertheless, they were quite right about the fighting and it seems that problems caused by alcohol abuse increased as soon as Junjuwa Community was created. Trouble within the community occurred even prior to the move into the village.

For example, in November 1976, a special meeting was organised to discuss problems caused by 'outsiders' (non Junjuwa members, non-permanent residents at the mission, or trouble-makers) who camped on the mission reserve. It was recorded in the minutes of the meeting that there were too many of them. They had brought alcohol into the reserve, and caused so much trouble (gambling, fighting and drinking), that the white missionaries could not tolerate it any longer (JCCM 2/11/76)<sup>14</sup>. Although, it happened in the mission area, the UAM people insisted that it was the responsibility of leaders from Junjuwa Community to tackle the problem, for the mission was no longer responsible for the Aboriginal people.

It seems that many people who were attracted by the prospect of living in their own house in an 'autonomous' Aboriginal village, were attempting to move to the residential group at the mission reserve, in a bid to be incorporated into it. This, they appeared to believe, would secure them the allocation of a house in Junjuwa village. On the basis of kinship and social links people tried to become members of Junjuwa even if they were already members of another community. It was difficult to control the visitors and Junjuwa council organised several meetings with other communities' leaders to discuss this

### *Junjuwa Village*

particular problem (JCCM 24/11/75, 13/9/77, 10/4/78, 20/6/78). It was impossible for Junjuwa residents to deprive their relatives of the right to visit them: the difficulties arose because many attempts were made by the visitors to transform these visits into permanent residence. Visitors who were not members of Junjuwa Community but related to members were, of course, supported in their attempts by the Junjuwa Constitution (see previous section). The council did not have the power to expel visitors, nor did it want to, for it would have created more tensions between Junjuwa residents. Problems caused by 'permanent' visitors were discussed but no action was taken and consequently Junjuwa became even more overpopulated. Criteria upon which the allocation of a house to 'permanent' visitors could be made varied from one case to another.

For example, in May 1978 during a council meeting a Walmajarri woman, Weeda, was said 'to have been given a house by mistake' as she was 'not really' from Junjuwa Community (JCCM 25/4/78). At the meeting she established that her rights were legitimate and she was allowed to remain in her house on the assumption that her sons would abide by village rules. She was born near Lake Gregory but grew up and worked on Laurel Downs Station (Bunuba country). She had married a Nyikina man, now deceased, and her two sons were born in Bunuba country, although they did not speak the language. In fact, because her sons were heavy drinkers this was an attempt by the council to get rid of them on the basis that they were not Junjuwa members. Her life story did not make her a member of Junjuwa but nobody challenged her because many Junjuwa members themselves would have been embarrassed by having to prove their full right to live there. A few months later, a Walmajarri man, Jimmy, requested a house in Junjuwa for the third time and for the third time he was given a negative answer (JCCM 9/8/78). He was separated from his wife, a Wangkajunga, who lived in Junjuwa in her own house, but claimed he had a right to a house on his own for his life story was in many ways similar to Weeda's. Junjuwa council refused to let him move into Junjuwa because he would have been soon followed by all members of his group (Ngarandjatu) who had just settled in town. By contrast, all Weeda's relatives were already housed elsewhere and she left Junjuwa to join them not so long after. She could have done so earlier on but it seems that she attempted to secure a house in Junjuwa for her sons, but failed because they caused further trouble and she had to leave Junjuwa for the council pressed her to do so.

Chapter Four

Year	January	April	July	October
1985	511	567	395	403
1986	392	341	273	298
1987	51	365	N.A.	325
1988	N.A.	343	N.A.	293

TABLE 1  
Junjuwa population figures  
1985/1988

Censuses and interviews I conducted during my fieldwork showed that at some stages (1979/1980) there were more than 650 people living permanently in Junjuwa. Table 1 shows variations of Junjuwa population over a two and a half year period<sup>15</sup>. Apart from the regular movement of populations : concentration of people during the wet season, decreasing population during the dry months, two noticeable drops were recorded. The first one occurred in July 1985 when nearly 100 Walmajarri left Junjuwa to move into Kurnangki village. The other took place during July 1986 when the Kurlku people (approximately 30 Walmajarri people) shifted from Junjuwa to Windmill Reserve. Since Junjuwa village was built, all groups of people who left the place were either Walmajarri or Wangkajunga, who had a possibility of moving into a newly created outstation or another recently built village, in their respective country. This meant that their relatives still in Junjuwa could spend some time out of town during the dry season. The other side of the coin was that sections of Junjuwa village were town bases for groups that had land, houses, enterprises and outstations outside the town (McMahon 1984:19). People from remote settlements moved into Junjuwa either during the wet season when their own communities were not easily accessible or more casually when they needed to use town based amenities like the hospital and the pub. In contrast, Bunuba who had left Junjuwa did so on an individual basis because alternatives for living elsewhere, such as I have just described for other groups, just did not exist. This appeared clearly when I recorded movements of population within different parts of the village. In the Walmajarri and

### *Junjuwa Village*

Wankgajunga sections all visitors were from other communities. When permanent residents were away from their own houses they were out of town, but in the Bunuba section people who had moved away from their own house were still within the Bunuba section and had just moved from one house to another.

The regular movements of population associated with the wet and the dry season seem to be inherited from decades of involvement with the cattle industry. On the cattle stations the rhythm of Aboriginal life changed from the traditional six to two seasons<sup>16</sup>. These two seasons were: the dry season, during which people worked hard as stockmen and received regular rations in return; in the wet season when rain and floods made work impossible the Aborigines were paid off with rations in advance and then left the station to live on 'bush tucker' for several months. It was at this time of the year that initiation ceremonies were held, people gathering from different stations to hold ceremonies. When Aboriginal people were no longer much employed in the cattle industry, they kept a similar rhythm of life although some new elements were incorporated. Firstly, there were less people employed in the cattle industry and most of the employment was casual work during the dry season. Secondly, people did not 'go bush' anymore during the wet season but regrouped in town centres in the vicinity of which they organised ceremonial activities. In the era of Aboriginal villages, remote Aboriginal settlements and outstations a few changes were added. People who lived in town-based villages visited relatives in remote places during the dry season. During the wet season, when access to isolated places was impossible and supplies difficult to get, there was a reverse move from bush to town-based villages where large ceremonial gatherings took place.

As far as employment in the cattle industry was concerned, there were still job opportunities in 1980 but they were very limited. Approximately 40 to 50 Junjuwa men were employed each year on stations during the mustering season (April/July). There were marked geographical differences between employment locations for different groups. Bunuba men were employed on stations located in the Bunuba country; people affiliated to other languages were recruited to work on stations within their country of origin or where their parents worked. People from different languages mixed only when they were employed on stations where in the past the permanent Aboriginal population was also of mixed linguistic origin (Noonkanbah: Walmajarri & Nyikina; Fossil Downs: Gooniyandi & Walmajarri). A similar difference could be observed in the location of foraging and hunting activities. Almost everybody could fetch firewood or go fishing anywhere within the town limit. But, when people went out for one or several days, they did it as close as possible to the precontact distribution of linguistic groups. For example, Bunuba went to the north and north-west of town; Walmajarri went south of the highway; and Gooniyandi went west of the Margaret river. The worst thing that could happen to somebody would be to have to spend the night in 'someone else country'. For



#### *Chapter Four*

example, I was on a visit to significant places in Bunuba country in the company of two Bunuba men and one Walmajarri. The car broke down next to a Bunuba Dreaming place. We had everything we needed to spend the night on the spot. The Walmajarri man was married to a Bunuba woman, worked for most of his life in stations on Bunuba country, and was a leader in joint ceremonial activities. Nevertheless he walked back to Fitzroy Crossing, more than 50 km away, at night despite being told by the Bunuba men that he was welcome to stay overnight.

Apart from the men employed at times in the cattle industry, there were less than ten people employed by the community on a permanent basis in 1979. The remaining residents depended on pensions and benefits from the Department of Social Security. Since the social benefits were paid fortnightly a new rhythm was introduced in the life of people; this new rhythm was the alternate of 'slack week' (no pay) and 'pension week' (pay week). During pension week, there were always more people in town and subsequently in Junjuwa. Those from remote settlements had to come into town to cash their cheques, gambling and drinking activities flourished, and large sums of cash attracted many people. Pension week was also a period when food surpluses were available, and it was easy to get a 'free' meal. In contrast, slack week saw fewer people in town, there was a shortage of cash, less drinking and gambling, and food was scarce. Those who had cash at that time, either because they received unemployment benefit<sup>17</sup> or because they were employed in town, were not so lucky for they had to face relatives and peers who pressed them for a loan. But, because food obtained from stores was scarce as a result of the shortage of cash, slack week was the time of bush activities that usually produced enough to survive on until the next pension day. The entire town of Fitzroy Crossing, with Aboriginal people making up 80% of the population, lived according to the rhythm of fortnightly paid social security benefits. Fresh produce, as well as all sort of goods and items were delivered in town every second Sunday, two days prior to pension day.

Each person who lived in Junjuwa and received a cheque from DSS had to pay \$35 to the community. That sum included the rent (\$20), the 'chuck-in' or individual participation in the Community (\$10), and what was called 'tops' (\$5). Tops were taken from each cheque to cover the levy (4%) that MWW took for providing cash to Aboriginal communities. There was no bank in Fitzroy Crossing and MWW was the only place where it was possible to obtain cash on pension day. In order to have enough money on pension days to cash all cheques for all Aboriginal communities, MWW wrote in advance a cheque to a Derby bank for the estimated amount needed. The day before pension day, the cash was delivered to MWW, then all cheques were collected and cashed either individually or through a community. Finally, MWW vested all cheques in its bank account. MWW did not receive sufficient funds from government bodies to cover its wide range of activities, therefore it charged Aboriginal communities for this service. There was always the possibility of

*Junjuwa Village*

handing out cheques straight to individuals, who could cash them in several places in town. But then, it would have been difficult for the office workers to recover the fortnightly payment due for all Junjuwa residents. The sum taken from each cheque provided Junjuwa with a regular and substantial income.



Plate 3

A Bunuba man in front of his house. This is house 20, it is a three-bedroom house occupied at the time by eight people (the house boss, in the picture, his wife, their older married son and his wife, and their four other unmarried children). The beds in the front yard, the chairs in the breeze way and the blanket across one bedroom window indicate that it was the beginning of the cool season (May/June).

## **Endnotes - Chapter Four**

1 Walmajarri people were the earlier converts in the area.

2 Prior to 1976, the Federal Associations Incorporation Act 1895/1962 was extended to Aboriginal Communities which were incorporated as associations. Afterwards, a Federal Act was passed especially designed for the incorporation of Aboriginal groups. This was the Commonwealth Aboriginal Councils and Associations Act of 1976.

3 For more details on how this agreement was reached see Chapter Nine.

4 Junjuwa Community Constitution is set out in full in Appendix One.

5 I shall not comment in detail on this but there is a confusion here between 'language group' and 'tribe'. It is also assumed that the latter existed as a cohesive, unified and distinct group which was almost certainly never the case.

6 See distinction between river people and desert people in Chapters Two and Three.

7 This was also the case prior to white settlement but presumably on a different scale.

8 When the constitution was written there were no community rules. They were gradually introduced by the Council following various incidents within Junjuwa caused by non-residents, however the councillors never had the power to enforce them. Junjuwa Community applied to have its own by-laws in mid-1987.

9 Councillors are also elected once a year during the Annual General Meeting prior to the choice of a chairman. These are all yearly positions, but the same people can be chosen several years consecutively.

10 During the wet season of 1985/86, Fitzroy Crossing was hit by the highest flood ever recorded. Junjuwa was the only place in town not under water.

11 Inequalities over access to housing between members of co-resident groups have been noted in other contemporary Aboriginal settlements; see, for example Anderson 1989:75-76.

12 See some examples of conflicts and their settlements in the next Chapter.

13 For a detailed account and a full discussion on the perception of housing by Aboriginal people from the East Kimberley, see Ross 1987.

14 They were probably similar problems before, but no record was kept.

15 Population data relating to the period prior to my arrival were obtained from the Community Health Centre.

16 Bunuba and Gooniyandi distinguished a cycle of six named seasons, all associated with a distinctive type of weather and foraging activities.

17 Unemployment benefits were paid fortnightly from six weeks after the application had been lodged. Only a few people received it on the same day, as opposed to pensions which were paid every second Tuesday. Therefore there was more cash available on pension day because all the pensioners received their cheques at once.



---

---

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

---

---

### **JUNJUWA COMMUNITY AS ONE GROUP**

---

I have shown in the previous Chapter that the residential unit, Junjuwa village, was made up of various sub-groups. These groups were, however, denied official recognition once Junjuwa became an incorporated body and were forced to behave and act as a single coherent group in several ways. The view of the community as a single entity was promoted by white advisers, mainly to attract government funding and to create a better structure for the implementation and development of community projects. Nevertheless, within Junjuwa village, the linguistic groups have preserved some of their internal organisation and leadership. They have also partially overcome residential constraints imposed upon them when moving into the village. At the same time, it seems that people were receptive to the idea of Junjuwa as one community, to the extent that it became gradually internalised by village residents. Indeed, despite their differences, Junjuwa residents had much in common, which facilitated the development of a community sentiment.

In this Chapter, I shall discuss the bases of group sentiments within Junjuwa and the circumstances in which these notions were expressed and operated. There are four aspects within which the notion of Junjuwa as a group can be explored. The first aspect corresponds to peoples' perception of their history. That is to say, how people experienced the origin of the community as a corporate body, the village, and the move from the mission reserve into Junjuwa. The second aspect has to do with the village as a group of people related one to another. Kinship ties and social networks form a complex and strong set of relationships between individuals and groups within Junjuwa. The result is a web-like structure of obligations, duties and solidarities among Junjuwa residents that reinforce the sentiment of the community as a group. The third and fourth aspects are concerned with several practical expressions of community sentiment: those contexts in which people act as a unified group that represents Junjuwa community. The third aspect consists of situations in

which members of Junjuwa supported each other and affirmed the unity and the coherence of their community. This was particularly significant when membership in Junjuwa community was marked through contrast with other communities: meetings where several Aboriginal communities were involved, certain types of joint ceremonial activities and when village residents dealt with outsiders within the community. Finally, the fourth aspect concerns those situations in which Junjuwa members acted to affirm their differences and to assert their autonomy from other Aboriginal communities and/or Aboriginal organisations.

### **5.1. "In Junjuwa we are one mob, all mixed, we all stop here for good long time ago" (Carol)**

This statement was one of many that were made by some of the older people in Junjuwa, whom I had asked for their views on the causes of problems in Junjuwa and why, despite these problems, they remained so attached to the place. I had a lengthy discussion with Carol, a Walmajarri in her late fifties, during the course of which she summarised her entire life in a few minutes:

She was born south of Noonkanbah but said she had forgotten about her people and her country. She and many other "desert people were 'adopted' by river people when they had moved into this country" (the Fitzroy valley). Later she left the station where she had worked and together with other Walmajarri people, had settled and 'stopped for good' in Junjuwa. None of these people now in Junjuwa were keen to return to the desert, for they now belonged to the Fitzroy country.

This brief life history is typical of Walmajarri and Wangkajunga who had moved into and settled in areas previously occupied by groups of speakers from different languages. It is clear that only the points that support the migrants' claims to live in the Fitzroy country were highlighted. Even those of the migrants who had lived outside the Fitzroy valley for longer periods omitted these years from their life histories, and concentrated on the period of their lives spent on the mission reserve or at Junjuwa village. If I wanted to obtain details about the gradual move of these groups towards Fitzroy Crossing, I had to ask people about their place of birth, or in case of men about their initiation, as well as emphasising that I was interested to know on which stations they had worked. Nearly all the older people pressed the point that they had forgotten about their country and their people. People used this expression, to mean that they did not know any Dreaming stories or did not have any secret objects associated with their country of origin, because those who knew such stories or had such objects died without passing them on. Therefore, without a country of their own and with no relatives, they were in a position to be 'adopted' by local groups. Afterwards, they became actively involved in the processes that brought them from the mission reserve to Junjuwa village. The last comment

*Junjuwa community as one group*

made by Carol about her belonging to the river country, as well as the fact that she had no intention of returning to a 'country' to which she did not belong any more, were the final words that completed many life histories of older people from Junjuwa who had migrated from the south of the Fitzroy valley. In some cases, people went on and emphasised that Junjuwa village was for all of the people who lived there without any restriction, for all the language groups were mixed together:

Look this one house (she points at a house in the Bunuba section of Junjuwa), well in that place Kija and Walmajarri people. Look now that side (she points at a house in the Walmajarri section of Junjuwa), that place Gooniyandi and Bunuba boys, them bin marry Walmajarri girls all the lot, now they bin livin altogether. Look again that Wangkajunga row, well here maybe they bin marry Walmajarri girls or maybe again Bunuba girls. We all the same, all mixed and Junjuwa is one place for us all, listen me my boy, it's just like I am tellin you right now, before we bin different, country, lingo, law, all different. Now, we are all here, all mixed, all one mob (Christine).

Christine, a Walmajarri woman in her mid-fifties, was explaining to me that people were not only of mixed origin within Junjuwa but had intermarried between groups and were living together in the same section of the village or even in the same house. For her, as well as for many migrants to Junjuwa, this demonstrated clearly the unity of the place. They all acknowledged that many differences existed between groups in the past, but they implied that eventually the differences disappeared as these groups experienced a common history during several decades on stations. These groups intermarried, and gradually merged to become members of the present community living at Junjuwa.

Bunuba and Gooniyandi people presented a different view of the history of the community residents. They agreed that those people who had not lived in the area prior to white settlement had developed and sometimes acquired some rights to country within the Fitzroy valley area, but gave a different account of the circumstances that led desert groups to migrate as well as the modalities of their settlement. For example, they insisted on the role of whites in the settlement of Walmajarri and Wangkajunga groups in the Fitzroy valley. It seems also from these statements that the acquisition of rights to this country was limited to those born in the country itself, that is to say birth rather than migration was the main factor upon which a person could claim to belong to the country. Later, when Junjuwa was built it became impossible for the Bunuba to send them all back to the desert for by now the groups had become mixed.

Them whitefella them bin comin with big mobs of sheeps and bullocks in Bunuba and Gooniyandi country. Us, Bunuba and Gooniyandi we helped them right through, we bin workin on stations, all them places in our country, proper Bunuba and Gooniyandi places too. Us mob we bin quiet people, but some of those Walmajarri and Wangkajunga people them really wild, proper wild bush fellas. You know, in that desert country, them wild fella they bin spearin that cattle and they bin stealin that tucker from the



### *Chapter Five*

homestead too. Them whitefella policemen and managers altogether them bin chasin them wild blackfella. Them bin catchin them too and them bin take them right up here to that mission place. Alright, these wild blackfella they sit down for good they like him that tucker from that mission mob. All of them, Wangkajunga and Walmajarri all the same. Big mobs of kids they bin havin too, some mixed one some proper desert people too, but them kids all bin born in that river country now. That river they love him too these kids, they belong to that place properly. Now them all big boys and big girls, and them don't know nothin for their parents' country. One day them government people them bin startin up that Junjuwa place, for us Bunuba, in Bunuba country. Us Bunuba we can't send back these poor fella to their [desert] country, them don't know that place, anymore. Them all came down with us in Junjuwa, we are all mixed now, not like in the early days, we are altogether, Bunuba, Gooniyandi, Walmajarri, Wangkajunga all the same now. We all sit down here for good (Cyril).

From what Cyril<sup>1</sup> said, it is clear that Bunuba and Walmajarri have distinct views of the pre-mission period in Fitzroy Crossing but nevertheless agree that everyone has a right to live and to remain in Junjuwa.

One might think from these three examples that the idea of community as one group exists only in discourse. That is to say, Aborigines from Junjuwa were confronted with a situation they did not control and they had no alternative but to accept it, and that subsequently they developed a community sentiment as part of this new situation (see Trigger 1987). Consequently, they have incorporated Junjuwa in an historical discourse in which these constraints were included. This is only partly true, such a view is restricted and ignores other elements of the group formation process, and reduces it to a plain relation of facts. In other words, group sentiments that people shared within Junjuwa village were and are much more than simple sentiments. There are already hints of what these elements were in the examples presented. Marriages between groups occurred well before settlement in the mission reserve. Development of countryman sentiment inspired from similar experiences on cattle stations took place in the area long before villages such as Junjuwa were even thought of. Births of children to desert migrant parents were recorded in the Fitzroy valley well before the 1950s.

Differences remained between some linguistic groups, or between sub-groups of the same language, but stronger links bound individuals and families, and were extended to sub-groups or even to groups during the cattle station era. These links were of two kinds: some existed even before white settlement, such as intergroup marriages or ceremonial cooperation, and were intensified; others were new, for example, working experience or birth of children away from their parents' country. Both combined and contributed to an overall structure of relationships that could be developed into a more coherent form of group. This development was no doubt facilitated by the settlement in town of Aboriginal populations from various cattle stations of the Fitzroy valley, and their permanent association on the mission reserve which led to the emergence of a

*Junjuwa community as one group*

loose form of community identity. At least this is how it was perceived by Junjuwa people who experienced it.

In Junjuwa we are mission mob properly. Some of us, Walmajarri people just like me, we bin bush people. Then that cattle station time came up and we bin cattle people; Other mob like Bunuba and Gooniyandi people, they bin proper cattle people all the way. But here now in that Junjuwa place we are mission people. All the way from that time we got altogether at the old mission reserve. You know just before we start him up that Junjuwa place (Sydney).

Sydney's summary of the last one hundred years of Aboriginal history in the Fitzroy area is particularly interesting. First, it confirms other statements already presented concerning clear distinctions, in the distant past, between desert migrants and local groups. Secondly, it shows the importance of the mission life as a period which brought people to live together. Finally, the Aboriginal involvement in the making of both Junjuwa community as an incorporated body and the village is highlighted. In my opinion, the village is where the sentiment of Junjuwa community as a group took its present form.

For all Junjuwa residents, and for many Aborigines in Fitzroy Crossing, Junjuwa community represents an achievement:

We have big mob of problems alright in Junjuwa. But, it's our place, for us all old people (here he named many Junjuwa residents), we bin fightin really hard for that place too. Government people came up all the way from Canberra to talk to us mob, and we bin tellin straight to that lot what we want: one place for us with proper houses. We made him up too that place you know; the same lot of us we bin buildin him up these houses. Then we bin workin hard: garden, rubbish, butcher shop and bread shop, all the lot again (the whole lot). It was a lot of work and proper hard work too: all them meetings, the money side, paper work and office work. Then we got that place for us all, Junjuwa people. All the time we bin in front, we bin the first one, all the way through. All them mobs, Kimberley Land Council, Marra Worra Worra, Kurnangki, all the same they all started after us, we show them the way first, us Junjuwa mob (Arthur).

It was one of the first Aboriginal communities in the West Kimberley to become incorporated, and was one of the first Aboriginal villages to be built in the Fitzroy Valley. Although white people initiated and controlled the entire process, Aborigines were involved in every step, which was new for them. In their historical perception of Junjuwa, Aborigines have concentrated on their role in the making of the place. They were consulted before any decision was taken, they attended meetings where white people listened to their views, they chose the location of the village and built the houses, and when community enterprises started they worked for themselves for the first time. Therefore, it is not surprising if for those Aborigines involved in this venture who still live in Junjuwa, the community is seen as a symbol of Aboriginal achievement.



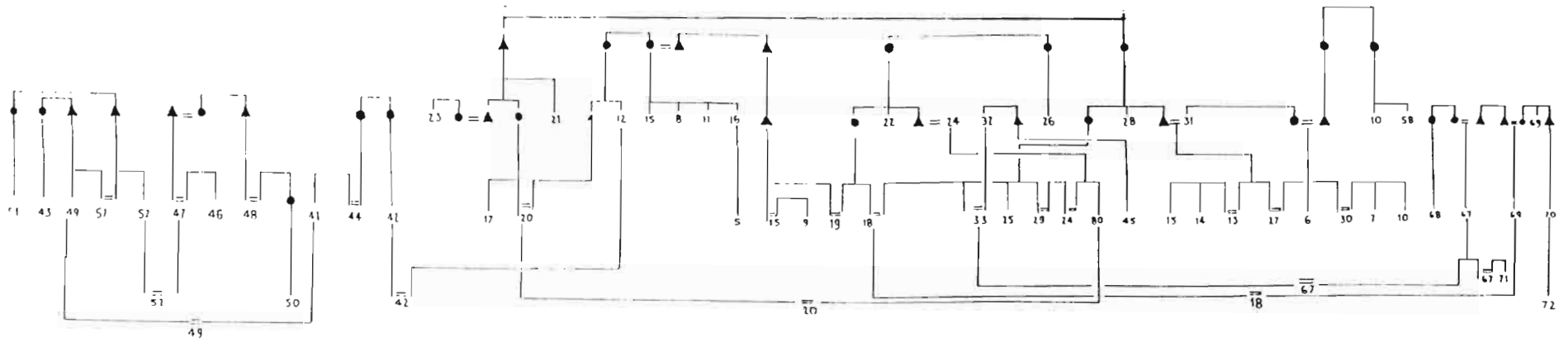
Plate 4

'Handing out cash' at the Junjuwa office on pension day. All the people inside the office in the picture lived in the Bunuba section; residents from the other sections generally received their cash outside or in the office later.



**Plate 5**

Outside the Junjuwa office on pension day. Most of the people waiting outside are Walmajarri people, indicating that Bunuba were still inside the office. The public telephone booth had been put outside the Junjuwa office for residents' use outside office hours. It was an STD phone but was mostly used for local calls to get a taxi that would wait at the village main gate, to call an ambulance or to contact the police station. STD calls were made to contact residents' relatives living in distant settlements. Since the phone was installed the Junjuwa office's telephone bills were substantially reduced.



**FIGURE 1**  
**Kin connections at the community level**  
**Junjuwa Village 1986**

Legend:  
 Numbers indicate houses  
 == indicates marriages  
 ●/▲ deceased persons

Peoples' sense of Junjuwa community as a group seems to have expanded and contracted according to circumstances during its short history. There were occasions when demands were made in the name of the community as a group. A particularly significant instance was when a delegation of the Aboriginal Land Fund Commission, led by Professor Rowley, visited Fitzroy Crossing. Its task was to evaluate the land needs of newly incorporated Aboriginal groups. It was approached by Junjuwa councillors, who told the delegation that the community wanted to run its own enterprises for a while, but in the near future Junjuwa would certainly be interested in acquiring some land in the vicinity of the township. None of this land had any special significance, but would be used to run some cattle and train young men in cattle work (JCCM 8/12/75). Despite all the different sub-groups and languages that formed Junjuwa, land claims were made in the name of Junjuwa community as one group.

## **5.2 "In Junjuwa we are one mob, all related"(Arthur)**

The notion of relatedness was frequently used by people in their discourse about Junjuwa. The idea that Junjuwa people were all related was put forward in many circumstances. This was particularly the case during council meetings in the process of decision-making. It also played a part in the settlement of disputes within the community, or when Junjuwa people needed to assert the image of Junjuwa as a coherent group.

Genealogical links within Junjuwa are multiple and complex. Historical factors in the Fitzroy Valley extended links between languages, sub-groups and individuals. For example, marriage alliances between groups developed strong bonds and established reciprocal duties between spouse-recipients and spouse-givers, and contributed to the dynamic of group formation (Trigger 1987:231). Prior to white settlement, marriage exchanges were restricted to a few neighbouring groups also involved in joint economic and ceremonial activities. As part of their involvement in the cattle industry, Aborigines were grouped in larger residential units, and groups either became involved in larger circles of matrimonial exchange or were condemned to be left out.

Within Junjuwa, there were alliances of two types. Several groups of kin co-resided at various stages on different stations, and therefore had many opportunities to intermarry; for other groups, their association was more recent as was the development of genealogical links between them. It is possible to 'link' all residents of Junjuwa as shown in Figure 1. This diagram is a sketch of the kin connections that exist within the Junjuwa population. The main point is to show that all houses within Junjuwa are interconnected through kinship. Therefore, it was my choice to show the connections that existed between houses and not individuals. Thus, only the deceased individuals appeared on

### Chapter Five

Figure 1 since they were part of the people's discourse on the relatedness of Junjuwa's residents as one group. In some cases several ties exist between two houses but I have only selected one in order to simplify the diagram. In Figure 1, two houses are connected if at least one person, who lives permanently in one of the houses, is related to one or several occupants of the other house. It also needs to be made clear that to make this diagram I took the notion of relatedness in a large sense, and that I did not differentiate between actual, close and distant relatives. The nature of a relation between individuals goes together with a specific set of duties, obligations and responsibilities that are usually extended to the households.

It is clear, for example, that the occupants of houses 11 and 16, will have different responsibilities towards each others than the occupants of houses 18 and 69. In the first case, the two households are related through consanguineous links for two of their occupants are siblings; in the second case the relationship is affinal.

Although, the entire population of Junjuwa is related through kinship links, it remains true that the nature and the degree of intensity of these links differ and vary to such an extent that sub-groups are created, and some of them do not seem to have much to do with one another (Anderson 1989:69). This fact can split the cohesive image of Junjuwa as a kin group:

Here, in Junjuwa, it's like one big mob, you know us, all us related. Me, myself, big mobs of relatives in here: this side, that side, all the way. This side, my sister, proper way one mother; that side, my in laws, they are alright, I call them uncles too. Here again, one mother, not properly my mother but skin name way. All the way, all my relatives in Junjuwa. But truly, we are different mobs too, even us Bunuba, we are three mob properly, from three sisters, long time ago, but them bin finish now. Before, we bin different, we can't call each other uncles or brothers, this time all different again. That skin name business, it was all different again. We had different 'kings'<sup>2</sup> too but now it's all the same, all the way from Yuendumu right up to Darwin. Here in Junjuwa we all know how to call each other, anybody, them boys, girls, old fella, old women, babies too, we all know how to call them all the lot (the whole lot) (Arthur).

Arthur's statement on Junjuwa as a group of people who are all related one to another can be interpreted in several ways. It conveys the impression that kin relationships at the community level are as divisive as they are cohesive. It also shows people's awareness of the dynamic of their kinship system. For example, Arthur first acknowledged that Junjuwa is a place where everybody is related. Second, he made a clear distinction between consanguineal and affinal kin. Third, he mentioned the subsection system through which each person is assigned to a specific category and makes possible the use of kin terms between individuals of each category for whom genealogical links are too distant. Fourth, Arthur said that the "skin name way" was different in the past for it was not applicable to all groups. This was a reference to the differences that existed at the level of social organisation

between various linguistic groups: the Bunuba had four section system and the Walmajarri eight subsection system (see Elkin 1932). But now the latter one is used by all linguistic groups of Fitzroy Valley, it gives a framework within which people can relate one to another far beyond the limit of Junjuwa. Within the community, the subsection system overlays the set of kin relationships and is used to reinforce the overall sentiment of unity. Frequently, people switched from one system to the other according to the context. For example, during a council meeting, Arthur needed the support of a man married to one of his parallel cousins (a classificatory sister) to get the approval of his expenses by the entire council. When he addressed that man, he called him wardu ('brother-in-law'). This underlined the man's indebtedness to Arthur from whom he had received a 'sister' for wife, and was clearly a deliberate choice because the man's subsection affiliation did not correlate with that in which a sister's husband would normally be found. Arthur used the kin term whenever he needed the support of this man. A few weeks later, Arthur had a successful fishing trip and brought back to Junjuwa three large barramundi. He called the same man over and this time addressed him in the following way: "Uncle, uncle, come over here to my place; Uncle, uncle I have something for you". This time Arthur was giving something to the man and consequently he used the kin term 'uncle' which was appropriate according to their respective subsection categories. This was a way to make public his generosity, as well as his ability to 'pay back'.

The combination of the kinship and subsection systems was noticeable during most council meetings. Firstly, seating arrangements were organised according to links between consanguineal and affinal kin. People sat next to each other if they were close from a consanguineal point of view: siblings, then cousin-brothers, then mother's brothers and father's brothers, and finally affines. There were many similarities between these types of spatial organisation and the overall spatial organisation of kin groups within the village. Secondly, in the course of the meeting political alliances were made either through the same channels or through the subsection system, whichever was the more appropriate. In the course of the meeting speakers would make their intentions clear while addressing others by using the kin term most appropriate to the situation. I found that a speaker could gain or lose the support of an individual on a single issue only by using a different term of address. As one would expect numerous attempts were made by each speaker to gain the maximum of followers for his view according to this strategy. But, if those in attendance did not seem to reach a common agreement and were really divided, the chairman or a senior community leader would ultimately intervene in the debate. He would remind the people how closely related they all were, and how important it was for the sake of their respective families that the cohesion of the community not be threatened by internal divisions between leaders.



## Chapter Five

I attended more than thirty council meetings in Junjuwa. On several occasions I witnessed very heated debates and powerful arguments between community leaders. Even when the situation seemed beyond hope of agreement, I never saw a single leader maintain his opposing view once a call for a common and unified decision had been made on the basis of the councillors' relatedness. It is at this level that the notion of Junjuwa as a kin group was really efficient: when the cohesion of the group was jeopardised. Kin relationships represented a way for the group to reaffirm its unity. Two cases where there were profound internal divisions will illustrate this.

The first case started with a domestic dispute between a husband and wife, such as were commonplace in the community. However, this one turned into a fight in which many people became involved. Glen was looking for his wife Eva. He went to Sydney's house, where Eva was likely to be, for Sydney is married to Eva's sister, Karen. But Eva was not there; instead of visiting her sister she had gone drinking in the bush with people visiting town. It was not long before Glen was told where she was. He decided to go and get her. Glen was a violent man, and Karen convinced Sydney that they should follow him to help Eva if need be. As soon as Glen spotted Eva he ran to her and started to hit her. At first, Karen and Sydney remained neutral, but soon Eva screamed for help. Karen grabbed a stick and hit Glen on the head from behind and knocked him unconscious. Sydney and Karen took Eva to their home. Glen recovered quickly, and was furious. He rushed to Sydney's place, where he was met by Sydney and his two older sons. They would not let somebody walk into their house armed with a fighting stick and a boomerang. Glen very quickly found himself on the ground with three men hitting him. At this point Merrilee got involved. Merrilee was Karen and Eva's deceased father's sister, and she was also Glen's adoptive mother since his parents had been sent to the Derby leprosarium. A healthy old woman in her late seventies, Merrilee arrived behind Sydney and hit him from behind with her walking stick. Sydney turned instantly, and in a reflex action hit her back and broke her arm. Realising who she was, and that she was badly hurt, he sent his oldest son to call for an ambulance. Sydney was upset by what he had done, but said that Merrilee should not have interfered for she was like a 'mother' (classificatory) for both him and Glen. The fight was about to expand. Merrilee is the classificatory grandmother (mother's mother's sister), of three siblings, who lived in the house next to Sydney's, and they were keen to avenge her immediately. Glen, still unconscious on the floor of Sydney's house, had two married sisters in Junjuwa. Their husbands and sons wanted to 'back him up' in the fight, and had already started their own fight with Sydney's son, who had passed next to their house on his way to the telephone booth. Two of Sydney's son's cousins (sons of Karen's brother), when they saw him in trouble, came to his rescue. At this stage the fight could have easily developed into an all-out brawl in which nearly the entire community could have been involved, for each person in Junjuwa had good reason to support or avenge a relative. This was when the chairman, accompanied by three senior leaders, arrived on the scene. They agreed that

*Junjuwa community as one group*

every person involved in the fight so far had the right to be because they were close relatives to other people involved earlier on. But, they also pointed out that everybody in Junjuwa would be soon fighting each other, for they were all related one to another (here they named many people including themselves and described their genealogical links). Then, they added that their responsibilities and duties were to preserve the unity of Junjuwa as a group, as well as to avoid fights that would create 'bad feelings' and divisions within the community. After about half an hour of discussion the responsibility for the entire fight was attributed to those who had attracted Eva to drink with them in the bush. They were from out of town, and none of them was related to any of those involved in the fight.

The second case was far more serious. In the end, one man died and another was accused of being responsible for his death; both were from Junjuwa. Harry was originally from the west coast of the Kimberley, near Broome; he came to the Fitzroy Valley as a teenager and worked in stations located in the Bunuba country. He married a Bunuba woman and was identified as a river person even though he originally came from the coastal area. Harry had been drinking at the pub on a Friday night on his way home, he had to cross Brooking creek, which was flooded. His body was found two days later one kilometre downstream from where he had drowned. He had been a heavy drinker but had always managed to walk home no matter how intoxicated. Once his body had been recovered, several Bunuba men searched the area next to where he drowned. They found evidence of a fight (this type of track was not uncommon next to the pub), and had some ideas about who had left the footprints. The dead man had come to the area on his own when he was a youth and did not have any brothers in Fitzroy. In the case of a suspicious death, brothers of a deceased person were usually in charge of the enquiry to find out who was the murderer. In this case Arthur was in charge of the enquiry for he was the closest kin of the deceased. Arthur had not participated in the search but was very well aware of who the main suspect was. For the Bunuba, there was no doubt that Bobby was responsible. Harry had had a fight with one of Bobby's sons a few days before his death which had sent him to the hospital for a week. Moreover, on the night of Harry's death, Bobby had been seen drunk and arguing with Harry. Those who saw this were Harry's step-sons; They led the Bunuba men and demanded immediate revenge. Arthur was in a very difficult position. He had to control the young men whose responsibility was to grieve and not to take revenge. His daughter was married to the brother-in-law of Bobby's parallel cousin (Mervyn). Therefore, he was in too delicate a position to accuse Bobby openly. Finally, Arthur, himself a Bunuba, was married to a Walmajarri woman and Bobby was a Walmajarri as well; therefore he had to do his best to avoid the conflict degenerating into an opposition between linguistic groups. Nevertheless, the tension grew rapidly, for several reasons. Harry's step-sons accused Arthur of slowing down the enquiry because of his relationship to Bobby. Mervyn warned Arthur that any direct accusation made against Bobby would be made against him as well; other

### *Chapter Five*

Bunuba men accused Arthur of being a traitor and called for action after the funeral: a raid against the Walmajarri section of Junjuwa where the culprit was hidden. None of this was discussed publicly and this probably reinforced the tension within the community. Then, one night outside Junjuwa's main gate, one of the deceased's step sons publicly accused Bobby of the murder. Almost instantly, a group of Walmajarri men, heavily armed with fighting sticks and boomerangs, gathered in Bobby's house. The young Bunuba man who made the accusation was scared and ran away, but other Bunuba men prepared themselves for the fight. By now the conflict opposed two groups of people within Junjuwa on the basis of their linguistic identity, although most of these people were related. The fight did not eventuate but the tension was extremely high during the entire week-end. On the following Monday, a meeting was organised. It was chaired by Kurnangki's chairman because people did not want someone from Junjuwa, who was involved in the dispute, to do it, and nearly all Junjuwa residents attended. I was not authorised to attend the meeting, but was told afterwards how things went. Basically, it was said that all Junjuwa people should be 'sorry' (observing mourning behaviour) rather than fighting each other, for they were all related to the deceased. Then it was pointed out that Junjuwa was not made up of two groups: Bunuba and Walmajarri, but was one single group of people, all related. Harry's step-son was forgiven on the basis that he was too upset to really know what he had done. The meeting went on for about two hours, and all the speakers insisted on the fact that in Junjuwa people were all related and therefore "one could not kill one of his relatives". Finally, Arthur talked. This is how he afterwards summarised what he had said

I've bin tellin them all those fella that my uncle (Bobby) did not kill him that wardu -brother-in-law - (Harry) of mine. The policeman him bin tellin me, that mob from Balgo, them fella them bin in Fitzroy, that night. They gotta drunk too, and them bin stealin one motokar. they bin drivin to Derby, run away too, but they rolled him over that motokar and them bin all dead now. I know that Balgo mob they are proper mean them fella, real wild one too, I reckon them bin killin my wardu poor fella. I bin knowin all the way nobody from Junjuwa bin done this, we are all related we don't kill each other in here. Well, it's all over now, but them young fella Bunuba they bin givin us a hard time. Them bin gettin mad a little bit, but them bin sorry proper way, you know really sad and that sadness make him no good longa his head. Now we gonna get all together all Junjuwa mob and we will give him, a proper good funeral to that wardu of mine, we gonna all cry for him (Arthur).

Once again the blame for trouble within Junjuwa had been attributed to outsiders. This was a very frequent strategy when problems started in Junjuwa because of drinking, gambling, or extra-marital affairs. As soon as they threatened the unity of the community, outsiders were blamed. Then the community through the mediation of some leaders had regained its unity around the concept of one group of people all related. When such divisions

arose they were controlled and eventually annihilated through the use of genealogical links as a basis of a compromise and as a mode of reconciliation.

### **5.3 "In Junjuwa, we all stand up for each other"(Joe)**

It is one thing for a group to affirm its unity in historical terms, or to maintain it through genealogical links between group members, but it is another thing to be recognised by other groups as one entity. If Junjuwa wanted to be seen as one unit, it had to act accordingly. In the previous section, I suggested that the strategy of blaming outsiders represented a way for Junjuwa to overcome internally divisive problems. I have noted other circumstances in which Junjuwa people acted as one unit and showed other Aboriginal communities that they were a coherent group. In this section I concentrate on concrete cases in which the community acted as a unit. I have selected three different contexts in which Junjuwa presented itself a coherent group. These contexts were very different situations that indicate Junjuwa's willingness to affirm its coherence in a range of circumstances. The first context was the Annual General Meeting of the KLC, organised in March 1986 at Bow River Station. The second was internal to Junjuwa village, for it concerned the handling of outsiders within the physical limit of the community. The last context relates to the participation of the entire community in ceremonial activities.

Since it was formed in 1978, the KLC has organised an Annual General Meeting. From 1980, Junjuwa has had a love/hate relationship with the KLC, and in 1985 finally separated itself once and for all from the organisation. In 1986, the KLC decided for the first time to hold its Annual General Meeting jointly with the Kimberley Law and Culture Centre (KLCC) that had existed for several years<sup>3</sup>. The idea of a joint Annual General meeting had the advantage for both organisations of limiting their expenses; it was also possible for the KLC to attract more people than it had done in previous years.

In 1984 and 1985, the KLCC Annual General Meeting had attracted two to three times more people than the KLC one. One of the reasons for this was that the KLCC Annual General Meeting was a cultural festival with dances and performances. Groups came from many different communities, all located within an area delimited by Yuendumu, Port Keats, and La Grange. Meetings were also held to discuss the collection of artifacts within a specific area, the opening of local sales outlets for artifacts, and the control by Aborigines of the entire artifact regional market. All these issues, combined with a dance festival, attracted far more people than the political agenda of the KLC Annual General Meeting. Moreover, many Aboriginal people from the Kimberley had withdrawn their support from the KLC when they realised that the outcome of

the Seaman enquiry would be far from what they had expected<sup>4</sup>. The KLC needed to regain people's confidence and support.

Junjuwa council was divided on the issue of whether or not to participate in the meeting and send a delegation to Bow River (500 km from Fitzroy). On the one hand, Junjuwa did not have much to do with the KLC, but on the other hand the community was well represented at the previous KLCC Annual General Meeting at Kalumburu, and those who went had enjoyed it. A decision was eventually reached: it was agreed that Junjuwa would send a community bus. The final decision regarding who should go was left to group leaders. When they prepared their swags early in the morning of the departure day I could see that about twenty men were undertaking the trip. Approximately half of them were older men, representing nearly all sub-divisions of Junjuwa. Each of these old men was accompanied by a younger one from his group. The older men, chosen to represent Junjuwa, thought it was an excellent opportunity for these 'young fellows' to learn how their leaders were acting for their community in a big meeting.

Soon us old buggers we will be finish. Them young fella they do nothin but drinkin, sit down and drinkin again. They know nothin about runnin that Junjuwa place. We have to give them a go, they have to see by themselves, to learn. That meeting business is big business, we have to show them. This time they gonna learn only, them young fella, they stay quiet, behind, and us old fella we gonna stand up for Junjuwa. Still, they gonna go and learn that's the only way (Joe).

The KLC and KLCC had notified participants that food would be provided during the four day meeting, but Junjuwa council had decided that the Junjuwa delegation would take sufficient food for the duration of the entire trip. In doing this Junjuwa council indicated that community representatives would not be dependent on Aboriginal organisations for food and thereby affirmed Junjuwa's autonomy. Moreover, each representative of Junjuwa was allocated \$30 'pocket money' per day. According to the Junjuwa chairman, this was done for two reasons. First, it would show representatives from other communities that Junjuwa was a good and strong community where people were well looked after. Second, it would allow the Junjuwa people to play cards as well as to give money to relatives they would meet at the meeting.

I had decided, well before Junjuwa council, to attend the meeting and I took the opportunity to travel in my own vehicle in convoy with the Junjuwa bus. On the way to Bow River we stopped twice. Each time, young people fetched firewood, lit the fire and cooked the meal. People sat together according to languages and only the older men, who had previously attended similar meetings, talked. They told others, especially the young men, about their experiences. They warned everybody against women from other places, who could "use magical powers to seduce men" and against some groups which were "still cannibals not so long ago". We reached Bow River station at night.

*Junjuwa community as one group*

The camping ground was located next to the station homestead, but the older men refused to set up their camp at night next to other groups. We camped in the bush a few kilometres away from the homestead so that the following morning a choice of camping spot could be made in the light of where different groups were camped. While we were setting the camp up, we could hear people singing, as the KLCC festival had already started. After a few minutes one old man said :

It's the Red Hill mob from Halls Creek, they're singing a corroboree  
I know, it's alright for us to go and look him. Careful you young  
fella, you stay quiet and with us all the way (Herbert).

The next day they moved the camp to the appropriate location on a spot selected by the older men. During the two and a half days they stayed at Bow river, Junjuwa people remained constantly together. They sat together during all the various sessions of the KLC and KLCC meetings, they took their meals together in their camp and they slept next to each other under the tarpaulin set up between the Junjuwa bus and my vehicle. At each meal the older men sent the younger ones to get the food provided by the organisers of the meeting: damper, tea and chunks of beef. The extra supply given by the Junjuwa council enabled them to vary the meals, but were equally popular amongst other people. Rapidly, Junjuwa bus became a place where one could go whenever one was short of anything such as powdered milk, tins of fish, soap, sugar. Junjuwa people were very generous with their own supplies. I estimated that about three times more was given away than we actually consumed; the older men never failed to mention that every time they represented Junjuwa in a meeting they were provided with extra supplies and pocket money.

During sessions of the meetings, each time one Junjuwa representative spoke, he spoke in the name of Junjuwa community. Whatever the statement or question was, it started in the following way : "We in Junjuwa we don't agree for ...", or "Us Junjuwa people we agree...", or again "In Junjuwa it's different...". Although I noted that certain issues raised by some Junjuwa people were personal, they were nevertheless presented as 'community business'. For example, George wanted to sensitise representatives from the Aboriginal Development Commission (ADC) to his financial problems. George had started a mustering team a few years ago and had been promised financial assistance from the ADC, but so far he had not received any money and did not understand why. He employed several of Junjuwa's young men in his mustering team, but it was a private enterprise. When he spoke, he presented his enterprise as a community project. His problems with ADC and financial difficulties became Junjuwa's. Several decisions were taken during these meetings, and in order to reach a decision, votes were organised. For each vote, all the Junjuwa people voted for the same proposition. The young men waited until the older ones had decided which proposition they would support, and put their arms up whenever the older men did.

### *Chapter Five*

The best example of Junjuwa as a coherent group was given on the third morning of the four day meeting. The previous night, Junjuwa chairman (Andrew) and his father (Arthur), the community spokesman, had arrived at Bow River. They camped in the bush for they did not know where Junjuwa people had set up their camp, and joined Junjuwa people in the morning. Arthur and Andrew talked with Junjuwa people about what had been said and decided during the first two days. On that morning, a very important discussion of land rights issues in the Kimberley was scheduled. The KLC chairman (Adrian), opened the meeting and presented the agenda. He insisted on the importance of the KLC as an Aboriginal organisation representative of an entire region. Adrian added that in order to be successful in its policy, the KLC should have the support of all Aboriginal communities in the Kimberley. At this stage Arthur stood up and talked about Junjuwa's situation regarding the land rights issue. His argument was clear and simple: Junjuwa people were about to have the Mission Reserve handed back to them. This would be done without any outside interference or assistance; the entire matter would be dealt with between Junjuwa and the UAM. As far as Arthur was concerned, the land rights issue in the KLC terms was not an issue at all for the Junjuwa community; therefore Junjuwa would not support the proposed KLC policy on land rights. Adrian was very upset. He said that for many years Junjuwa had failed to give any support whatsoever to the KLC, and added that the Junjuwa community attitude was not a good example for the others to follow. His answer offended Arthur who then said:

Listen Uncle, I bin comin to listen and you bin lookin for argument. This country, I don't know him, you don't know him too. You fella, me fella we belong to other country, we can't argue in this country, him belong to other fella not me'n'you. I bin comin with my mob to listen not to argue, those Junjuwa people, old fella, young fella, they bin comin to listen too not to argue. Well, I'm proper sorry but I can't stay now, you have bin givin us bad feelings and we can't argue on that place, we have to go, I am sorry Uncle, but we have to go (Arthur).

Arthur left the meeting followed by all the Junjuwa people. They went back to their camp, and in a few minutes had packed everything up and were ready to leave. Adrian came to apologise, but Arthur and the other older men refused to talk to him. Immediately, the Junjuwa bus headed back to Fitzroy Crossing followed by Arthur's vehicle. They stopped only once on their return trip. After a light meal Arthur gave his version of the events:

I know that fella, he is a proper cunning bugger. But you see, I stood up and I told him. I stood up not for myself but for Junjuwa people. I stood up for you fella: Walmajarri, Wangkajunga, Bunuba, all you mob. Then you back me up and stood up for me fella, all you lot again, that's the proper way. This is us way we Junjuwa mob, we all back up each other (Arthur).

Once back in Junjuwa, the incident was commented on at length, then discussed. It was on the agenda of the following council meeting. Every one in

*Junjuwa community as one group*

Junjuwa agreed that what Junjuwa representatives did was right. When Junjuwa community had been criticised, these men had 'stuck together' and had 'stood up for each other', this was what the entire community expected from them: they gave a coherent image of Junjuwa to others and acted accordingly. Nobody commented on the actual decision of whether or not the Junjuwa community should have supported the KLC on the land rights issues, but everybody agreed that what the Junjuwa representation did was the right thing to do.

The way in which Junjuwa councillors got together in support of the community chairman to handle a problem posed by a group of outsiders within Junjuwa village provides another concrete example of when and how the community acted as one coherent group. As already noted, 'outsiders' were regularly accused of causing trouble within Junjuwa. First of all, it is necessary to describe briefly what Junjuwa people mean by 'outsiders', and to specify in which cases such people represented a danger to the community. The heterogeneous nature of Fitzroy Crossing Aboriginal population makes it clear that an Aboriginal person from the town was not likely to be considered as an 'outsider' in Junjuwa village, because nearly all Junjuwa residents had relatives living elsewhere in town who visited them regularly. I shall show that this was not the case all the time. In contrast, one might expect that an individual or group, from a distant Aboriginal community, with no close relatives in Junjuwa would be perceived as an 'outsider'. Again, this was not as systematic as one might think. For example, a local Aboriginal with close relatives in Junjuwa would be described as an 'outsider' if he attempted to bring alcohol into Junjuwa village, or started an argument between two families, or if he challenged a leader's authority. In these cases a person who became a threat to Junjuwa, and did not live permanently in the community, was declared an 'outsider'. Aboriginal visitors, regardless of their usual place of residence, could be tolerated for a few days in Junjuwa providing they notified the council of their visit and received approval for their stay. In such a case outsiders would be treated as visitors, as long as they abided by community rules. Therefore, being an 'outsider' was due more to specific actions than to the fact that one was not a resident. It was when people threatened Junjuwa's integrity that they put themselves 'outside' the community as a group for they were a source of tensions within Junjuwa. I have examples of permanent Junjuwa residents who caused trouble but, having created divisions within the community, were classified as 'outsiders'. Still, there were more cases in which 'outsiders' were people from a distant place who visited Junjuwa.

In order to limit trouble within Junjuwa village, there were two councillors posted at the main gate at night time. They checked that no one brought alcohol into the village, and prevented well known trouble-makers, drunks, and strangers from having access to the place. This control was far from efficient for several reasons. It was organised only for a few nights following each pension day. Some Junjuwa residents refused to be checked by councillors from



### *Chapter Five*

another group on the basis that these men 'had no right' over them. Relatives of councillors on duty at the main gate were not controlled at all. Finally, the fence around Junjuwa was damaged in many places and one side of the village was not fenced at all, so it was easy to get into Junjuwa without going through the main gate.

A group of young men from Yuendumu had been in Fitzroy Crossing for a few days. They were all members of a 'Rock and Roll' band on its way to a music festival in Katherine. They had come up to the Kimberley through the Tanami road and had run out of petrol on the Great Northern Highway near Halls Creek. One of them knew he had a distant relative in Fitzroy Crossing, and they managed to reach the township. In Fitzroy, they expected to find some help that would enable them to continue their trip to Katherine. The distant relative was a female Kokatja, whose two 'cousins' lived in Yuendumu. She was married to a Wangkajunga and lived in Junjuwa. Her husband, together with other Wangkajunga leaders, were away attending a ceremony. The Yuendumu men put a lot of pressure on the woman, and she gave them food and money. Eventually, the band managed to move into her house and set up its camp in her backyard. The men had promised her not to cause any trouble and kept their promise the first night. The following night, they got drunk, abused the councillors at the gate, and brought alcohol into the community. Once in the Wangkajunga house they started a fight with a group of young Wangkajunga men who attempted to stop them from smashing a car's windows.

At this stage none of community leaders wanted to interfere, although they realised that the visitors were breaching community order. The main reason was that, so far, trouble was limited to the 'Wangkajunga row'; therefore it was the Wangkajunga leaders' responsibility to settle the problem. Unfortunately, they were all away. The Junjuwa chairman went to the police station. According to him, his intervention in Junjuwa could have been misinterpreted by the Wangkajunga leaders and this might have created divisions within the community. He was not very successful at the police station: when he reported the problem, he was told that Junjuwa was a 'private property', and that as long as these men were not causing public disorder there was nothing that the police could do without interfering with internal community affairs.

On the third evening of their stay in Junjuwa the Yuendumu band organised a rehearsal session. This event attracted a lot of people, mostly single women, in the Wangkajunga part of Junjuwa. The rehearsal turned into an improvised party that went on for hours. There was alcohol available, many single women got drunk, and some of them failed to return home that night. It was remarkable that the 'party' did not degenerate into a fight between the band members and the women's boyfriends, for women were regularly at the origin of fights between groups of men. The most likely reason was that Aboriginal people in Fitzroy Crossing feared those from the Northern Territory. For example, the young men from Yuendumu were said to be all

*Junjuwa community as one group*

expert in martial arts and the older ones in sorcery. So, even if many of Junjuwa's young men were keen to put their martial arts knowledge to the test, there were as many older men to discourage them from fighting because they feared some magical retaliation from the Yuendumu old people. Andrew, the chairman, contacted the town electrician who cut the power off from the house. After a while things returned to normal.

Very early the next morning, a group of Junjuwa leaders got together to discuss the problem. Luckily, two Wangkajunga leaders had returned to Junjuwa a few hours earlier. Sydney, a Walmajarri, explained to them what happened and encouraged all the leaders to act together.

Them fella from Yuendumu, them proper no good, big trouble too. That Yuendumu mob and them music them bin attractin big mob of single girls. Too much single girls them bin attractin. Them fella might take them away them girls, for good too. Us poor fella we gonna lose them girls for good. This is wrong, us uncles and fathers for them girls we have to be strong: them girls them gotta get married right here, proper way too. All of us, Wangkajunga, Bunuba, Walmajarri, we bin havin daughters, all of us, we gonna look after them girls, right? Well we gotta help each other, altogether like one man, altogether behind that Jangala (the chairman). All of us like one man we gonna get rid of them Yuendumu boys, we gonna chase them for good. alright we gonna chase them, but quiet way we gonna do it, we are quiet people in here. We can't giv'im them Yuendumu old fella bad feelings, we gonna do it proper way, let's go now, all of us like one man we gonna talk quiet way to them boys (Sydney).

Subsequently, a meeting was organised with the Yuendumu men and leaders from all the groups in Junjuwa. Andrew contacted Yuendumu community by radio telephone and reported that the Yuendumu people were ashamed of the band's behaviour. An agreement was reached between the two communities: Junjuwa would give enough money to the band to allow it to reach Katherine, and in return Yuendumu would take some money from the band members' unemployment cheques and forward it to Junjuwa.

The band left Fitzroy Crossing soon after. Once the 'outsiders' were on their way everyone in Junjuwa commented on how the leaders' behaviour had shown the strength of Junjuwa and the solidarity of its members. In this example, leaders did not get together spontaneously as they had done at the Bow River meeting. In fact, as long as trouble is limited to one part of Junjuwa, it is not a community problem, and the Yuendumu men were only 'trouble makers'. It was only when the problem was phrased as one in which unmarried women from the community could have been taken away and married elsewhere that the entire community reacted. Then the 'trouble makers' became 'outsiders'. There was then a threat to the unity of Junjuwa: if these women had really been taken away and married elsewhere, prearranged marriages contracted within Junjuwa would have been broken, and as a result internal divisions within the community would have emerged. Another element

## *Chapter Five*

that could have stimulated cohesive action on the part of Junjuwa leaders was the fear of 'magical retaliation'. Such powers are easily directed towards one individual, but may be difficult to direct against an entire community. Therefore, when Junjuwa leaders acted they used the broadest basis possible (the community), because of the potential danger of acting on an individual basis in that situation.

The last context in which Junjuwa community was involved as a coherent group was ceremonial. Prior to white settlement, the West Kimberley area was a crossroads of trade routes and ceremonial activities (Ackerman 1979a). As a result of white settlement, a few townships, because of their geographical location and the diversity of their Aboriginal population, have become centres where these activities developed and intensified (Ackerman 1979b). At Junjuwa it was possible to distinguish three main types of ceremonial activities. There were ceremonies held elsewhere in which individuals or sub-groups from Junjuwa took part. There were also rituals controlled and organised by people from Junjuwa in which only those concerned were involved. Finally, there were initiation ceremonies during which several youths from Junjuwa were circumcised<sup>5</sup>. The participation of Junjuwa community as a whole occurred in ceremonial activities of the latter type.

Many ceremonial activities were held at any time throughout the year, the only constraint being that people had to be 'ready'. By being 'ready' for a ritual people meant that everything was organised: all participants were present, there was sufficient food and cash available for all those involved, and no one in town was opposed to the ceremony. By contrast, initiation ceremonies were held mainly during the wet season and people had to be ready when ritual parties passed through Fitzroy Crossing. During the years prior to my first field trip in the Kimberley, there was a revival of ceremonial activities in the area and many ritual parties visited Fitzroy Crossing (Ackerman 1979b:236-237). These ritual parties came from different places and each of them travelled according to a pre-established itinerary. Over the years privileged links have developed between some ritual parties and specific communities. That is to say, when boys reached an age that community leaders agree to be appropriate for initiation, one of the ritual parties was contacted and told that a community had boys ready for circumcision. Then the community would be visited during the next ritual party trip to the area.

In the case of Junjuwa, initiations held in Fitzroy for the village's youths were performed either by a ritual party from Port Keats, or by one from La Grange. Ritual parties' members were not necessarily all from these places, but included men and women from places visited on the way and local people. For example, the Port Keats ritual party, or 'Wangka mob', was mainly made up of Port Keats people, who had been joined by Turkey Creek and Halls Creek people. It included, as well, a few individuals from Fitzroy Crossing. 'Wangka' is a generic term for a wide range of ceremonial activities but was used in that particular case to differentiate the Port Keats ritual party from the La Grange

one. The latter was called 'Walungari mob' and performed initiation ceremonies in which deeds of ancestral beings who lived in the lower part of the Fitzroy River formed the mythical basis for the rites. Walungari is also a generic term applied to myths and rites related to ancestral beings from the Fitzroy River. Thus, the two generic terms were employed to distinguish the initiation ceremonies performed by ritual parties coming from the north and the north-east, from those under the control of groups who came from the west and the south. The difference was important because, according to their linguistic identity, Junjuwa boys were initiated either by the Wangka mob or in the Walungari ceremonies. Bunuba, Gooniyandi and Kija youths went through a Wangka ceremony; Walmajarri and Wangkajunga novices were circumcised during a Walungari ritual<sup>6</sup>. The content of each type of ceremony was completely different but as they were initiation rituals the overall structure of the two was similar. For example, in a pre-ceremonial stage, boys were 'lost' to Junjuwa in both Wangka and Walungari rituals but it was done in a different way. In the case of Wangka, teenagers were sent away in the bush and were said to have lost their way. Then the ritual party would rescue them and bring them back to Junjuwa. The boys' parents were told that their children would be given back to them not as boys but as men. The ritual party in charge of the Walungari ritual raided the village at dawn and abducted the boys. Then the boys' brothers would tell their fathers and mothers that the abductors were prepared to return the boys to their families but they would 'cut' them first, i.e. they would circumcise them and 'make them men'.

I attended both types of initiation ceremony, during each of which four boys from Junjuwa were circumcised<sup>7</sup>. Each ritual was held on a different ceremonial ground and in each case the boys' extended families played a major role in the ritual. But, in both rituals, the entire population of Junjuwa was present when the boys, painted with ceremonial designs and wearing ceremonial ornaments, were brought back to their parents by the ritual party. All the people would remain until the ritual party members finished eating the food prepared by the boys' sisters and given by the parents in 'exchange' for their sons. After a while, people not directly related to the boys would leave the ceremonial ground.

Once the boys were circumcised they remained in the bush for a period of seclusion. Meanwhile, the ritual party went on to its next stop. After three or four weeks, it returned to Fitzroy Crossing and the initiates were handed back to their parents and to the community. Once again food had been cooked by the initiates' sisters for the ritual party. In both types of ceremony, the entire population of Junjuwa attended this final stage. Each time, once the ceremony was over, the chairman thanked the ritual party. He thanked them in his name, on the behalf of the parents, but mainly on the behalf of Junjuwa, and he insisted on how everybody in Junjuwa was grateful to those who had brought back the 'lost boys'. Moreover, Wangka men and Walungari men had turned these boys into men and this was for the benefit of the entire community.



**Plate 6**

Part of the Walungari initiation ceremony. This initiation ceremony was held in Kurnangki for four boys from Junjuwa in January 1987. This particular dance occurred when the boys were 'returned' to their parents during the first stage of the ceremony prior to the circumcision. The boys had been abducted from their parents' houses the previous morning at sunrise by their older brothers (full and classificatory). They had spent all night in the initiators' camp located near the circumcision ground. The initiators were mostly Nyikina and Walmajarri men from Noonkanbah, Looma, La Grange, and Bayulu. The boys had been painted with ceremonial designs before they were shown to their parents and relatives who sat in the middle of Kurnangki village. All Junjuwa residents were present to witness that the boys were genuinely returned to their families. The men dancing in large circles around the novices' relatives were full and classificatory brothers-in-law to the boys. In an inner circle, each boy was accompanied by three sisters (full and classificatory) who held his hands and covered his head with bunches of green leaves. The novices joined their parents briefly while the brothers-in-law and the initiators ate the food prepared for them by the novices' sisters. Then the people moved onto the ceremonial ground.



**Plate 7**

Walungari initiates on the ceremonial ground behind Kurnangki village. The four boys are resting prior to the start of pre-circumcision stage of the Walungari which includes dancing and singing all through the night. The three men who can be seen on the picture were looking after the novices; they were classificatory brothers-in-law. The four boys were of mixed linguistic origin but each had one Walmajarri parent. They were nevertheless identified as Bunuba (the boy second from the left) and Gooniyandi (the other three) after the two languages of their non-Walmajarri parents. The paintings on their chest are associated with the two mythical snakes who, during the Dreamtime, swam up the Fitzroy river. On their way upstream the snakes circumcised all creatures they encountered, which subsequently followed them. When the snakes reached Geikie Gorge, they attempted to circumcise the freshwater crocodile but it resisted; it flicked its tail and threw them in the water. The three fought and the snakes died and sank in the deep waters of Geikie Gorge. Because the boys belonged to different sub-sections (one Jangala, second from the left, and three Japaljarri), they had different motifs on their chest associated with various creatures the snakes initiated. Each of the boys was circumcised by a different man chosen by the boy's older brothers and classificatory mother's father. This man as well as the two others who held the boys during the operation were classificatory fathers-in-law to the boys.

The only other type of ceremonial activity in which the entire community participated was mortuary ceremonies. In Fitzroy Crossing, for several decades, Christian burials have taken over traditional methods of disposal of the dead, but some specific mourning rites were maintained. For each death in Junjuwa, only some of the deceased relatives would be under mourning restrictions. But all of the Junjuwa population went to funeral services held in the village church as well as to burial ceremonies at Fitzroy Crossing cemetery.

As I have stated there were other ceremonial activities in which individuals or sub-groups from Junjuwa took part. Their involvement remained at the individual or sub-group level, and people did not act as a representative of Junjuwa or in the name of the community. According to people from other Aboriginal communities from the area, as well as to many Junjuwa residents, "Junjuwa was not a Law place". That is, the community as a group was not involved in any particular type of ceremonial activity that would contradict this statement. The community took part in burial ceremonies because of their Christian aspects. The participation of Junjuwa in initiation ceremonies was a public statement of what type of ceremony a 'non-Law' community was prepared to be involved in. Also, in funeral and initiation rituals, a group, in that case Junjuwa community, loses (death) or gains (initiation) members, and this was represented as something with which the community as a whole was concerned.

## **5.4 Conclusion**

I have shown in this chapter that Junjuwa exists as a group in several respects. The first is the level of discourse in which Junjuwa people expressed their view of the historical circumstances that brought them together in Junjuwa village. Statements about the unity of Junjuwa as a 'mob' were directed to both Junjuwa residents and people outside. For both audiences these statements provided a basis upon which the coherence of Junjuwa as a group could be established. The second aspect is as a group of people related to each other. This aspect is mostly internal and reinforces community cohesion when needed. When division started to appear between sub-groups of Junjuwa residents, as manifested in conflicts, they were often settled through the tightening of kinship and other social links. The third aspect is that of situations in which Junjuwa community acted as a group. These acts, made on a community basis, were generally directed towards outsiders. They constituted concrete proof to residents and to other Aboriginal communities that Junjuwa was a unified group and acted as such. It seems that Junjuwa people acted as a group whenever it offered the possibility of displaying Junjuwa's cohesion. By contrast, people were reluctant to be involved in collective acts that exposed

*Junjuwa community as one group*

divisions within the community. It was important for Junjuwa people to affirm, reinforce and demonstrate as frequently as they did that Junjuwa was one group because everybody, inside and outside Junjuwa, was aware of the internal divisions and the varied aspects of organisation within Junjuwa. For their own well-being, as members of a particular group, Junjuwa people had to affirm and demonstrate the unity of their community, which was constantly challenged both internally and externally.



## **Endnotes - Chapter Five**

1 Cyril, a Bunuba, moved into Junjuwa Village in 1979. He was Community chairman between 1980 and 1982.

2 It was under this generic term (kings) that Aboriginal people of the area classified important religious and ceremonial leaders from the past.

3 The KLCC is based in Broome and deals with a variety of Aboriginal cultural activities, from collecting and retailing of artifacts to financial support of some ceremonial activities.

4 The Seaman enquiry report was published in 1984, but none of the recommendations about need for land made by Aborigines through the KLC submission was taken into account by the government. Many individuals, Aboriginal communities and Aboriginal organisations had put a lot of effort into this enquiry for almost no result. This lack of results was a reason for some people in the Kimberley blaming the KLC, because in their view the Aboriginal organisation failed to support their claims.

5 There were other types of initiation ceremony, for example those during which initiates were subincised, but they were restricted to a small number of participants and therefore are not relevant to this Chapter.

6 The same distinction between linguistic identity and types of initiation ceremony existed in the past, although the old men who confirmed that information added that before the ritual parties came from different places.

7 I attended a Wangka initiation ceremony in December 1980 and a Walungari ceremony was held at Fitzroy Crossing in January 1987.

---

---

# CHAPTER SIX

---

---

## VARIOUS KINDS OF GROUPINGS WITHIN JUNJUWA

---

In Chapter Five I discussed four ways in which the coherence of Junjuwa as a group was expressed, affirmed and operated. I also briefly referred to the fact that they were factors which at times threatened community cohesiveness. The purpose of this Chapter is to show that the same elements upon which people draw to create and maintain community coherence can also produce stresses that fracture the community into smaller groups.

### **6.1 In Junjuwa, there are too many people from different mobs, they don't listen (James).**

Differences between the sub-groups in Junjuwa were always present in everyday discussion but became salient when problems arose either between two particular sub-groups or within the community at a more general level. Apart from the general statement that "too many people were mixed", with a clear implication that a place like Junjuwa was bound to have problems, people always blamed those "from another mob" for Junjuwa's problems. The idea of 'another mob' could apply to any form of grouping of which the speaker was not a member and thus was highly context dependent, but in general the notion applied to three basic kinds of groupings:

- large groupings defined in terms of cultural differences as they were perceived by Junjuwa residents; for example, desert people as opposed to river people

### *Chapter Six*

- groupings of variable size defined in terms of linguistic differences, such as Bunuba, Walmajarri, Jaru, Kija

- small groupings defined in terms of historical differences; for example, all the people born on the same station as opposed to the people who migrated together or who have specific links to the same country of origin

Generally speaking, problems in Junjuwa were presented, in public discourse, as resulting from the historical processes that had gradually brought so many different groups to live permanently together in the same village. People justified the differences that existed for each various kinds of groupings by referring to their own past and added that if there were so many problems in Junjuwa today it was only because all these people had to live together and such things would have never happened in the past.

## **6.2 Cultural divisions within Junjuwa**

The broadest form of groupings that people distinguished within Junjuwa was based on cultural differences: river people as opposed to desert people. Under the category river people were grouped Bunuba, Gooniyandi, Kija, Nyikina and Jaru people; Walmajarri and Wangkajunga were grouped together under the label desert people. This division is entirely arbitrary as far as clearly marked cultural differences are concerned. Although it is a fact that both Walmajarri and Wangkajunga people lived originally in the desert, and there were and still are cultural differences between them and the river people, there are also internal differences between these two desert groups. Cultural differences were not always obvious between linguistic units from one category vis a vis another. For example, the Jaru people were culturally closer to the desert people (see Chapter 2), but those who lived in Junjuwa were a small minority and had elected to be classified as river people, probably because they were all born on cattle stations within the Fitzroy Valley. This is where the main difference between desert and river people lay: the place of birth. The desert people in Junjuwa were those who were born in the 'bush', and subsequently were brought on to cattle stations throughout the Kimberley, together with their children and grandchilds. By contrast, all the river people were born and reared on cattle stations. Personal histories of Junjuwa residents show that all the Walmajarri and Wangkajunga people over 45 years of age were born in the 'bush'<sup>1</sup> and people affiliated to other languages, even when they were older, were all born on stations. For example, the older Bunuba people were born in the following places : Old Leopold Station (two men, born in 1924 and 1926), Old Oscar Station (one person born in 1919), Fairfield Station (a man born in 1911). A Kija man was born at Louisa Downs in 1911, a few Gooniyandi people in the early 1920s at Fossil Downs, and several Jaru in the late 1920s at Flora Valley (DNW files on cattle stations in the Fitzroy Valley). All these people

### *Groupings within Junjuwa*

confirmed, during interviews, that their parents had already been working on these cattle stations for some time. Another element was added to the place of birth to distinguish between river and desert people: it is a fact that the river people were 'mixed'. That is to say, from as far as river people could remember, they were of mixed linguistic origin<sup>2</sup>, they intermarried and held joint ceremonial activities, and many of them resided on the same stations.

The broader distinction has been partially preserved in the residential organisation within the village:

Well, myself I'm a proper Jaru, river people alright, like them Bunuba, Kija and Gooniyandi fella, we're all mixed, all the way right through from the beginning. Them, desert mob, they're different again, those Walmajarri and Wangkajunga, they're from the other side, desert way. Just like in Junjuwa them fella camp on the other side, them different all the way, them don't mix right through, only little bit, they're different people altogether from us river mob (Ronald).

What Ronald was referring to was the two sections within Junjuwa village: one for the river people, in which people associated with that category lived, and the other one for the desert people. This second section of the village was subdivided into two distinct parts: one for the Walmajarri and the other for the Wangkajunga. Even though this tripartite division was planned since the start of Junjuwa, people kept using the broader division in two sides when they wished to refer to river and desert people.

Exogamous marriages between river and desert people were insignificant compared to marriages within each one of these broader categories: out of 84 marriages recorded in Junjuwa in 1986, 58 were endogamous to these groupings (29 each), and 19 were exogamous; the remaining marriages were not taken into account because they concerned people who did not belong to these two categories<sup>3</sup>. When a person married into the other 'side', they had to make a choice, often expressed in residential location, as to whether they remained on their side of origin or passed into the other one. The commitment of an individual who passed into the other side was not limited to residence, but included social and economic as well as ritual activities to be carried out with the people of the category that had been married into. Overall, there were more individuals from the desert group that had passed into the river side than the other way around. Only three men (one Bunuba, one Gooniyandi and one Walmajarri), amongst those who had married into the other side had preserved a dual identity (desert and river people), which gave them an influential position within Junjuwa. All three were ritual leaders on the side they had belonged to prior to their marriage and none of them had lost this important position, even though they had married into the other side. They lived in three houses all located as near to both sides as possible, and many occasions acted as brokers between desert and river people (see Map 6). The fact that two were from the larger linguistic units in Junjuwa had probably contributed to their prominent position. The third one, the Gooniyandi man, was from a family

### *Chapter Six*

closely linked to the Bunuba for several generations and this factor was important in his acquiring a privileged position between the two sides. By contrast, members of language units with few members in Junjuwa who had married into the other side and had 'passed' into it as well did not retain a dual membership but were merged with the side into which they had married. This factor could have been important in the decision of the Jaru to mix with the river people. As a smaller linguistic unit, its members could only acquire some recognition if they were amalgamated into a larger and more dominant one, which in the case of Junjuwa was the Bunuba. Thus Jaru, even though they are culturally and geographically closer to the desert, are amalgamated with river people because of their co-residence with the Bunuba in the appropriate section of the village. This particular association gave Jaru people living in Junjuwa some say at the community level, whereas on their own they would not have held a significant position at all.

Marked differences existed between desert and river people in ritual activities. The river people, for various reasons, had abandoned many of their traditional ritual activities; by contrast, the last desert migrants who settled in the Fitzroy Valley in the mid-1950s had preserved a strong and active ritual life. This factor was in some ways stimulating and had contributed to an increase and a revival of ritual activities in the Fitzroy Valley in the mid and late 1970s (Akerman 1979a). But it was also perceived as a threat by many river people, who saw the desert people's 'Law' as a direct challenge to their rights over the country around Fitzroy Crossing, because these rights could not be established as effectively as in the past since many ceremonies were no longer performed. At least this is how it was interpreted by some people who consequently took the necessary steps to prevent such a situation eventuating.

Behind the UAM compound in Fitzroy Crossing there are two hills, called Burawa in Bunuba<sup>4</sup>. In these hills were hidden some sacred boards and 'secret stones' associated with the cherrabun, the barramundi and the freshwater crocodile dreaming places located alongside the Fitzroy river between Geikie Gorge and Fitzroy Crossing old crossing. Other boards had as well been stored in a nearby spot. The former sacred objects were the property of Bunuba people, some of the latter had been associated with deceased Bunuba men but most of them belonged to Kija, Nyikina and Gooniyandi men who had been long settled in the Fitzroy Crossing area. When Walmajarri people settled permanently on the mission reserve and subsequently were joined by Wangkajunga, the river people in charge of these objects decided to move them to safer places. The Bunuba stones and boards were taken to a storehouse in the Oscar Range (30 to 60km north west of Fitzroy), and the others objects were taken to various appropriate places, that is to say to locations directly associated with members of the languages they belonged to. According to the river people who took the decision to move them, these objects would have been stolen by the desert people and used in their ceremonies to make them boss of the river country, if they had not done so. I was given several similar

examples of sacred objects being moved to a different location or simply hidden, to stop the desert people appropriating the country:

My brother and mefella we got them sticks for our country. They're somewhere in a proper place in that Leopold Range, we don't look them anymore and we can't take him out too, you know. Well, I tell you what, them desert people, they're mean alright, they might steal them sticks for us fella and give him away to other desert mob. Then you proper finish, you bin losin your country for good, no sticks, no country. Well, we don't use them now, but we still got them sticks for us fella (Ralphie).

A further sign of the river people's desire to maintain a ritual autonomy from the desert people was clear in initiation ceremonies. Circumcision ceremonies for river people were different from those for desert people; they were performed on distinct ceremonial grounds and involved different participants. For example, when a young Bunuba boy and a young Gooniyandi boy had reached the required age for circumcision, the ritual took place at the river people's ceremonial ground next to the old crossing and Bunuba, Gooniyandi, Nyikina, Kija as well as Jaru were involved in the ceremony. By contrast, Walmajarri circumcision ceremonies were held behind Kurnangki village, and Walmajarri and Wangkajunga people participated in the ritual<sup>5</sup>. Although, these initiation ceremonies were held by different groups and in distinct places, desert people required the approval of the Bunuba to hold theirs, because the Bunuba were the group which 'owns the country' and therefore had the final say as to whether a ritual could be held in the area. This represented an extra chance for river people, and particularly for the Bunuba, to emphasize their links to the country and to resist ritual predominance from desert people. It was pointed out to me on one occasion in which the river people's ceremonial ground was threatened that the Bunuba people had reacted strongly and were extremely distressed when the prospect of that particular site being destroyed soon was made known to them.

In mid-1986 the Fitzroy Crossing Progress Association (FCPA) had planned, without consulting any local Aboriginal groups or organisations, to build a 'go-kart-track' next to the old crossing, right on the river people's ceremonial ground. When the project was brought to their knowledge, the Junjuwa people insisted that I map and record the site in order to show its significance to the FCPA people. Three Bunuba men accompanied me to the old crossing and told me about their forefathers, Bunuba, Gooniyandi and some Kija who were circumcised on this site. They described the various parts of the ceremonial ground and pointed out to me the importance of some trees in the area, which are seen as the guardians of the site and should not be cut or the site itself would lose a lot of its significance. They insisted that I record everything because they wanted to show the non-Aboriginals from the town that the project could not take place and should be abandoned as soon as possible. Luckily, this is what happened once the importance of the place had been

### *Chapter Six*

pointed out to the FCPA council. But, before we left the ceremonial ground one of the three men summed up the situation:

This is the place now, you gotta to get everything on paper. I tell you again: our father and grandfather, big mob, all them bin cut right here now. This is the place for river people where we make them boys men properly, us we do it on our own, between us mob all river people, not like them desert mob, them askin other people to cut them boys this is no good. Now look, we bin losin a lot: country, people, places, too much we bin losin, but if we gonna lose this one place too, we gonna be nothin, we gonna have no place to cut them boys and them desert mob them gonna cut us boys their way. We can't lose him that place, if we lose him us river people we gonna be finish, for good we gonna be finish (Colin).

When Colin mentioned that desert people ask other people to circumcise their teenagers he meant that other groups of desert people (from outside the Fitzroy Valley) acted as ritual leaders during initiation ceremonies for Walmajarri and Wangkajunga boys. In contrast, the river people also relied on other groups for the same purpose, but these groups were from places within the Fitzroy Valley, that is to say, from the river country people. Colin stressed that river people could not lose that particular site otherwise they would lose everything (control over circumcision ceremonies). I clearly recall how determined he was as long as the ceremonial ground was under threat: it was clear that one of the last elements of river people's cultural distinctiveness was about to be taken away from them and neither he nor the other river people's ritual leaders could accept the idea.

## **6.3 linguistic divisions within Junjuwa**

The second form of 'mob' to which people referred was defined in terms of linguistic differences. These 'mobs' corresponded to the linguistic units in the broader sense of the term, that is to say, for example, all the people identified as Bunuba, whether or not they could speak the language, were from the Bunuba mob. People within the same linguistic unit identified variations that existed within Bunuba language and formed dialects which were spoken by various sub-groups of Bunuba<sup>6</sup>. Similar differences were identified for other languages which all seemed to have local variations (Walmajarri, Wangkajunga, Gooniyandi), but these differences were not taken into account when people referred to one linguistic unit as a group. As far as the strength and the influence of a language unit were concerned, it was again the number of people affiliated to one particular language that was determinant. Smaller linguistic units such as Kija (16 people), Jaru (17 people) and Nyikina (five people), although they were identified as separate and distinct mobs, as far as grouping according to linguistic differences was concerned, did not have much influence within Junjuwa, let alone Ngarinyin and Warlpiri (one person each). The

stronger and more influential linguistic units were the larger ones: Walmajarri (166 people), Bunuba (150 people), Wangkajunga (66 people) and Gooniyandi (31 people), with the predominant role within Junjuwa for the two former languages. During the entire period I spent in Fitzroy Crossing there were numerous arguments between Bunuba and Walmajarri and relationships between them were extremely tense at times<sup>7</sup>. What initially caused these constant disagreements was Junjuwa community itself: it is located on Bunuba land, but because of the local historical events, Bunuba were always a minority in Junjuwa. It was only since July 1985, when about one hundred Walmajarri people left Junjuwa and moved into Kurnangki village, that the number of Walmajarri and Bunuba become almost balanced. Since that time there was a definite move by some Bunuba men, mainly those who were not intermarried with the Walmajarri and had limited contacts with them, to assert Bunuba control over Junjuwa council. They acknowledged that the Walmajarri had been allowed to settle in Bunuba country several decades ago, but for them this was only a temporary agreement and now that Walmajarri had opportunities to 'start places on their own in their own country', the feeling was that they all should leave Junjuwa:

I tell you straight my boy, these Walmajarri people they should go now. You know, my grandfather, poor bugger he passed away long time ago, well he was proper king for us Bunuba mob. He bin tellin them Walmajarri people, yeah alright, you fella can camp and sit down in Bunuba country, this side of the river, but you fella gonna listen us Bunuba people, we boss for that country. He was proper good fella mine grandfather, you know them Walmajarri people he bin give them a home, poor fella, no more country they bin havin, them Gardiya [=European] him bin chasin them and pushin them this side of the river. They sit down in Bunuba country alright, quiet fella them old fella too. But now look, they're running wild, just like that bullock in the bush, wild one. Them Walmajarri don't listen us anymore, them bin too much of them fella too, everywhere all over the place. Now they gotta their own place too: Noonkanbah, Millidgidee, Warrimbah, even Kurnangki right in Bunuba country for them fella too. Well, I respect them old fella them can stay but all them young ones them should go now, leave the place, there are no more trouble with Gardiya [=European] now, well they should go back to their country (Ned).

There are several interesting points made by Ned related to the main complaints that Bunuba addressed regularly to Walmajarri. Firstly, there is little doubt that there was a feeling of great frustration amongst Bunuba as a result of several Walmajarri groups getting villages on their own whereas they themselves still had to co-reside with other language groups in their own country. Secondly, there were still Walmajarri visitors coming to Junjuwa in increasing numbers without prior approval from the Bunuba people. Finally, some ritual activities had been held by Walmajarri on Bunuba land without any notifications to the Bunuba ritual leaders. All these elements combined with others (such as the nomination of the first non-Bunuba chairman in November 1985) and the subsequent appointment as community advisor of a former UAM



### *Chapter Six*

employee. This all resulted in further tensions between the two language groups (see Chapter 8). The UAM staff had always enjoyed privileged relationships with the Walmajarri, who are predominantly Christian as opposed to the mainly agnostic Bunuba; consequently, the new community adviser and the chairman were expected by Bunuba to act in a similar way.

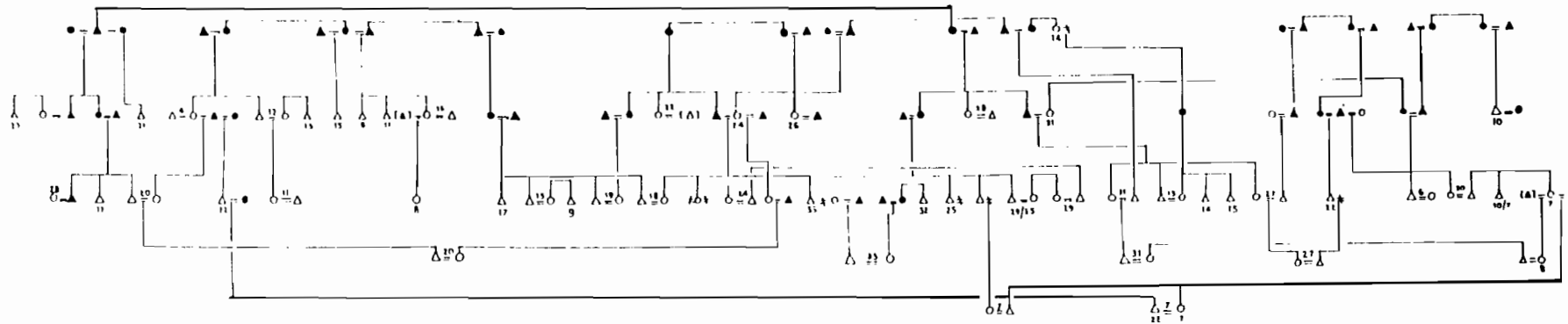
As a result Bunuba always blamed Walmajarri for all Junjuwa's problems:

- Walmajarri councillors were accused of being either too slack with young Walmajarri men or too tough with young Bunuba men
- Walmajarri women were said to cause domestic disputes between Junjuwa married couples or to seduce single Bunuba men for whom Bunuba spouses had already been chosen
- Card games in the Walmajarri side attracted many Walmajarri from other communities who subsequently caused a nuisance in Junjuwa
- Young Walmajarri men were accused of verbal abuse of older Bunuba men as well as of bringing alcohol into Junjuwa
- Walmajarri 'gangs' were said to incite Bunuba youths to fights and violence

This list could go on for ever, as in everyday life most accusations were formulated by Bunuba against Walmajarri. Some Bunuba, mostly those who had married Walmajarri-speaking wives or husbands or who had close kin who had, were more moderate in their accusations and attempted, in periods of crisis between the two sides, to channel the anger and frustration of the other Bunuba towards the Wangkajunga:

Them Walmajarri people, they're alright, they're my mob too, I bin married one of them Walmajarri girls. They listen to us, they're quiet. But look this side, in the Wangkajunga row, it's a different story altogether, you know them mob, they're proper bastards, they want to boss us now. Them old Wangkajunga boss scared us young fella, and them Wangkajunga young fella them bin bringin grog every night, big mob too them fella bin bringin. Well I reckon they should all go back to their country, Christmas creek way, more better for us Bunuba (Arthur).

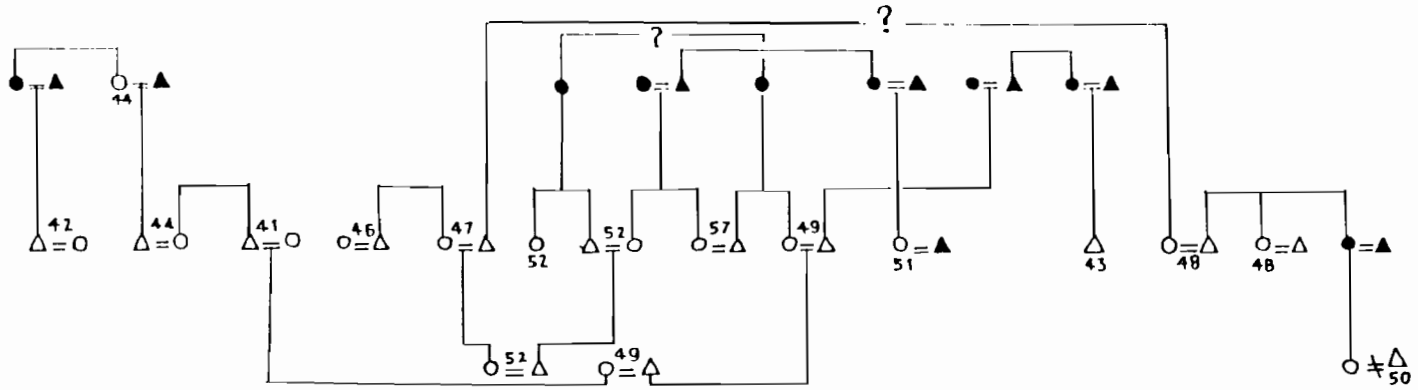
Nevertheless, these attempts did not ease the tension that existed between Bunuba and Walmajarri, and the situation deteriorated badly at some stages. I have already presented a case study in Chapter 5 in which a Walmajarri man had been accused of the murder of a Bunuba man, but many other similar incidents occurred. For example, in September and October 1986, what I then called 'the Bunuba coup' took place. A group of young Bunuba men stirred up the Bunuba people against all the Walmajarri on the basis that they were 'running' Junjuwa. During an informal meeting with older Bunuba men, the leader of the 'coup' repeatedly attempted to win their support :



Groupings within Junjuwa

**FIGURE 2**  
**Kin connections in the Bunuba section**  
**Junjuwa Village 1986**

**Legend:**  
 Numbers indicate houses  
 = indicates marriages  
 ●/▲ deceased persons



**FIGURE 3**  
**Kin connections in the Walmajarri section**  
**Junjuwa Village 1986**

**Legend:**  
 Numbers indicate houses  
 = indicates marriages  
 ? indicates a classificatory relation  
 ●/▲ deceased persons

*Groupings within Junjuwa*

Oscar: What are you?

Ralphie: Bunuba!

Oscar: Me too! What land is that land! (he pointed to the ground)

Ralphie: Bunuba!

Oscar: Alright, Who makes the rules here?

Ralphie: ..... (no answer, but he obviously knew to whom Oscar was referring)

Oscar: Well we have to take them over right now and get rid of the Walmajarri and the Mission people too.

The whole purpose of this coup was to vote in the coup's leader as chairman and to sack the current community adviser. The young Bunuba men almost succeeded in their attempt, as the coup's leader missed the chairman's position by only a few votes. Although he was appointed as vice-chairman because he came second, he was later dismissed and subsequently left Fitzroy Crossing. His constant challenges to the Walmajarri people and the chairman had gone too far and gradually the Bunuba withdrew the support that had allowed him to reach the vice-chairman's position. He found himself isolated and fell into disgrace when he challenged the leaders of his own language group for their lack of commitment to his cause.

The Walmajarri also had plenty to say against the Bunuba. Basically, Walmajarri people denied they had taken over the Bunuba people by controlling Junjuwa, because the Bunuba said they were still listening to them and they were still the 'boss' of the country. In turn, Walmajarri accused the Bunuba of having too many privileges (use of community vehicles, employment within Junjuwa, easier access to community loans), and argued that although the Bunuba were the boss of the country it should not give them all these advantages<sup>8</sup>.

These criticisms were addressed mainly to the younger Bunuba men and women, most of whom were not involved in any ritual activities. Ritual activities were still considered by the Walmajarri as the basis of leadership within local Aboriginal groups<sup>9</sup>, but nevertheless these young Bunuba openly challenged the Walmajarri leaders (swearing, alcohol brought into Junjuwa, failure to observe some kinship rules and obligations towards relatives). Therefore the older Bunuba were accused either of weakness or of complicity with the younger ones. Both attitudes reinforced the Walmajarri's negative feelings towards the Bunuba, to the point where on many occasions Junjuwa was more like two distinct communities rather than a single one. For example, card games were organised by the Bunuba on their own side and vice versa for the Walmajarri, although people from different linguistic units did gamble together outside Junjuwa. Similarly, people on the Bunuba side ignored fights as long as they involved only Walmajarri people and were contained on the

## Chapter Six

Walmajarri side. Further, I recorded several cases in which injured or sick people who needed urgent treatment at the hospital, had either to walk or to be taken by a police patrol to the hospital if no vehicles were available from among their own side (either Bunuba or Walmajarri), even though transport facilities were available on the other side. Furthermore, during the dry season, the community truck was used either by Bunuba people for firewood collection for their side or by the Walmajarri for the same purpose. In one instance, the community adviser, in order to reduce fuel costs and to make the truck available for other duties, tried to organise a trip with people from both sides. All those who asked to take part in that trip found good excuses to decline the offer, when usually there was never enough room in the truck to take all those who were willing to go for a 'ride'. This particular trip was eventually cancelled and the following day two separate trips were organised as usual.

One of the main advantages for the Walmajarri was that in terms of sheer numbers they had the majority in the context of the town as a whole. There were Walmajarri people in all the town based communities as well as in the surrounding area, and the fact that they were a majority gave them an edge in several situations. As a result, if Bunuba and Walmajarri were in conflict over any issues, the Bunuba always limited the extent of the dispute to avoid an open conflict between all members of the two linguistic groups (Bunuba vs Walmajarri) which they were bound to lose.

The fact that the two main linguistic groups were almost constantly opposed resulted in advantages of all kinds made available only to them. For example, two cars were allocated for emergencies at night on the following basis: one for the Bunuba, the other for the Walmajarri. Similarly, mob opportunities within the community were firstly offered to Bunuba or Walmajarri. Consequently, people from smaller but significant groups like the Wangkajunga had to struggle to be recognised, and blamed the two larger linguistic units for their lower status in Junjuwa:

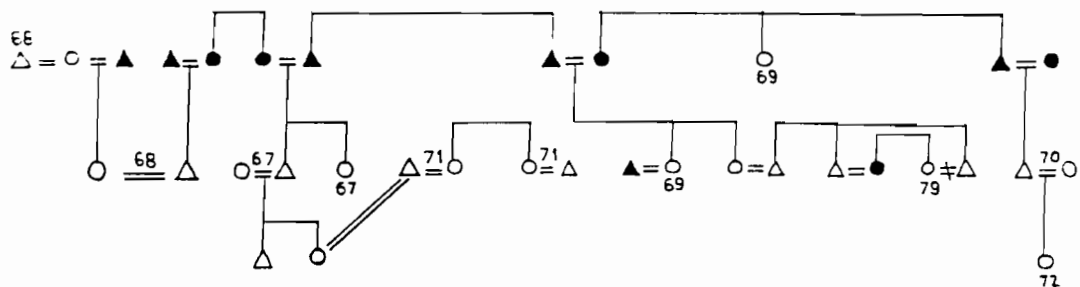
This side we got nothin, us Wangkajunga we got nothin. Them side (she pointed towards the Bunuba and Walmajarri sections), they got plenty: motokar, firewood, tucker, everything. Here we got nothin, only us old people, big mob of widow and oldwomen in that camp. Them Bunuba mob him don't look after us properly, Walmajarri all the same. All them young fella (Walmajarri and Bunuba), him do nothin but drinkin, him come at night too, him bin scare them oldwomen them drunk fella him bin makin humbug for old people tucker and money. Them Bunuba and Walmajarri boss them bin say nothin, too slack them mob, him don't think for us mob, him think for them mob that's all. This is no good, we gonna leave him that place one day (Amy).

The main problem for the Wangkajunga, as pointed out by Amy, was that they were mainly elderly women, either widows or separated from their husband and school age children. There were only four Wangkajunga men who lived permanently in their section of Junjuwa but they were frequently out of

*Groupings within Junjuwa*

town, visiting other Wangkajunga communities in the Christmas creek area. The women's older children were living in these communities, usually with their father's families, while the women stayed in Fitzroy to take advantage of facilities available in town that did not exist at Christmas creek (supermarket, hospital, church, adult education centre). Nevertheless, the Wangkajunga formed a distinct unit and affirmed their identity as well as their differences towards both the Bunuba and the Walmajarri.

The situation was different for the Gooniyandi. Although they had a different linguistic identity which was recognised by others, they associated themselves very closely with the Bunuba even though some Gooniyandi had married Walmajarri. The Gooniyandi in Junjuwa were not a coherent group on the basis of the language distinction only, possibly because of their small numbers (31 people) but more likely as a result of their merging into a larger linguistic unit.



**FIGURE 4**

**Kin Connections in the Wangkajunga section  
Junjuwa Village 1986**

Kinship connections were more diverse and more cohesive within each of the three sections of Junjuwa than they were at the community level. They contributed to consolidate grouping at the level of language units and enable members of lesser represented languages to be incorporated into larger ones. This appears in Figures 2, 3 and 4 as well as the main difference that existed between the three main languages: Bunuba people's kin connections were limited to Junjuwa whereas both Walmajarri and Wangkajunga's kin connections were directed outside the community.

Some of the living individuals on Figures 2 and 4, have no house numbers because they did not live at Junjuwa on a permanent basis. Nevertheless, they were all considered members of Junjuwa community, because they had been involved in the setting up of the community, had lived within Junjuwa for several years, and had moved out of Junjuwa only recently. The numbers of

people included in genealogies in Figures 2-4 do not match the population figures I gave earlier for Junjuwa; There are two main reasons for this discrepancy; first, the Figures include adult persons only; second, I focus on kin connections that existed between houses' occupants within one section of the village, therefore not all occupants of each house appear on the Figures.

## 6.4 Sub-groups within linguistic units

The third kind of grouping was based on the sub-division of the language on any of three main criteria:

- in terms of 'country' of origin: that is to say where members of a sub-group of a particular linguistic unit had a close association (through birth, through descent, through initiation), with a specific part of the area occupied or perceived as belonging to the linguistic unit
- according to the various waves of migration: in the case of sub-groups of only a few individuals who had lived together prior to the their migration.
- as a result of employment on the same cattle station: long periods of co-residence on the same cattle station(s) formed coherent and distinct sub-groups. Members of these subgroups were usually of mixed linguistic and cultural backgrounds and had developed close links with one or several areas within the cattle-station on which they co-resided.

Sub-group identity was put forward either when people wished to distinguish themselves as a sub-group from other sub-groups within the same language or when there was a need for people, as in the case of people from a smaller linguistic unit, to assert their identity with a more coherent and better recognised form of grouping. These sub-groups represented at times internally marked divisions that split the coherence of one linguistic unit (cf 'Bunuba coup' initiated by a sub-group of Bunuba). Tensions existed between sub-groups and in public discourse these were expressed similarly to those mentioned earlier between linguistic units. Bunuba people argued that although they were all from a distinct language unit, there were differences between them because in the past they lived in smaller groups and in different locations, and only recent historical events had brought them permanently together:

You see us Bunuba people from Junjuwa, we're not one mob properly. Really we are four mob from three place: Brooking, Oscar and Leopold country. Well, the Gardiya them bin closin that Oscar homestead, first one long time ago. Them Bunuba fella from Oscar now them bin go Old Leopold. Now again that manager, different

*Groupings within Junjuwa*

one, him bin finishin that Leopold place too. Poor fella this one my country too. Well him bin say "you all go Brooking way now, all you lot". All us Oscar and Leopold people we bin know that Brooking mob and them country little bit, you know for business and Law, all them thing. Then that citizen time came up, and all us Bunuba we bin comin to the UAM place, old camp Bunuba country that place too. Right, now all of us we bin sittin here in Junjuwa. But him no good, too much Bunuba people in here: humbug, humbug all the time we bin havin, too many relatives too, and all them young fella, we can't make him quiet, too much young fella them don't listen. I reckon us Leopold mob we gonna go to a proper place for us in Leopold country, more better that way, old way like in the early days all them four Bunuba mob bin sittin in their place properly, that's the way alright (Colin).

Colin's account is particularly interesting as it almost combines the three criteria that led to the formation of sub-groups. The older people from the four Bunuba groups were all born in different areas of Bunuba country which was then already occupied by white settlers. Therefore Colin did not mention the specific places with which each of the four groups were associated but linked each group with a cattle station on which people were born and worked. Oscar Range Station was abandoned in the mid-1920s, and later on in the 1940s the old Leopold homestead was relocated and Leopold Station purchased by the same company which owned Brooking Springs and Fairfield. Subsequently, the four Bunuba groups either co-resided on Brooking stations or moved from one of the three stations to another (Leopold, Brooking, Fairfield). But, for the Bunuba, the new location of the Leopold homestead was not in Leopold country anymore as it was a part of Brooking country<sup>10</sup>, therefore although some Bunuba lived on Leopold station until 1971, they described this period as spent on Brooking country.

These four sub-groups were also based on kin networks: there were six distinct kin groups amongst Bunuba who resided in Junjuwa, four had intermarried in pairs and presented themselves as coherent groups whose members lived together for many years. It can be seen from Figure 5 that kin groups 1 and 2 were linked by marriage A, and that groups 3 and 4 by marriage B. Thus the four sub-groups within Bunuba language described by Colin were 1 and 2, 3 and 4, 5, and 6. Later on these four sub-groups did intermarry among themselves and co-resided at Brooking Spring Station and later on at the mission reserve. Alliances between these sub-groups materialised in clusters of houses in the Bunuba section of Junjuwa, but members of these sub-groups differentiate between kin networks formed around a core of cognatic kin and those based on agnatic relations. I am aware that more inclusive regional groupings based on patrilineal relations to country at a lower level than that of the four cognatic groups described above, existed among the Bunuba, but I do not have enough data on this type of grouping to discuss it in details. Figure 5 includes only a small proportion of the Bunuba living in Junjuwa because these people only were identified as members of the 4 sub-groups by my informants.



### *Chapter Six*

Other Bunuba were either of mixed linguistic origin, or belonged to sub-groups whose most members lived outside Junjuwa.

In another account about sub-groups, Colin stated that his mob (one of the two sub-groups of Bunuba from Leopold Range) and the 'Oscar mob' were the only "real Bunuba in Junjuwa". His statement was based on two facts: first, none of the men of these two 'mobs' had married into another language; second, all the older people from these sub-group were of 'full' Bunuba descent (both their parents were Bunuba). Indeed, in the third Bunuba sub-group several men had married into other linguistic groups (including Walmajarri), and some of the older people were of mixed linguistic origin (Goóniyandi/Bunuba, Kija/Bunuba, Nyikina/Bunuba). As a result, there were strong divergences between the Leopold and Oscar group on one side and the Brooking one on the other. For example, the leader of the latter, married to a Walmajarri woman, was often accused by people of the former of caring more for the Walmajarri than for his own people (Bunuba). There were numerous subjects of discord between Bunuba sub-groups; in fact, there were more frequent and deeper disagreements between them than between any other sub-group from other linguistic units. This was probably caused by the closeness in terms of country of origin, ritual activities and kinship links that existed amongst these sub-groups, despite all the differences emphasised by their members. The consequences of this closeness were that in their widest demand and activities members of the Bunuba sub-group competed with one another for similar things: leadership in the same ceremony, land excision within the same cattle station, fishing and foraging trips in the same area, and the same core of relatives to borrow food and money from. As a result, there was never any cooperation between them and the actions initiated by one sub-group were rarely supported by the others, for it would have given the former an edge over them. The competition was so strong that Bunuba sub-groups rarely achieved anything either at the community or at the town level. For example, the first West Kimberley dance and music festival was organised in Broome in late 1986, in which Junjuwa community had elected to participate. A community bus was allocated to the Bunuba for the trip; only two Bunuba men held the required licence to drive a bus: Colin and Arthur, leaders of two distinct Bunuba sub-groups. Colin agreed to drive the bus if one of his brothers and two other men from his sub-group were part of the trip. All the remaining seats had already been allocated because the trip had been planned long in advance and the participants had registered well ahead of the departure day. Arthur for his part said that he was happy to let Colin drive if Arthur's oldest son, his daughter's husband and another male relative went in place of Colin's relatives. Each leader refused to take a firm decision one way or another. Eventually they both declined to drive the bus which was thus allocated to Walmajarri people who were in need of transport facilities but to whom the use of the bus had been denied on the basis that the Bunuba had a priority with community's vehicles.

Groupings within Junjuwa

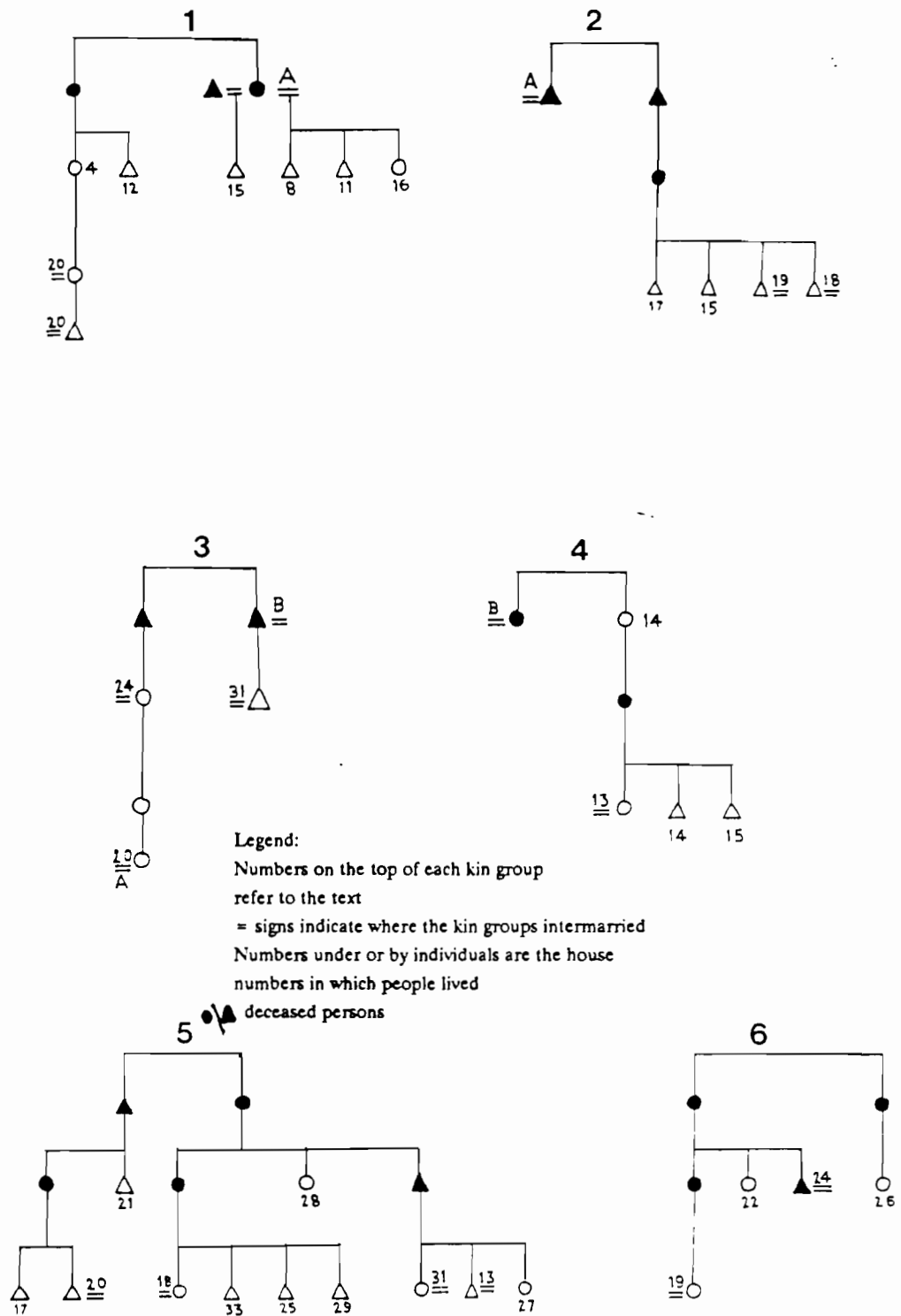


FIGURE 5

Bunuba kin groups

FIGURE 6

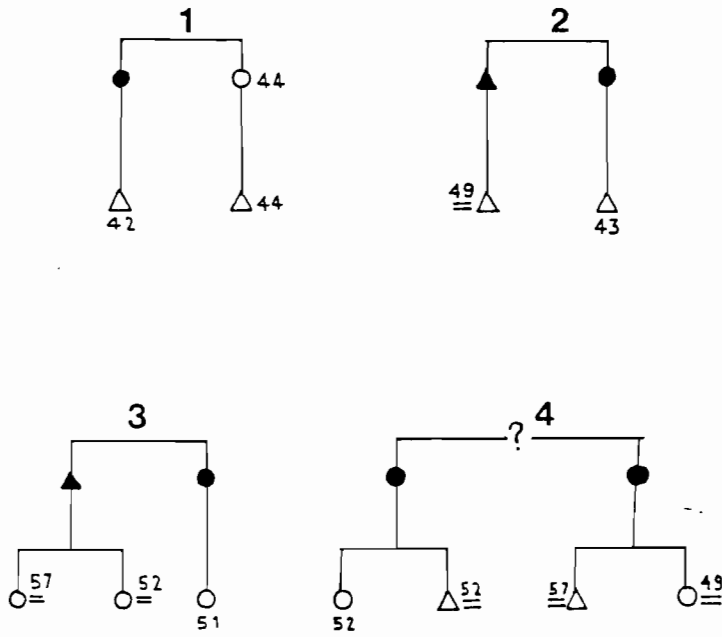


Figure 6a  
Walmajarri kin groups

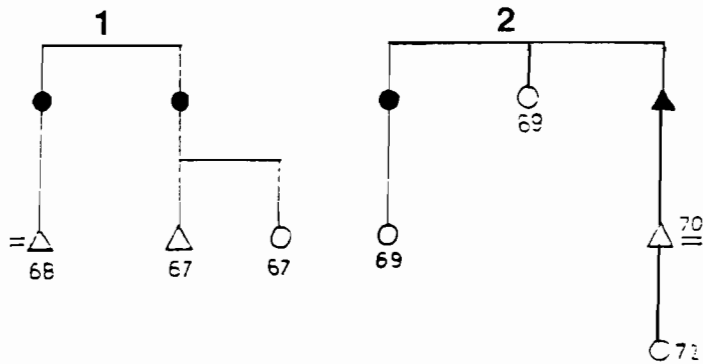


Figure 6b  
Wangkajunga kin groups

Legend:

Numbers on the top of each kin group refer to the text

= signs indicate where the kin groups intermarried

Numbers under or by individuals are the house numbers in which people lived

? indicates a classificatory relation

●/▲ deceased persons

### *Groupings within Junjuwa*

Walmajarri distinguished many sub-groups within their language. The distinctions were not based on the same criteria that defined Bunuba sub-groups, each of which has a separate identity and estate. Walmajarri who lived in Junjuwa originated from a residue of kin groups that had scattered over a wide area (Fitzroy Valley and beyond). These kin groups were not formed around a relatively well defined cognatic core of kin but privileged birth place (country of origin). Even though there were four distinct kin groups I identified amongst Walmajarri from Junjuwa (see Figure 6, 6a), they did not constitute sub-groups per se but reflected patterns of migration into the area (pairs(s) of siblings). Growing up together on the same station is in fact the criterion that under-writes Walmajarri co-resident kin groups: people perceived and defined themselves as Cherrabun, Noonkanbah or Gogo 'countrymen', although these places were far away from their original birth places. Sometimes it happened that people were born in the same country and grew up together on the same station(s), in which case they were likely to form a more cohesive sub-group (Kurlku).

Several white employees from MWW and DCS, who had had a long working experience with both Walmajarri and Bunuba sub-groups, agreed on the fact that amongst the former there was a greater sentiment of solidarity not only within each sub-group but between them, whereas the latter lacked both. This different attitude may well have been reinforced by the fact that since the early 1980s several sub-groups of Walmajarri had been granted excision on cattle stations or leases on vacant crown land, simply because the areas to which they wished to move were located in poor cattle country and therefore unoccupied. By contrast, the Bunuba country is probably the richest in the West Kimberley and consequently cattle stations' managers and owners have so far refused all applications for excision from Bunuba sub-groups.

This difference in attitude between Bunuba and Walmajarri can be interpreted as resulting from a difference in social organisation between them. Bunuba social organisation is centred around cognatic descent groups, and alliances between them are not sufficient to give someone any rights over the 'country' of the group they have married into<sup>11</sup>. By contrast the Walmajarri social organisation is inclusive, like that of many desert groups (Myers 1986:194); it lacks descent groups and the terminology is different from that used by the Bunuba. The dynamic of the Walmajarri social organisation is the expansion of the notion of relatedness that in turn makes possible negotiations of country boundaries on the claim of a shared identity, this is made possible through bilateral filiation rather than by marriage per se. The Walmajarri system sought to widen its network through inclusion whereas Bunuba privileged the exclusiveness of the descent groups<sup>12</sup>.

The Walmajarri sub-groups shared one element in common: they all had kin in more than one community either, in Fitzroy Crossing or in the Fitzroy valley. Thus the other advantage available to Walmajarri sub-groups was that in the case of serious disputes between sub-groups, they always had the

opportunity to move to another community to join other relatives, until things eased up. Indeed, the constant movement of people in and out of Junjuwa often prevented conflicting situations between Walmajarri sub-groups getting out of hand so that at the community level they offered a more harmonious image and achieved their goals more easily than the Bunuba. Nevertheless, conflicts did occur between Walmajarri sub-groups within Junjuwa, mainly caused by alcohol related problems and extramarital affairs. For example, members from one sub-group of Walmajarri had had enough of living in Junjuwa and they decided to live 'on their own' elsewhere in town. They obtained a sub-lease from Junjuwa, for the Windmill reserve, largely because of the support they received from other Walmajarri sub-groups when the case was discussed at one Junjuwa Council meeting. This Walmajarri sub-group was known as Kurlku and had members living in four different communities (Junjuwa, Kurnangki, Kadjina, Windmill Reserve) although the majority were Junjuwa residents. This is how one of Kurlku's leaders explained the decision to move:

In Junjuwa we bin havin too much trouble: grog, gidjigara<sup>13</sup>, biggest fights all the lot. Us Kurlku people we're proper strong, last pension night I bin knockin down two fella, him bin comin night time longa my camp, drunk one too them two fella, him never sing out nothin him bin walk in straight away. Well, I knock him down them two fella. Now we bin havin big trouble with them father and uncle for them two fella. No good, too much humbug [=trouble] we bin havin now with that argument. I bin tellin straight that old man, him bin drunk too "look out uncle I gonna spear you in the leg", poor fella him my uncle too. Well we bin tellin them mob to be quiet, but he can't listen us them people, too much mob in here too much people from different place, this is no good. Well, we finish with that place now, we bin leavin that Junjuwa place now, you know might be one night him bin comin longa my camp and him bin killin me too, we can't stay in here too much humbug, too much mob. In my mob, they listen alright, in Junjuwa him can't listen all them mob, too much people, too much mob, proper no good (James).

What seemed to have decided the Kurlku people to move was not so much the alcohol related disturbances, since once they moved to Mindi Rardi they kept having similar problems, but rather a growing conflict between two Walmajarri sub-groups. Once the cycle: offence / fight / retaliation, had started between the two sub-groups, people were very distressed, as in James' case, because such conflicts led to fights between close relatives (in this case involving a mother's brother), threatened sub-group coherence and could easily result in a death which would bring even further conflict. In the case example, James and the other Kurlku people elected to re-affirm sub-group solidarity by moving elsewhere on the basis of their sub-group structure rather than jeopardize the unity of the entire Walmajarri group and possibly Junjuwa's too, through a conflict that opposed them to another sub-group.

Sub-group divisions within the Wangkajunga were similar to those within the Walmajarri (see Figure 6, 6b). Here again the sub-groups were oriented toward the outside rather than within the community. Wangkajunga people had

*Groupings within Junjuwa*

links over an even wider area than the Walmajarri. For example a Wangkajunga man described his sub-group as formed by people from Jigalong, Billiluna and Balgo (see Map 8 for the location of all 'countries' associated with Junjuwa sub-groups). The Wangkajunga who lived in Junjuwa had either come to the Fitzroy Valley through Christmas creek in the late 1920s or arrived at the UAM reserve in the mid 1960s after having spent a short period on stations. In the first category were three brothers who had been captured by the native police on Bohemia Downs Station. The oldest brother was about ten years old at the time and the youngest a few months old. Their parents belonged to a group that lived in the vicinity of the Canning Stock road west of Billiluna, but themselves never lived in this country, which is now 'lost', according to one of them:

My country him finished, all the people gone, passed away, us we know nothin, him got nothin left that country of mine, no people nothin, only wild dogs he got now, properly finished that place (Henry).

These people had developed links with the country in the Christmas Creek area, which was regularly visited by various Wangkajunga sub-groups based in Junjuwa. The sub-groups of the second category had strong associations with people and places far away from the Fitzroy Valley and sub-group activities were essentially directed towards these places. Even though these people did not participate actively in community life and were frequently absent from Junjuwa, they were still highly respected within the community mainly because of their involvement in ritual activities which Fitzroy Crossing's Aboriginal people considered highly secret and dangerous. For example, a Bunuba sub-group leader wanted to 'start' a Bunuba corroboree but could not do so because a leader from a Wangkajunga sub-group would not allow the dancers involved in the rituals to wear head-decorations (See Chapter Nine). This opposition to his corroboree forced the Bunuba leader to engage in a long and delicate negotiation process with Wangkajunga ceremonial leaders in order to get their support. Once again a conflict was avoided between sub-groups, this time from different linguistic units. Consequently, it seems right to argue that all sub-groups were given recognition within Junjuwa regardless of their linguistic affiliation, and that the sub-groups played an important part in community life.

Sub-groups of mixed linguistic origin for which shared working experience was the criterion of identification, and their association with a particular area of a cattle station, were also given recognition in Junjuwa. There were only a few of this kind of sub-group and their members shared one thing in common: they had cut off most of the links they had with other sub-groups of their own linguistic group with which they were previously associated, either on their own initiative (personal choice) or because of particular circumstances (descent, place of birth, initiation). For example, Robin, a Bunuba, married Lucy, a Gooniyandi associated with a sub-group of people of mixed linguistic origin that

had worked on Brooking Springs station for more than a decade. Robin was born on Leopold station and remained there until his late teens. His father had been a Wangkajunga who died when Robin was still a baby. Robin had been circumcised by members of a Bunuba sub-group, his mother's linguistic unit, from the Brooking Spring area, and had never been to his father's country. Later on he married Lucy, also of mixed linguistic descent (father Kija, mother Gooniyandi), who was from a sub-group from the Halls Creek area. They had a lot of trouble because according to the sub-section system she was his niece (his sister's daughter) and therefore their marriage was considered as 'wrong'; consequently, they had to stay away from their respective sub-groups from Old Leopold and Halls Creek. The couple went to Brooking Springs where they stayed until they moved to Junjuwa in the late 1970s. Robin did not take part in any ritual activities while I was in Junjuwa, neither with the Bunuba nor with the Wangkajunga. He claimed to be a Bunuba and was recognised as such because his mother was Bunuba and he was initiated by a Bunuba sub-group in Bunuba country, but he was not associated with any particular Bunuba sub-group. The Wangkajunga people attempted many times to involve him in ritual activities associated with his father's country to which, in their view, he belonged, but Robin had rejected all these attempts because he feared some retaliation as he had not married the Wangkajunga woman promised to him. Robin was caught in a profound dilemma which he seemed to have partially overcome by cutting all the links with both the Bunuba and the Wangkajunga. For example, the older of his two sons was circumcised at Derby hospital because several distinct sub-groups disputed the right to 'cut' the boy (from Robin's mother's side, his father's side but also from Lucy's parents' side). Robin intended to do exactly the same thing with his youngest son. I lived in Robin and Lucy's house during my first field trip to Fitzroy Crossing and many times Robin exposed his situation with distress:

You see, I gotta no country, some fella say I belong this way (he pointed to Leopold), some fella say I belong that way (he pointed to Christmas creek). Well, I reckon I belong Brooking Spring way like them all mixed people who bin workin on that place same like us Lucy and my mob. Same stories with my boys, all them mob, this way, that way and Lucy way, they bin wantin to cut them boys of mine. Well, Lucy and I we bin takin the old one to hospital, more better less humbug. You know if you pick up the wrong mob to cut your boy you end up in all sorts of trouble and your boy too, he could die poor fella. I reckon I'm gonna do the same with the second boy of mine, more better for him too. You see when you're a mixed people, I reckon you have to go your own way, if you gonna go too much father way or too much mother you gonna get too much trouble that's all (Robin).

Not all members of sub-groups of mixed linguistic origin were as marginal as Robin<sup>14</sup>, but all seemed to alternate their association from one sub-group to another (either between their parent's sub-groups or between theirs and their spouse's one) whenever the pressure was too strong from one side or the other. The sub-groups of mixed linguistic origin were characterised by higher levels of fluidity compared with those of a single linguistic origin. They did not play an

important part in the running of Junjuwa but they have probably contributed to maintaining links between other sub-groups and linguistic units<sup>15</sup>.

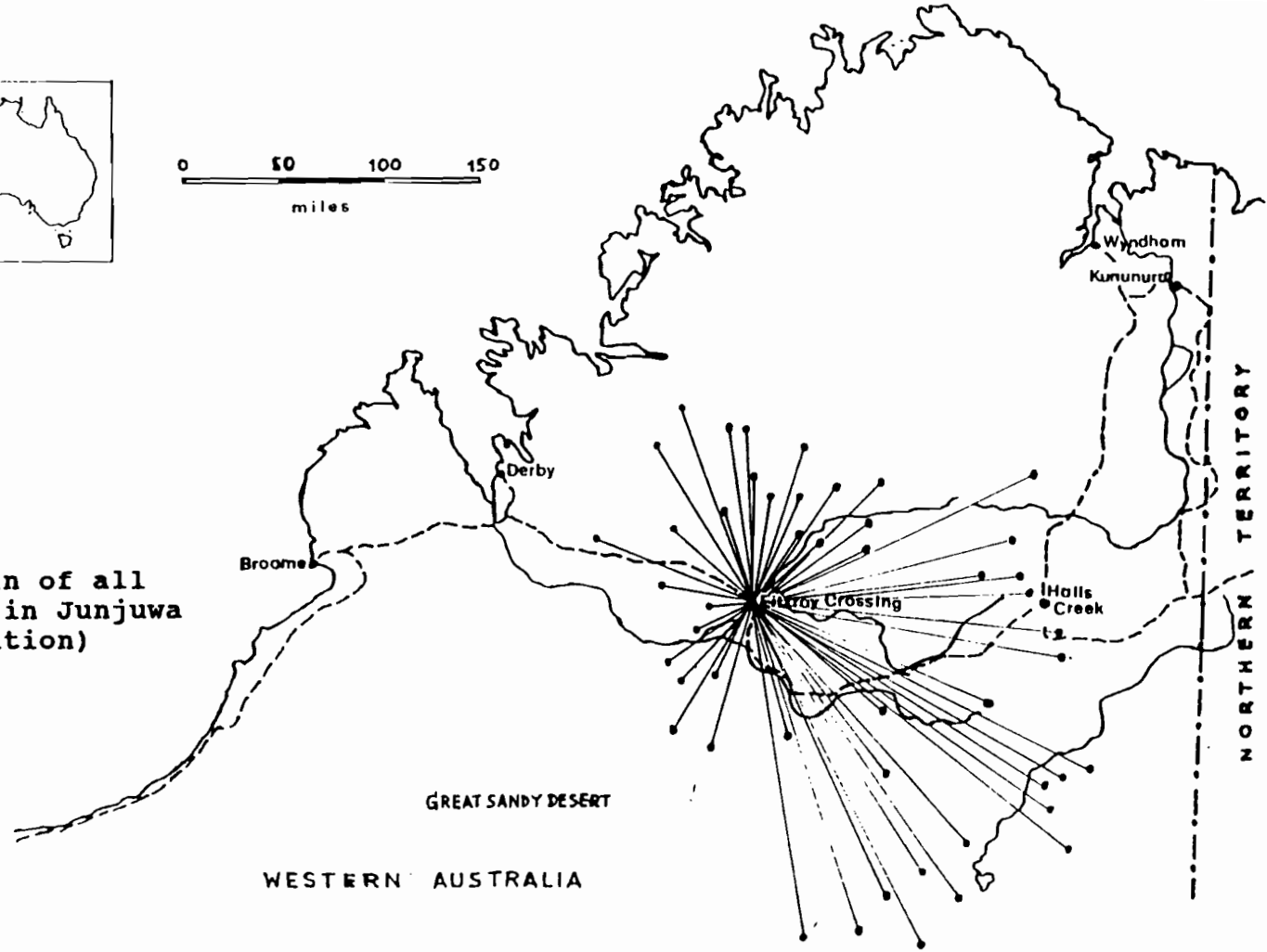
## **6.5 Conclusion**

In this Chapter I have presented the different kinds of groupings that people distinguished within Junjuwa. I have firstly described the larger ones, defined according to cultural criteria, then presented groupings based on linguistic units and finally shown that smaller units existed, defined according to historical circumstances. I have given many examples of how people expressed their belonging to each type of grouping as well as how they differentiated themselves from other groupings. The differences were part of a public discourse in which it was argued that people were different today because they were different in the past (culturally, linguistically, geographically, residentially). People from Junjuwa argued that these differences had been maintained, despite the fact that all of them were 'mixed' and had many things in common (lifestyle, living conditions, use of Kriol, similar initiation ceremonies). Kinship was a further cohesive element on which people drew to sustain each form of groupings discussed in this Chapter, depending on which kin connection people privileged each time.





**MAP 8**  
 'Countries' of origin of all  
 sub-groups that lived in Junjuwa  
 (approximate location)



## **Endnotes - Chapter Six**

1 'Bush' is the official birth location in the hospital and DCS records when people were born elsewhere than in a particular town, mission or cattle station.

2 Pigeon, the Bunuba man who resisted the invasion of his country by white settlers, was born in the early 1870s. He was of mixed linguistic origin: his father was Ungumi and his mother Bunuba. This well documented case, and personal genealogies of Junjuwa's older river people, confirmed that members of some linguistic units classified as river people had intermarried and mixed long before the arrival of white settlers in the area.

3 These are the people in the remaining seven marriages: one non-Aboriginal person, three salt water people, and three for whom information was either incomplete or unclear in regard to their classification.

4 This name was given to the UAM store once it had been purchased by Junjuwa, see Plate 12.

5 See Chapter Five for the distinction between Wangka and Walungari ceremonies.

6 See Chapter Two for the details of these dialectal differences.

7 For example, when a death occurred amongst speakers of one language the members of the other were always blamed (see Chapter Five). When the Junjuwa community adviser seemed to give privileges to members of one group or the other (see Chapter Eight); or when a conflict opposed people affiliated to the two major languages.

8 It is a fact that the economic and historical processes that led formerly discrete residential Aboriginal groups to co-reside in large settlements, in northern parts of Australia, has contributed to the creation of inequalities amongst these groups in terms of access to housing, vehicles, but other inequalities that existed prior to the construction of these villages should not be ignored. On this important point, see Anderson 1989:73-76, 81-83.

9 Walmajarri said frequently that the fact one was born in the country was not enough to make one a leader: a person should also 'look after' his country and 'work' for it; two terms that applied to ritual activities to achieve this status.

10 The limits of countries in the Aboriginal view do not correspond to the borders that distinguish one cattle station from another.

11 I mapped the country of four Bunuba full brothers. Interestingly each of these brothers claimed separate tracks of land adjacent one to another but separated by small creeks. Three of them were married and, although they knew the location of their spouses' countries, they did not have any right over them, nor did their spouses have any over theirs. But their children had rights in both of their parents' countries.

12 There was at least one Bunuba in Junjuwa whose matrimonial strategies for his daughters seemed inspired by Walmajarri strategies. He himself was married to a Walmajarri woman; see Chapter Eight.

13 A generic term for card games in the Fitzroy Valley.

14 Robin's oldest brother had married the Wangkajunga woman promised to him. She later died and he remarried. He remained involved with ritual activities held in the Christmas Creek area. For example, his son was circumcised at Christmas creek by Wangkajunga people in January 1988.

15 Because of the importance of a common shared experience as a basis for community coherence (see Chapter Five and also Sansom 1981).



---

---

# CHAPTER SEVEN

---

---

## INFORMAL ASSOCIATIONS

---

Another type of grouping is informal associations. I call them associations because they are distinct from the kind of groups presented so far and, being informal, they are usually more fluid than the groups discussed before, and the sentiments associated with them are less clearly expressed. Nevertheless, associations and groups do have elements in common. For example, the size of the grouping varied in both categories from large and relatively loose to small and more cohesive. Another element these two kinds of grouping shared was they were not exclusive one to another. That is to say, a person who was an acknowledged member of one particular group or association could also belong to another one. Some of these informal associations did not exist prior to white settlement, while others that did exist have been transformed.

In this Chapter I will discuss informal associations beginning with the larger ones. I do not intend to discuss all forms of association that existed in Junjuwa but only the more significant ones which had an important part in the life of the community as a whole. These informal associations are formed on the basis of: gender, generations, Christianity, descent, gang membership and drinking group membership.

Other informal associations existed in Junjuwa, such as those connected with ritual and foraging activities, or based on work activities. But these associations were either too small, were formed too sporadically or were too ephemeral to have a significant influence on community life. Such associations were subsumed in larger ones.

All these informal associations influenced the other types of grouping discussed in earlier chapters. The entire community life was based on the

maintenance of a delicate balance within, and between, groups and associations which was essential to the survival of Junjuwa as a group.

## 7.1 Gender based action

**"Us Women we are different" (Justine)**

**"These Women they don't understand nothing" (James).**

Men's and women's distinctive roles, and gender relationships, in Aboriginal societies are well documented. Many sources, especially the earlier publications, focused only on the distinction between the importance of women in economic life as opposed to the leading role of men in the religious domain. This view has since been challenged, mainly because it was far too limited. Today it is acknowledged that male and female worlds, if they were indeed distinct in Aboriginal societies, were more complementary than opposed. It could be argued that colonisation has played a role in moderating cleavages that existed in the past between Aboriginal men and women. Gender relationships are today a combination of past and modern elements that need to be taken into account fully in order to be understood.

Kaberry's book, published in the late 1930s, provides a detailed account of Aboriginal women's role (Kaberry 1939). It is largely based on data collected in the Kimberley at a time when white settlement had already transformed traditional life for fifty years. If Aboriginal women who lived in the area at that time had distinctive statuses in their respective groups prior to white settlement, which is most likely to be the case since many cultural differences existed from one group to another, they experienced similar living and working conditions once settled on cattle stations. But the sharing of these activities did not alter all differences that existed and some were preserved. For example, differences between those female Junjuwa residents who migrated from the desert and the river people remain.

Broader distinctions that existed between men and women in the past were preserved on cattle stations. Men and women engaged in separate and distinct working activities: the former devoting their time to stockwork and related activities, whereas the latter were assigned to domestic work and duties associated with the homestead (Berndt & Berndt 1987:61, McGrath 1987:50-59). From the interviews I conducted in Junjuwa, it is clear that on none of the cattle stations in which Junjuwa residents had worked were women ever engaged in stockwork, apart from being occasionally a cook in a stockcamp, although this has been reported in other areas (McGrath 1987:51-52, Laurie & McGrath 1985).

### *Informal associations*

Apart from working activities, the main difference was residence. Women lived with children and old people at the main Aboriginal camp located next to the homestead. Men stayed in small groups at various stockcamps established within the boundary of the station. Thus, women experienced living in large residential groups, sometimes with people from several language groups, whereas men were more accustomed to living in discrete and smaller units for much of the time. In some stations, mainly those located to the south of the Fitzroy Valley, men had very limited access to the main Aboriginal camp and husbands and wives had to see each other secretly. Some women expressed their bitterness about this when remembering the period, but many described it as one during which they acquired some autonomy from Aboriginal men:

You know, when us women, we bin campin near that old Cherrabun homestead, with them kids and oldfellas, we bin alright then, no men to boss us, no men to humbug [=trouble] us all the time. we bin havin a proper good time. Well, we work hard alright, and them Gardiya [=European] they like black girl too, myself I had three Gardiya, not properly like my husband today, no way, you know, just for ..., you know, kangaroo marriage we call'im. Well us women, we bin cookin, fishin, gettin bush tucker, all the lot. We have plenty food then, we gave them men too, well sometimes my proper man he can't come to see me, well we see together in the bush alright, but they never humbug us that time, we bin on our own, not like now (Carol).

In the Kimberley, Aboriginal women's ceremonial life seems to have disappeared more quickly than in areas in which Aboriginal people were not involved in the cattle industry, while hunting and gathering skills were preserved, since they were needed to support large populations settled together (Berndt & Berndt 1987:277-279).

When people moved from cattle stations to the mission compound in Fitzroy Crossing, they experienced different living conditions, but differences based on gender that existed before and during the cattle station era were perpetuated. The mission camp was organised similarly to the cattle stations' Aboriginal camps. Only married people, or those recognised as such, were allowed to share a house. All young unmarried people lived either in the boys' or girls' dormitory. Many men were still engaged in stockwork, for which they had to travel back and forth from Fitzroy Crossing to the stations. Men who lived permanently in the mission compound learned some mechanical skills, vegetable growing, butchering and baking. The permanent mission population, mostly women, children and old people, were engaged in other activities. Children had to attend school, some old people worked with the missionaries on translating the Bible into Walmajarri, and women were in charge of all domestic tasks (washing, sewing, cleaning dormitories, raising chickens, cooking for old people). The more skilled women taught the unskilled women, the younger ones and those who had recently migrated from further south.

## *Chapter Seven*

Women, children and old people were the first to be forced off the stations when the Pastoral Award was implemented. This migration brought more people to the mission compound, and influenced living conditions. Missionaries relied on the town police to enforce rules meant to keep the reserve in good order. All those not registered as residents, and intoxicated persons, mostly Aboriginal men at that time, were denied access to the mission area. One of the consequences was that women were more numerous than men in the reserve, and they played an important part in the running of the camp.

That old camp behind UAM us women we like him better than Junjuwa, Well, before we work for our children and old people, we show them young girls how to work properly. Big mob of women these days, them missionaries people them bin chasin them drunk one fellas, them can't get in to make trouble. Proper good time too, us women we bin strong, together all the way, no matter your country or your lingo, we bin together, we care for them kids and old people (Christine).

It seems also that women were more receptive to change than men, especially in fields such as education, health and caring collectively for children and elderly people. These practices were firstly acquired on cattle stations, usually through the manager's wife, then developed during the time people lived on the mission reserve. Such attitudes were always present in women's statements about their concerns and duties, and represented a further basis for female cooperation.

In Junjuwa it was clear that women were less oriented to small groupings, based on criteria other than gender, than men, at least in public statements, while for the latter gender was never a sufficient criterion for grouping per se.

These women, they don't understand nothin, they stick together, all the way, us we don't believe this way, alright we are Junjuwa people, some countryman, big mob people related too, but you know that men business, proper strong one, you get killed if you stick with the wrong people, us men we know this, women they don't know, they don't understand nothin (James).

The relative autonomy that women experienced on cattle stations was further developed when individual payment of social benefits was implemented. Many married couples in Junjuwa did not receive their social benefits in a joint cheque. Women were often registered as single parents and therefore were eligible for a pension, while men only got unemployment benefits (Bell 1980). Consequently, women received money directly, but they also received extra allowances for children. Social benefits such as family allowances were paid monthly to women<sup>1</sup>. This financial autonomy was challenged by men who attempted to obtain money from their spouse or female relatives once they had spent theirs. Many women relied on savings to protect their family budgets: they either had an account at the UAM store, or left part of their cash in the Junjuwa office's safe. Most of the office workers were female and could be trusted not to give woman's money to any man that would claim it.

### *Informal associations*

Differences between men's and women's employment activities continued at Junjuwa. In 1985, all but three of Junjuwa male working residents were employed in seasonal work in the cattle industry. Women overall had fewer job opportunities but held permanent positions that provided them with a regular source of income throughout the year<sup>2</sup>. Apart from seasonal activities on cattle stations, men took jobs in Junjuwa, whereas women were mostly employed outside the community. When several women affiliated to different languages were employed at the same place (Kindergarten, Hospital, UAM store), they shared news or information that would otherwise be limited to a single language group.

In Junjuwa it was common for women to visit each other, regardless of where the houses were located. Similarly, women would often get together at shopping or meeting places, such as the roadhouse or the hospital. Overall, there were more opportunities and more grounds upon which women, as opposed to men, grouped themselves on a gender criterion. This does not mean that men never got together, but they did it less frequently; ritual activities and council meetings were the only situations that brought many men together, usually in smaller numbers. Few women attended council meetings regularly, and within Junjuwa they were no women's ceremonies. The official statement put forward by Junjuwa female residents was that they 'were not business women' and this was, in their view, one of the reasons why they could get together despite their various backgrounds. Nevertheless, some of them, mostly Wangkajunga and Walmajarri, did participate in women's ritual activities, but these were held jointly with women living elsewhere and took place far away from Fitzroy Crossing.

At the most, there would be two or three females from Junjuwa attending fortnightly council meetings. They never took part in the discussion nor did they raise any points, although it was clear from one meeting to the next that women played a role in the decision-making process within Junjuwa. This role was not public; rather, women exchanged ideas and information they heard during council meetings, and sometimes influenced the position held on issues by their husbands and/or male relatives. There is little doubt they acted as 'liaison person' between language groups whenever those were opposed over a council decision or did not share the same ideas on a particular issue. I am not saying that women always succeeded in settling arguments between male council members or community leaders, but they certainly made possible exchanges of views whenever men could not or would not agree to do it. For example, there was once a problem about school attendance. Male councillors were divided on whether or not non-Aboriginal teachers from the school could come into Junjuwa to round up kids<sup>3</sup>. It was a heated debate and both views were strongly supported by heavy and loud arguments. The meeting was closed without any decision being taken on the issue. Further, none of the male councillors were prepared to challenge either of the two leaders who were opposed over the issue. The following day, wives and older sisters of these two men went fishing with other women. Such large fishing parties were uncommon and, since



women had little if any access to community vehicles, they approached me to provide them with transportation. The women did bring fish back to Junjuwa in the evening, but most of their time had been spent talking about the school attendance problem. The opposed views of the two men were discussed at length and women tried to find a compromise that would suit everyone. One of the women suggested that since her husband was driving a community vehicle and did not start working before mid-morning, he could take care of the problem. All the women agreed that could be a suitable solution and decided to 'talk' to their husbands and males relatives before the next council meeting. The man who had been suggested by the women to undertake this duty was not closely related to either of the two opposed leaders, therefore his involvement could not be interpreted as a victory by either side. All council members reached an agreement over the solution proposed by women at the next meeting. This example cannot be taken as representative of women's behaviour as opposed to men's in Junjuwa, but the former, being more cohesive, were better organised to reach a decision on common grounds than the latter, who were more fragmented in their groupings and less inclined to find a public compromise.

If women interfered with some male issues, so did men in female affairs from time to time, but less systematically. During disputes and fights that initially involved men only, women were likely to take part, either directly in the fight or to stop it. I did not, however, observe any interference by men in fights that involved women only. For example, one night a fight started between a woman and her older daughter, who had brought a man into the house without her mother's consent. Many men gathered at the house and watched quietly, but other women got involved in the fight. I was standing next to the chairman, who usually attempted to stop fights between Junjuwa's residents. I questioned him about his attitude in this particular situation and he told me:

This is a women problem, we cannot be involved in women disputes or fights. These have to be settled amongst women themselves. Maybe an old woman can come and try to help. But as a man I have no right but to stand here, that's all, as a chairman I can stop them if one of them is badly hurt, but usually women settled down their problems amongst themselves (Andrew).

Ritual activities were another area in which women had some influence, even though there were no separate women's ceremonies in Junjuwa. Some old women had a wider knowledge than most men about ceremonial songs. Women often accompanied their husbands during trips undertaken for ritual purposes. They attended ceremonies as spectators and built up a knowledge that afterwards was shared and traded with other women. Once, I was asked by an old Walmajarri woman to tape some women's songs. She wanted to make this tape to use it to teach young women as well as as a trade item. She told me she could not sing in Junjuwa but that we should go to the river where other women would join us. Six women got together for that improvised singing session; they were from four different linguistic groups and sang songs in seven

### *Informal associations*

languages. They knew songs in languages they could not speak, that they had learnt from other women. Most of these songs were associated with public ceremonies and this was why they could sing them without the owner's permission, but off the record they sang women's secret songs and, more surprisingly, male secret songs, in both cases in their respective languages.

A further element that women shared was their perception of Junjuwa. Men had a public discourse in which they claimed they had made Junjuwa and that they had to work constantly to maintain its unity. Women, on the contrary, stated that they did not have any alternative but to move into Junjuwa, which was not a united place at all. Overall, they had a better understanding of Junjuwa's problems as well as a stronger willingness to solve them at the community level rather than to the benefit of a few individuals. This attitude became obvious when, in late 1986, Junjuwa was offered the use of the old UAM buildings as a part of the transfer of the mission area to Junjuwa Community. Several meetings were organised to discuss this issue during which men and women had a completely different approach to the question. Men were eager to use these buildings for small groups and demands were made at this level: some Christians wanted to start a 'bible school', some Walmajarri old people intended to create an artifact showroom, and several Bunuba claimed their rights to live in these buildings, located on Bunuba land. In contrast, women expressed their wish to use the place for Junjuwa community, with a dormitory for elderly people, and a women's refuge. They even thought about granting access to all Aborigines living in Fitzroy Crossing. The idea had been initiated by non-Aboriginal workers from the Community Health Department, but all the women supported it because they faced common problems: they had to take care of the old people, to face violence and abuse from intoxicated men, and to care for the children of their female relatives who drink. It was a further motive for them to get together, especially when it came to these issues.

Many Junjuwa female residents had more skills and had better jobs than men, and were a good way to channel information to other women. Women proved to be more receptive to ideas from outside, and through individual or collective actions they tried to benefit the community as a whole. Some women married to heavy drinkers organised special plans for pension nights or pay days. They purchased beer for their husbands and encouraged them to spend a couple of days by the river with them and their children. The men could drink, but did not have the chance to get involved in a fight, nor could they purchase any more alcohol so eventually they would fall asleep. This was done by several women who gradually managed to control their husbands' drinking problems, but ultimately they gave up this initiative because of the lack of support from other women as well as from the rest of the community.

Gender was, thus, a criterion under which people grouped themselves, although male and female associations differed in size, goals and motives. Overall it could be said that women were less 'kin-group' oriented than men and more concerned with community problems. They also had a role in the

decision-making process, although it was not always as obvious as the men's. Men, for their part, grouped in smaller units and criticised women's groupings but did not challenge them openly, since many women had positions (office workers, health workers, accountants) and skills that gave them an edge over men and were needed by Junjuwa community and its male residents (access to money, unemployment benefit forms etc..).

## 7.2 Generation based action.

**"Them young fellas, they run mad like wild bullocks, but we can quiet them down"(Arthur)**

**"We are sick and tired of the same old people, they don't care about us and about Junjuwa, they only care about themselves" (Tommy).**

Aboriginal societies have often been described as being those in which elderly people monopolised nearly all power and privileges. From a male perspective, Aboriginal societies were gerontocratic: older males controlled access to unmarried women through long and harsh initiation rituals which young men had to complete before they could get married. The ceremonial life was one of the older men's strongholds, on which their authority was established and through which they asserted it. Ceremonial activities were disrupted by white settlement, especially when people were grouped into large residential units and settled in areas located outside their traditional countries. The weakening and the simplification of ceremonial activities has meant that younger men are less dependent on their elders' decision in being recognised as fully grown men (Kolig 1981).

In the West Kimberley, prior to white settlement and during its first decades, an Aboriginal man had to be circumcised, then subincised, before he could get married. Now only the circumcision is required and more and more are performed at Derby hospital. Groups which maintain subincision rituals do it after a man is already married, and has children, and mostly only if he agrees to undergo it. Therefore, men marry younger and fewer unmarried young women are available for older men as second wives. Amongst all Junjuwa married male residents, there was only one in his mid-fifties who had two wives. This practice, common in the past amongst desert groups, disappeared gradually as men born prior to white settlement have died<sup>4</sup>.

Early marriage for a young man does not necessarily mean he is no longer under older men's authority. Once again, cattle station records show that on each station an old man was in charge of a group of ten to fifteen young men, most of them single, and they all moved regularly from one station to another.

### *Informal associations*

When I interviewed a former station manager on that practice he argued that it was controlled by the station management and common whenever extra labour was required on a station. Later, while collecting Junjuwa male residents' life stories, I established that these journeys to different stations were used to perform initiations or male rituals as well as offering an opportunity to arrange marriage<sup>5</sup>. One old man, who had been in charge of one of these groups, told me that trips were decided on by the elders, who could then control young men often seen as a threat because they were likely to try to have affairs with the young married women or unmarried ones already promised:

All them single blokes, them young fellas, when they got cheeky or really wild like a young stallion, we bin takin them away, to see places, to do stockwork long way, sometimes we quiet them down too, you know, make them bleed, that's the way, them quiet properly after, no more cheeky, them listen us after (Henry).

In some ways the weakening of ceremonial life had been compensated for by the pyramidal structure that existed in the hierarchical organisation of each cattle station. Older men were engaged in higher status jobs and received better wages than the young and inexperienced. For example, at Fossil Downs station in 1954, all male workers over forty years old received L 3/10/0 monthly, whereas young men in their twenties or under were paid the same wages as women, L2 (DNW, Fossil Downs July 1954). But, twelve years later, in 1966 at Cherrabun station, all stockmen, regardless of their age, were paid \$24 per week, and female workers received half of this amount; old people as well as some teenagers who were doing minor tasks got \$6 (DNW, Cherrabun 2/4/1966). Already at that time young men in their late teens and early twenties had stockmen's status, and were paid as much as older men. I believe that this economic aspect probably did as much damage to the elders' authority as the weakening of ritual life, and added to the conflicts of generations between those born long before the social benefits era and what can be called the 'social benefits' generation.

The combination of changes in rituals, economic autonomy, early access to women as well as such factors as better education, life in settlements, and demographic inequalities has created a wider gap between the generations that has contributed to Junjuwa's instability. In Junjuwa, people tended to group with peers, although among the old and young linguistic affiliations limited age groupings to a language. If young people were less under the control of elders than in the past, these elders still enjoyed privileges<sup>6</sup> and remained in a powerful position at the community level. For example, people who were officially listed as community councillors in 1985 and 1986 (JCCM, Annual General Meeting 1985 and 1986), were those who appeared in the first list of Junjuwa Councillors in 1975 (JCCM, Annual General Meeting 1975), and who before had held a leading position on the mission reserve. But these elders had little if any control over the young people. The lack of control was always put forward in public situations to explain why the young people caused disturbance in community life:

### *Chapter Seven*

These young fellas, Bunuba, Walmajarri, Wangkajunga, all the same, them all the same, them do nothing but humbug, humbug all the way, all the time too, drinkin, fightin, disco, humbug all the way. Well, they don't listen us old fellas, maybe we are slack now, but they don't listen and now that Junjuwa place him proper no good one because them young fellas they're runnin wild (Jack).

But these accusations, even if they were mostly correct, were part of a rhetoric and attitude that channelled the responsibility for conflicts entirely onto young people, mainly in order to avoid open conflicts between elders. Repeatedly, old men who had been in charge of Junjuwa for over a decade claimed that young people should take over and 'be given a fair go'. In late 1986, two Bunuba councillors and one Walmajarri stepped down from their position, suggesting that young men should be chosen instead. Three young men were approached, all sons of those who stepped down, and agreed to their appointment. They came to the following council meeting, but they were obviously very uncomfortable; nevertheless, they took an active part in the meeting. All suggestions and comments they made were ignored or turned down by older councillors. During the following fortnight, two of the newly nominated councillors were so frustrated that they got drunk and went to the chairman's house to abuse him. At the next meeting, the three young councillors remained silent. Shortly before the meeting was closed the chairman's father addressed them:

You're proper rubbish men, today you sit down and say nothin like puppy dogs, but last time you went to my boy's house and gave him a hard time. What make you talk then? Grog, that's your law, that's all you know grog, that grog make you think you're big men, but you're proper rubbish men, that's all, me I can stand up and talk cold sober, but you no way, you're nothin but little puppy dogs, you know nothin about that place Junjuwa, us we make it, no grog, no disco, no video, nothin that time, well look at you you're proper rubbish men alright (Arthur).

Subsequently, these three young men resigned and the former councillors got their positions back. Older men criticised young people but through them they were really criticising modernity and the changes that occurred in Fitzroy Crossing and interfered with their own lives. This discourse of the old men about younger people was somehow similar to that of non-Aboriginal people in Fitzroy Crossing when asked about Aborigines, whom they would describe as unreliable, drunkards, unskilled and lazy.

Young people were opposed to the strong grip that elders had over Junjuwa, but argued they could not do much about it since they were 'left behind, not given a real chance and not taken into account'. Even when individuals were given an opportunity or decided on their own to bridge the generation gap, pressures within each group were so strong that neither a young man nor an elder had much chance of success. A young Bunuba man was offered the position of trainee project officer in early 1985. The purpose of this training was to give him the opportunity to acquire the required knowledge in a

### *Informal associations*

year or so, then to be appointed project officer. After less than three months he resigned, even though he had shown some promising ability, skills and commitment during that time. Several factors led him to resign, but two were important in his decision. First, the old councillors were always trying to test his capability for fulfilling the position; second, the other young Bunuba blamed him for working under the same old people he had previously criticised and accused him of having sold out to the elders.

Anywhere I look people blame me, the old people are tougher with me than with the Gardiya project officer, anything wrong it's my fault and I have to take responsibility for it. My mates, they think I've turned my back to them and I go for the old people. It's too hard, too much hassle, I'd better get back on UB and do nothing, then I can be blamed for something (Marty).

The opposition between young and old people was sometimes manipulated by old men, when they wanted to challenge another elder without a direct confrontation. Individually, each council member had contacts with young people and it was easy to stir them up on an issue that would prompt a reaction from them aimed at the required target. This is what happened during what I called the 'Bunuba coup' (see previous Chapter). The young Bunuba man who challenged Junjuwa's chairman had been convinced to do so by a Bunuba elder who was eager to challenge the chairman's family, which enjoyed too many privileges in his view. Once it was clear that the 'coup' had failed, the old man withdrew his support, which eventually led to the disgrace of the unsuccessful challenger.

In the same way that young people were manipulated when needed, they were blamed whenever a serious offence had been committed in Junjuwa. On such occasions, the elders would get together to accuse the young men, regardless of who they were. Such an attitude was convenient for it avoided blaming an old man but the accusation could still be channelled to him through some young men of his group. A mature Walmajarri man had speared a young Walmajarri man in the leg, who previously had badly injured the son of the former man. The old man was not blamed openly for the injury he inflicted on his opponent, but two young men were accused by the council of bearing responsibility for it since they started the fight. The old man, it was said, had just interfered to help his son, but it was obvious that in attributing guilt to his son that his own responsibility was pointed out. He publicly had to take sides against his son who was heavily fined for causing trouble and disrupting community life.

I have mentioned that old people were getting together, regardless of their language differences, when they dealt with young people. The younger generation itself tended to preserve linguistic differences in groupings. This emphasis on linguistic identity is somewhat paradoxical since it is the young people who have lived nearly all their lives on the UAM reserve and in

### *Chapter Seven*

Junjuwa, nearly all of them speak only Kriol, and know little about the traditional territories associated with their groups.

There were only two events that brought young people together across linguistic boundaries: sport and music. Junjuwa had a basketball team, which competed in the annual Fitzroy Valley Basket Ball carnival. This team included young men from different linguistic groups. For music, it was the local rock and roll band 'Fitzroy Xpress' that provided an avenue, since the band's members were all from different language groups, too. Fitzroy Xpress was a popular band locally and whenever live performances were organised, it always attracted a large crowd. Unfortunately, these performances, or 'discos', as they were called, were marred by fights and violence, mainly because of uncontrolled alcohol consumption. These discos provided a further opportunity to blame the young people: music, alcohol and fights. But, whenever a disco was planned, none of the Junjuwa councillors would agree to go on along to prevent trouble by denying access to intoxicated people, for example.

It was not that the young people were impossible to control, but more likely that old people did not want to make the necessary effort to control them. It was the same attitude towards alcohol consumption: old people blamed the young for their excessive drinking, but I have witnessed many occasions when old people themselves drove young men to the pub. They even, on one occasion, provided a carton of beer for each teenager who had been circumcised, as if the alcohol marked the reaching of adult male status. It was amongst the Bunuba people, and to a lesser degree amongst Walmajarri, that young people were mostly undisciplined. They were the largest groups in Junjuwa which were not always united because of internal competition between leaders. Such divisions were played on by young people. Smaller groups had a better control over their young people, especially if they were still performing subincision and had the opportunities to provide young men with employment on Aboriginal cattle stations.

In Junjuwa, age was a criterion on which associations could be formed. There were several possibilities, since each age group shared similar activities: children / school, young / unemployed, mature / community business, old / pensioners, but there were two important categories: young and old people that played a key role in community life. Differences also existed amongst women based on generation, but they were less perceptible since, as pointed out in the previous section, women usually took care of internal problems on their own. For men it was different; they needed to show their concerns both for the community and the young people, thus these conflicts suited them to the point that they brought them to public attention on purpose.

### **7.3 Christian people**

**"Here we are all Christians, UAM mob all the lot" (Sydney)**

**"It's time for us to get rid of that Christian mob, the mission time is over for more than ten years and they are still bossing us" (Oscar).**

Christianity and Christian identity among Aboriginal people is a rather complex phenomenon<sup>7</sup>. In some areas of Australia Aboriginal people converted a long time ago and for many of these early converts Christianity is associated with Christian beliefs. Elsewhere, in places where Christianity appeared lately, becoming a Christian is a new experience and many people are attracted by it as a different identity. In the Fitzroy Valley, Christianity amongst local Aboriginal people is a recent phenomenon (1952 in Fitzroy Crossing), and it is still gaining many Aboriginal converts. For people established at Fitzroy Crossing, Christianity was embedded in their life as it was associated with the transitional period between life on cattle stations and the creation of villages like Junjuwa. Therefore it was not surprising that almost all people in Junjuwa labelled themselves Christian since, they had all lived for some time on the UAM reserve.

Claiming to be a Christian was not necessarily a religious statement, but rather a way to describe Junjuwa's residents' situation more than anything else. According to age, gender and language group the Christian identity had different meanings whose components varied from historical elements to individual behaviour. Christianity was more confusing for the old people who amalgamated it with the new environment they had to deal with.

I remember them old days, when people, my people bin killed, big mob bin dead in fights with other tribes. A lot of arguments we bin havin that time. Every one tribe bin havin his own place, proper country too, them kids to us we brought them up and look after them, them kids don't know other people, them don't mix. Well, one day that missionary man him bin comin, alright them come with the Good News too. Proper good people them fellas, they stopped the fights with Gardiya [=European] and with other tribes too. We all settled down alright, quiet all the lot [=the whole lot], now here in Junjuwa we live peacefully altogether, we are UAM people alright, all related too, well this is us Junjuwa people, big mob Christian people (Bradley).

This was the stereotyped statement heard from nearly all old people (men and women) who belonged to the people's church group. That group was formed at the beginning of Junjuwa community and its members were Walmajarri and Wangkajunga who first resided at the UAM camp in the mid



### *Chapter Seven*

1950s. Their settlement in the Fitzroy Valley was facilitated by their conversion and the subsequent support they received from the missionaries. Some of these people, mostly Wangkajunga and some late Walmajarri migrants, were also involved in ritual activities, but none of them saw any major contradictions between Christianity and Aboriginal ceremonial life<sup>8</sup>.

Another aspect of using the Christians label was that Christians do not drink alcohol, nor do they gamble, swear or smoke. Since the first three of these activities were the main cause of disturbances in Junjuwa, Christians removed themselves from most conflicts as well as claiming to work for a better life. Claiming to be Christian was also a way to put some distance between oneself and the cattle station life, during the course of which Aborigines adopted many of the non-Aboriginal stockmen's behaviours. Christian people were then 'new people', those from after the cattle station era. Differences in behaviours existed between local white Christians and non-Christians, the former being a model for Aboriginal converts. Here a further confusion arose because a person who did not drink and gamble would miss a lot of the community's social life. Many Christians in Junjuwa had their own interpretations of Christian behaviour that did not strictly conform with that of the missionaries. On the other hand, some heavy drinkers or their relatives thought that by converting, their drinking problem would be solved overnight. A Bunuba man in his forties, one of the few associated with UAM, whose wife's older brother was a heavy drinker who created conflicts within the household, decided to take him to the pastor:

This wardu [=brother-in-law] of mine he's too much humbug [=trouble], I have to take him to the pastor. That man is good, he will open my wardu ears to the Lord. Then he will be alright, he will forget about that grog. That's the Christian law for all the churches: if you listen to the Word you don't drink, this is the new way and us Christians we like it like that (Walter).

Another example was when two young men went to church for the first time one Sunday. The following Tuesday they went to the pastor's house and swore at him, because they got drunk on Monday night even though they had attended service the day before. They listened to the Word and it did not work; consequently, they become really upset and went on criticising Christian people for days, telling everyone their Law did not work at all.

Many components of Christian identity made it a particularly attractive one for Junjuwa people: it explained their current settlement in Junjuwa, and it could solve most of their problems. Christian ideology was also put forward to justify Junjuwa's political attitude. Junjuwa leaders were opposed to land rights issues as they were promoted by the KLC, and were against linguistic group oriented claims which should instead be made at the community level (see Chapter Five). Christian Aborigines got together regardless of their individual backgrounds to communicate, sing and pray. Thus, it was not possible for a Christian Aboriginal community to be engaged in a land rights issue that was based on claims made by a sub-group of the community, because such claims

### *Informal associations*

were in conflict with a Christian identity. A further element that made land claims impossible was the potential for confrontation with White people it created, because when they became Christian, Aborigines had to forget all antagonism that existed between them and non-Aboriginal people. This attitude to land rights was a particularly strong element of Christianity in the Fitzroy Valley. One of the early Aboriginal leaders in the Noonkanbah events converted to Christianity once the crisis was over. He admitted publicly his past mistakes, especially in creating confrontations between Whites and Aborigines. He subsequently created the Kimberley Christian Fellowship (KCF)<sup>9</sup>. This was one of the reasons why Junjuwa's chairman, himself associated with the KCF, was convinced that a better future for Junjuwa could only be reached with the help of Christianity:

You see, only Christianity can solve our problems: grog, gambling, tribe differences, and it is the best way to bring people together too, from all the Kimberley and even further. Also, we don't want to be against Gardiya, or government, like with the land right business, but side by side with them, not behind not in front, you will see us Christians we are the future of Junjuwa, only us can make things becoming good (Andrew).

The strong links between Junjuwa's chairman and Christianity were not appreciated by everybody. For many young Junjuwa residents, Christianity was associated with the UAM and what it represented for them: they grew up in dormitories, were forced to pray and to abide by missionaries' rules, and once adults they claimed the missionaries patronised them. Further, in the eyes of young people, as opposed to old people, Christianity belonged to the past, and was in no way the best possible future for Junjuwa. This sentiment was particularly strong amongst Bunuba, and not only young people in this case, for they believed it was UAM people who took Bunuba land away from its rightful owners and gave it to the Walmajarri. This was a direct reference to the privileged relationships that existed between missionaries and Walmajarri people. Thus few Bunuba considered themselves as Christians because it was too closely associated with the UAM in Fitzroy Crossing.

I don't want to be a Christian, I cannot go for that UAM mob who made the Walmajarri boss in Bunuba country. Anyway we will get that mission land back soon, the Christians well they can go somewhere else with Walmajarri people in Walmajarri country (James).

Those who had similar views were not all agnostic; some Christians would not label themselves as such because they rejected UAM people and what they represented.

Finally, Christians often organised joint activities: they travelled outside the Kimberley to attend conventions, they went on trips that mixed Bible studies and Aboriginal economic activities, they gathered every Sunday for services that were followed by a lunch at the UAM compound, and held night

### *Chapter Seven*

services that included dinner once a week. Therefore, joining them could represent for some a way to escape the boredom of Junjuwa life. In Junjuwa many people spent days in their homes, mainly because they did not have anything to do, but also because they did not have the required status to join groups that had activities. For these people, Christianity was the quickest way to acquire a status that gave opportunities to participate in meetings and trips that kept them busy. Being involved in Christian activities was also a way to limit pressures from relatives during pension weeks, not least because Christianity offered the chance to step aside from the system of duties, obligations and responsibilities that one had towards relatives, since these practices belonged to the past and Christians saw themselves as 'new people'.

Not all the non-Aboriginal Christians were able to cope with the particular use and manipulations of Christianity that existed in Junjuwa. Some people, especially those from the Mission, were offended in their Christian beliefs and attempted to force Aborigines to give up on-going ceremonial activities. Tensions arose such as during initiation ceremonies in which almost all Junjuwa people participated. One night, while a circumcision ceremony was being held, the superintendent from the UAM drove the KCF bus right up to the ceremonial ground while people were singing and dancing. He flashed the headlights and beeped the horn several times, to remind Christian people to call them to attend a service. This attitude was most offensive and those attending the ceremony asked him to leave. He drove the empty bus back to the UAM. Subsequently, many Christians from Junjuwa, including leaders of the people's church group, dropped their Christian involvement for a while and did not attend any services for several weeks.

As opposed to gender and age, involvement with Christianity was voluntary. In Junjuwa, it was not a simple question of Christians against non-Christians: people labelled themselves Christians or refused to do so, according to their own understanding of this identity and its content. Christianity was an avenue for people with low status in Junjuwa (young woman, widows, old single men), to join a group that was easy to access and from which withdrawal was always possible. Still, Christianity was also combined with old age and leadership in rituals to become an identity somehow representative of Junjuwa people. Groupings on Christian grounds depended again on what people sought in Christianity, and were combined with other criteria that delimited associations and/or groups (gender, age, language...)

## **7.4 Full and mixed descent**

**"It's not because my father was a whitefellow, that I am not a full blood Bunuba" (Sandra)**

**" These half-caste people, they think they are better than us because they have some Gardiya blood" (Shirley).**

Aboriginal people of mixed descent were a minority in Fitzroy Crossing. In Junjuwa they represented only a small percentage of the total population<sup>10</sup> but were present in all language groups. They were considered as fully Aboriginal although they had a different status from people of full descent. This status was first given to them during the cattle station era and further developed under the missionaries.

When Aborigines of mixed descent lived on a cattle station, they resided with other Aborigines but enjoyed privileges. They received payments for their work, even before people of full descent were granted any wages (Sullivan 1983:90), and once wages had been implemented in the cattle industry, those people of mixed descent still had higher status than Aborigines of full descent but were never equal to white stockmen. Further differences, such as gifts of stockmen's clothes for men, drinking alcohol with the non-Aboriginal employees (Sullivan 1983:42) and responsibility over homestead workers for women, contributed to Aborigines of mixed descent being in an 'in-between' position. They were strongly encouraged to marry amongst themselves, and they usually received better training than people of full descent. Most of these attitudes were connected with the assimilation policy, according to which 'half-castes', as they were called then, would ultimately be assimilated into the white society, although at the bottom of the social ladder.

While non-Aborigines made distinctions between the children of full and mixed descent, Aboriginal people of full descent did not make any distinction between them. All information I collected relating to this issue, both from Aboriginal people of full and mixed descent, confirmed that the latter were always considered as full Aborigines. Children of mixed descent were given Aboriginal names, they were included in the kinship network, they underwent initiation ceremonies, they spoke the language of their group and nothing in their behaviour could differentiate them from Aboriginal kids of full descent. It seems that for Aborigines, the skin complexion of mixed descent children was not a relevant criterion for considering them as different. However, this attitude changed once people of mixed descent got to adulthood, when they acquired privileges that were denied to people of full descent. Aborigines of mixed descent were the favourite target of missionaries, who relied on them to propagate Christian ideas to others. Therefore, many mixed descent people

### *Chapter Seven*

received a good education in English and some were offered opportunities to acquire high school qualifications in Broome, Port Hedland or even Perth. In this process a small percentage of mixed descent Aborigines took this opportunity to sever all links with their Aboriginal families<sup>11</sup>. Those who returned to live in Fitzroy Crossing have since had many chances to leave the area but somehow do not seem to be able to stay away from it for very long.

Within Junjuwa, residents of mixed descent lived in houses located in the part of the community associated with their mother's language, although they did not always live in the mother's house if she was married<sup>12</sup>. Whenever it was possible, they had a tendency to live together in the same house. On the Bunuba side of Junjuwa there was one house occupied only by Bunuba of mixed descent. One side of the house was occupied by females and the other by males. All the house's occupants either had the same Aboriginal mother and different non-Aboriginal fathers, or the same non-Aboriginal father and different Aboriginal mothers. A similar house did not exist in the Walmajarri side because of a housing shortage. Consequently, a group of Walmajarri people of mixed descent rented a house located in the town site. They were labelled as Junjuwa residents and spent most of their time in Junjuwa.

In Junjuwa, the expression 'half-caste' was commonly used, but it only applied to Aborigines of mixed descent from outside the Kimberley, or those who had moved into the area on their own and did not have Aboriginal relatives in Fitzroy Crossing. There were some instances in which Junjuwa residents of mixed descent were called 'half-caste'. This happened only when they did not act according to the 'Aboriginal way'. It was common to hear people state:

You know poor bugger, he/she is a half-caste, sometimes he/she doesn't know were he/she stands...

That 'in-between' position was reinforced by the contacts and relations that Aborigines of mixed descent had locally with both the White and the Aboriginal communities. They lived in Aboriginal settlements and were seen as 'black-fellows' by non-Aborigines, but they had a better command of English, and held positions in town that could not be ignored by White people. Therefore, they were frequently given access to the White community's social life, from which Aborigines of full descent were excluded. For example, none of the mixed descent people who lived in Fitzroy Crossing drank at the 'black fellow bar'. They were likely to get together in the garden bar or even to mix with non-Aboriginal with whom they worked. Similarly, when parties were organised by local whites, invitations were often extended to most people of mixed descent.

There were a proportion of positions in various government bodies, agencies and local enterprises that were made available to Aborigines. All but one or two were occupied by people of mixed descent. Through these positions

### *Informal associations*

Aboriginals of mixed descent had, in many cases, a direct involvement with Junjuwa. Therefore, they worked for and with their own people, even if sometimes kinship obligations and duties interfered with the way they dealt with Junjuwa. Most people of mixed descent were exposed to strong pressures from relatives they found difficult to handle. Partly because of that aspect but also because of local policies, they rarely worked for extended periods at the same place. The turnover was between nine months and a year, and over a period of several years the same people occupied most of the positions available to Aborigines in Fitzroy Crossing. This situation did not always please Aborigines of full descent who were frustrated at having little if any access to local jobs, even though they held the qualification for appointment.

A position for a female liaison officer was advertised, to work for the local branch of the DCS. There were already four Aborigines employed by DCS in Fitzroy Crossing, and three of them were of mixed descent. Several applicants underwent the examination test and one Aboriginal of full descent, a Walmajarri female from Junjuwa, was the best qualified. She was one of the very few local Aborigines of full descent who had attended high school outside the Kimberley, but she did not have any working experience, nor was she used to dealing with non-Aboriginals. She started in her new position on a Monday and by the following Friday she had resigned. At this time there was one Aboriginal female of mixed descent who was unemployed. She had previously worked in several positions in Fitzroy Crossing and applied for that one but she did not perform well enough at the test to be appointed. The three mixed descent employees of DCS had made things very difficult for the newly appointed liaison officer. Since she could not communicate easily with the white staff, she had to try to handle that pressure on her own but quickly realised that it was more than she could take. The following week the unemployed person of mixed-descent was appointed to the position.

There were other occasions like this during the time I was at Fitzroy Crossing and each time they benefited people of mixed descent. People of mixed descent thus tended to have better job opportunities, relations with non-Aborigines and a relative independence towards Junjuwa all of which created strong tensions between them and Aboriginal people of full descent, especially amongst the younger people:

Them half-castes, they really think they're white, look at them: they drink with Gardiya, they don't look at us, they have good jobs, good money, houses in town... What's wrong with them, they forgot they're blackfellas or what? Well me myself, I don't mix with them, some are my relatives too, but they really think they're too good for us blackfellas, well I don't care about them myself, one day they will know where their real people are, one day they will feel sorry for all what they are doing now, treat us like shit, one day they will come back to us (Jack).

Aboriginal people of mixed descent for their part were very frustrated because they felt that their relatives did not acknowledge their contribution to

### *Chapter Seven*

the community. Mixed descent people often acted as brokers between government bodies or agencies on one side and their relatives or Junjuwa on the other side, but any unsuccessful initiative from them was interpreted negatively by their Aboriginal families:

I try all I can to obtain some equipment for Junjuwa's children, to be put in the drop-in-centre. I lodged a request ages ago, I don't know if I will get what I've asked for, but I'll keep trying. Well, every time I go to Junjuwa people blame me, they think I got the stuff and gave it to another community or I don't know what... They say I forget about my own people, this is not true, but they are really hard with me and that makes me really sad, sometimes I feel like running away from here (Julia).

Junjuwa residents of mixed descent regularly left Fitzroy Crossing. They usually did it to avoid pressure from relatives as well as to put some distance between them and situations in which they were always caught in the middle. They could more easily get jobs in the Fitzroy Valley or even outside if needed. Men usually moved to a cattle station located far away from Fitzroy and women had opportunities for positions in Derby, Halls Creek or even Broome.

One Bunuba young woman of mixed descent left Fitzroy for Broome where she had been offered a position at the Department of Social Security. I saw her one week after she had moved to Broome. She was very happy about the town and her new position and felt relieved she did not have to face the same constant pressure as in Fitzroy Crossing. I saw her again three months later when she came to Fitzroy Crossing for a funeral and spent the night in our house because she did not want to stay overnight in Junjuwa. She said she was missing her family, her country and that she intended to come back to live and work at Fitzroy Crossing. From all that she said that night, it was clear that in Broome her identity had become an issue for her: over there she was only a 'coloured' person, and not a 'full' Aboriginal as she was in Fitzroy. Moreover, she always had to prove herself to white and Aboriginal people alike, whereas in Fitzroy Crossing she was respected by both communities. Neither when she spoke Bunuba nor Kriol, her two main languages, was she understood. Thus, in Broome she also faced pressure, although in a different way than in Fitzroy, and she could not tolerate that situation any longer:

Here in Fitzroy I am somebody, a full Bunuba, I have my mob, my country, my language everything. Over there, I am nothing, I have to tell the people that I am Aboriginal and not a coloured person, otherwise they treated me like one... I don't belong to that place, I belong to here, to Junjuwa people, to the Bunuba mob (Julia).

Despite the problems with their Aboriginal families, people of mixed descent had a good understanding of the problems faced locally by all Aborigines and attempted to solve them at community level. In the process they often got together on the basis of gender. They compared and shared experiences as well as the possibilities they had for improving the situation by using their positions and planned action. Gender was probably the most

### *Informal associations*

effective basis on which people of mixed descent could get together, although at times it was challenged by linguistic loyalties. When conflicts existed between speakers of different languages within Junjuwa, mixed descent Aboriginals privileged a grouping based on language rather than on gender. These smaller associations would break down whenever tensions arose within families of speakers of one language; subsequently, mixed descent people would group with those from their own kinship network (same father or mother).

Overall, people of mixed descent had more opportunities than people of full descent to get together outside Junjuwa, thus they often played a key role in the settlement of conflicts. For example, their relatives from Junjuwa would pass on information to them to be relayed to the opposite faction in the conflict, through the channel of people of mixed descent who belonged to it.

## **7.5 Gang based action**

**"Us Warriors we used to fight Rebels, one day an old bloke told us we're one same mob, now we fight the Duckey Boys"  
(Lindsay).**

Grouping in gangs was usually limited to school aged children and teenagers under the age of sixteen. Over sixteen, teenagers had legal access to the local pub and gang members joined one of the drinking associations that I will discuss in the next section. Youth gangs seemed to be a recent phenomenon for Fitzroy Crossing Aboriginal population. Only people born since 1950 recalled gangs existing during their youth. Older people talked about gangs but they were really working associations: a group of young stockmen or a party of drovers and did not relate to the youth gangs.

Gangs formed at school as early as grades two and three, when children of the same community and language stuck together. I am not sure that the emergence of gang leaders could be dated as early as that, but most gangs members I interviewed confirmed that they got together during their early schooling. From this period up to the time gang members reached their early teens, gang activities were limited to games, in the school yard or within Junjuwa. These groups of children were called gangs by the kids themselves, and by teenagers, but in my opinion these groupings did not have all the characteristics that established and recognised gangs had. A gang had a name and a leader, had either all male or female membership and was made up of people affiliated to the same language who lived in one community and were bound by close genealogical ties. Gang meetings took place regularly at the same location, to discuss and plan gang activities.



### Chapter Seven

In Junjuwa I knew of eight gangs that had all the characteristics mentioned above. It was likely that others existed but they were not as prominent. Some gang names referred to the language spoken by its members ('Bunuba Chicks'), others had a name inspired by American movies ('Warriors') or that depicted the behaviour of members ('Midnight strikers'). During my first field trip to Junjuwa, gangs were less numerous and had less colourful names, nor did their members wear distinctive garments as was the case in 1985/1987. I have mentioned in an earlier Chapter the importance of videotapes in people's lives: videos had a very strong influence on gang behaviours, language, clothes and graffiti<sup>13</sup>.

What was important for a gang was to control one area of the bush outside Junjuwa and to maintain solidarity amongst members. Both were expressed in graffiti that listed, under the name of the gang, the initials of all gang members, often followed by the words 'for ever' and the year. Graffiti appeared on any sort of physical structure all over Junjuwa and throughout town. Gangs of young teenagers rarely fought but relied on older relatives and members of allied gangs, to chase other gangs from a territory in order to control it. The main 'territories' over which gangs of youngsters were competing were the 'drop-in centre' in Junjuwa<sup>14</sup>, the video coin machines at the supermarket and at the butcher shop, as well as one or two swimming spots on the Fitzroy close to town.

When they got older, teenagers ventured further away from Junjuwa, usually at night time. Gang activities changed accordingly. Some gang members attempted to obtain cans of beer from older relatives while others got involved in break-ins. All break-ins in 1985-1987 at Fitzroy Crossing perpetuated by teenagers had been planned and carried out by gang members. Apart from their different clothing and their involvement in various activities, gang members were involved in fights that opposed two or more gangs. Fights between gangs were sometimes carried across generations, such as those in which young Bunuba males from Junjuwa were opposed to Walmajarri teenagers from Bayulu, a conflict that had been going on for over a decade. Often fights were the result of conflict between members of different gangs or just erupted without any apparent reason. Since fights and violence were part of gang activities, involvement in a fight was more important than with whom the fight occurred. These fights were sometimes at the origin of serious conflicts, such as when a child had been badly hurt during gang fights or when gang leaders ignored whom they were fighting.

We are 'Warriors', all Walmajarri boys from Bayulu. Our cousins and big brothers them were 'Warriors' too. Them bin say them always had big fights with them mongrels 'Rebels' from Junjuwa. Alright, now I am the boss for them 'Warriors'. One day I bin meetin that damn kid, at the movie in Fitzroy School. Him bin tell me: 'fuck off you Warrior shit, you're on Rebel land...' Well next day my gang and myself we got them, we fight them alright them Rebels mob. We're proper good because my cousin-brother him bin told us

### *Informal associations*

them trick from that Kung-fu business. But now today, we bin havin big mob of trouble with our own people for that kid from that Rebel mob, him bin proper crook one at the hospital. Well, I don't know before that them Rebels from Junjuwa them were proper Walmajarri people just like us. My big brother him bin told me, them Rebels all one mob, all Wangkajunga them fellas... Well, that time them don't have that name... Us Warriors we don't know, that new name story, but now we have big mob of problem...we gonna find one more gang to fight properly, show them other gangs that us 'Warriors' we are proper strong gang too (Jonathan).

This dispute was settled through a collective fight organised by two older Walmajarri males from the opposed sides (Junjuwa and Bayulu). These collective fights were also organised to settle long-running disputes between gangs or whenever gang members had been attacked while they were alone or too drunk to fight. Usually all gang members paraded behind their leader from the community to the race-course. The race-course was selected as a battle field for collective fights because it was not associated with any gang's territory nor Aboriginal community. Once both gangs had reached the spot, each leader selected ten members of his gang, who fought ten opponents chosen by the other gang. The victorious gang was the one whose fighters were still standing up when all opponents had been knocked out.

When gang members reached the age that granted them legal access to alcohol, a gang would undergo a change yet would not necessarily disperse altogether but, rather, diversify into a wider range of activities. Some members who turned sixteen were tempted to join other gangs. They occasionally split up to form several drinking associations because they were too many to form one such association. Members attended discos and become involved in affairs with female members from allied gangs. When a gang decided to attend a disco, members usually met at the disco place after heavy drinking sessions in small groups. Then they had to find out if any of their usual targets from other gang(s) were around, otherwise they had to find somebody else to challenge. Discos were regularly marred by fights as I have already pointed out, and provided gangs with a good opportunity to settle old conflicts or to start new ones.

As far as affairs between members of allied groups were concerned, they had to follow some rules. First, a person had to make sure that he/she was not about to start an affair with one of his/her fellow gang member's 'sweethearts'. Second, a male gang member always protected female relatives and girlfriends against males from other gangs. If the first point was not respected, it led to conflict within the gang that was likely to degenerate into a dispute at the level of 'the community'. The second point allowed all sorts of strategies to develop. For example, some girls from one gang might try to attract the attention of young men from another gang, who later had to deal with the girls' protectors. Interviews I conducted with female gang members in Junjuwa indicated that young women often relied on male members from an allied gang to get rid of a boyfriend whenever they wished to terminate an affair.

### *Chapter Seven*

Fights and disputes were not limited to male gangs, but it was difficult to get access to data on female gangs in Junjuwa. The only opportunity I had was when female gang members were eager to inform me about their activities:

These 'Blue Angels' (a Walmajarri female gang from Junjuwa), we gav'em a proper hiding last night. Proper bitch them girls, one wantta to get that boy from me. Well, I bin callin on them 'Bunuba Chicks', my gang and we gav'em a hiding. Some of them 'Midnight Strikers' (a Wangkajunga female gang from Christmas Creek) were in town too, but they stay away from us, well they're proper scared, because us 'Bunuba Chicks' we're the best girls gang in Fitzroy, no worries about this (Cindy).

Solidarity amongst female members of a gang was very strong. Three members of the 'Bunuba Chicks' were employed at the Junjuwa office. They were in charge of all the paperwork for the community. In mid-1986, Junjuwa expanded some of its enterprises<sup>15</sup> and one extra office worker was needed. Many Walmajarri councillors had already complained about the monopoly of community positions by Bunuba. In order to please them, the community council decided to appoint a Walmajarri woman in that position. The young woman was a member of the 'Blue Angels'. The office workers did not react to her appointment but gradually they all pulled out from work: one was sick, the second wanted to take some leave and the third pretended she was pregnant. The newly appointed person was not familiar with paperwork and she tried to do her best but there was not much she could do. The Bunuba girls resisted pressures and threats from the chairman, the council and the non-Aboriginal project officer. One night they managed to find an excuse to fight the 'Blue Angels' but their real target was the office girl. The following day was a pension day, and she could not come to work because of slight injuries contracted during the fight. The three former office workers were begged to return to work, they agreed on the condition that one of their fellow gang members was appointed instead of the Walmajarri girl. Everybody agreed on their condition and the same day four 'Bunuba Chicks' came to work at Junjuwa office.

In some special circumstances when local gangs were threatened by outsiders, all gangs from Fitzroy got together and fought to chase their opponents out of town. This happened once when a gang from Balgo came to Fitzroy Crossing. The night before they arrived, Balgo gang members attacked a young man from a Bayulu gang and stabbed him in the throat with a screw driver. All the Balgo gangs were feared in the Fitzroy Valley and whenever they were in Fitzroy Crossing local gangs overcame their conflicts and got together. The day after the stabbing incident, the Balgo gang went to a disco organised at Fitzroy Crossing's Basket Ball court. They had only been at the disco for a few minutes, when gangs from Junjuwa, Kurnangki, and Bayulu attacked them. Their only chance was to leave town which they did as quickly as they could.



**Plate 8**

'The Rebel's car'. This car belonged to the leader of the Rebel gang (male Walmajarri from Junjuwa), who had bought it three weeks before this photo was taken. One night he was arrested for drunk-driving and was jailed for ten days. The police officers towed the vehicle to Junjuwa and parked it in front of his house in the Walmajarri section. The vehicle was vandalised and most parts stolen during a raid conducted by members of another gang while the Rebels were out of town. Once the gang leader was released from jail, the gang members got together, and covered the wrecked vehicle with graffiti. It subsequently became their meeting place.

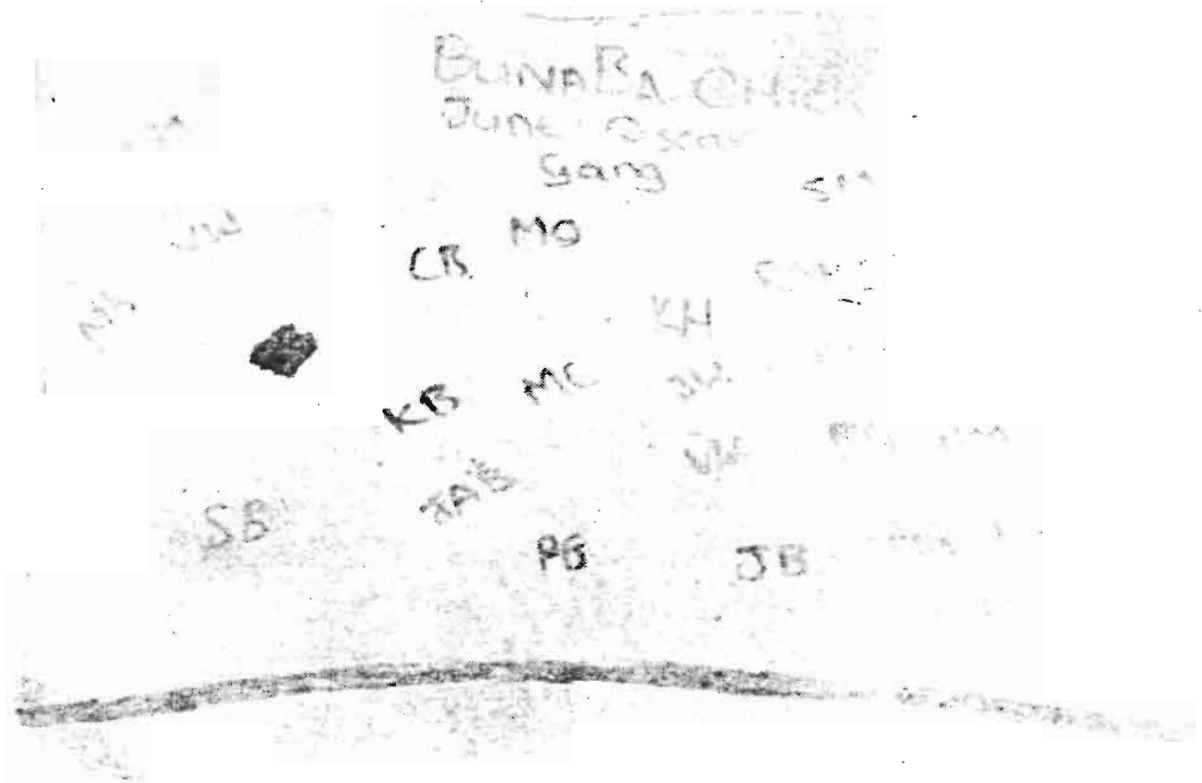


Plate 9

Graffiti by members of 'Bunuba Chick', a female youth gang. It was located on a derelict basketball court which was part of the mission compound. This had been the gang's meeting place and territory a few years ago. The graffiti is fully representative of that by gang members at locations they see as their territory: the names of the gang and leaders are in full, while the rest of the gang members put their initials only.

### *Informal associations*

Gangs provided an opportunity for young people to form their own independent associations. The criteria for belonging ranged from age group, community of residence, linguistic affiliation, to gender and kinship ties. Activities of gangs differed according to members age, from 'hide and seek' for the younger ones to drinking and fighting for the older. These gangs were a source of frequent conflicts both within Junjuwa and the town. They represented a further basis of complaints made by old people against the younger generation. Gangs were a recent phenomenon and were heavily influenced by American models of youth gangs depicted in videotapes available in Fitzroy Crossing.

## **7.6 Drinking associations**

**"Me, I only drink with my mob, cousin-brothers all the lot"  
(Steven).**

In Junjuwa it was very difficult to make a clear distinction between drinkers and non-drinkers. Those of the second category were very few. They were mostly strong Christians, old people who had never drunk or people who used to drink but stopped because of serious health or family problems. Many people, especially community councillors, who criticised drinking and drinkers would themselves take the first opportunity to get drunk, either when they were outside Fitzroy Crossing or on special occasions.

Therefore it was not really significant to find out who was drinking and who was not, but more important to know with whom and where people drank. Drinking alcohol was a social activity in Junjuwa, and I did not see or hear of any individual who ever drank on its own. People got together to drink, first to share alcoholic beverages but also to share problems associated with alcohol consumption in groups. People from Junjuwa very rarely drank in groups of more than eight or ten people. But a group of four or five persons was a minimum for a drinking association. The size of these associations were not fixed once and for all but fluctuated according to situation: because people were away in jail, had no cash available or the opportunity of joining another association, but membership fluctuated within a well defined group of people. Membership of a given drinking association was based on several criteria: place of residence, language, gender and kinship ties.

People from different Aboriginal communities never mixed to drink except in the 'Blackfellow' bar. But drinking sessions in groups were different from drinking at the pub. People who drank at the 'Blackfellow' bar usually did not belong to any drinking associations or for some specific reasons did not join the one they used to drink with. Within each community, drinking, with many

### *Chapter Seven*

other activities, was organised along language lines. All discussions, and talking while people drank, were in their own language (although most of the swearing was in English). Gender was also an important criterion but not in the sense of female as opposed to male. It is true that men were likely to drink together, but drinking associations of women only were very rare. A group of women drinking alone in the bush at night would have been interpreted by Aboriginal men and women as an open invitation for sexual intercourse. Moreover, even if women decided to drink on their own, once drunk it was likely that they would have been sexually assaulted. Consequently, women had to join an existing drinking association whose members were mostly male. Mixed drinking associations were frequent, usually with a majority of men, and the women generally being either sisters or wives.

According to its origin (community of residence + language), a drinking association had several possible drinking spots where its members gathered to drink. A member of a particular drinking association always knew where he/she could join their group. Drinking spots were associated with local Aboriginal communities and languages. People who had access to these spots, on the basis of these two criteria, protected them from outsiders. This protection of drinking spots was done by drinkers but also by non-drinkers for whom outsiders who drank at the same spot as their relatives represented a chance of a fight or for trouble in which they would be involved. I had several occasions to drive people between Junjuwa and the pub or between the pub and a particular drinking place, and was subsequently able to map the most popular drinking spots (see Map 9). Apparently these drinking spots had been selected more than a decade ago, but some new ones were still available for those who did not mind isolation. Taxis were available in Fitzroy Crossing from 1984 and more people had access to vehicles, which made possible transportation to drinking places located far away from the pub and even from town. Before it was important to be close to the pub, and with direct access to the community.

You see us Bunuba, all old 'Duckey Boys', we drink here, right under that big fig tree. Number one place this one, if you too drunk and you wanna sleep, well you're on the shade when you wake up in the morning. We are next to that hotel, when you want more grog you just go there and get some. Look behind, well there is that creek, if you need one good cool bath to sober you up a bit this is the place now. Now look behind you, see that track, well him go straight to Junjuwa, no humbug on the way, no drinking mob from other places, all the way back home, I know that track all the way, even dead drunk I can go back home, when I get to Junjuwa I am getting sober already, no humbug, I lie done and sleep, this is the way we drink here with my mob (Patrick).

The size of drinking associations was influenced by three factors: the source and amount of cash; the fact that not everybody had cash, more people often meant less alcohol for each drinker; and by the need to have enough people to face other groups should a fight break out. The ideal composition of a drinking association was when each of its members was receiving unemployment benefits but got their cheques on a different day<sup>16</sup>, and the

### *Informal associations*

remaining members were pensioners. Older people did not always drink with younger ones but many drinking associations grouped people from different age groups. Usually younger men who called each other brothers (full and classificatory brothers), were grouped with one or two mother's brothers or father's brothers, and one or two women, to form an ideally composed drinking association.

Amongst members, sentiments of solidarity existed but were not always very strong. For example, some people would leave one group of drinkers to join another one when it was their turn to pay for alcohol. Nevertheless solidarity within drinking associations worked efficiently when a member was insulted, challenged or whenever a fight occurred between groups of drinkers. For this last category of events, it was very important that at least one member of a drinking group drink less than the others. In a given drinking association no-one was 'appointed' to this job but members would decide amongst themselves before each drinking session whose turn it was to 'take the watch'. Thus, he would be able to get support from relatives in Junjuwa if needed or could identify the offenders for retaliation.

The main causes of conflicts and disputes that degenerated into fights was the lack of control in speech. Often, when people were drunk they used, intentionally or not, the wrong term of address to a relative. Those addressed wrongly were extremely quick to react and did it violently, since using the wrong term of address was an offence. Another common reason was when a man or woman started to mention secret matters without regard to who could hear what they were saying. In that case reactions from those offended were even quicker and extremely violent. Conflicts, disputes and fights that involved members of drinking associations were either internal or external. In the case of internal fights, only those directly involved in the argument settled it through fighting, others did not interfere. I saw once a husband beating, punching and kicking his wife during a drinking session. Publicly he accused her of drinking with other men while he was away, but in fact she had purchased beer with his money and drank it all before he could join the drinking group. None of the other people in that group reacted. The man was drunk and could not control himself, the woman was also drunk and unable to react or to protect herself from the blows. When a member of a particular drinking association was challenged by an outsider, then the conflict involved the entire group. Once again causes were multiple but the following ones were the most common: misuse of kin terms, drinking at the wrong spot, old disputes between families, revenge for relatives' death or injuries, beer stolen, and love affairs.

Fights between intoxicated people were extremely violent and did not seem to have any limits. Often the people involved were totally unequally matched: several people would not hesitate to attack a single person. Many of the deaths that occurred in Fitzroy Crossing in the last six to eight years were alcohol related<sup>17</sup>, and among those a high percentage were caused by fights. There was always a real danger of these fights getting out of control. Some work



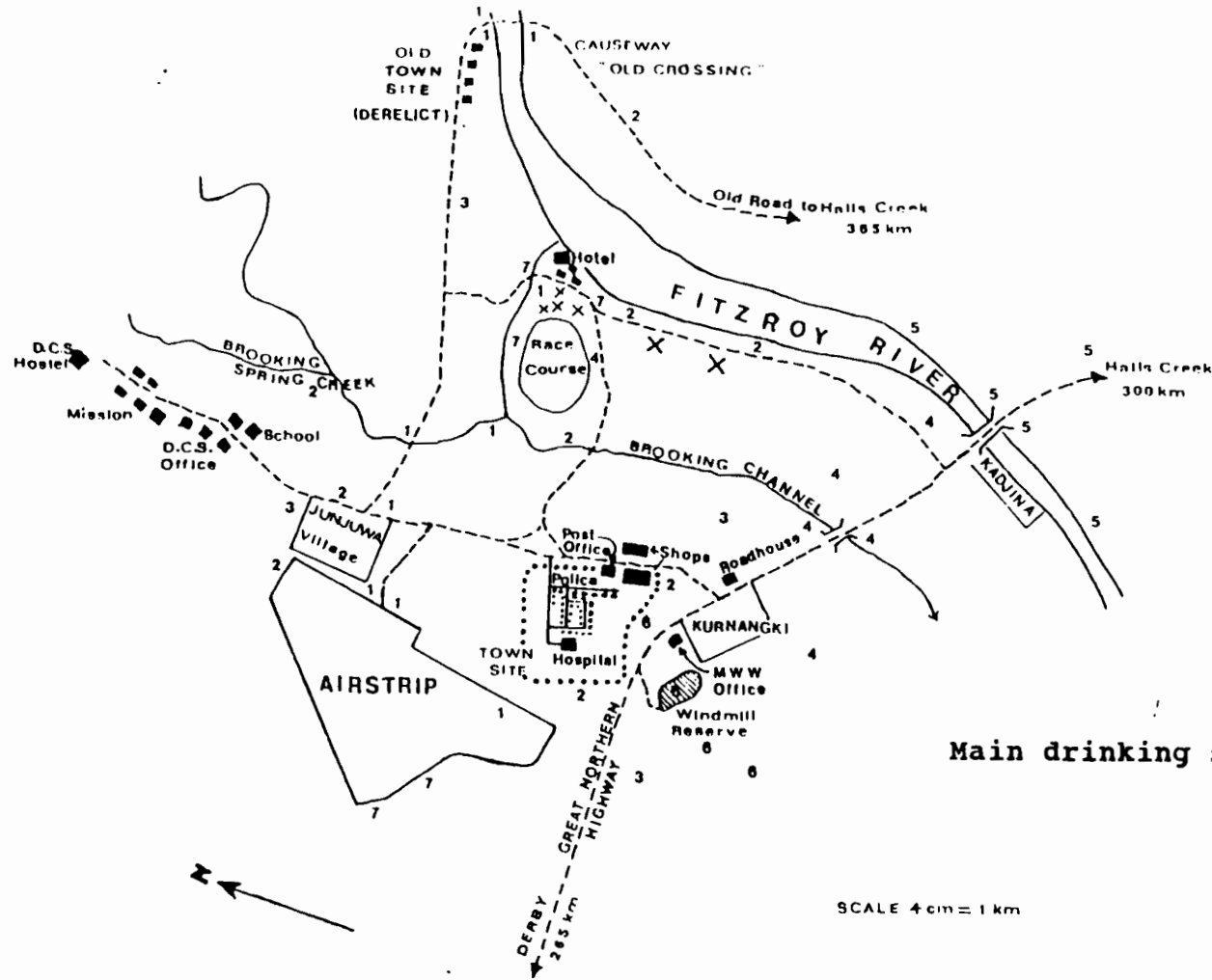
### *Chapter Seven*

was done by the local police to prevent fighting, but the most efficient control was done by non-drinkers from each group in Junjuwa who checked on their own relatives' behaviour throughout the night. They travelled back and forth, in private and community vehicles, between Junjuwa and the drinking spots. They took back home those too drunk to walk or to defend themselves if a fight broke out. They also limited the amount of alcohol available, when they realised that people had had enough to drink. Extra cans were confiscated by relatives and given back the following day. They also attempted to defuse conflicts and disputes. What was really surprising in their attitudes was that a sober person never took advantage of the situation to settle an old conflict with any intoxicated person:

This drunk one, him don't know, him like a baby, he sleeps he cries he talks silly that's all. You have to help him but you can't hit him or anything. It's not him who talk swear and abuse you, it's that grog, that grog he make him proper silly in his head too, but him he don't know, tomorrow when proper sober, you tell him everything, well him proper shame for good, but when him drunk you have to help him, like a baby. (Arthur)

When someone failed to return to Junjuwa by two or three o'clock in the morning, relatives immediately organised a search party. They asked his fellow drinking association members where they had drunk that night and if they had any argument with other people. Indeed, Junjuwa people really panicked whenever one of their relatives had been left alone intoxicated in the bush at night, for usually the missing person was found dead the following day. This was another reason why drinking associations existed: they provided protection for individuals within an organised group structure. Similarly the role played by non-drinkers in drinking activities was important to the drinkers themselves. They protected their relatives, but also tried to prevent fights between different drinking association members to prevent the fight spreading to Junjuwa more generally.

Drinking associations were small groupings formed by several former members of the same gang, together with female relatives and older men. Each drinking association had the choice of several drinking spots. Activities were not limited to drinking but extended to fighting and the like. Non-drinkers were also involved with drinking associations because they had to control their relatives' behaviour. Although these groupings were small and their activities limited they had a strong influence on life in Junjuwa.



Legend:

- 1: drinking spots of Bunuba from Junjuwa
- 2: drinking spots of Walmajarri from Junjuwa
- 3: drinking spots of Wangkajunga from Junjuwa
- 4: drinking spots of Kurnangki residents
- 5: drinking spots of Bayulu residents
- 6: drinking spots of Mandi Pardi residents or of Wangkajunga from settlements outside town
- 7: drinking spots of Walmajarri from settlements outside town
- X: open drinking spots

MAP 9

Main drinking spots in Fitzroy Crossing 1986

Informal associations

## **7.7 Conclusion**

In this Chapter I have shown that other types of groupings, which I called informal associations, existed in Junjuwa. Some of these associations concerned large groupings (gender, age, Christianity), while others were limited to a small number of people (mixed descent, gangs, drinking groups). I have outlined the role of these associations in regard to the Junjuwa community. Some provided opportunities to bridge gaps that otherwise existed between Junjuwa residents and could be used to reaffirm community cohesiveness (gender, Christianity, mixed descent), while others duplicated linguistic divisions (age), or were internal to them (gangs, drinking groups) and in both cases reinforce divisions within Junjuwa. Those associations that existed in the past had been slightly transformed as a result of changes; others which appeared recently provided for their members new expressions of grouping themselves that reflected the living conditions in Junjuwa. Finally, these associations did not necessarily combine with other forms of groupings that existed in Junjuwa and as such represented further disruptive elements. The maintenance of Junjuwa as a group, despite these internal groupings and various associations, was only made possible by the community leadership, which I will discuss in the next Chapter.

## **Endnotes - Chapter Seven**

1 The Family Income Supplement was called 'kid money' by Junjuwa residents and paid to women only. One man was the recipient of such an allowance for his family with his wife's consent.

2 All 18 employed Junjuwa female residents had permanent positions: two were community nurses in the Department of Community Health, three worked at the hospital as cleaners and cooks, one was a clerk at the DCS office, two were employed by the School Canteen, one was a cleaner at Fitzroy Crossing Primary School, one was assistant teacher at the Kindergarten, one was employed by Karrayili, two were shop assistants at the UAM store and Junjuwa provided the five remaining positions (three in the Junjuwa office and two at the community store).

3 Fitzroy Crossing School's deputy headmaster was displeased with the attendance levels of Junjuwa children. Several times he had approached the community council on the issue but he felt he was not getting any support from the community elders. Therefore he decided to solve the matter himself and chased with his motorbike some kids from Junjuwa who had run away from school. Unfortunately one of them fell and was slightly injured. Junjuwa council blamed the deputy headmaster for the injury as he had taken the initiative without their approval.

4 Censuses taken on various stations from the Fitzroy Valley for the Department of Native Welfare, show that many old men were registered with two and sometimes three wives until the early 1960s.

5 See life stories in Chapter Two.

6 Junjuwa elders monopolised access to community vehicles and were the only ones to have the possibility of obtaining loans from Junjuwa.

7 For a detailed study of the history of missions and the impact of Christianity on Aboriginal people, see Swain & Rose 1988.

8 I will not pretend that syncretism was frequent in the area, but since the missionaries had adapted the Bible to make it understandable in an Aboriginal context, the Aboriginal people did not see anything wrong in mixing biblical and Christian events with their own mythical stories.

9 This Aboriginal controlled movement was mainly aimed at bringing all Kimberley Aborigines together through Christianity and at promoting harmonious relationships with non-Aboriginal people.

10 In Junjuwa there were 17 people of mixed descent who were full time residents.

11 In Junjuwa there were four people, out of the twenty sent to study in Perth, who never came back to Fitzroy Crossing. They were all males of mixed descent and seemed to have taken this opportunity to start a new life, ignoring their relatives at Junjuwa.

12 This was not limited to people of mixed descent: whenever a Junjuwa female resident had remarried, her children from a previous husband, either dead or alive, never co-resided with their step-father but were taken care of by their mother's elder sister or brother.

13 If one compares videos available in 1985 in Fitzroy Crossing to films shown in 1980, there was such a dramatic increase that it was possible for Aboriginal teenagers to have access to movies which depicted American youth gang life and habits, shot less than year before in the USA, whereas in 1980, their older brothers and sisters watched movies made in the mid-1950s. Consequently, these videos created a real fad as well as providing an inspiration for all youths in Fitzroy Crossing.

14 See Chapter 9 for the full details of this story.

## *Chapter Seven*

15 With the prospect of purchasing the UAM store, Junjuwa's own store was developed and the community took a 50% participation in the running of the mission store in order to be prepared for the take over.

16 I have already indicated that unemployment benefits were paid six weeks after the application form had been lodged, but because of unforeseen circumstances (people in jail, out of town, sick, forms improperly completed or not signed) delays occurred frequently and about ten to fifteen UB cheques arrived almost every day at Junjuwa.

17 Hospital records show that between 75 and 85% of fatal injuries that occurred between 1982 and 1987 were alcohol-related.

---

---

# CHAPTER EIGHT

---

---

## LEADERSHIP IN JUNJUWA.

---

In several Chapters I have stressed that some individuals (chairman, councillors, leaders, elders, spokesman, community adviser) played a role in maintaining Junjuwa's coherence, but so far I have only touched on leadership in Junjuwa when I discussed case examples. Although from these examples it is obvious that leadership was a key component in creating and maintaining Junjuwa as a group, leadership was a result of many factors that made it a difficult notion to grasp. In this Chapter I will discuss leadership in Junjuwa as I was able to perceive it through individuals who had a say in community life as well as in the way Junjuwa ran its own affairs.

Since white settlement, Aboriginal leadership has changed and adjusted to new situations. Nonetheless, some of what made people leaders prior to contact with Europeans was partially preserved, and traditional forms of leadership persisted in Junjuwa. The intensification of contacts between Aboriginal people and whites has facilitated in the long run the emergence of 'cultural brokers'<sup>1</sup>. These 'cultural brokers' were people who, because of their better command of English and their ability to deal with Aborigines and non-Aborigines alike, made possible communications between the two. These brokers set the pattern for an emerging form of leadership, first on cattle stations and then on mission reserves. These two aspects of Aboriginal leadership, traditional leaders and 'cultural brokers', co-existed in Junjuwa but represented only one side of leadership at the community level. White advisers and to a lesser degree non-Aborigines employed by Junjuwa. formed the other side of leadership. I will argue in this chapter that leadership in Junjuwa was based on these three elements (traditional leaders, 'cultural brokers' and non-Aboriginals), and that each needed the two others to assert its authority. These three elements formed a fragile balance that constituted community leadership.

### *Chapter Eight*

I will first present the Aboriginal leadership in Junjuwa. I will make the distinction between councillors or 'council leaders', who were appointed and hold the title of community leaders according to Junjuwa constitution, and other leaders, who got their authority on more traditional grounds. I will also look in detail at the chairman's position, including the role and the duties as well as the monopoly of that position by particular families and tensions arising from that situation.

In the second section I will discuss non-Aboriginal leadership. I will show how Aboriginal people's reliance on non-Aboriginal people originated and was perpetuated. I will discuss the position of project officer<sup>2</sup>, along with the duties and roles. I will present three different styles of dealing with Aboriginal people and Aboriginal leadership and their consequences, on the basis of three different individuals who were appointed community adviser between 1981 and 1987.

In the final section of this chapter I will examine interaction between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal leaders with its constraints and conflicts, as well as pressures linked to interaction. In Junjuwa none of these forms of leadership was sufficient per se to be recognised as the community authority on its own, and therefore such interaction was the only possibility for leaders to keep the community running, although it was at times difficult to sustain.

## **8.1 Aboriginal Leadership**

In a community like Junjuwa in which residents came from different backgrounds, there were many leaders who were not easily identifiable at first sight. For example, some people had a high profile during community council meetings but they were not necessarily leaders, while others who seemed little concerned with Junjuwa affairs were always approached whenever an important decision had to be taken. The main criterion for the identification of leaders was that these people were recognised as having the right to talk in the name of other people and were consulted on important issues, and that what they had to say was listened to.

I have already pointed out in Chapter Four the discrepancy that existed between the eligibility for leadership as it appeared in Junjuwa's constitution and the traditional criteria that made a person a leader in his (her) group. Despite that discrepancy, Junjuwa community members had to elect a council of leaders, and from amongst them a chairman. Within Aboriginal leadership it is possible to distinguish three sub-categories: community councillors, sub-group leaders and the community chairman. I will discuss these three sub-categories in that order in the following sections.

### **8.1.1 Community councillors**

**"We councillors, we work for Junjuwa, we are boss for that place" (Jaimie).**

Junjuwa male residents appointed to the community council took their positions very seriously. According to Junjuwa's constitution, these councillors were officially recognised as leaders (see Appendix 1: Junjuwa Constitution clauses 2 & 7), and were responsible for making rules for Junjuwa residents to abide by. These rules as well as community business were discussed at regular community council meetings as well as when a leader requested it. The recognition of Aboriginal leadership by non-Aborigines and the fact that leaders were consulted on important issues by them was a new experience for those councillors<sup>3</sup>, compared to the time they lived on cattle stations. Many of them, although they were used to dealing with non-Aborigines, did it as subordinates and were so far reluctant to talk in the name of large units such as the Junjuwa community. Nonetheless, some councillors became over-zealous and were reminded by Junjuwa residents that the position they held in Junjuwa community was not necessarily valid towards all those who lived there. Following an incident in December 1978, during which a Bunuba councillor threatened to expel some Walmajarri people from Junjuwa because they sheltered in their house many relatives from other settlements, a new rule was added to the Junjuwa constitution. This rule stated that councillors had limited power and could not take any decision or act without prior approval from the entire community council (JCCM 23/12/1978). Subsequently, a similar incident occurred involving several councillors (one from each main language), who expelled a Wangkajunga woman from Junjuwa after she had caused a problem within the community, but on this occasion the councillors asked her to leave Junjuwa only after they had been allowed to do so by a Wangkajunga leader.

Not only could the councillors not act individually but they could not interfere when Junjuwa residents who spoke a different language from themselves caused problems. Nevertheless, councillors saw their positions as prestigious and did their best to hold onto them throughout the years. Consequently, appointments to the Junjuwa council were either the privilege of the same individuals, or were passed on amongst members of a few families. This is clear from looking at Junjuwa's records. The first council, appointed in May 1975 had ten members. Five were Bunuba, or were recorded as such, according to Junjuwa's constitution. The last list of Junjuwa's councillors I had access to was dated from November 1987. This list showed that fourteen councillors had been appointed, including nine Bunuba men<sup>4</sup>. For the 1987 list, four names were from the 1975 list and all subsequent lists, and four other names were those of people appointed in 1976 and in position since then. New



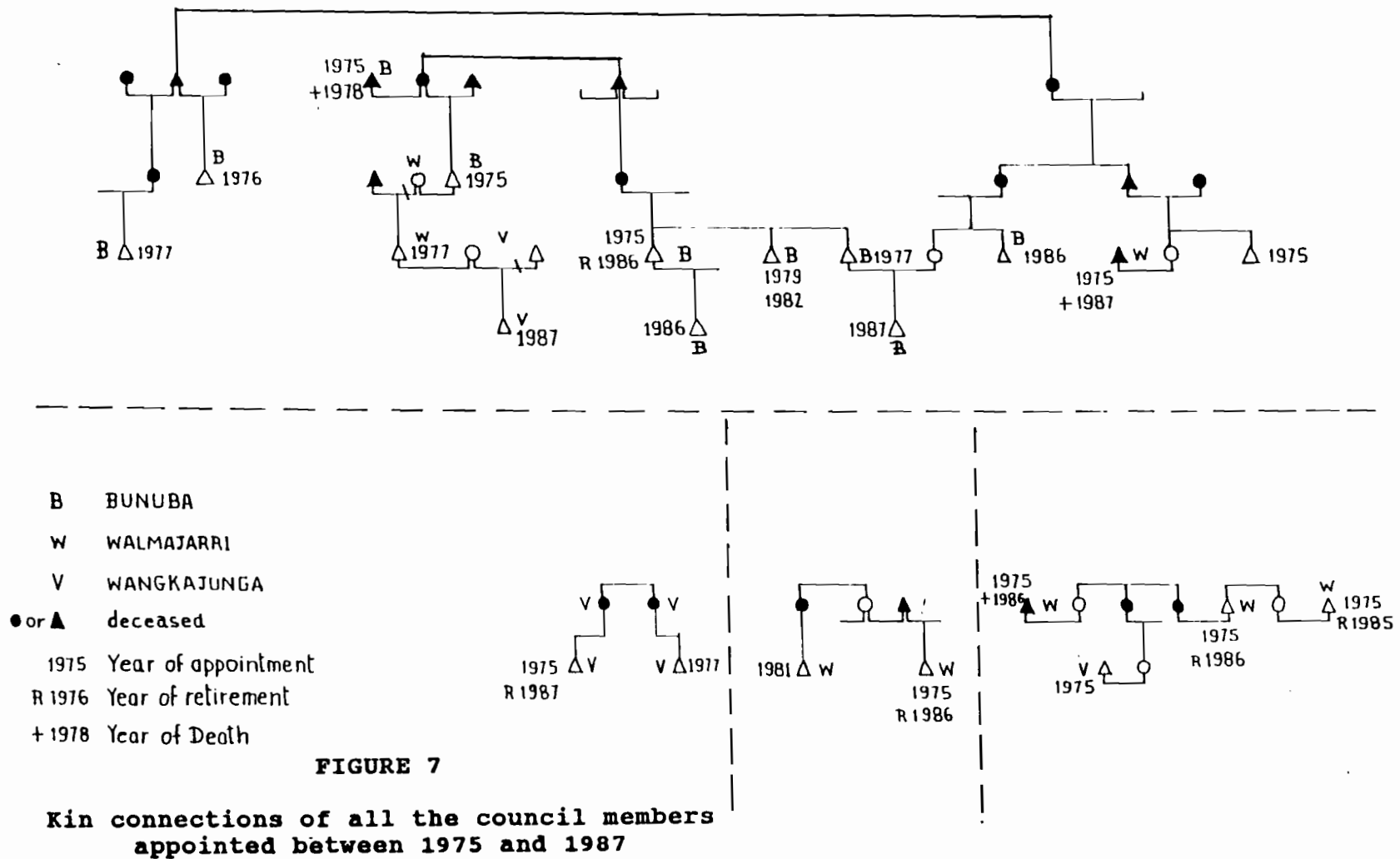
### *Chapter Eight*

names that appeared in the 1987 council were those of either younger brothers or sons of councillors nominated in 1975 who had died or stepped down. Further, genealogical links that existed between councillors, either those of 1975 or 1987, confirmed that such positions were monopolised by a few families (see Figure 7).

The fact that only a small number of families were involved in Junjuwa's council limited further the authority of the councillors. As I pointed out earlier (see Chapter Four), councillors from 1975 supported and nominated each other one year after the other, and thus formed a cohesive group of people who hung on to the community's council.

If councillors had little power or authority, one could wonder what attracted people to hold such positions, especially as they seemed to get nothing but trouble from members of families and groups out of their direct control. Councillors were not paid, but they enjoyed privileges, most of which were extended to their closer relatives. For example, Junjuwa's first list of project coordinators (JCCM 31/5/1976) shows that all of eight community projects were placed under the leadership of councillors. Similarly, supervisors of CDEP teams were all council members (JCCM 14/03/1988). In both cases councillors were responsible for a project or a team of workers and they controlled many areas. They had access to community vehicles (after 1981), they could appoint whoever they wanted to work under them<sup>5</sup>, they could easily obtain loans for themselves or their workers from the community, and finally they could assist their families or own households in the course of their duties. For example, the fencing team under the CDEP scheme in 1988, did a great deal of work on the Bunuba side of Junjuwa, where all workers came from, but little in the Wangkajunga area. Similarly the team in charge of all plumbing repairs in Junjuwa during the year 1986, worked as a priority for councillors' households. One house occupied by Wangkajunga people, none of them being councillors, remained for more than four weeks with the toilets blocked, even though the house occupants complained every day about the nuisance. Such attitudes were not limited to members of one particular language. For example, a group of Walmajarri in charge of firewood collection delivered it to every household in the Walmajarri part of Junjuwa but dumped the wood in the middle of the streets in which people affiliated to other languages lived.

Junjuwa's books show that only councillors and their immediate relatives were granted loans, many of which were never paid back<sup>6</sup>. Further, councillors who owned vehicles had them bought with community money for their own use. Only councillors travelled to 'represent' Junjuwa in meetings held in or outside Western Australia, with expenses paid for by the community. The main reason for the monopoly of these privileges was that they were granted by council decision, therefore councillors had complete control over various demands and their approvals.



## *Chapter Eight*

Privileges were extended to councillors' relatives. Indeed, they occupied all but one position amongst those offered in the community office, community store, bakery, rubbish collection, and health area. Most of the people employed in Junjuwa were Bunuba, not only because a majority of councillors were Bunuba, but also because the position of chairperson had, until recently (see below in this Chapter), been held by Bunuba men. This Bunuba stronghold over the council and consequently over the community was a permanent ground of complaints from Walmajarri. Walmajarri people had always been the largest group in Junjuwa and neither in 1975 nor in 1987 was the composition of the council representative of this. All councillors, regardless of their language group, were aware of this unbalanced division of leadership but they all claimed to work for all Junjuwa people in the decisions they took and the way they dealt with community affairs:

Us Bunuba councillors, we work for Junjuwa, not only for Bunuba people or for our mob, but for all the lot. Well, them Walmajarri and Wangkajunga councillors, all the same they work for Junjuwa. We try to help everybody and we help each other too, and we work hard for that, very hard too. But you see only when we have trouble we cannot work for all the lot, us Bunuba councillors we cannot talk to them trouble makers if they belong to another language, then them Walmajarri councillors they talk to them, that's the proper way (Martin).

By using such statements, councillors indicated their willingness to get involved in Junjuwa's affairs but not to interfere with internal conflicts in other language groups. Most of the time this attitude was respected and this was probably why leaders who were not councillors were not disturbed by those who were: the latter did not challenge the authority the former had over their group. In fact, the support of leaders was needed by councillors for approval of council decisions, and in return leaders were granted privileges by councillors when needed. The involvement of non-appointed leaders in Junjuwa life became more significant from the 1980s onwards. Prior to this, only council leaders attended council meetings. From 1980, community council minutes show that people other than councillors participated in meetings.

All leaders were consulted for any important decisions even if they did not attend council meetings regularly. Council meetings I attended brought together between fifteen and thirty people according to the time of the year, issues discussed and others factors. Not a single decision out of all those discussed during the meetings at which I was present was taken the first time it was raised. Important issues were debated during several council meetings and prior to each one leaders, councillors as well as others, got together along language lines to talk about it. Afterwards, a spokesman from each language, usually a person who was both a leader and a councillor, presented his fellow leaders' view(s) at the council meeting. A similar process took place after each council meeting: the positions taken by leaders and councillors during the

### *Leadership in Junjuwa*

meeting were commented on at the level of each language group. During and between meetings councillors acted as liaison persons and brokers between leaders of different sub-groups. If an issue was particularly sensitive, a meeting was called during which all leaders, as well as councillors and female residents, would present their views. Then, when a decision was reached, it was up to the chairman to put the issue on the council meeting's agenda .

Whenever a particular issue was raised in a council meeting, only a few councillors would talk and the impression given was that the councillors were taking a decision: however, the leaders had already agreed on that decision prior to the meeting. Whenever a decision had obviously been forced by anyone or taken while a leader was away, it was likely that it would be cancelled at the first opportunity and reconsidered afterwards. In such cases the chairman addressed the meeting and argued that some councillors or leaders did not quite understand what the decision taken was all about and that it was better to discuss that matter once more. In fact it was usually the case that meetings between groups of leaders had already been held, the unwanted decision rejected and a new one adopted instead.

After 1986 Junjuwa's annual general election, during which the chairman came first, but with the second person very close behind (see Bunuba coup, Chapter Six), the community adviser suggested that this person could be appointed as vice-chairman. Some councillors commented positively on the idea and during the confusing minutes that followed the chairman's election, it seemed to the community adviser that the idea had been approved by the entire council. Consequently, the challenger to the chairman's position was officially appointed vice-chairman. Four days later the chairman called for another meeting during which several leaders from various sub-groups as well as councillors argued that they had been rushed over the decision concerning a vice-chairman and claimed they had reconsidered their choice. Instead of the young Bunuba man they nominated a mature Bunuba who during the previous months had done a lot to improve health standards in the community. The nomination made by non-Bunuba councillors was unanimously supported by all those in attendance. It was an interesting move for several reasons: first, because non-Bunuba councillors showed they did not challenge the first vice-chairman being a Bunuba; second, because instead of a young man who proposed to 'get rid of Walmajarri people' and therefore threatened community cohesiveness, leaders and councillors appointed a person who had worked for the well-being of all Junjuwa residents; third, because Bunuba leaders and councillors who were already divided on the choice of the first vice-chairman were helped to a resolution of an internal conflict with the assistance of leaders from other languages; finally, because the chairman and the community adviser, who were both the target of the challenger but nonetheless agreed on his appointment as vice-chairman, were helped out of this difficult situation by all councillors and leaders.

### *Chapter Eight*

When Junjuwa residents, usually young men, contested the monopoly of leadership by a few families within Junjuwa, councillors rejected critics by adopting attitudes similar to those described previously, when younger males had been appointed to the council (see Chapter Seven). Councillors who had been in their position for over a decade stated publicly that they were prepared to step down anytime, but they added that they had to remain on the council since, as they put it, none of the young men was able to do a 'good job'. In such statements they used the image of the community being a group to which they devoted all their time and energy. This notion of working for Junjuwa was a typical form of the rhetoric used by the councillors: they had 'made' the place, had maintained Junjuwa as 'one mob' throughout the years and were not prepared to step down if younger people did nothing but spoil their 'work'. Councillors also stated they had an intimate knowledge of what was required in that position: ability to deal with non-Aboriginal people, and experience with meetings at all levels. All these elements showed that young people could not be appointed without the community being put at risk: commitment, hard work and time-consuming activities were put forward by old time councillors, whereas privileges advantages were forgotten or omitted.

#### **8.1.2 Sub-group leaders**

**"I am the boss for my mob nobody can talk for us, nobody can talk for me" (Fred).**

I pointed out in the first section of this Chapter that not all councillors were leaders and vice versa, although I also indicated that those appointed as community leaders (councillors) rarely challenged other leaders' authority since they needed their support. Other leaders were either spokesperson for members of one minor language group which did not have a representative at the council (Gooniyandi, Jaru, Kija), or leaders of sub-groups that existed within the main language groups (Bunuba, Walmajarri, Wangkajunga). None of these leaders had the power to veto council decisions but they could be an obstacle to their implementation. Each leader had followers<sup>7</sup>, who abided by Junjuwa's rules only if these rules were supported by their leaders.

For example, Junjuwa council had passed a rule under which any person caught bringing alcohol into Junjuwa should be fined \$50 for the first offence and \$100 for any further breach of the rule. The rule had been discussed at several council meetings but was voted on by a few councillors only, mainly Walmajarri. An old Bunuba man, not a councillor but leader of a sub-group of that language, brought two cartons of beer in the village and organised a 'drinking party' in one of his followers' houses. The house was located directly opposite of the chairman's father house, who could not ignore what was going on. The same evening, some Jaru men, encouraged by their leader, drank beer and played loud music in their leader's house. Neither the councillors nor the chairman interfered with any of the drinking going on in these two houses. In

### *Leadership in Junjuwa*

the case of the Bunuba leader, he wanted to show that the chairman's father, himself a Bunuba, who had voted on the rule did not consult with Bunuba leaders before supporting the decision. The Jaru leader, although he also challenged a rule which for him did not exist, had something else to say: he was a leader and since he did not vote on that rule he did not see himself bound by to respect it in his house. This controversial rule was eventually adopted but had to be discussed by all leaders before it was put on the meeting agenda again, when it was approved by the council as well as by representatives of various factions of Junjuwa.

For some leaders it was a personal choice not to be a councillor. In doing so, they preserved their group autonomy and did not feel individually bound to council moves they did not approve of. Further, being out of the council put them in a powerful position since their support was needed by the councillors. Finally, although some groups resided in Junjuwa for long periods of time they maintained their own coherence, leadership and autonomy that enable them to leave Junjuwa whenever a suitable opportunity existed (see Kurlku people Chapter Four). Such a decision would be difficult to take if leaders of these sub-groups were councillors.

As I have shown, many types of groups and sub-groups co-existed within Junjuwa, and forms of leadership were various, some being more prestigious than others. Some people were eager to be a councillor because it was an avenue for acquiring a status that gave some power, but leaders whose status was based on traditional values did not need to enhance their authority. For example, a Bunuba elder, who kept his distance from community affairs and attended few council meetings, during which he remained silent, had nonetheless a very strong influence over council's decisions. He was consulted by Bunuba councillors prior to and after council meetings, the chairman visited him at least once a day, and even Walmajarri leaders would not decide to do anything in Junjuwa without his approval. He always kept a low profile and spoke rarely about Junjuwa's affairs. His leadership came from the fact that he was the only custodian of Bunuba secret sites close to Junjuwa, and even if Bunuba ceremonial life had almost vanished his religious inheritance made him a powerful and highly respected person. The only public statement he made was to join the challenger's supporters during Junjuwa's chairman election in 1986. I was counting 'votes' and was extremely surprised by his attitude, especially because his brothers, although they openly supported the challenger, lined up behind Andrew. In fact, the Bunuba leader was the only leader to display publicly his support for the challenger. The warning was clear enough and immediately after the election, the chairman and Walmajarri councillors altered some of the attitudes which had prompted the 'Bunuba coup'.

Another category of leader was those too old to be involved in community affairs. They usually spoke very little English and for them Junjuwa's affairs were like 'Gardiya business'. In that matter they were literally from another world and had not yet assimilated all the changes they went through during

### *Chapter Eight*

their life time. This lack of understanding of community affairs did not mean they were not taken into account in the decision-making process. On the contrary, they were consulted on many issues but slowed down this process considerably because lengthy parts of the meetings with them would be devoted to translation. Since meetings were primarily called to discuss community affairs and to take decisions, these old men did not have to participate. When meetings were important, such as the transfer of the UAM lease to Junjuwa, or if ceremonial activities were discussed, they joined in and took a prominent role in the debate.

I have already mentioned that seating arrangements during council meetings displayed people's linguistic identity as well as their sub-group affiliations. When meetings brought many people together, the seating arrangement was even more revealing of differences that existed between appointed leaders and others. It was also the occasion for a leader to show his support to other leaders or councillors by sitting next to or behind them. But if a leader needed to display his strength he would bring his followers along and they would sit together on their own if they did not wish to be associated with any particular group during the meeting (see example of seating arrangements in Figure 8).

### **8.1.3 Community chairman**

**"There is my family, my in-laws, my sisters' husbands, the old people, the project officer and myself right in the middle. Sometimes I really don't know where I stand" (Andrew).**

I have mentioned in a previous section that councillors were chosen only amongst a few families. For the chairman's position this choice was even more restricted: all but one of Junjuwa's successive chairmen came from the two most prominent Bunuba families (see Figure 9). Some members of one family had mixed with Walmajarri and Wangkajunga by marrying into these language groups. The current family's head was involved in a strategy of marriages for his daughters designed to extend his network of alliance beyond the Kimberley area. The second family, by contrast, was 'purely' Bunuba; only two marriages of male members of that family were to non-Bunuba, and both marriages did not last long<sup>8</sup>.

During my first period of field work in Fitzroy Crossing I lived in the Junjuwa chairman's house. At this time the Junjuwa chairman was Bunuba, and custodian of significant Bunuba sites located on Mount House station, and had recently moved to Fitzroy Crossing. He did not have close kin in the community but was appointed chairman because no one in the two prominent families was available at that time and both families agreed to nominate him<sup>9</sup>. My stay was short but it was sufficient to realise that the chairman was under

### *Leadership in Junjuwa*

permanent pressure: people wanted to borrow money, others called on him to settle disputes, drunks came to fight him and his position was constantly under challenge. All this was from the Aboriginal people in the community, but he also had many commitments and contacts with non-Aboriginal people that were as demanding: stations managers in need of workers contacted him, hospital and school staff called on him to represent Junjuwa at various meetings, local police relied on him for information on Junjuwa residents. Despite the negative side of his position it brought him some compensations, not in the form of a salary but through his followers who were provided with employment available in town (cattle station, hospital, bakery, butcher shop)<sup>10</sup>. In return, his followers would either give him gifts in kind or a part of their wages.

At this time Junjuwa's residents were already facing alcohol related problems, thus the chairman, himself a heavy drinker, decided to set an example by remaining 'dry' during the time of his appointment. He also organised, with the support of several councillors, to control people and vehicles entering Junjuwa in order to keep alcohol out. Because of his lack of close kin within the community he was frequently challenged, but his main difficulties arose from the fact that he was outspoken. Once, he attended a meeting outside the Kimberley and was pressed by Europeans to state Junjuwa's position on a sensitive issue connected with land rights. He presented his own view as Junjuwa's and did not inform Junjuwa's councillors or leaders about it. Not long afterwards he was publicly accused of acting too much on his own initiative. The same night he got drunk and rolled a community vehicle. Two days later he resigned. He was not any better or worse than previous chairmen from the two prominent Bunuba families but the lack of close kin within the community forced him to rely on followers who did not support him when he needed it because their own relatives came as a priority before him.

Between 1985 and 1987, I had better opportunities to know a different Junjuwa chairman, and all the contradictions inherent in the position. This particular chairman's personal background made him extremely representative of Junjuwa.

Andrew was born on Leopold Station in 1951. His mother was Walmajarri, and his father an Aboriginal person of mixed descent, whose mother was Jaru. His parents separated not long after he was born and his mother remarried, this time to a Bunuba man. Andrew saw his step-father as his real father since he raised him<sup>11</sup>. The family lived on Leopold station until 1966, then moved to stay at Brooking Springs station for a few years and finally settled at the mission reserve in Fitzroy Crossing in 1971. Andrew's father's father was the leader of the largest Bunuba sub-group and has been described to me as the last 'Bunuba King'. He was the Bunuba people's spokesperson while they were established at the mission compound. He was subsequently appointed Junjuwa's first chairman and kept the position until he died. Andrew learnt about stockwork in his early teens, then was employed as stockman on



### *Chapter Eight*

Gogo station. This was the time he was initiated: he underwent the Walungari ceremony and was circumcised by a group of Jaru and Wangkajunga men at the ceremonial ground behind Bayulu community. During all the time he was employed on stations he was a heavy drinker. At the same period he used to be the leader of a gang of young Bunuba stockmen, who went to Derby after pay-days to drink and fight other gangs. He was arrested by Derby police several times and was once sent to Broome Jail for about a month.

When Andrew's family moved to the UAM compound his life changed drastically. He renewed contacts with his former school teacher, whose strong personality had impressed Andrew while he was attending the AIM school between 1958 and 1962. In a couple of years he became a dedicated Christian, stopped drinking, learnt to play the guitar, acquired a good command of English and a better education than most of his peers. He married a Wangkajunga woman, who had been married once and had three children to her first husband. He was appointed Council member in mid 1977, and was for years Junjuwa's youngest councillor. He underwent subincision with a group of Wangkajunga men in 1979. The same year he started to work at UAM store as a store assistant. He was a dedicated and committed worker and within two years he was able to take care of the store on his own.

He was appointed Junjuwa's chairman in 1985 and subsequently nominated his former European supervisor at the UAM store for the community adviser's position. Over the years he had become a very strong Christian and was actively involved with the KCF. He was looking towards a brighter future for Junjuwa community in which only Aboriginal people would be employed. He was eager to improve the image Aboriginal people had locally and promoted integration with Australian society through self-determination. His personal background and his high respect for the Aboriginal Law faced him with contradictions he could not overcome at times and resulted in his allowing a situation he had been criticising to be perpetuated (privileges to some people, alcoholism, lack of commitment, dependence on a non-Aboriginal).

Partly because Andrew's life was a summary of Aboriginal local history he appeared to be Junjuwa's ideal chairman. The various aspects of his personality attracted followers from many backgrounds and statuses in Junjuwa (Walmajarri, Bunuba, Wangkajunga, mixed descent people, Christians, Law people, former drinkers), but because he was so representative of Junjuwa he had also many opponents. Andrew's opponents were mainly Bunuba male of his age group, for whom, paradoxically, Andrew's appointment represented a threat. He was the first non-Bunuba chairman<sup>12</sup>, and as such his Walmajarri kin as well as his Wangkajunga allies were seen as a menace by some Bunuba, who felt his appointment was part of a 'Walmajarrisation' of Junjuwa. Andrew had enemies as well amongst young Walmajarri who did not achieve what he did and felt he betrayed them by accepting Junjuwa's chairmanship. Most of the young Walmajarri did not see the community as a 'Walmajarri place', and

### *Leadership in Junjuwa*

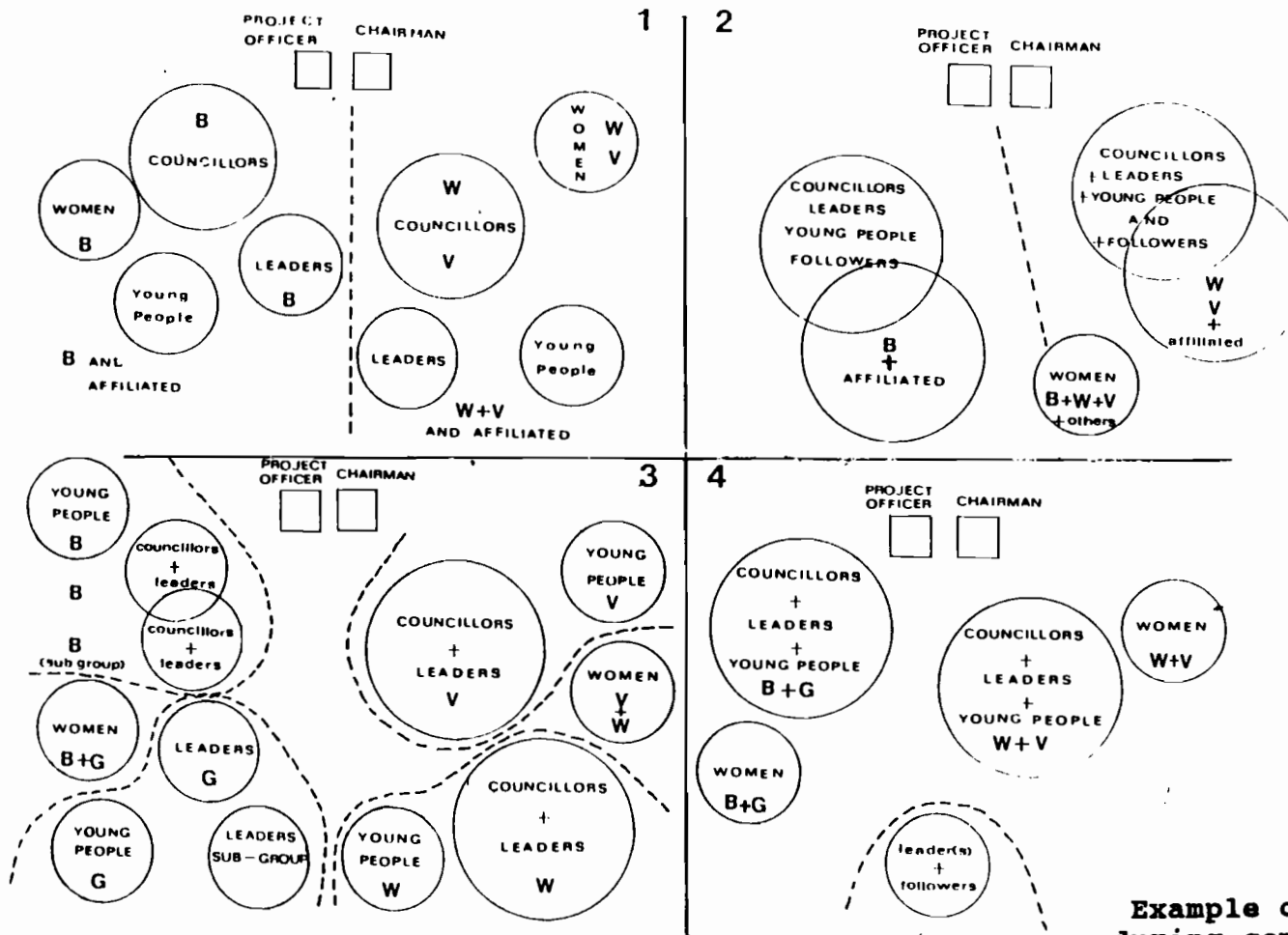
therefore a Walmajarri chairman was necessarily someone who accepted 'working for Bunuba' at his own people's expense.

Junjuwa's chairmanship was a position that required a lot of forbearance. Andrew received a salary as chairman from funds provided by DAA under a scheme for an Aboriginal trainee community adviser. His main responsibility was to act as a liaison person between the community adviser and councillors, which was a very demanding and frustrating task. Andrew's position gave him full time access to a community vehicle and a say over appointments to positions available within Junjuwa. He relied heavily on his close kin and relatives to support him in his duties, and he expected them to set examples that should inspire other people. For example, he encouraged his younger brother, his sisters and their husbands to stop drinking. Similarly, Andrew involved his sisters and his step-children in working activities for Junjuwa enterprises. He appointed his step-son as councillor and gave him the opportunity of a trainee baker's apprenticeship course in Derby, in order to become Junjuwa's first Aboriginal baker in the future. He received council's approval to employ one of his sisters and a step-daughter at Junjuwa community store. He truly believed his own family should be an example in Junjuwa, but many saw it as privileges accorded to the chairman's relatives:

Every time we give a job to someone from Junjuwa they quit after two or three weeks and put the shame on us all. Well, I think my own relatives should back me up in my job as a chairman. Most of them have a problem: they drink, they hang around Junjuwa doing nothing... I want to help them but they should support me in return. But look (here he named one of his sisters and two step-children), they come late at work, they got back into drinking after two weeks, they rob some old people of their change and gave away things free to their friends. Alright, they put the shame on me now, and all the other people think I gave them jobs because they are my mob, they are wrong, I gave them jobs because as chairman's relatives they should help me, but they did not do it and now every body talk about me (Andrew).

The problems Andrew faced in this area were not only caused by the lack of support from his relatives who left their jobs and criticism from other people about privileges given to his family. His immediate relatives and allies, on the basis of their relatedness to the chairman, challenged community rules and leadership to the point that Andrew found himself in a difficult situation: if he supported them against Junjuwa's leaders he would put his own position at risk, and had he sided with his relatives he would have offended council members and his family would claim he had forgotten about his basic duties:

That Jangala, brother of mine, same mother same country. Well, because he is chairman he goes front and left us behind. He should help us all the way, we are his mob, same blood too, me I fight for him everyday but him he sticks with them old people, Gardiya and Christian mob. I don't know maybe you think he is a good chairman, but myself I think he is proper not good as a brother (Malcolm).



Legend:

B = Bunuba

W = Walmajarri

V = Wangkajunga

G = Gooniyandi

1 and 2 are normal seating arrangements

3 seating arrangement shows a conflict between language groups

4 seating arrangement shows a challenge to a community decision by a leader.

FIGURE 8

Example of seating arrangements during community council meetings



### Chapter Eight

Andrew's siblings' negative attitudes could be absorbed within Junjuwa's conflicts and settled through the tightening of kinship networks (see Chapter Six). But as already pointed out, Andrew's father was involved in a matrimonial strategy that created several problems for Andrew as chairman. Andrew had three sisters; the older one had married a Jaru from Halls Creek, the second sister's husband was a Kukatja from Balgo and Andrew's father was attempting to organise the youngest sister's marriage to a Warlpiri from Yuendumu. The dynamics of this strategy were fascinating, and it represented an achievement for Andrew's father; but, all these 'outsiders', who usually kept a low profile during the first months after they had moved into Junjuwa, later took advantage of the fact they had married into the chairman's family. Whenever Andrew's sisters' husbands got drunk and challenged Junjuwa's residents, they often threatened to call on their 'mob' from their former place of residence. Such outsiders presented a danger for Junjuwa's residents (see Chapter Five), and Andrew had to get personally involved to settle the conflict. He could not take sides against his sisters' husbands without challenging his own father, and a familial conflict would erupt. Thus, at first Andrew did his best to limit the extent of several disputes involving his sisters' husbands, then he decided not to get involved anymore. He justified his attitude by pointing out that since these men failed to support him as a chairman, as good brothers-in-law should, he was not bound to be involved in their problems. His attitude received council support but his brothers-in-law reacted very angrily.

About a week after Andrew had made his attitude public, his younger sister's fiance, a young Warlpiri man from Yuendumu, stabbed Andrew's sister and threatened to kill himself. Andrew's sister and Jonathan, the Warlpiri man, had been drinking with several other people, at a popular drinking spot next to the Brooking Spring creek (see Map X). Suddenly, Jonathan stood up, started to shout and swear loudly, within minutes he stripped himself naked<sup>13</sup>. Immediately all people but Andrew's sister ran away, but because she was not supposed to see a naked man (circumcision and subincision scars), Jonathan stabbed her several times in the arm while shouting:

I am the Law, I am a Law man, no woman can look at the Law, no chairman can beat me, I'll kill you, I'll kill him, I'll kill myself (Jonathan)<sup>14</sup>.

Those who had fled the spot rushed to Junjuwa's store to seek assistance from Andrew. When Andrew reached Brooking Spring creek, his sister had fainted and Jonathan was standing next to her, still naked, the knife pointed to his own stomach. Andrew talked to him quietly, mentioned Jonathan's relatives at Yuendumu, and said that he would help him to visit them. Andrew had taken off his shirt and attempted to put it around Jonathan's waist, but every time he got close enough to do so Jonathan ran away. Many people had gathered to watch. Suddenly, Jonathan started to cry and called on his brother-in-law to help him:

*Leadership in Junjuwa*

Jangala, Jangala, please help me, that grog makes me mad, I gonna kill myself now, please Jangala, if you care for me, help me right now...(Jonathan).

But, when Andrew was about to cover Jonathan with his shirt, the latter tried to stab him in the chest. Fortunately for Andrew, Jonathan's drunkenness had slowed down his movements and Andrew was able to grab Jonathan's forearm with one hand and punch Jonathan with the other. Then he tied his shirt around Jonathan's waist, carried him back to his car and drove straight to the police station. Meanwhile somebody had taken Andrew's sister to the hospital. All this was related to me by a very distressed Andrew who expressed his frustration and dejection over the incident:

Yesterday, that problem with my in-law, it was really bad, but nobody helped, nobody backed me up. No councillors, no leaders, no community adviser, I am always on my own. When we talk it's always yes, yes, yes... They all agree, then nobody acts, they do nothing to show their support to me. They all do things on their own: community adviser, councillors, old people, young people, they never really work together. Look at me now I do the rubbish round, I look after the store, I do office work, at night I am at the gate to check for grog. I am on my own all the time. But if I decide something on my own, I am blamed, they say I am like a Gardiya in the station time. Now my in-laws put shame on me, they caused trouble in Junjuwa and they are not from the place, of course people blame me for my in-laws' behaviour, but what can I do? I am alone (Andrew).

It was true that Andrew was isolated and had too many things to take care of by himself. Because Andrew wanted to involve everybody and fought against family and councillors' privileges, he could not rally behind him those whose authority was based on leadership and privileges, and the lack of support became obvious. In public statements all council members and leaders claimed they supported Junjuwa's chairman, but in reality he was often left on his own to act and take decisions.

Consequently Andrew had to seek support from elsewhere, either from young people or from non-Aboriginal people. But in both cases his initiatives were strongly challenged by community councillors, and sub-group leaders as well as Junjuwa residents, who all argued he was going beyond his duty: a chairman was a representative of people's views and ideas and not a person who could act on his own. For example, Andrew agreed to rent the community bus to Fitzroy Xpress when the band performed away from Fitzroy Crossing. He supported his own proposal by explaining to old councillors that young people would not take part in Junjuwa's affairs if the community's policy was not supportive of them. Andrew reminded councillors that he himself had played in a band, and at that time the lack of interest from his own people distressed him. He added that he got out of trouble because some white people helped him, but now time had come for old Aboriginal people to support their young people more positively. Subsequently, some band members came to council meetings to show their interest in community affairs. They obtained the

### *Chapter Eight:*

use of Junjuwa's bus for three live performances and everybody seemed happy about this change of attitude from both sides. Unfortunately, during a trip to Broome, Fitzroy Xpress members travelled with friends who transported alcohol in Junjuwa's bus. One Junjuwa's councillor was at Broome and reported to the community council this breach of Junjuwa's rules. Even though the band members apologised publicly at the next council meeting and asked forgiveness, the councillors blamed them for 'making a bad name for Junjuwa and its people' and consequently decided to suppress the access to Junjuwa's bus. Further, Andrew's responsibility was pointed out because he had proposed the idea against the older councillors' advice. Consequently, young people stayed away from council meetings and for a while Andrew was reluctant to take personal initiatives.

Despite all the problems Andrew's relatives and allies caused him, both groups represented a vital support that he could not neglect. This was demonstrated at the 1986 Junjuwa Annual General Meeting during the chairman's election. I have already discussed the challenge to Andrew's position made by a young Bunuba man, but Andrew's wife's relatives' attitude was significant in the light of what has just been said. They all stood aside for a while until it was clear that people who had gathered behind the challenger were more numerous than those behind Andrew. Then, Andrew's wife's relatives joined Andrew's supporters, who without this last minute support would have lost the election. Their attitudes reinforced the Bunuba people's negative feelings against Andrew's non-Bunuba kin, followers and allies. This problem was partly overcome at the following election during which both candidates, Andrew and a Bunuba councillor, who had been chairman previously, got the same number of votes (JCCM 03/11/1987). The community adviser suggested a joint-chairmanship that was approved by the candidates and supported by the council.

Junjuwa's chairman needed to be a qualified and very dedicated person. Responsibilities and tasks were numerous, both inside and outside Junjuwa. The main problem a chairman faced was caused by his relatives and various factions of Junjuwa which at times supported or challenged the chairman's authority. Therefore a good chairman needed to have supporters and followers in many sub-groups and informal associations that made up Junjuwa community. Overall, it was a very demanding and frustrating position. This was not just the case in Junjuwa and I do not have knowledge of any chairman in Aboriginal settlements in the Fitzroy Valley area who lasted for long in the position. All chairpersons attracted critics and challenges that often forced them to quit regardless of the way they took care of community affairs

## **8.2 Non-Aboriginal Leadership**

Non-Aboriginal people employed by Aboriginal communities often have a strong influence over decisions taken by these communities. The situation can reach an extreme when non-Aboriginal people control nearly everything in one given community: access to cash, use of communities' vehicles and employment allocation. Such cases did exist in the Fitzroy Valley area and these community advisers<sup>15</sup> enjoyed much power locally. These aspects made it a very attractive position for some. It was nevertheless a position full of constraints, frustrations and a heavy work load, making it a difficult one to remain in for a long period.

In the Kimberley, white people have always enjoyed top positions in the pyramidal hierarchy that existed on cattle stations. It was the 'white boss' who took all decisions, and told the workers how, where and when tasks should be performed, and no initiatives could be taken without his approval. Even in some situations in which the white manager had been 'taught' station work by Aboriginal stockmen and relied on them to keep the station going, the white manager decided on wages, movements of people and living conditions (Marshall 1988:103). After a period of do or die which had traumatised several generations of Kimberley Aborigines, came a paternalistic era, although even during this period the use of the whip was not uncommon (Marshall 1988:123-131). Later, missionaries took over from station managers as the principal authority Aboriginal people had to deal with, and strong discipline was supplemented by a resolute paternalism on the mission reserves. Even though life on mission reserves was a totally different relationship between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people, the 'do' and 'do not' had set the limit to Aboriginal life within the mission boundaries, all activities depending on the approval of the White authority.

In the case of Junjuwa, the first non-Aboriginal people involved with the community were the UAM superintendent and a local DCW officer (see Chapter Four). Interviews and council minutes confirm that paternalistic attitudes by the former and control over the decision making process by the latter were the main characteristics of their involvement with the community. As a result of the history of Black and White relationship most of Junjuwa's residents have been 'brain washed' by the supremacy of non-Aboriginal over Aborigines to the point that they would not take particular kinds of decisions on their own, if there was a non-Aboriginal person to be found. This attitude was sometimes used as a strategy by Junjuwa residents to avoid the responsibility of a bad or unpopular decision, that consequently was taken by a Gardiya. Overall, however, Aborigines in Junjuwa were not aware of their own rights and did not make a clear distinction the way they dealt with non-Aborigines in



### *Chapter Eight*

Junjuwa today compared with the station times. This is revealed for instance in the vocabulary people used and in their attitudes towards White people. This was made clear to me once when the Junjuwa chairman approached me to find out if he had the power to veto a decision that Junjuwa's community adviser had taken without his consent. When I told him that the community employed a project officer and consequently council members had the authority to dismiss him, if needed, he barely believed me.

It is important to point out at this stage that the community adviser's personality played a major role in the way they dealt with people and fulfilled their positions. In order to show how different styles in performing community advisers' tasks influenced Junjuwa's life, I will present portraits of the last three persons who were employed by Junjuwa in that position.

#### **8.2.1 "If you want to get something from these bastards, you have to kick them in the ass" (Russell).**

Russell was appointed Junjuwa's project officer between 1981 and 1984<sup>16</sup>. He resigned from the position because he was under a lot of pressure from DAA and Junjuwa's residents, and had he not done so he would have been dismissed. He was born in England in 1925, came to Australia as a child and was brought up in Perth. Russell moved to the Kimberley after World War II and worked on stations as a windmill and bore specialist. He lived at Christmas Creek for about 10 years and was manager at Brooking Springs Station in 1972/3. At this time many Bunuba people, who afterwards moved to Junjuwa, were living at Brooking Springs. Russell was married to a Bunuba woman whose family included several custodians of significant sites located alongside the Fitzroy between Geikie Gorge and the old crossing. This last element was predominant in his appointment as Junjuwa's first community adviser:

**He was chosen because he was married to an important Bunuba woman, was known to the community and 'has practical attributes' (NACOC 1981; McMahon 1984:15)**

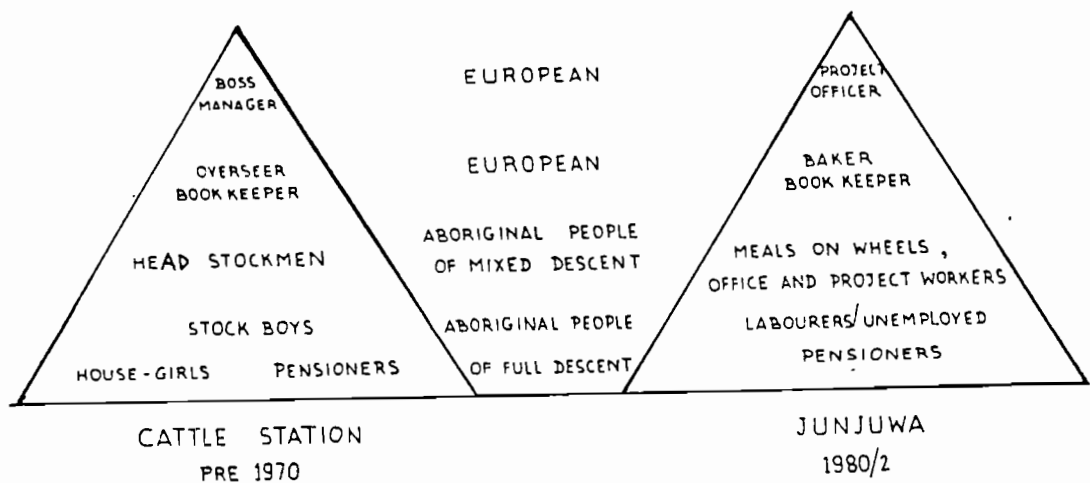
Russell was involved in several business ventures that had all failed because of poor management. Locally, he was an important figure: he was a member of the Derby Shire Council, was a Justice of the Peace<sup>17</sup>, and member of many local associations. He had a strong influence over local Aborigines because he had taken part in many initiation ceremonies and was the local undertaker. Further, Russell and his wife fostered a number of mixed descent Aboriginal boys and girls, and were managing the Fitzroy Crossing Group Home between 1976 and 1980<sup>18</sup>. Many local White and Aboriginal people

*Leadership in Junjuwa*

alike hated his attitudes towards Aborigines but it was difficult to by-pass him locally. This is how he was described by the DCW district officer in 1984:

He came to Australia as a child and was brought up by the Christian Brothers in Perth. This upbringing partly explains his familiarity with authoritarian, institutional structures and his lack of familiarity with more open, non-hierarchical interaction... He is often described as authoritarian, paternalistic, bombastic, cruel, kind, humorous, a God hater, overbearing, a 'character'... He has had no training or experience as an enabling, developmental community worker... His only family is his immediate family of wife, son and foster children. He often emphasises in conversation how much Junjuwa people need him and I suspect it is important to appreciate the personal investment he has in Junjuwa and the power status and sense of belonging it gives to him (McMahon 1984:15-16).

McMahon's last comment was confirmed by Russell himself when I interviewed him in 1988<sup>19</sup>. Russell told me that he wished to remain associated with Junjuwa because he saw many residents as his own relatives and in his opinion local Aborigines were not yet ready to run the community on their own, therefore it was better for them that he was involved rather than some "young bloke from down south ignorant of local Blacks" (sic). Russell was prepared to spend the rest of his life in the area because 'here he was somebody'. During the time Russell was Junjuwa project officer he organised the community like a cattle station: non-Aboriginal people at the top with monopoly over expenditures, job allocation and vehicles. People of mixed descent in charge of various community programs (meals on wheels, garden project), and as community workers (administration work, bakery, butcher shop). Aboriginal people of full descent were mainly unemployed, or pensioners. Only some of them were labourers employed in low status jobs for community programs and shops (see Figure 10).



**FIGURE 10**

**Pyramidal model of hierarchical organization  
in the Kimberley  
(after McMahon 1984:21)**

## *Chapter Eight*

The Aborigines of mixed descent were either his foster children or workers he had previously employed in his various enterprises. This pyramidal organisation gave him full control over the community. Whenever a councillor or a leader criticised or challenged Russell's attitude, he was 'bought off' by receiving personal advantages such as the use of community vehicles or individual loans, in both cases granted by Russell. An audit completed in 1985 by an accountant from DAA showed that all vehicles owned by councillors had been purchased with community money and that almost two thirds of the loans granted between 1982 and 1984 had never been paid back to Junjuwa. Informal surveys I conducted showed that privileges had been granted to all important members of the most prominent families in Junjuwa. Russell's paternalistic attitudes: meals served at home, shopping done by community workers for Junjuwa residents and use of the book down system, were combined with the strong personal influences he possessed over Junjuwa residents and increased people's dependency on him. Russell always put himself between Junjuwa people and other White people, and gradually severed all contacts that could have threatened his stronghold over the community. For example, the UAM superintendent was notified that he should not attend Junjuwa council meetings anymore, the KLC and MWW executive were also notified that they were not welcome in Junjuwa (JCCM 07/04/1982). These letters had been drafted and signed by Russell in the name of Junjuwa council, and several councillors reacted strongly against this action (JCCM 12/05/1982). Finally when DAA district officers came to deal with Junjuwa, he did his best to prevent contacts between them and Junjuwa leaders by sending the latter away or organising meetings in his house.

By 1980-1, all programs initiated by missionaries in the early years of Junjuwa community (see Chapter Three) had been abandoned and consequently Aboriginal involvement in these developmental projects had disappeared. The fact that Junjuwa residents did not have much of a say in the running of the community did not seem to distress them. Only a few people complained about having their outstanding bills deducted from their social benefits before they received it. What forced Russell to resign was his constant willingness to deal in the name of the people. Two surveys were organised by mining companies to record sites in an area of the Bunuba territory, northwest of Fitzroy Crossing near the Erskine Range. In both cases, Russell provided a survey team made up with Aborigines of mixed descent, who he claimed were 'traditional owners' of the area. They flew over the area in a helicopter and cleared the entire area of any significant sites. When this was brought to the knowledge of Junjuwa people, Bunuba people, including those related to Russell, were extremely distressed: they approached the local DCW district officer to seek assistance from him, lodged an official complaint to DAA in Derby and approached the Kimberley office of the Aboriginal Legal Service in order to find out how they could dismiss Russell. They were told that Junjuwa

### *Leadership in Junjuwa*

council had the power to sack the project officer if not satisfied with his work. This proved to be a real challenge since no Aboriginal people had previously found themselves in that situation, and the council could not take such a decision. Discontent increased when Russell used his position of Justice of the Peace to fine heavily the people who had contacted DCS and DAA. They appeared in the local court after they had been arrested for creating a 'disturbance' at the Aboriginal bar. It was probably just before the council was about to reach a decision to terminate his appointment that Russell resigned from his position.

### **8.2.2 "I am happy to help Junjuwa people to achieve something, but I'll never put my own ideas in their minds" (Jeff).**

Once the DAA's Derby office had been notified of Russell's resignation, the vacant position was advertised. The short list was drawn up by DAA<sup>20</sup> and two applicants selected. They both made the trip to Fitzroy Crossing to be introduced to Junjuwa council, accompanied by one DAA district officer. The councillors agreed to appoint Jeff, but they did not make their choice immediately, notifying DAA and the successful applicant a week after the meeting.

Jeff, originally from Victoria, was in his late twenties but had lived and worked in various states. He had good experience with Aboriginal people since he had been community adviser at Docker River in the Northern Territory for four years. His experience in this field was combined with a good knowledge of Aboriginal administration, and he was fluent in Pitjantjara. A few Walmajarri and Wangkajunga councillors in Junjuwa could speak Pitjantjara and they had been very impressed with his command of the language. Jeff had a completely different approach to the position from Russell, but nonetheless was introduced to his job by the latter. Jeff's main attitude was that Aboriginal lives and decisions were always influenced by White people. Consequently, it was better for Junjuwa to employ someone who acted according to their interests and was keen to attempt to influence government bodies and agencies as directed by the Council. In his own words, Jeff was ready to squeeze as much money as he could from DAA to improve living and social conditions in Junjuwa. While he had been working at Docker River, Jeff had obtained positive answers to many of the requests he addressed to DAA and 'knew the ropes', as he put it.

Unfortunately for Jeff, the situation in the Kimberley was not comparable with the Northern Territory, and neither the attitude of the government representatives nor Aboriginal people's motivations were similar to those he

### *Chapter Eight*

had dealt with for four years in the Territory. In Western Australia Aboriginal people's rights are almost nonexistent and government attitudes towards them differed accordingly. Further, frictions that occurred between federal and state government bodies influenced the running of Aboriginal communities and made the community adviser's position a difficult one to manage.

Despite these setbacks, Jeff greatly improved Junjuwa's office workload by computerizing it and by training a young Aboriginal man for the community adviser position as well as two office workers, all funded by the ADC. For the first time ever, Aboriginal people were the signatories for the Junjuwa cheque account<sup>21</sup>, and Jeff kept Junjuwa's council regularly informed of the community income and expenditure.

Jeff was very keen to propose alternatives to Junjuwa people and organised several trips to various Aboriginal settlements in which CDEP had been implemented. His aim was to show Junjuwa councillors that funds and programs were available for them if needed, as well as to make them aware that Aboriginal people did not necessarily need white advisers to help them run their community. Jeff was also supportive of land claims, and applications for excisions and outstations that had been made by Junjuwa's residents, and had remained filed in Junjuwa's office for years, were forwarded to the appropriate state authority. Finally, for the first time Junjuwa Community lodged a budget with DAA, based on demands formulated by the people and not simply based on the previous year, as had been the case up until then.

Unfortunately, Jeff's enthusiasm and dedication worked against him. First, Junjuwa people made some unrealistic demands and neglected community enterprises, which resulted in a loss of credibility in the eyes of the ADC and a difficult financial situation developed. Second, DAA people responded to Jeff's style by increasing administrative requests from Junjuwa's office. Jeff himself had to struggle with some contradictions. First, he was supporting Bunuba's claims and councillors since the community was established on Bunuba territory, but because of his previous appointment he was closer to people who had migrated from the desert. Second, Jeff was a newcomer in the area, whereas the majority of local whites had been long time residents<sup>22</sup>, and his attitude had disrupted existing relationships between Aboriginal and white people. Jeff constantly stimulated Aboriginal people to get rid of non-Aboriginal tutelage, and his involvement in fields controlled by other whites (DCS, MWW, Hospital, Karrayili), made him unpopular amongst local whites who also dealt with Junjuwa people. He faced a lot of pressure from various sides (DAA, Junjuwa, local whites), and he decided to resign after 10 months, even though both Junjuwa Council and DAA district officer asked him to reconsider his decision.

That place is mad, DAA expects far too much from a project officer, Junjuwa people are completely fucked up by the grog, they've been brain washed by station people and missionaries alike, they cannot think by themselves if there is a white bloke around. It's pathetic, I

### *Leadership in Junjuwa*

am really sympathetic to them but really worried too. Can you believe that alcohol killed 25 people in Fitzroy Crossing last year and nobody seems to care about it. The locals (White people) are pretty protective of their own jobs and privileges: DCS and MWW have split Aboriginal settlements amongst themselves and its all 'private property'. No-one tries to co-ordinate what they are doing on their own, they all seem happy to reproduce the status-quo over and over. It's too much for me, I cannot take anymore of that shit, I give up, good luck for the next guy (Jeff).

Although Jeff resigned after only a short time, his style has changed Junjuwa's residents views of the community's future and of the project adviser's position itself. These changes and other initiatives taken by Jeff had a positive influence on the community. For example, Jeff initiated people's interests in the CDEP scheme as well as in the implementation of by-laws for Junjuwa. In both cases, these changes would give Junjuwa residents more autonomy from the administration and local Whites. But, Jeff's constant comparisons between the local situation and the one he had known before in the Northern Territory was damaging for his perception of Junjuwa and ultimately for his own work because it gave him a distorted view of the town and its problem.

### **8.2.3 "I know that they all think I am a missionary, but I am not, I am Junjuwa project officer" (Mark).**

As soon as Jeff had decided to resign, he advertised the position and all applications were to be sent to the Junjuwa office. During a council meeting held in February 1986, all applications received were discussed. Altogether, there were eight applicants, including one supported by Junjuwa's chairman whom he introduced to the council. The applicant's name was Mark, he used to work at Fitzroy Crossing as UAM store manager a few years earlier, and Andrew had worked under him at that time. Andrew stressed that Mark had already been promised the position by Junjuwa council when Russell resigned, but DAA people did not select his application. The chairman emphasised how important it was to appoint a person who knew the people, was known to them, as well as familiar with the area. Jeff introduced the other applicants but none of them was singled out for the job.

Most of the council members did not have any preference and a few of them offered me the position. Only a few of the leaders wanted to appoint Mark but the entire council eventually agreed to offer him the position because of the DAA district officer's attitude: he came to Junjuwa and started to warn people against Mark because, in DAA's view, his appointment would represent a backward move for the community to the time when Junjuwa residents lived under mission control. He strongly suggested to the leaders that they appoint somebody else and tried to influence their choice. Council members reacted

### Chapter Eight

against this. Comforted by Jeff's advice, they stated that they wished to select an applicant by themselves and consequently appointed Mark: this was the chairman's choice, and it was an Aboriginal choice.

Mark was in his mid-twenties, he was very eager to help Junjuwa people and extremely keen to prove to Junjuwa councillors that they made the right choice by appointing him. Unfortunately for Mark, although he was indeed familiar with the area, he had no experience as a community adviser. He came to Fitzroy only five days prior to Jeff's departure, which was far too short a time to be instructed and told about everything. Further, right from the beginning Mark adopted an over-confident attitude that did not encourage Jeff to display a lot of patience with him. Everything Mark was told about his position, he pretended he knew already. He was immature but also too keen to demonstrate that he was up to the task. Thus he neglected to ask fundamental questions and advice. Consequently, when Mark found himself alone in Junjuwa's office he realised he had been over-optimistic about his ability to handle the situation and the first few months he worked in Junjuwa were really difficult for him.

Because of his previous work at the UAM store he had good contact with Walmajarri, more particularly with those who were still associated with the mission. The first council meeting Mark attended as community adviser was revealing of his attitude: he opened and closed the meeting and did most of the talking. He mostly talked about himself, his plans for Junjuwa, how he would improve this and that, what should be changed. Junjuwa's chairman was unable to attend this meeting and many councillors were very skeptical about Mark's attitude:

Well, that young bloke I reckon he is a bit cocky. We know him from the mission store alright, but he don't look too good for project officer that bloke. You've bin earin what him bin say: no Gidjigara [= card games, gambling], he don't want to bury them dead people too, well I don't know but he look like he is proper wild. Maybe we should bring him in low gear right now, we are boss not him, no way. Now listen, I am not keen on Jangala (Andrew) idea too, well you know he is a proper Walmajarri not Bunuba, that Mark boy he is from that UAM mob too, same Christian gang that made them Walmajarri boss in Bunuba country. Ok, us Bunuba we are Christian people too, but only little bit not all the way like them mob. Well, with that Mark maybe next time, no tobacco too. I don't know but I reckon we should quieten him down right now, show them, Christian and Walmajarri blokes, we are the boss not him, alright this way more proper (Willy).

Willy's comments relate to Mark's first council meeting, during which he stated that to maintain order within Junjuwa, gambling should be banned. Further he had also indicated that he refused to be the undertaker, as this was not part of his job although his two predecessors agreed to perform that duty since there was no undertaker in Fitzroy Crossing<sup>23</sup>. Worse still, during that first meeting, only Walmajarri people spoke and they all seemed to agree with

Mark, who made a mistake by addressing them all the time and neglecting other councillors.

The day after this first meeting, Mark had an even more difficult experience: his first pension day as community adviser. The mail is sorted out at Fitzroy Crossing's post office by 2 p.m. and on pension days Jeff had usually cashed all the pensions cheques and handed out cash to the pensioners by 4 p.m. Mark decided to do the pension on his own. Jeff had warned him that some young women, who hang around the office on pension days, had to be watched closely when there was a lot of cash in the office: Mark decided not to take any risks, and asked all office workers to leave the office. Unfortunately, without their assistance it was impossible to complete the pension payout in such a short time. By 7.30 p.m. a large number of pensioners and unhappy relatives had gathered outside Junjuwa office, people were banging at the door, throwing stones at the building, and shouting insults. Mark had locked himself in the office and only came out when Junjuwa's chairman managed to calm down the people telling them there was no cash available in town, something that had happened, before and that this was not Mark's fault<sup>24</sup>.

After the pension day incident, Mark's popularity went down in Junjuwa. He attempted to regain some of it by rescinding a ruling he had made at the first meeting to limit councillors' access to community vehicles. Councillors were happy about this reversal but it did not gain him support as he had thought it would because the councillors did not like his attitude. Even though they were given back access to community vehicles, they argued that Mark should not have taken the decision on his own. Mark's motives were good and most of his decisions were made to benefit the community, but he acted on his own far too often: he wrote letters in the name of the council and read them to council meetings once they had been sent; he interfered in family disputes and several times called the local police to Junjuwa. He thus isolated himself in the decision-making process and could not get the councillors' and leaders' support when he needed it.

Mark should have limited himself to office work in the first weeks of his appointment, but he wanted to do too much in too many areas right from the beginning, resulting in his being targeted by critics 'town-wide'. The DCS district officer was upset by Mark, who repeatedly sent Junjuwa residents in need of cash to apply for food vouchers at the DCS local office, whereas DCS's new policy was to distance itself from paternalistic attitudes. The local sergeant was also puzzled by how to deal with the Junjuwa community. On the one hand he had received a letter signed by Mark and Junjuwa's chairman which stated that the police needed council approval before entering community ground. On the other hand the police station was called by Mark two or three times a day in order to stop trouble in Junjuwa. In fact, Mark took too many personal initiatives, some unexpected: for example, he ordered that Junjuwa's store be supplied from the UAM store, when the usual supplier was a Derby based Aboriginal cooperative. Mark argued that getting supplies from the UAM was



### *Chapter Eight*

quicker than ordering from Derby, which was true, but although the UAM gave Junjuwa store a 20% discount, once the goods were on Junjuwa store shelves they were more expensive than in any other shops in town. In response to the councillors' request Mark had provided a community vehicle to take old people shopping: on pension days a bus load of Junjuwa pensioners made the round trip from Junjuwa to the UAM store and the roadhouse. Both the UAM store and the roadhouse were dearer than the local supermarket, but the former was managed by Christians and the latter owned by the publican's family. Further, Mark deducted money from some people's social security benefit cheques in order to pay bills at the UAM store or at the roadhouse, on his own initiative, similar to what had been done during the cattle station era and when Russell was community adviser.

Mark's ways of operating prompted many councillors and leaders to withdraw their support. He was distressed about this situation and a few months after his appointment was thinking of leaving Fitzroy Crossing. At this time the council and several local whites were really keen on seeing him go. But it was this period which coincided with Junjuwa getting opportunities to start new enterprises with the help of ADC. There were also more and more talks about a CDEP scheme to be implemented in the community and the transfer of the UAM lease to the Junjuwa Community was also on the agenda for the end of 1986. These three elements helped Mark to maintain his position since his training was needed for the new Junjuwa store and his personal background could facilitate negotiations with the UAM.

Gradually Mark modified his attitude and simultaneously Andrew started to get more involved in community affairs. He had kept a low profile during the first months of Mark's appointment for two reasons. First, because he was not really convinced that Mark was the right person for the position but had supported him to fulfil his promise. Second, two of his close kin had died and because of the taboos Andrew had limited his involvement with community affairs. Nevertheless, when Andrew realised that there was real discontent about the person he had nominated and supported for the position, he had a long talk with Mark during which he pointed out to him all that was not done properly. Mark reaffirmed his willingness to do something for Junjuwa people but argued that the lack of support from Junjuwa councillors, the delay needed to take a decision, and perpetual hassles caused by alcohol, gambling and money problems were at the origin of his wrongdoings. Both agreed to help each other and to act according to the new situation (chairman/community adviser) rather than to the former one (store manager/Aboriginal assistant). From then on things improved and both Andrew and Mark did a lot in getting Junjuwa off to a new start: transfer of the UAM lease in February 1987, the CDEP scheme implemented in May 1988, although their closeness drew many critics both inside Junjuwa (Bunuba councillors, young people), and outside (DAA, DCS, MWW).

Mark's attitude had not change completely but he was less strict with councillors' and leaders' privileges, and did not interfere any longer with gambling, drinking and family disputes within the community. Andrew on his side reacted positively and increased his confidence as a chairman. He challenged Mark's ideas several times and pointed out whenever he thought Mark was not acting as he should.

## **8.2.4 A personal experience**

In early 1987 I had the opportunity for three weeks of experiencing what it was like to be Junjuwa project officer. Mark had taken six weeks' leave. Jeff had made himself available to relieve him for half of that time and both Mark and the Junjuwa council approached me to look after Junjuwa office for the remaining three weeks. Although I was not enthusiastic about the idea at first, I eventually agreed to do it<sup>25</sup>.

It did not take me long to realise that Junjuwa project officer had to be available on a 24 hours basis as well as prepared to do various and sometimes unexpected tasks. Indeed, apart from paying social security benefits to Junjuwa residents and looking after community affairs, I found myself involved in situations far from the job description profile. I do not intend to go into details about all I did during those three weeks, but it is important to stress the wide spectrum of responsibilities, demands, duties and pressures that come on top of the current daily workload. The following are some examples of things I had to do during those three weeks: fill in forms for Junjuwa residents (social security benefits, driving licenses and registration applications); enquire about unpaid social benefits and other administrative problems; assist hospital staff locating young people with suspected venereal disease infections; bail people out of jail; to accompany local DCS staff to the juvenile court; drive sick or wounded people to the hospital, usually in the middle of the night; maintain and fix the Junjuwa diesel water pump; tow back a community vehicle that had broken down at night in the bush; negotiate with cattle stations' managers free access to fishing and hunting spots within station boundaries for Junjuwa residents; host a local MP willing to visit Junjuwa community; and finally attend local meetings organised by local non-Aboriginal organisations, government agencies, and Aboriginal communities.

As one would expect, most of these demands were urgent, important and had to be performed by the project officer in person. Keeping in mind the setbacks a project officer had to face when dealing with community Aboriginal leadership (lack of support, slowness in decision taking, reliance on non-Aborigines), anyone who held that position would be tempted to make all decisions and to act on their own. This was reinforced by the fact that, as I

### *Chapter Eight*

briefly experienced it, the Junjuwa project officer was an influential and important figure in town. I have to admit that a couple of times during this three week assignment, frustration made me act on my own, but each time I did so it created difficulties between me, as a project officer, and the Aboriginal leadership, making my leadership at the community level unsustainable. Therefore, I insisted on involving as many leaders as possible in responsibilities, tasks and duties I had to deal with.

Being Junjuwa's project officer for a short time allowed me to confirm my feelings about the importance of the project officer's personality and relationships with residents as well as his influence on the decision-making process. For example, as soon as I started working, several Bunuba families, with whom I had close links, became more involved in community affairs and members of these families channelled individuals' requests to the community through me for loans in cash, petrol vouchers<sup>26</sup> or use of community vehicles. These attitudes showed that personal connections were used by Junjuwa residents to obtain privileges in return for the support they gave to the project officer (Myers 1986).

The two council meetings I attended as project officer made me aware that it was possible to influence council decisions, not so much by interfering with the decision-making process, but by presenting items for discussion to the meeting in a certain way or simply by the order of these items on the meeting agenda. This personal experience emphasized how the threefold relationships between the project officer, the community chairman and the community leaders were crucial in making the running of community affairs easy or difficult.

I also became aware that office workers privileged their kin and relatives in their working activities in relations with the Department of Social Security (DSS). All enquiries I made to the state office of the DSS regarding unpaid or delayed payments of benefits were caused by improperly completed or unsigned forms, or applications sent too late. None of the people in such situations were closely related to any office workers and if they were it was the sign of a dispute or a familial conflict. On the contrary, office workers' kin's forms were returned duly completed, signed and before the due date. I attempted to discourage office workers from acting as they did by reporting the matter to the council meeting. Unfortunately, I did not notify leaders, especially the office workers' close kin, before I brought the issue to the council meeting and this personal initiative resulted in further difficulties: two of the three office workers did not come to work on the following pension day, and the third one spread rumours of my 'wrongdoings' with community affairs. I quickly had to apologize publicly for my initiative and left the people to decide on whether or not office workers' attitudes should change.

I experienced how misunderstandings could quickly arise between the project officer and community leaders, and create conflicting sentiments

### *Leadership in Junjuwa*

between the Aboriginal and the non-Aboriginal leadership in Junjuwa. These conflicts could be overcome but in the meantime community affairs were brought to a standstill and community leadership destabilized.

The first incident was caused by money missing from the office safe. I indicated in the previous Chapter that women and elderly people used the Junjuwa office safe as a deposit place for their savings. One day I gave a pensioner a \$50 note out of his savings and noticed before I put the envelope back inside the safe that he had still \$100 left. Two days later the same old man came to get some money and I found his envelope empty. I apologized to him and said that I would investigate the missing money. Between his previous and last visit I had had to leave the Junjuwa office a few times but had given the safe keys to only two office workers. I asked them if they had given that money to somebody else by mistake but both denied having anything to do with the incident and got very upset that I could suspect them. I did not accuse any one of them in particular but reported the incident to the council meeting. In the meantime, both office workers had told their fathers, who were leaders and councillors, that I accused them of stealing money. The two leaders challenged my report of the event: their daughters had worked for a long time and no money had been gone missing so far, but since I was new to the job I could have made a mistake myself; if I knew who was guilty I should call her name in front of the council. I declined to do so but was very uncomfortable with the outcome of the incident. For a few days I tightened the supervision over the office workers who responded by coming late to work, leaving early and displayed obvious lack of commitment. The office workers' fathers, their relatives and followers tried to make an issue of the incident: they pretended that I wanted to please the chairman by having one of his step-daughters employed in the office and therefore I needed to get rid of one worker. The chairman came to discuss the incident. He said that I should not distrust the office workers who were both from influential families within the community. I elected to cut short the incident prior to further development and called for a council meeting. At the meeting I asked council approval to draw \$100 from the Junjuwa account to reimburse the pensioner. I stated that since we were the three people directly involved with the incident, we should share the blame and I apologized to the pensioner as well as to the council. All councillors agreed on my suggestion and praised my decision for sharing responsibilities with the two office workers.

The second incident involved the chairman, and two senior councillors and happened a day after an initiation ceremony during which the chairman's younger brother had been circumcised. Because of his involvement in the preparation for the ceremony, Junjuwa's chairman, who was also the community store manager, had had to close the store for two days. The day after the ceremony was a Sunday but in order to allow people to shop, Andrew decided to open the store for a few hours. He sent two councillors to notify Junjuwa residents. About an hour after the store had opened, the chairman's wife came

### *Chapter Eight*

to tell me her husband was having problems at the store. When I got there, the chairman had locked the store which was full of people with boxes of goods. He informed me that the people had been told they could buy on credit. He wanted to avoid a major incident but did not know what to do. We decided to allow Junjuwa pensioners to purchase up to a \$50 of goods on credit. Once the store was empty I tried to find out how such a rumour came into being. The chairman said that he allowed the two councillors, who went to notify the people, to shop on credit in order to thank them for the prominent role they had played in his brother's initiation, then he suggested that they probably told everyone. At the next meeting, the chairman mentioned the incident and reminded pensioners who purchased goods on credit that money would be taken from their next pension. I added that people should avoid doing such things in the future for it complicated office work and blamed 'those who told the people they could buy on credit'. Immediately, one of the councillors stood up and said that I should call his name publicly and should not 'talk behind', if I thought he started the rumour. He went on saying that the chairman had plotted against him to keep him away from community affairs, and he left the meeting with several relatives and supporters. This councillor was in charge of electrical and plumbing maintenance in Junjuwa and declined to do any work until his name was cleared. I had a private discussion with him during which he admitted that the other councillor started the rumour but that he could not blame him because they were close kin; nevertheless he insisted on being cleared from any wrongdoings in the incident. He adopted a strategy similar to the one used in the previous incident by making public statements claiming that people 'in charge' of Junjuwa wanted to give his job to someone else. He declined to support any decisions made by the chairman and me, and threatened community leadership by rallying many followers to support him. Eventually, the chairman acknowledged he was the one who had decided to allow people to shop on credit to thank them for his younger brother's initiation ceremonies, but he added that he had to deny it first because there were people from other communities in the shop at the time and he did not want them to benefit from it. He apologized to me and to the councillor and stressed the importance of the community as a group united towards outsiders.

## **8.3 Community leadership**

As stated in the introduction to this chapter, community leadership as it operated in Junjuwa was an interaction between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal leadership. That interaction was necessary in the way that it provided a better representation of Junjuwa and its various components as a community. This did not mean there was full harmony, complete agreement and total support between the two types of leadership. On the contrary, frictions were common

### *Leadership in Junjuwa*

between the project officer and Junjuwa councillors, or between the latter and leaders, paradoxically, these disagreements did not necessarily split the community leadership into opposed factions, but helped to make this leadership efficient and reinforced the notion of community as a group.

On the side of Aboriginal leadership, people had the possibility of opposing non-Aboriginal leadership if decisions or new orientations did not suit the councillors, the leaders or the chairman; but, Aboriginal people could also limit their responsibilities to 'Aboriginal business' in the community and leave the charge of 'community affairs' to the project officer. This was common amongst older leaders and councillors, but others insisted on having a say in community leadership, even if the role they played in some area of community affairs was minor compared to the non-Aboriginal leadership. The chairman and councillors appointed in recent years were keen to learn about community affairs and insisted on being part of it. Their eagerness to be involved in the decision-making process was guided by a different type of relationship with the non-Aboriginal community as well as the prospect of a community fully controlled by Aboriginal people. Thus, the chairman and younger councillors played an important part in the community leadership, mainly by acting as brokers between the Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal leadership.

As Junjuwa chairman it's my duty to tell the council about everything. With Mark I learn about community affairs, it's important for me because we cannot have Gardiya working for us all the time, it's time we stand up now and the young councillors will help me to run the community by ourselves. Well, you could say I tell the project officer the Aboriginal way and explain the old people about the Gardiya way, myself I stand in the middle, sometimes it's hard, very hard, but I reckon as a chairman it's my job and it's the only way for Junjuwa people to go ahead and have a chance to do something on their own (Andrew).

Councillors and leaders could not afford to be out of community affairs, but since most of them did not have a clear understanding of 'paper work and money side', as they called it, they limited their participation to supporting the chairman and the project officer in the decision-making process. This support was neither unanimous nor systematic, but once a decision had been discussed, explained and altered, if needed, in order to meet Aboriginal leadership requirements, then the support eventuated. Afterwards, the role councillors and leaders had played became integrated into public discourse on community unity.

That Mark boy, him bin a bit wild alright, but him proper young fella too, we gonna help him understand about that Junjuwa place. Look now, first he wanta make a rule, us we don't like this one rule, but still we help that boy, we talk talk with him and with Jangala (Andrew) too. We have to help each other, we have to back up each other, all the way: councillors, old men (leaders?), young people, chairman, project officer, all the same, altogether we work for that Junjuwa place, Junjuwa, one single mob all the way, alright we bin havin little argument, and trouble little bit hard way too but we talk

### *Chapter Eight*

talk about it and then we stand up together, one mob alright, not blackfellas one side, Gardiya one side, no we make them rule together for Junjuwa (Joe).

This in particular brought various forms of leadership together in full support of decisions taken in the name of the community. It consolidated the image of Junjuwa as a group, both inside the community - all leaders and councillors supported the chairman and project officer - as well as at town level. Dissensions, when and if they existed, were not make public.

Differences of views among people who made up the Aboriginal leadership as well as other factors internal to community affairs made community leadership a fragile association that was easily destabilized. In such circumstances it was necessary for people involved in community leadership to reaffirm their commitment to it as well as their support to community based acts even if in the process of doing so some familial privileges needed to be publicly denied. I recall a council meeting that took place at a time where community leadership was very unstable. A few councillors, including the chairman's father, were harassing Mark for money and petrol vouchers to get relatives who had been attending ceremonies elsewhere back to Junjuwa. Mark had stood firm against them and refused to allocate these loans on the basis that the money would not be used for community purposes. Andrew had remained neutral on the issue: he agreed with Mark's attitude but could not challenge his father by siding against him publicly. Subsequently, the councillors involved in that argument refused to attend council meetings for a while and therefore blocked the decision-making process. Mark was upset by the chairman's lack of commitment and to show his discontent decided to sort out on his own current community affairs. The chairman's father started to complain to different leaders that although Junjuwa was an Aboriginal community, and that Aboriginal people were in charge of the community council, Gardiya were still running the place and interfered with Aboriginal business: people were not allowed to take care of their relatives who had to attend ceremonies, which was indeed Aboriginal business. A few days afterwards, the chairman was handed a letter by the local pastor. This letter had been sent to UAM headquarters in Melbourne, and dealt with the forthcoming handing over of the UAM lease to Junjuwa. The letter was written in the name of Junjuwa council but neither the councillors nor the chairman knew of its content. At the following council meeting, the chairman talked about the letter; he stated that even though he agreed with the letter's content, it was not suitable for the community to have a project officer who acted on his own in the name of the people. Mark reacted by complaining about the chairman's lack of commitment regarding community affairs and many councillors not attending meetings regularly. He added that the letter had to be forwarded to the UAM urgently and that was the reason why he had written it but he had been careful to say only what had been agreed to at previous council meetings. Mark apologised to the councillors and then brought up the issue that had caused him to be in conflict with some councillors: should community

### *Leadership in Junjuwa*

money be given to individuals for private purposes or not? Two councillors that were not directly concerned with this loan, said that in their views it was not a good idea but they wanted to hear other councillors' and leaders' views on the matter. One leader asked the council if it was right that an Aboriginal community should be run by a Gardiya like a cattle station. At this stage the chairman stood up and talked. He told councillors and leaders that they were wrong in blaming Mark and stressed the importance of community based acts and decisions. This is the moment his father chose to expose the rightfulness of his claim.

Well Jangala, I bin tellin you before, many times I bin tellin you, that mother for you, him bin gonna long way for business, long time too him bin gone, one pension bin come already. I don't know nothin, no telegram, no phone, nothin, well I'm proper worried now, I wanta get him back here that old girl, but I'm proper flat, no money no petrol nothin, I am spokesman for Junjuwa, I bin workin hard for that place too, well Junjuwa money is us money too, right, I reckon Junjuwa should help me, that's all (Arthur).

At this point of the meeting, Mark itemised the loans and several free tanks of petrol that had been granted by Junjuwa to the chairman's father for various reasons during the last three months. Andrew interrupted Mark by asking his father not to bring personal and family issues to the community council meetings anymore. He stressed that people, especially himself, had already enough problems in sorting out community affairs that they could not waste time by discussing private problems. He went on by asking council approval for a new rule that would make it impossible for individuals to obtain community money for private purposes. His motion received the entire council approval, including his father's, then he discussed with Mark the content of the next letter to UAM headquarters.

Mark had tried for a long time to cut privileges given to influential families, especially to the chairman's, but so far had failed because he could not get any support. In this particular situation, all the components of community leadership had been pulled apart over one particular incident and in order to get them together again, each side had to make concessions to the other: the project officer had acted on his own but was forgiven because his wrongdoings had been motivated by the lack of support from Aboriginal leadership; the chairman stood up against his father when all privileges previously granted to him had been mentioned and he subsequently initiated a move to suppress these privileges, even though he had ignored, so far, Mark's attempts to do so; the entire council supported the chairman's motion, knowing it was aimed at indicating to Mark that his willingness to work for a better commitment in community affairs was appreciated. After the meeting, interactions between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal leadership were more efficient and the running of community affairs improved accordingly for some time.



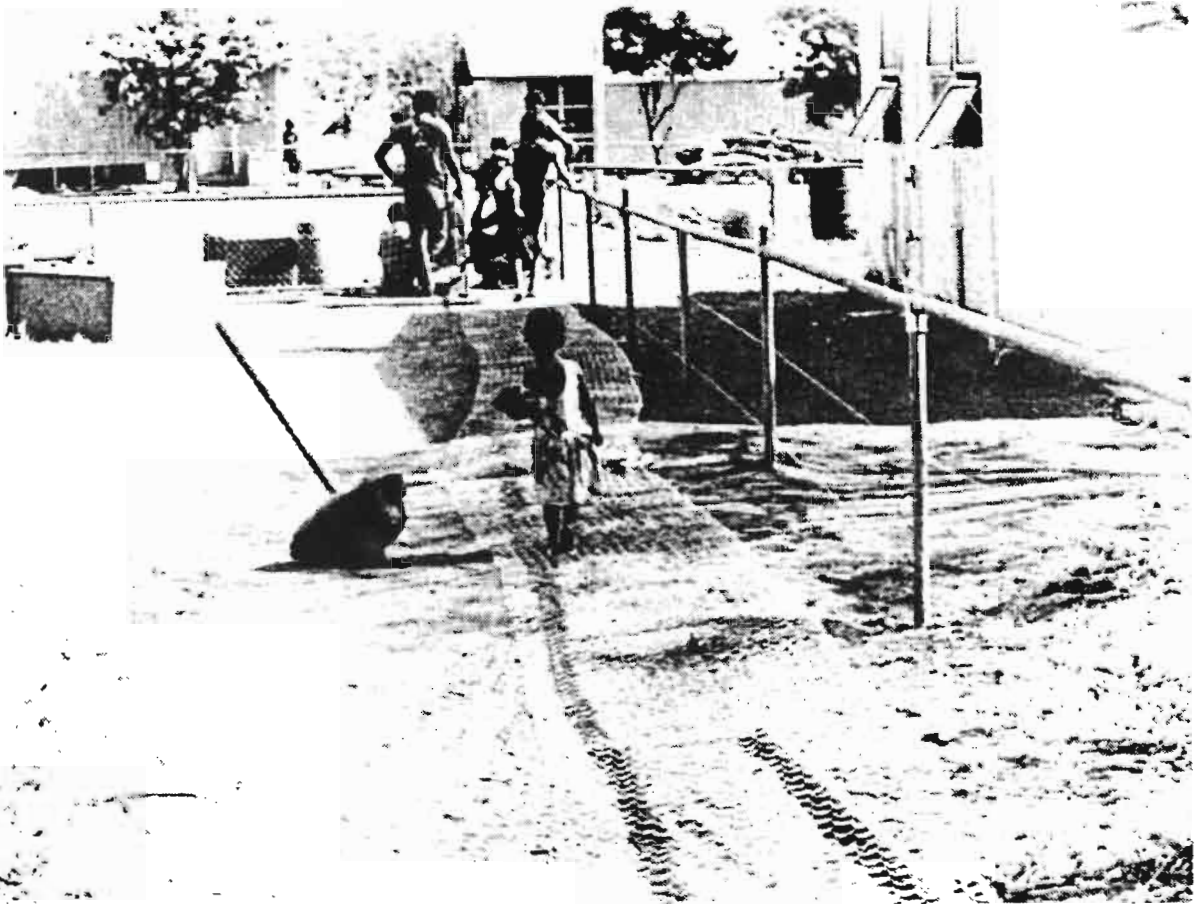


Plate 10

House being upgraded in October 1988 as part of the CDEP scheme. Here the fencing team is working in the Bunuba section of Junjuwa.



**Plate 11**

This Junjuwa community store was formerly the UAM store located at the entrance to the old mission compound. It had been purchased by Junjuwa as part of the transfer of the UAM lease to the community and subsequently given its new name 'Burawa store' after the Bunuba name for the two hills behind the old mission compound.

## Chapter Eight

Theoretically, the project officer was able to take and apply decisions on his own. He had control over community expenditures and should he wish to do so could easily run the community as a single person. Although, as I showed earlier in this Chapter, if he had adopted this attitude it would have made his position precarious and created tensions within the community, rendering his position unsustainable.

Interaction among community leaders was needed to make community leadership efficient, but other uses of that interaction existed as well. For example, strategic use of that interaction was a possibility if the project officer needed some time before taking a final decision: he would stress the importance of getting the council's support and consequently often delayed the process of decision-making, as this had been pointed out to me by Jeff the previous project officer:

Frankly, I could run the show on my own, dead easy. But you see, I want all my moves to be approved and supported by the entire council and the chairman. There are too many people in Fitzroy who would be happy to point at me if they could prove that I am acting on my own. Sometimes it's a pain but other times it's worth it. I'll give you an example: it takes so long to get council approval on one issue, when it's not properly understood by the people, that it can be handy in some cases. When DAA or other people are pressing me for something and I am not too sure about it, I can freeze the whole thing by taking the matter to council's approval (Jeff).

On the Aboriginal side of leadership, the support given by the project officer as the white authority at the community level was comforting to people in leadership roles as well as highlighting the importance of Aboriginal leadership at the community level.

Sometimes, them Gardiya them proper no good in their head. But this Mark, he's alright, he listen, he listen to me. Well you can see now we are the boss here, not them Gardiya like before, now we are the boss properly, we talk, I tell him and he listen, alright Junjuwa is our place and we make the rules here too, not him, he listen to us (Mervin).

Although mutual support was needed to assert leadership on both sides as well as to reinforce community cohesiveness and autonomy in the decision-making process, the interaction was a fragile balance that was constantly put at risk. Some threats came from within Junjuwa but they were not really dangerous for community leadership since they could be absorbed within sub-groups or languages and controlled by leaders or councillors. On the contrary, threats that originated outside Junjuwa could unbalance community leadership and make it inefficient at times. These threats could come from either Aboriginal or non-Aboriginal people and could be directed at either one side or the other of community leadership. I will look at these external interventions and their impact on Junjuwa in the next Chapter.

## **Endnotes - Chapter Eight**

- 1 The role of cultural brokers in minority groups and their emergence as potential new leaders is discussed in several papers dealing with ethnicity and the relations between the State and minorities; a synthetic approach is proposed by Fred (Fred 1986).
- 2 Although non-Aboriginal people other than the project officer were employed by Junjuwa community and intervened at times in the decision-making process, I have chosen not to discuss their role in this Chapter but will include them in the next one, under non-Aboriginal interventions.
- 3 I will call councillors those of the Junjuwa residents appointed to the council of leaders, and leaders any other person recognised as a leader but not appointed as a councillor.
- 4 This did not accord with the Junjuwa constitution, but older councillors had decided to involve more young Bunuba people in the council to look after community affairs and because of the prospect of getting the UAM lease and some land located in Bunuba country.
- 5 Working activities under Junjuwa community were limited and sought after because those who were employed also received unemployment benefits.
- 6 An audit conducted in late 1985 estimated that about \$30,000 out of \$50,000 granted as loans to Junjuwa residents during the fiscal year had never been paid back to the community.
- 7 On the notion of followers who support leaders in Aboriginal grouping, see Sansom 1978 and 1981.
- 8 The two Wangkajunga women moved into the Bunuba part of Junjuwa, but returned regularly to stay with their own families. Many disputes arose about the children who were identified as Bunuba by their fathers' groups and as Wangkajunga by their mothers'; both couples separated after a few years and the children were raised by their Bunuba families.
- 9 The heads of both the families had died recently and their male members were under taboo caused by the loss, which meant they kept a low profile in community affairs; a single Bunuba male from another part of the Bunuba country, related to both families, was not seen as a threat by any of them and consequently he was offered the chairmanship.
- 10 It was common at that time for non-Aboriginal people in need of labour to ask the community chairman to provide them with workers.
- 11 Andrew never mentioned his real father to me and called his step-father, father; when I talk about Andrew's father it is in fact his step-father.
- 12 A Wangkajunga man had been appointed chairman previously but it was only to relieve the Bunuba chairman, who had been sick for a few weeks.
- 13 Often drunk Aboriginal men or women strip themselves naked when they are upset by something.
- 14 Once again, the threat to kill other people and commit suicide afterwards was a very common attitude amongst heavily intoxicated young Aboriginal men.
- 15 Non-Aboriginals appointed to such positions were known locally as project officers: I will use one or the other expression in the course of this chapter.
- 16 I did not know him as Junjuwa project officer since my first field trip was conducted prior to his appointment, which had terminated by the time I returned to the Kimberley. He was, however, still living around Fitzroy Crossing during my second field trip and I had many opportunities to discuss his involvement with Junjuwa.

## *Chapter Eight*

17 Until 1983 there was only one Justice of the Peace in Fitzroy, then the roadhouse manager was appointed and finally the school headmaster in late 1987. Since no magistrate made the trip regularly to Fitzroy, the Justice of the Peace acted often as the local magistrate for minor offences. Most offenders were Aboriginal people, therefore such a position gave Russell an even stronger influence over local Aboriginal people.

18 This was the old UAM girls' dormitory that had been taken over by Russell, his wife and a part-Aboriginal worker and turned into an hostel for homeless Aboriginal children and orphans.

19 He was at the time appointed by Junjuwa as CDEP team coordinator. He had attempted to take the project officer's position while Mark was on leave but he failed to achieve his goal, and subsequently was offered that job by Mark, who wanted to have him under his control (see Chapter Nine).

20 The position was advertised for the first time and although all the applications were sent to DAA Derby office, still the short list was made by DAA district officers prior to any meeting with Junjuwa residents.

21 Two signatures were needed: one being either the chairman or spokesperson and the other one of a councillor out of the five chosen by council as co-signatories.

22 The average period of assignment for non-Aboriginal government staff in the Kimberley is between two to three years; at the time of Jeff's appointment most of the non-Aboriginals he had to deal with were either in the last year of their assignment or non-government appointed people who had lived in the area for nearly a decade.

23 There was no appointed undertaker in town and it was too expensive to have somebody sent from Derby for one funeral. Junjuwa community ordered several coffins each year and the funeral was conducted by the project officer, helped by one or two local white people paid by the community (no Aboriginal were prepared to do this task because of the taboos associated with a corpse). The location of the grave was usually chosen by the relatives of the deceased but this caused further problems since, until 1986, there was no official cemetery for Aboriginal people in Fitzroy Crossing. When one was created it was a very traumatic experience for many Aboriginal families to have the graves of their relatives relocated.

24 Since there were still no banking facilities in Fitzroy Crossing in 1987, on pension day Marra Worra Worra drew cash from Derby to pay the pensions to people from the area. The cash came by plane with the mail, then each community wrote a cheque to MWW and cashed it to pay pensioners who resided in the community. It happened regularly and for various reasons (plane delayed, bank holidays, not enough cash in Derby, airstrip flooded, MWW financial difficulties) that no cash was available in town on pension days, therefore cheques had either to be handed out and cashed individually, then rent and bills were rarely paid off, or the project officer had to rely on local enterprises (post office, pub, roadhouse, supermarket) to get cash but this was rarely sufficient to pay all pensioners; consequently, payments were delayed by one or two days and people were very angry about this situation.

25 I was in fact very reluctant to relieve Mark because relationships between myself as an anthropologist and the people were totally different from those that existed between the Junjuwa residents and the project officer. I was worried that this experience could make the remaining period of field work difficult. I eventually accepted, however, because I saw it as something I could give in return to Junjuwa people for their help in the course of my research.

26 Petrol vouchers were issued and signed by the project officer and given to councillors or office workers; otherwise it was impossible to control petrol expenditure.

---

---

# CHAPTER NINE

---

---

## JUNJUWA AND EXTERNAL INTERVENTIONS

---

In this Chapter I examine will look at various types of external influences on Junjuwa community and describe their impact on it as a cohesive group. In describing the township of Fitzroy Crossing (Chapter Three), I have stressed that it cannot be dissociated from Junjuwa community. Indeed, even though Fitzroy Crossing had been established long before Junjuwa existed, the town developed largely because of the Aboriginal population which needed to be serviced and because local enterprises saw business opportunities from the late 1960s onwards. Most of the Aboriginal population that lived in the various town-based and nearby settlements had at one stage resided at Junjuwa. The combination of these two factors resulted in many external interventions in Junjuwa's internal affairs. These interventions were of various origins, of different kinds and were channelled in several ways. External interventions often had only a limited impact on community leadership, but they could also create problems by undermining the cohesion of Junjuwa as a group.

External influences on Junjuwa fall into two main categories according to their origin: those which were initiated by other Aboriginal people and those which originated from non-Aboriginal people. Under the first category I will discuss external interventions by other Aboriginal town-based settlements, either by a group or by individuals; influences from Aboriginal settlements located outside the township; and the role that local Aboriginal organisations played in these external interventions. In the last section of the Chapter I discuss interventions by non-Aboriginal people; I first expose interferences caused by people employed by government bodies; then by people who did not necessarily have an official position (non-government employees). In the conclusion to this chapter I examine the impact of these external factors as a disruptive element that worked against Junjuwa's cohesion as a group.

## **9.1 Interventions from other Aboriginal settlements**

There were only two other Aboriginal settlements at Fitzroy Crossing: Kurnangki (established in mid-1985), and Mindi Rardi (leased to Junjuwa and sub-leased to Kurlku people in late 1986). All residents in these two settlements had been living in Junjuwa before, either permanently or temporarily. For this reason, as well as for others stated, both Kurnangki and Mindi Rardi interfered with the life of Junjuwa residents. Aboriginal people from the three town-based settlements had a lot in common (see Chapter Two), and kinship networks expanded beyond the separate settlement boundaries (see Chapter Six). Thus, residents of these settlements interacted on a daily basis on many occasions, even though at the level of 'community affairs' leaders and councillors claimed that the three settlements were independent and autonomous.

The main conflict between Kurnangki, as a community, and Junjuwa was over equipment and resources that Junjuwa had and Kurnangki did not. For example, Junjuwa community had a truck, a bus, a tractor, two lawn mowers and many tools. All the vehicles and the equipment were to be used by Junjuwa residents, for community purposes with council's approval. These rules were not strictly followed, however, and demands from residents of other settlements were numerous. Kurnangki village had recurrent problems with plumbing appliances which resulted in heavy electricity and water bills, water waste and health hazards. Members of households in which these problems were really bad often relied on relatives from Junjuwa to get access to Junjuwa plumbing tools and spare parts, so that they could fix it themselves. Unfortunately, many tools were not returned or were damaged, and the stock of spare parts was not renewed, resulting in Junjuwa's household plumbing problems being left unfixed. Several unhappy Junjuwa residents complained to the council that people from outside Junjuwa had been given priority over them. Further, the two workers in charge of plumbing maintenance in Junjuwa argued they could not fix things properly in Junjuwa since their tools were either missing or broken. Furthermore, Junjuwa's project officer refused to purchase new tools or to pay for parts that had been fitted outside the community. In response to these critics and to negative comments, several Junjuwa councillors stated that Junjuwa should help Kurnangki people since many Junjuwa residents had relatives at Kurnangki, although they admitted that stricter controls over the loan of Junjuwa's property to outsiders should be implemented. A letter was drafted by council members in which it was stated that in order to limit inconvenience caused in the past the council should be approached formally before any equipment could be borrowed.

The local DCS officer, who acted as Kurnangki community adviser<sup>1</sup>, had been aware of the situation, and did not want to let misunderstandings develop

*Junjuwa and external interventions*

between the two settlements. He notified Junjuwa council that Kurnangki Community was prepared to pay for plumbing maintenance on a regular basis, and that instead of getting a contract from a local enterprise, he was happy to offer it to Junjuwa. Junjuwa maintenance team was sent to Kurnangki to make a quotation, and the two councils agreed on how and when the maintenance would be conducted. From then on personal initiatives to borrow Junjuwa's tools were not taken into account any longer, and Junjuwa was 'working' for Kurnangki people and not only 'helping'. This resulted in Junjuwa residents being able to have maintenance carried out in their houses when they needed it.

This example shows that it was possible to channel demands from one settlement to another in a way that did not interfere too heavily with community leadership and did not cause conflict. However, this initiative opened the gate to an increasing number of other demands for agreements between the councils, often channelled through a non-Aboriginal person, that included payment for the service provided. Ultimately, Junjuwa council, pressed by the growing discontent of Junjuwa residents, decided to terminate the availability of this type of service to other settlements. Junjuwa residents, deprived of the use of community vehicles, access to Junjuwa equipment, and labour force in the form of workers' teams, argued they were not business people and that the income from these arrangements benefited only councillors and leaders. In doing so they highlighted the fact that an Aboriginal community is not an enterprise, and reminded the community leadership that in order to have the residents' full support such activities would have to be stopped or strictly limited.

Another intervention by Kurnangki that created problems within Junjuwa was caused by the Kurnangki chairman's family. The Kurnangki chairman used his position of community appointed leader to obtain privileges from Junjuwa's chairman's family. These privileges consisted mainly of access to Junjuwa vehicles, and in the purchase of goods on credit at Junjuwa's store. These privileges created problems within Junjuwa, firstly because use of community vehicles was limited to council members, and to residents in special circumstances pending council's approval, and secondly because shopping on credit had been banned at Junjuwa store. As long as these privileges were granted only occasionally, when the Kurnangki Chairman needed some help, it did not have much effect on Junjuwa residents' life. But, gradually he borrowed Junjuwa's vehicles more regularly and got to shop on credit more and more frequently. Further, shopping privileges became extended to his immediate family (five daughters, all married with children), apparently without approval from anyone in Junjuwa. This situation provoked several problems: first, the DCS officer, who acted as Kurnangki community adviser, refused to pay off bills run up by the chairman's family. Second, the Junjuwa store started to have financial problems: only a few bills were partly paid off while credit purchases continued to occur every second day. Third, members of Junjuwa's chairman's family who had granted these privileges to the Kurnangki chairman, started to



### *Chapter Nine*

encounter open disapproval of their decision. Finally, Junjuwa residents approached the council, in increasing numbers, for similar concessions. The situation developed into an internal crisis which was directed at the Junjuwa chairman's family.

Look that mob over there (he pointed towards the chairman's father's house), them proper no good them mob, they gotta everything in that Junjuwa place: motokar, jobs, free tucker, petrol, all the lot alright, but them don't care for Junjuwa people, them only care for boss mob like them lot. True God, it's like I'm tellin you now: that chairman from Kurnangki, Walmajarri boy too, well that chairman mob from Junjuwa them back'im up to get Junjuwa motokar and free tucker too. Myself I reckon them proper wrong, look here, look there, (he pointed at several houses in different directions), we got'em too Walmajarri people right here now, old people, old girl, but look no motokar, no tucker, proper hungry one all them lot. But that mob (chairman's family), they don't care about them, them only care about making boss from other places boss for Junjuwa too, but this time we gonna stop it, show them properly that lot they can't do that no more now, or we gonna finish them lot, that's it. We can get one chairman from another mob too, one mob that really care for Junjuwa people (Colin).

The situation did not deteriorate further because of the joint efforts of the DCS officer and Junjuwa's project officer, who both felt that these privileges granted to the Kurnangki chairman should be stopped. They obtained a decision from each council: Junjuwa council decided that the entire council's approval would be needed prior to an outsider borrowing a community vehicle, and the Kurnangki council agreed that any purchase on credit should first be submitted to the DCS officer for approval.

A similar set of problems arose with Mindi Rardi. Mindi Rardi's conflicts with Junjuwa started even before the Kurlku people moved into the old Windmill reserve. The Kurlku people had lived in Junjuwa since it started but were eager to set up an outstation at Kurlku<sup>2</sup>, a place where they paid short visits every two or three months. A young Walmajarri female related to one of the Kurlku group leaders was employed at the Fitzroy Crossing DCS office as a community liaison officer. She was amongst the first people to know about DCS willingness to transfer the Windmill reserve lease to an Aboriginal incorporated group. She consulted with Kurlku representatives to find out if they were prepared to move into Windmill reserve, given that they had wanted to leave Junjuwa (see Chapter Six). She received a positive answer once the Kurlku leaders had checked with a Bunuba custodian of the area, to see if he would allow them to move into it<sup>3</sup>. Then she notified the local DCS officer about the Kurlku people's readiness to reside at Windmill reserve and Junjuwa's approval of it. He advised her to contact the Aboriginal Affairs Planning Authority (AAPA) in Perth, on the behalf of the Kurlku people, since that government agency was in charge of negotiating the transfer of lease from government bodies to Aboriginal communities. A few weeks afterwards a letter from AAPA reached Junjuwa office: the content of this letter sparked strong reactions from council members and Bunuba alike. In this letter, Junjuwa's

### *Junjuwa and external interventions*

leaders were praised and thanked for their kindness in agreeing to give Windmill reserve to the Kurlku people who would get a 99 year lease and would be granted the full benefit of that reserve for its entire duration. Junjuwa's leaders and the Bunuba people, although they admitted they had agreed to Kurlku people living in the houses located at Windmill for a while, stated that they had never given the land away. Further, they would have liked to notify AAPA themselves of their decision, rather than being confronted with a situation which reminded many Bunuba of the creation of Kurnangki:

This time we gonna fight, we can't let them trick us again like last time with that Kurnangki place. We bin tell'em government people, all right we wanta help them Walmajarri people, but them don't listen properly, them listen one side, not all the way and them bin givin that place to them Kurnangki people, milimil<sup>4</sup>, houses, all the lot. OK we say nothin we're proper quiet mob us Bunuba, we don't like humbug [=trouble] too much. But now them government people them bin doin all the same again, no way, us Bunuba we can't give no more of that Bunuba land away to them desert mob, because us Bunuba we got fuck all, nothin we got, just that Junjuwa place that's all but him proper rubbish place this one. Them young fellas Bunuba them got nothin, well we should think about them lot first and tell them government people we wanta keep that Bunuba land for our young fellas, not give that land away like white fella with paper, that's no good, no we can't no more (Walter).

Subsequently, a meeting was called by Bunuba leaders to discuss the issue with the DCS officer and representatives of the Kurlku people. During that meeting, it became clear that Kurlku representatives were displeased with the initiative taken by their female relative working at DCS and uncomfortable that their desire to move into Windmill had been misinterpreted. The DCS officer exposed his Department's position, and added that it was not his intention to create tensions or problems between Aboriginal people by acting 'behind their backs'. He stated that his department would agree and support any Aboriginal decision about Windmill reserve. Bunuba leaders asked Kurlku representatives about their 'side' of the story. The spokesperson for Kurlku said that since Windmill reserve was located on Bunuba land, it was up to the Bunuba to talk first. The first Bunuba leader outlined the history of Aboriginal settlements in the area: desert people being allowed to settle in Bunuba country: creation of Junjuwa, then Kurnangki and now Windmill. He reminded people about the opportunities to set up outstations in their countries and he pointed out the lack of such opportunities for Bunuba people<sup>5</sup>. The second Bunuba leader called some young Bunuba men to join the meeting and asked them what they wanted to do with the Windmill reserve. They all said they wanted to keep it. The next leader asked who, amongst the Bunuba, was prepared to move into Windmill reserve and his question remained unanswered. Another Bunuba leader argued that Kurlku people helped the community during the time they lived in Junjuwa, and consequently he was prepared to help them too. If they wanted to live at Windmill reserve this was possible but the reserve should have a Bunuba name and the lease be given to Bunuba people. The representatives of the Kurlku group said they were happy to move into the houses, and would like to

### *Chapter Nine*

stay at Windmill reserve until their outstation was ready for permanent occupation.

After that meeting other problems arose. Some Walmajarri and Wangkajunga from Junjuwa complained they had been 'left behind' in the issue: they claimed that although the Bunuba were indeed the 'owners' of the Windmill reserve area, many people from other languages, and more particularly Walmajarri and Wangkajunga, had lived on that reserve for a while, had looked after the place and therefore they could not be ignored. Further, their understanding of the problem was that it concerned Junjuwa as a community (both Kurlku people and Bunuba involved in that matter were Junjuwa residents), and therefore all ideas should be taken into consideration before an agreement was made. Following that reaction, another meeting was arranged, this time with representatives of all groups living in Junjuwa, in addition to people directly involved, and a final decision was reached: the reserve would be called by its Bunuba name 'Mindi Rardi', the lease would be transferred from DCS to Junjuwa Community for a 99 year period, and the new leaseholder would sub-lease it to Kurlku people for renewable 5 year periods.

Afterwards all Aboriginal people involved in the transfer of Windmill reserve commented positively on the final decision they had made together. But for nearly 5 months (mid-April to mid-August 1986), from the time the proposed transfer of the reserve was made public until the day Kurlku people moved into Mindi Rardi, the entire town's attention was monopolised by the Windmill Reserve issue and people who were primarily concerned (Bunuba, Kurlku people, Junjuwa residents) had difficulty in reaching a quick and satisfactory decision on their own.

The further away from Fitzroy Crossing Aboriginal settlements were located the less they affected Junjuwa. Any impact they did have was limited to times visitors from various remote settlements stayed at Junjuwa or when Junjuwa residents undertook trips to visit relatives in these settlements. Involvement in Junjuwa's internal affairs was mainly advice in response to rumours about Junjuwa's internal problems that circulated outside Fitzroy Crossing or to open criticism expressed by Junjuwa residents with whom visitors were staying.

One example of external factors developing into community conflict was the role a Walmajarri man from Noonkanbah played in the 'Bunuba coup' during a visit to relatives in Junjuwa. This Walmajarri man, Raymond, resided alternatively at Yungnora (on Noonkanbah station) and at Fitzroy Crossing. He was married to a Bunuba woman whose father was closely related to one of the two most prominent Bunuba families in Junjuwa. Raymond was just about to move back permanently to Yungnora, where he faced a challenge: he was a young but respected man, whose influence was important amongst young and older men alike, who actively engaged in limiting Christian influence in Aboriginal internal affairs. Unfortunately, the Yungnora chairman at this time

*Junjuwa and external interventions*

was himself a strong Christian, partly as a result of frustration following the Noonkanbah crisis (Hawke & Gallagher 1990:320-321), and encouraged Christian involvement and activities in the settlement's life. Raymond had a lot of respect for the chairman and old leaders who, for the most part, supported the chairman's attitudes, but at the same time he did not want them to adhere to ideas that in his view benefited people outside Yungnora (donation to Christian movements, fund raising for building a church, employment of an Aboriginal pastor as book-keeper). Thus, Raymond thought that on the basis of his own experience he could stimulate young Bunuba men to become more involved in community affairs and to express their disagreements to both the Junjuwa chairman and the newly appointed project officer, who in his view also favoured Christian activities. Raymond exposed his ideas to several Bunuba leaders, who agreed that he could speak to young men, which he did on a few occasions. Unfortunately, his suggestions were misinterpreted and young Bunuba men got carried away: they really wanted to take over control from Junjuwa's elected leadership. Once the coup had failed and Raymond had left town (see Chapter Seven), his role in precipitating the crisis was pointed out by a Bunuba leader:

That Japaljarri boy (Raymond), him bin proper trouble-maker all the way, when we bin havin trouble with that Noonkanbah business long time ago, him bin already stirrin up them mob young fellas to make more trouble with them police and government mob. Look now, he gonna camp at that Yungnora place for good and people bin say him gonna take over that old boss for them mob. Well I don't know myself but I reckon it's proper wrong. One night him bin come longa my camp, now him bin say, that Gardiya (Mark) him bin rubbishin us mob, that Jangala (Andrew) him proper no good chairman and that us mob Bunuba we gonna stand up and fight. Alright, I listen little bit, I reckon him bin talk funny, ok him married that girl proper Bunuba, right, but him Walmajarri lingo properly that boy like them lot him bin talking about (Andrew). I bin say ok, you can talk talk with them Bunuba boys, I don't know what him bin tellin them boys, quiet mob them lot Bunuba boys, but them got proper mad, them bin talk wrong (swearing), them don't listen us old fellas and them bin givin us a hard time too. Alright now we all quiet again, no more humbug, but that Japaljarri boy him bin makin all than humbug [=trouble], all the way right through (Colin).

In this example the outsider was blamed as the real cause of what was an internal dispute. He might indeed have played a role in bringing the dispute out into the open but the conflict existed before. Blaming outsiders, as I have already stated in Chapter Five, was a strategy used by Junjuwa leaders to reaffirm Junjuwa's cohesion as a group whenever it had been challenged.

The second type of involvement in Junjuwa's affairs from settlements located outside of town was demands for vehicles. Most of these demands originated from Christian oriented settlements which had access to the KCF bus but often needed extra vehicles, such as were available from Junjuwa. Over a three month period, Looma community (See Map 1) approached Junjuwa

### *Chapter Nine*

council five times to use the Junjuwa bus. The demands were channelled directly to the chairman, who sought council's approval before responding positively to the requests. The Looma chairman asked to rent the Junjuwa bus only for special occasions (usually to attend a Christian convention) and agreed to pay for petrol and for extra expenses if any.

The first time Junjuwa council was approached for the use of the community bus by Looma, the request was presented as a lucrative operation for Junjuwa community, which at that time did not use the bus very much, and the council's response was positive. The bus was returned in due time with a full tank of petrol and cleaned throughout. The second time Looma people rented the bus they returned it 48 hours late and a few councillors complained to Junjuwa and Looma chairmen about it. The third time Looma community approached Junjuwa to rent the bus some misunderstandings occurred: apparently the Junjuwa chairman and project officer agreed to rent the bus but failed to notify the council about Looma's request. The evening prior to the day the bus had been rented to Looma, the Fitzroy Xpress band requested council's approval to use the bus to go to Derby where the band was due to perform the next day. The council agreed to the band's request, providing a councillor drove it<sup>6</sup>. When the councillor who had been chosen to drive the bus asked the project officer for the vehicles' keys he was told that the bus had been rented to Looma people for three days. The band members and most of the councillors were upset but since the chairman was out of town they did not want to start an argument with the project officer, who in the meantime had provided the band with other transportation to Derby. At the next council meeting, the use of Junjuwa vehicles by people from other communities was debated. The councillors criticised the project officer for renting Junjuwa vehicles, which he saw as a good financial operation for the community<sup>7</sup>, by stating that Junjuwa was not running a business with vehicles, and that these vehicles were the community's property and as such Junjuwa residents should have priority. The chairman was embarrassed by the matter but eventually sided with the councillors against the project officer, whom he blamed for failing to notify the council the third time Looma people asked to rent the vehicle.

The fourth time Looma community expressed its need for the bus, Junjuwa council was divided over what decision should be taken. Bunuba councillors claimed they wanted to use the bus at the same time as the Looma community requested it, to take old people fishing at Brooking Gorge. Walmajarri and Wangkajunga leaders, although they were prepared to lend the vehicle to Looma, acknowledged that Junjuwa residents should be given priority. Looma council was notified that they could not use the bus since Junjuwa people needed the vehicle at the same time. The fishing trip did not materialise and the bus remained parked in front of Junjuwa's office during the entire week-end. The project officer was annoyed with the leaders' behaviour, but it was clear that the council was now reluctant to loan vehicles to other

*Junjuwa and external interventions*

communities, and the next time the project officer was approached to rent the bus, he said that Junjuwa vehicles were not for rent any longer.

This particular involvement with another settlement resulted in a conflict because it highlighted the lack of communication that existed within the community leadership. The conflict was overcome by tightening group solidarity amongst leaders at the level of the community and by the Aboriginal leadership standing firm against the project officer until he agreed to act according to their wishes.

All the examples I have discussed so far occurred as a result of demands or involvement from outside Junjuwa. Sometimes other settlements were used by Junjuwa residents, individually or in groups, when internal problems existed in Junjuwa and external support was needed to solve them. I will give two examples to illustrate the impact of external involvement resulting from demands by Junjuwa: one was an individual initiative and the other was initiated by a group of leaders.

An individual initiative to get support from other settlements was made by Arthur, the chairman's father. Arthur had been told that some funding was available to people who had to travel for ceremonial purposes. He contacted the KLCC in Broome in order to get details of applications for grants and afterwards visited Kalumburu and Iminji, two settlements in which he had relatives who shared with him the ownership of a corroboree or Jumba<sup>8</sup>, which he intended to set up in the Fitzroy Valley area. When he returned to Junjuwa, he was very confident about his plans: he would take his 'show' to places as far away as Perth and prove to Blackfellows and Whitefellows alike that Bunuba people have not forgotten about their past. Some days later, he asked me to accompany him to several spots between the Oscar Range and Windjina Gorge associated with his Jumba, and asked me to take photos and to record his version of the entire story. His idea was to produce a booklet with pictures and the story printed in 'proper English' so that Gardiya could understand the show better and would be encouraged to visit Bunuba country. For a few weeks Arthur devoted most of his time to organising details of 'his show'. He told me that Law people he had visited at Kalumburu and Iminji cleared his corroboree and that it was an 'easy one'<sup>9</sup> that every one could watch and enjoy. He selected dancers and singers from amongst his kinsmen and other Bunuba, as well as amongst other river people<sup>10</sup>. He ordered two large paintings from a young Gooniyandi male from Yiyili which depicted the main sequences of the story, and organised to have some head decorations made by a Gooniyandi ceremonial leader who lived in Junjuwa. Everything was going according to his schedule and he had planned a rehearsal of his show to which he had invited many local whites.

He came to my house the day before the practice session and looked really depressed. He told me he was having 'big trouble' with his Jumba: Wangkajunga from Junjuwa would not allow such a Jumba to be performed

### *Chapter Nine*

publicly before women, children and white people. For about two weeks he kept saying that he would go ahead because he was sure of his rights: this was a Bunuba story, he was a Bunuba leader, Junjuwa was in Bunuba country, and he had received approval from Bunuba ceremonial leaders in other settlements to go ahead. Even though Wangkajunga people were 'Law people', they could not stop him from showing his corroboree nor could they do anything against him. Nevertheless, he kept postponing the rehearsal of his show: one night it was pension night ("too many drunks"), another night it was too windy (...), then a dancer was sick, and another night it was too dark. After I had known of his problems for about 10 days I tried to obtain information about the identity of the Wangkajunga people who were against the public showing of Arthur's corroboree, as well as about the specific problems with it. In fact there was only one Wangkajunga man opposed to the open display of Arthur's corroboree. He was a renowned 'Law man' whose reputation as expert in 'hard law' was well established across the Fitzroy Valley, right down to Lake Gregory where he originally came from. The problem in Arthur's jumba were the head ornaments made of wooden poles of various sizes and shapes decorated with feathers and brightly coloured knitting wool. According to Arthur these decorations were 'clean' and could be seen by women and children: for Ben, the Wangkajunga opposed to Arthur, these ornaments were 'hard', and could only be displayed at specific male ceremonies attended by fully initiated men only.

Arthur approached Walmajarri ceremonial leaders in various settlements from the Fitzroy Crossing area to find out what would be the reaction of other desert people should he display such head decorations. According to him they all said that such ornaments were suitable for a public performance. Arthur organised a short rehearsal session while Ben was out of town. He sang only a few parts of the entire story and the dancers performed only some dances without body or head decorations. From that point on he organised practice sessions every two or three nights and invited more and more people to attend, especially leaders from the predominantly Walmajarri and Wangkajunga settlements. Each practice session was a step further towards the final performance: bit by bit dancers wore body decorations. At first they were roughly done, then they became more and more elaborate. Similarly, more songs were sung every night and dances became more and more sophisticated. Arthur was playing his leading role by stimulating singers, correcting dancers and telling the story to the audience. Gradually he had invited all Walmajarri and Wangkajunga leaders from the area except Ben, and some had even joined in the dancing and singing. Indeed the corroboree proved to be so popular that many people demanded a full version of it.

Ben was never formally invited to attend a practice session nor did he show any interest in coming to any of these sessions, but he could not ignore what was going on. I left Fitzroy Crossing before Arthur organised a performance of his corroboree with head decorations, but before I departed he had organised a final rehearsal which was attended by a large crowd, including

### *Junjuwa and external interventions*

most of the Walmajarri and Wangkajunga leaders from the settlements located within 200km of Fitzroy Crossing. It was the full version of the corroboree, albeit lacking the head decorations which were ready and were probably used not long after I left.

Although the entire process was long and delicate, Arthur managed to gain support from leaders from the same language and grouping as the person opposed to his corroboree. Gradually all Walmajarri and Wangkajunga people in Junjuwa, comforted by the fact that leaders from other settlements approved and supported Arthur's corroboree, withdrew their support from Ben, who found himself isolated and as such could not do much to stop Arthur from going ahead with his corroboree. Arthur managed to restore community cohesion on one disputed issue by using people from other settlements as a catalytic element.

The second example occurred not long after Junjuwa and Kurlku representatives had agreed what to do with the Windmill reserve. A meeting called to officially finalise the matter was to be attended by all parties involved: representatives of DCS, AAPA, the Aboriginal groups and settlements involved and a state representative of DAA. Although the Bunuba and Kurlku leaders as well as representatives of Junjuwa council had agreed to attend that meeting, they were concerned that during such an important meeting non-Aboriginal people were likely to do most of the talking and that their own position might be either misinterpreted or misunderstood by non-Aboriginal people. They approached leaders from several Aboriginal settlements (Kurnangki, Bayulu, Noonkanbah, and Bunuba people from Derby and Mowanjum) and invited them to attend the meeting in order to act as mediators between themselves and the Gardiya. Their idea was that once the Junjuwa leaders and Kurlku representatives had expressed their views, leaders from other settlements would act as witnesses and make sure no statement was misunderstood nor any manipulation attempted by the Gardiya.

The meeting did not last for very long: a Bunuba spokesperson spoke first, then a representative for Kurlku. They both confirmed what had been agreed on at the two previous meetings held on that issue (see above in this Chapter), then the Junjuwa chairman stated he was happy both for Junjuwa and the Kurlku people. He added that since the Kurlku people were only a small group, they would not occupy all the houses at Mindi Rardi; and therefore he suggested that some could be dismantled and the materials made available to settlements whose representatives were attending the meeting and showing their concern and interest in what was going on in Junjuwa. I cannot recall that any non-Aboriginal people attending the meeting misunderstood what was said or attempted to manipulate any individuals or groups, but Aboriginal people present certainly felt much more secure having 'mediators' attending the meeting:



### *Chapter Nine*

We ask them fella to come, sit down and listen that talk-talk business. We bin tell'em before what we gonna do with that new Mindi Rardi place. But first they gonna sit down and listen them Gardiya mob. Myself I don't get it alright when them Gardiya bin talk, I don't know what them bin say, don't talk same like us mob, sometimes them bin talk tricky too. You bin say 'yes, yes, yes...', but you don't hearin properly that Gardiya and him bin trick you alright. Well we gotta them boys to listen for us, them boys them bin to big meeting longa that Perth place, longa that Sydney place too, big mob Gardiya this way too, well them Gardiya them know them boys can hearim that 'proper English' language, us old fella we're not scared no more from that Gardiya funny talking, him bin talked straight alright, we bin listen, we bin hearin too, no trick, alright. we gotta him right this time (James).

What James, a representative of the Kurlku group, expressed after that meeting was a common fear amongst older Aboriginal people unable to understand standard English. As a result of this linguistic problem people feared they might find themselves opposed to or in disagreement with other Aboriginal people from the same community who had been in conflict over one particular issue. To overcome their divisions they relied on people and leaders from other settlements to support and help them make their point clear when dealing with non-Aboriginal people. This time the external intervention represented by Aboriginal leaders from other settlements was used to avoid a possible crisis caused by external elements (non-Aboriginal people) but which would have fractured group coherence at the community level.

## **9.2 Interventions from Aboriginal organisations**

As the oldest and largest Aboriginal settlement at Fitzroy Crossing, Junjuwa has been involved with all Aboriginal-controlled organisations that existed either in town or in the West Kimberley. This was particularly true for the first few years that followed the start of Junjuwa, but from the early 1980s onwards Junjuwa gradually become more distant from nearly all the organisations, either because community leaders were influenced by the project officer or because of Junjuwa's lack of commitment<sup>11</sup>. Overall it can be said that Junjuwa was always involved at first with a newly established organisation, then the involvement gradually lessened, although links still existed between Junjuwa and most of the Aboriginal-controlled organisations.

An illustration of a Junjuwa relationship with such a local organisation is that with MWW. MWW is an incorporated resource and service agency mainly set up to liaise between various Aboriginal communities and groups in the Fitzroy Crossing area. It was started in late 1978 and Junjuwa was approached to be represented on the MWW executive committee by at least two community

*Junjuwa and external interventions*

councillors (JCCM 24/01/1979). Councillors from Junjuwa did attend MWW meetings regularly for about a year then dropped out, and relations between Junjuwa and MWW started to deteriorate in early 1981 (JCCM 13/04/81). Junjuwa councillors and leaders gradually stopped all involvement with the resource agency, with the encouragement of the community project officer who felt a newly appointed non-Aboriginal MWW employee was a threat to his stronghold over Junjuwa leaders. Nevertheless, Junjuwa council was always notified about MWW meetings and invited to attend, and copies of all MWW council minutes were forwarded to the Junjuwa office. Throughout the years, according to the local politics and to the various chairmen's personalities (both at MWW and at Junjuwa), the relationship between the two groups ranged from completely ignoring each other, to open conflict with in-between periods of fruitful collaboration. As far as I could evaluate, involvement of MWW in Junjuwa's internal affairs was of two types and generated two kinds of reactions. The first type was individual initiatives, usually from a member of the MWW executive committee, when Junjuwa residents faced problems that came to the knowledge of MWW. These initiatives were aimed at helping Junjuwa people find a suitable solution to their problem. It would usually generate two kinds of response from Junjuwa: if there were enough people in the community convinced of the rightfulness of the external involvement and of the necessity to act, the reaction would be positive; but, if only a few people displayed a vague interest in the involvement in the community's internal affairs, the person who interfered would be firmly told to mind his own business and the MWW executive committee would be notified that Junjuwa was an autonomous and independent community.

The second type of situation in which MWW would intervene in Junjuwa's affairs was in the name of the entire executive committee. Such initiatives were aimed at gaining Junjuwa's support or involvement in programmes, decisions or moves promoted by MWW. This second type of involvement usually met with a negative response from Junjuwa.

An individual initiative from MWW that met with a positive response from Junjuwa was prompted by growing rumours of leadership difficulties between Andrew, Mark and Junjuwa councillors and leaders. One Walmajarri man on MWW executive committee decided to approach separately the three components of Junjuwa's leadership in order to help them to improve their mutual understanding and support. He was an outsider, since he lived at Millijidee, but had once been a Junjuwa resident when he was married to a Bunuba. Further, he was Andrew's schoolmate and had worked on a casual basis at the UAM store at the time Mark was the store manager. His initiative did not fully succeed because he failed to overcome all the problems that existed in Junjuwa leadership, but he started a positive exchange of ideas between the various components of the community leadership. His involvement in Junjuwa's affairs was praised by Junjuwa leaders, who emphasised his

personal 'caring' about the place and his willingness to see people cooperating positively.

Involvement from MWW as an organisation in Junjuwa's affairs usually met with negative responses. By adopting such attitudes Junjuwa people or leaders expressed their desire to remain free of any amalgamation with other settlements controlled by MWW. An example of such an organisation-based move was the setting-up of an artifact store at Fitzroy Crossing. This store was in fact an outlet of an artifact centre located at Broome and controlled by the Kimberley Law and Culture Centre. People from that organisation had decided to open outlets in a number of places for several reasons: to offer various and stable opportunities to local artists to sell their products, to promote artists' work outside the Kimberley (promotion and marketing Australia-wide and overseas), and to set good and fair market prices<sup>12</sup>. The outlet store located at Fitzroy Crossing was set up to collect artifacts and artists' productions from the middle Fitzroy valley. It operated locally under the supervision of MWW, which promoted it to both Aboriginal artists and to tourists. When Junjuwa council was approached by MWW and asked to market objects and artifacts from Junjuwa residents through the store; the response was negative. A few prominent councillors, themselves craftsmen and artists, refused to have their own objects 'mixed' with those made by people from other settlements. Further, they suspected that MWW would make profit by selling the objects at higher prices in Broome<sup>13</sup>. As a response to the MWW proposition Junjuwa opened its own artifact outlet, within Junjuwa store, even though most of the artists sold their work individually either in Broome or to local tourists. Although on that issue MWW acted more as a broker between Aboriginal settlements and the KLCC, the initiative was perceived by Junjuwa residents as an attempt to merge Junjuwa with other groups:

All them things (artifacts) we bin makin us Junjuwa people, well we can't givin to that MWW mob, us mob, them mob we're proper different, we don't follow the same way, they go them way, we go us way. Them can't be boss for us things, same way them do with other mob who bin follow them way. Alright, them can boss other mob who stick with them MWW rules but us Junjuwa people we don't mix with them people, we can't give them things from us, we put them longa Junjuwa store, more better that way (Sydney).

Although they were several reasons for Junjuwa craftsmen's reluctance to market their artifacts through the MWW outlet, Junjuwa's final position on the issue was that MWW had interfered with Junjuwa's internal affairs and, since Junjuwa was not regularly associated with MWW, the offer was rejected as a whole.

The other town-based Aboriginally controlled organisation was Karrayili Adult Education Centre. In Chapter Three I outlined the main problems that existed between Karrayili and Junjuwa: the centre was located on Bunuba land but it had an Aboriginal name in Walmajarri language; it was started by the

### *Junjuwa and external interventions*

former DCS officer's wife who was associated with Walmajarri, and more particularly, Kurnangki and Noonkanbah residents; and classes were in Walmajarri. Therefore the centre was not well considered by Bunuba, who tolerated it as a place for old Walmajarri people living in Junjuwa, but limited their contacts with it to a minimum. Karrayili sub-leased the old Summer Institute of Linguistics building from the UAM, but the UAM superintendent made it clear to Karrayili people that they had to deal directly with Junjuwa council since, the community would eventually get the entire UAM compound back.

In late 1986, Junjuwa council was approached by Karrayili, which sought permission to set up a local radio to broadcast in Aboriginal language in the Fitzroy Valley. Junjuwa response was negative: the council notified Karrayili that Junjuwa was not directly associated with any of Karrayili activities, and therefore did not wish to have this radio station set up on what was about to become Junjuwa land. Should Karrayili Aboriginal Board be happy to go ahead with this project it could do so but other languages than Walmajarri should be included in the broadcast programmes. It was also demanded of Karrayili that Junjuwa people should be given a priority in any employment opportunities that might result from the project. It was common knowledge that the non-Aboriginal teacher in charge of Karrayili was closely associated with Walmajarri from Junjuwa, Bayulu, Kurnangki and other settlements. For Junjuwa leaders, and especially Bunuba, this radio station would become a way for predominantly Walmajarri speaking settlements to communicate and as such this project could not receive Junjuwa support. Several young Walmajarri males from various settlements around town had already been contacted to work for the local radio and this again could not be supported by the Junjuwa community. Finally, the non-Aboriginal teacher in charge of Karrayili had been critical of the Junjuwa project officer's approach to community affairs, the radio project was hers and the project officer warned Junjuwa leaders that should this radio exist it could be used 'against' Junjuwa by spreading false rumours about the community in the entire area.

At a regional level Junjuwa was known to have distanced itself from the KLC, especially since the Noonkanbah crisis, although both informed each other of their main activities. For example, Junjuwa was always notified of the venue of KLC meetings and Junjuwa leaders invited to attend. Further, whenever important issues were on the agenda, the KLC chairman would make the trip to Fitzroy Crossing to inform town-based communities. He would join a Junjuwa council meeting to make his announcement to councillors and leaders and then leave the meeting. His attitude was to make KLC activities public as much as he could, but he did not want to interfere with Junjuwa's response to what he had presented to the council, nor did he wish to be involved with internal community affairs.

I came all the way to tell Junjuwa council about some business from the KLC that I have to tell every one. Well, I know they don't follow

### *Chapter Nine*

us on many issues but I have to tell them anyway. Once I told them, I can go, I don't need to stay to listen their own business or to be pushy with them, but still it's my job to come and tell them (Adrian).

The fact that the KLC chairman acknowledged that differences existed in various settlements of the West Kimberley with the KLC views facilitated relationship between the KLC and Junjuwa. For example, he once invited representatives from Junjuwa to attend a meeting at Broome. This meeting had been organised to evaluate common problems faced by Aboriginal settlements and Aboriginal-controlled resource and service agencies in the West Kimberley in order to solve them at the regional level. Once the KLC chairman had exposed his organisation's position he introduced Junjuwa representatives and insisted that they should talk, since their views were different from those he had expressed. This change in the KLC attitude towards communities like Junjuwa, which did not adhere to KLC policies, might have been prompted by the controversy that developed between the KLC chairman and the Junjuwa representatives at the Bow River meeting (see Chapter Five). In the past there were more interventions from the KLC in Junjuwa's internal affairs, especially when several non-Aboriginal were employed by this organisation.

Once the Junjuwa leaders had withdrawn from the KLC executive committee they joined a newly formed organisation, based in Derby, the Kamali Land Centre, in which they played a major role for two years (1983-1985). Junjuwa leaders supported this change by arguing that the KLC was oriented too much towards desert and 'sea-side' people and that Kamali was more representative of the river people's 'culture and country'. Although Junjuwa's involvement with Kamali declined after two or three years, some links persisted between some of the Junjuwa leaders, especially the Bunuba, and the Kamali executive committee. Whenever another Aboriginal organisation tried to interfere with Junjuwa's internal affairs or to rely on Junjuwa residents for promoting a particular policy, Kamali representatives would step in. This happened once, after the Bunuba Production had been incorporated.

This incorporated association had been formed to make a film about the life of Pigeon, the 'Bunuba renegade' (cf Jandamarra in Chapter Two). Some Bunuba custodians of Jandamarra life's story had been acting as consultants and advisers, then an association had to be created in order to deal with all the financial and legal details, and this is how Bunuba Productions Incorporated came into being.

A few meetings had been organised at Junjuwa to inform Bunuba people about the progress of the project. The person employed as coordinator by Bunuba Productions was known to Junjuwa people but he did not have their confidence because of his past involvement with the KLC during the Noonkanbah crisis and afterwards with the National Aboriginal Conference (NAC). Bunuba leaders had insisted that at least one Bunuba person should be directly involved with Bunuba Productions and proposed that a young Bunuba

female should be appointed as secretary and liaison person between Junjuwa and Bunuba Productions. The team of people who worked on the movie project had been in the Kimberley area for over a year, dividing their time between Broome (where the Bunuba Productions office was located), several places in the Oscar Range associated with Pigeon's life story, and Fitzroy Crossing.

In early March 1986 a meeting was organised in Junjuwa to finalise all the details before the beginning of a shooting trial which at that time was planned for April 1987. The main issue to be discussed at the meeting was royalties: should they benefit only Bunuba people (regardless of where they lived) or should they benefit Junjuwa Community, the main Bunuba settlement, but in which many people from other linguistic groups resided as well? The way Bunuba leaders understood the sharing of royalties was not clear and since there was only one Bunuba family directly involved with the project<sup>14</sup>, other Bunuba thought they would be excluded from financial benefit. The head of the other prominent Bunuba family, who had initiated Junjuwa's move from the KLC to Kamali, approached the Kamali executive committee and asked them to come to Junjuwa to clarify several issues about the movie project. A meeting was called by the Kamali chairman, only two days after the one organised by Bunuba Productions. The Kamali chairman addressed the Junjuwa council and representatives of Bunuba Productions and stressed that a venture in which Junjuwa was involved could not ignore Kamali. He stated that the Bunuba Productions office should not remain located in Broome and that all future plans should be first discussed with the Junjuwa council and the Kamali executive.

Junjuwa people they follow us Kamali, us Kamali we wanta to be in that movie business too. This side river we are all related all the way from Willare right to Wyndham, if some are doing business this side of river, we all gonna do it too, if some are in and some out, well we feel sorry for relatives and this is no good. That side river: Jandamarra, Bunuba mob, Junjuwa mob, them got one business ok, but them can't havin that milimili [=official documents] for that business other side of that river longa Broome, them can't do this, Broome way this is another country, other mob country, not this side mob (Peter).

Despite this ideologically sound statement, it was obvious that both the Kamali chairman and the Bunuba family not yet involved with the movie project were mainly concerned with possible royalties or benefits from the venture they could miss out on. This aspect was so obvious that the Kamali chairman's interference with Junjuwa's internal affairs prompted negative reactions: first, from Walmajarri leaders who stated they had never been associated with Kamali and did not feel bound to rely on it to act as a broker between Junjuwa and Bunuba Productions. Second, the head of the Bunuba family already involved in the film pointed out that the venture was a 'private business' between the film crew and the owners of the Pigeon story and that it

was up to them to decide, with Junjuwa people's approval, where the office should be located and what to do with the royalties.

The Kamali chairman left the meeting and a Bunuba leader, one of the custodians of the Jandamarra story, stated his view:

Us Bunuba people boss for that story we don't like humbug, we don't like people comin from back or side way and tell us what to do. I talk straight now: all you mob Junjuwa people gonna help makin that one movie, no matter what language, no matter what country, no matter what mob, all Junjuwa people gonna help. Alright, this is Junjuwa business now, we gonna get that office back to Junjuwa and all that milimili longa that movie we gonna keep him right here in Junjuwa. We don't want them mob from other place to come here and tell us mob what we gonna do, no way. We all gonna do it and no bad feeling this side (amongst Bunuba), or that side (with Walmajarri), I reckon this is the proper way alright (Ned).

His proposal received the meeting's approval and from then on the Pigeon movie project became a Junjuwa venture: the office was temporarily moved from Broome to Fitzroy, and Junjuwa council was regularly informed of all progress.

Despite this intervention being initiated by a Junjuwa leader, the community leadership reacted by stating its independence from Kamali, prior to reaffirming community cohesion, by including the entire community in a venture that initially concerned only a few people from one linguistic group.

The initiative of one Bunuba leader to contact another Aboriginal-controlled organisation in order to get it to investigate a matter internal to Junjuwa is representative of how individuals in Junjuwa dealt with these issues: should a disagreement exist at the level of the community leadership, one of the strategies available to overcoming it was to involve an Aboriginal organisation as a whole, or some of its representatives. This external intervention was likely to tighten community coherence and leadership as they reacted by asserting their independence from such organisations.

Overall it can be said that interventions by Aboriginal-controlled organisations were most common from those based in Fitzroy Crossing and occurred less frequently from organisations located elsewhere. Should interference be by individuals there was likely to be a positive response from Junjuwa leaders if the issue raised was seen as appropriate. On the other hand should interventions lead to the involvement of organisations, Junjuwa's leadership reacts negatively by stating community independence.

Finally, Aboriginal organisations could be of some strategic use for solving internal leadership problems and in this instance were approached by Junjuwa residents. It should be stressed that over a period of nine years<sup>15</sup> relationships between Junjuwa and the various local Aboriginal-controlled organisations became less critical as the number of non-Aboriginal people involved or

employed by these organisations became fewer and fewer. Previously, nearly all initiatives from any organisations were perceived by Junjuwa residents (and the non-Aboriginals employed by the community) as initiated by non-Aboriginal people attempting to expand their control over Junjuwa.

### **9.3 Non-Aboriginal interventions**

Non-Aboriginal people who lived and/or worked at Fitzroy Crossing did so mainly because of the town Aboriginal population. Nearly all employment opportunities available to the non-Aboriginal people were, directly or indirectly, connected with the Aboriginal population. Thus contacts between the two populations occurred on a daily basis. For the white people, relationships with the Aboriginal population were often the main focus of their working activities, and Aboriginal people could not ignore local whites whether or not they were directly involved with them. Consequently, interventions from the non-Aboriginal people in the life of the Aboriginal population were numerous and often contradictory. This resulted in misunderstandings and sometimes led to conflicts. These conflicts were rarely between the two populations, but often arose between and within Aboriginal groups and in the case of Junjuwa threatened community coherence. It is at this level that I shall look at the impact of the non-Aboriginal interventions with Junjuwa<sup>16</sup>.

Before I illustrate with examples the extent of these non-Aboriginal interventions it is necessary to describe briefly the nature and the meanings of relationships between individuals or groups from the black and white communities. Broadly speaking, there were two different strategies that led members of one community to establish and maintain relationships with particular individuals or groups of the other one. For white people, good relationships with many Aboriginal people, individually or in groups, meant locally a larger recognition of someone's position in town. The influence given by a particular status associated with a specific position at Fitzroy Crossing was nothing in itself if one could not show that the influence was acknowledged by many and could, when needed, rally a large support from the Aboriginal population. For an Aboriginal person or a group, it was important to have good relationships with those of the local white people who could take a decision that gave access to privileges (jobs, loans, equipment, food, clothes...). Good relationships with several white people were a must for an Aboriginal group because they offered alternatives in case of problems or conflicts between the group and one of the white people.

Relationships between people of the two populations were complex, multiple and difficult to establish, but once they existed they could be difficult



to overcome at times. The arrival of a new non-Aboriginal in town was a challenge for the group who enjoyed a privileged relationship with the former person in the position as well as the opportunity for other Aboriginal groups to establish a relationship with the newcomer. The rapid turnover of white people at Fitzroy Crossing was a challenge to the Aboriginal population for whom relationships with non-Aboriginal people are based on a mutual trust, only possible after a long-standing knowledge of each other. Nonetheless, even if these movements of the white population introduced a precarious element for the stability of long-standing relationships between members of the two communities, it also made possible new alliances that gave a dynamic to the local Aboriginal / non-Aboriginal relationships that ultimately benefited the Aboriginal people, who in the past had to rely far too often on one single white person.

Two examples will show how these relationships originated, developed and ended up closely linking non-Aboriginal individuals to a group of Aboriginal people. These examples demonstrate that often Aboriginal groups targeted a specific individual in order to establish a very exclusive relationship which could become detrimental for the non-Aboriginal person when dealing with other Aboriginal groups.

Michael was appointed DCS local officer in early 1986. From the beginning he was willing and careful to benefit all Fitzroy Valley Aboriginal people in the course of his duties. Michael, a bachelor in his mid-twenties, was allocated a large house, located in the town site, that belonged to DCS. He had been in Fitzroy for about a month when he was approached by a single Bunuba woman, herself a DCS employee, who had some difficulties with her Junjuwa relatives: she asked him to accommodate her for a few nights. After a couple of days of reflection Michael agreed to her request. From the day Julia, the Bunuba woman, moved into Michael's house many young Bunuba people stopped by: first they came to visit Julia, then they dropped in to say hello to Michael, later on they called in for a drink, then they came to play some snooker and/or to watch a video<sup>17</sup>, some even stayed overnight. Michael had felt isolated since he arrived in town and he was happy to have Aboriginal people around him. He also thought that this situation could help him in his work. Further, he had intended to privilege relationships with the Bunuba mainly as a reaction against some Walmajarri people (one group from Noonkanbah and another one from Kurnangki), who had a very close relationship with Michael's predecessor and had tried to impose the same type of relationship on him from the day he had taken his position. After a few weeks Bunuba from Junjuwa came in growing numbers to the DCS office, which they had visited only sporadically for several years<sup>18</sup>, and all seemed happy to re-establish friendly contacts with the new DCS officer. Bunuba people received very positively Michael's suggestion about a 'drop-in' centre to be opened at Junjuwa (see below in this section). They also asked his advice on a couple of minor problems they had with the Junjuwa community adviser and the local doctor. Bunuba demands increased and rapidly Michael had no spare

time to carry on his activities outside town or to take care of problems brought to him by other Aboriginal groups.

Michael approached me since I was also involved mainly with Bunuba people because he was keen to stop his exclusive involvement with them. I pointed out to him that as a non-Aboriginal bachelor with a prominent position in town he might have made a mistake by housing a single Bunuba woman. Already in Junjuwa many Bunuba people talked about him as 'Julia's husband' and consequently her relatives and extended family expected a lot from him. Michael said he had suspected such a thing but he swore that there was nothing between Julia and him. This was beside the point: Michael was a newcomer in town, he held a good position and as such was a choice target for any given Aboriginal group to become 'their Gardiya'<sup>19</sup>, who was expected to grant privileges and devote his time to them.

A few days later Michael asked Julia to move out from his house, arguing that administratively speaking he was not allowed to accommodate her. Julia complied with his request but this did not reduce nor stop Bunuba demands. At this stage Michael's work in Junjuwa was obviously successful but he was frustrated that all his efforts benefited only a minority of the local Aboriginal population. About a month afterwards, Martha, a Wangkajunga woman, who had spent a year overseas returned to Fitzroy Crossing. She was a very close friend of Michael's predecessor's wife, and she knew they had left town but did not know their whereabouts. She called in at Michael's house hoping he would be able to tell her about her friends. Martha wanted to stay for a few days in Fitzroy Crossing but she had no place to stay in town<sup>20</sup> and consequently Michael agreed to accommodate her for a while. Almost immediately Bunuba people changed their attitudes towards Michael and the DCS: at first they did not visit him in his house any longer, then they gradually stopped their involvement with DCS, and many Bunuba avoided Michael for months. Martha stayed only for a few nights at Michael's place before she joined her parents at Christmas Creek. She came to Fitzroy Crossing once or twice a week with many relatives who started to be involved with DCS. Julia asked to be transferred and the other two employees of the DCS office, one Walmajarri and one Wangkajunga, started to show more commitment in their work than they did while Julia was living in Michael's house. Unfortunately, Michael had as many difficulties in limiting his involvement with Wangkajunga people as he had previously had with Bunuba.

The second example is personal. My association with the Bunuba people from Junjuwa was fortuitous: I had been invited to stay in the house of the chairman, a Bunuba man, during my first visit to Junjuwa. During that first stay I had developed close links with Bunuba individuals and families, which were perpetuated during my following field trips. At first this association tended to limit my contacts to a small number of people, but in the course of my research conducted at the community level I could not restrict my collection of data to Bunuba only. Relationships I came to establish later were not liked by all

Bunuba people and it happened, especially during the first weeks of my second stay, that when I was seen with non-Bunuba I was often 'reminded' of my 'duties' by a passing Bunuba person. At first people limited their comments by stating loudly that 'I was a Bunuba'. I did not modify my behaviour and persisted in working with people from other languages. Once, I was talking with two Walmajarri women outside Junjuwa and I was called upon by an old Bunuba woman:

Son, you work for us mob, we look after you before, long time ago, now you come back with that girl and them two babies (my wife and two daughters), well that's proper good but you can't turn your back to us now, you have to help us Bunuba mob all the way, this people you bin talkin too, them are different, them they'll tell you lies, them they don't know, us mob we know, we can tell you all about this place, this country, us people, all the lot but you got to stick with us Bunuba people, only us mob (Myriam).

I apologised to Myriam but took the opportunity of the next council meeting to make public my willingness to be involved with all Junjuwa residents regardless of their linguistic origin. In order to point it out clearly to those in attendance I paraphrased the public discourse held by community councillors about Junjuwa: I argued that I saw myself as a Junjuwa person and consequently, in order to understand what Junjuwa was, I had to become 'mixed'; therefore I should be able to talk and work with people from various groups and sub-groups that made Junjuwa a mixed place. If I consider how my field work went afterwards it seemed that I convinced most of the people but whenever I found myself in a position of granting privileges, Bunuba's demands were more numerous than others (see Chapter Eight); similarly, my associations with the Bunuba rendered informants from other languages reluctant at times.

Most of the non-Aboriginal interventions did not affect Junjuwa residents' lives greatly, but it happened that some initiatives taken by white people interfered with community coherence. These interferences were not necessarily meant by those who caused them, but they forced Junjuwa residents to react in order to overcome whatever resulted from them. For example, white people employed by government bodies had to take some initiatives to solve local problems. These initiatives were meant to benefit the entire Aboriginal population of the town but were often implemented at Junjuwa since it was the largest, oldest and most representative settlement in Fitzroy Crossing. Junjuwa residents accepted these initiatives but the outcomes of some created problems within Junjuwa. Invariably the non-Aboriginal person would be blamed for these problems, but it was up to the Aboriginal people to solve them. Solutions needed to overcome some difficult situations could be extreme and sometimes affected the local image of Junjuwa residents but in their view it was the price to pay for preserving the community as they wanted it to be.

For the reasons mentioned earlier, Michael from DCS enjoyed a good relationship with the Bunuba from Junjuwa during the first months of his

appointment. One of his responsibilities while in Fitzroy Crossing was to limit and if possible reduce juvenile delinquency in the area. Michael had DCS funds to take some positive steps against this social phenomenon. He purchased sports and recreation equipment to make it available in a specific place for youths (school aged children and teenagers), since Fitzroy Crossing lacked such facilities. Michael approached Junjuwa Council and offered to repair one derelict empty house in order to use it as a 'drop-in centre'. This centre, he emphasised, would have to be accessible to all Aboriginal youths from the town area. He had chosen Junjuwa for several reasons: first, because it was the settlement in which the juvenile delinquency was the highest (McMahon 1984:24-26); second, because Junjuwa had a central location in town and was ideally placed between the school and most of the Aboriginal settlements (see Map 5); and finally, because nearly all languages spoken in the area were represented in Junjuwa which in his view would facilitate access to the 'drop-in centre' by all youths from different linguistic origins. His proposal was supported by the Bunuba councillors and leaders who convinced other leaders, even though they were not really enthusiastic about it<sup>21</sup>. The Council decided the centre's operating hours and insisted that a councillor be on duty at the 'drop-in centre' to assist the person in charge of the centre. Once it was opened the 'drop-in centre' was very successful: for any Aboriginal kids between six and sixteen it was the place to be in town. School aged children were only admitted outside school hours and the others spent most of their days at the centre. A young Bunuba woman from Junjuwa was appointed by DCS to supervise youth activities at the 'drop-in centre'. However, councillors chosen to be on duty at the recreational centre found all sorts of excuses to stay away from it, as for most of them it was 'a kids' place, not good for men'. The 'drop-in centre' was mostly attracting children from Junjuwa, amongst whom a majority were Bunuba, and although youths from others communities were not banned from the centre they were only a minority. About two weeks after the opening of the 'drop-in centre' a Bunuba gang had taken control of it and its members decided who could have access to the place. Michael paid frequent visits to the centre, as did the Junjuwa chairman, and they both noticed that the majority of youths were Bunuba from Junjuwa. In an attempt to overcome the Bunuba youths' monopoly over the 'drop-in centre' the chairman brought the matter to the next council meeting. Michael organised bus trips between the school and/or other communities and the 'drop-in centre'. As long as Michael and/or a councillor were present, other kids were tolerated by the gang members, but as soon as the adults left the non-Bunuba kids had to leave as well. One gang member pointed out to me that the 'drop-in centre' was located in Junjuwa and as such the Bunuba were the bosses of the recreation place. The situation deteriorated after Julia moved out of Michael's place: the female employee lost faith in her job, she opened the place late, did not come to work and finally resigned. Her resignation resulted in the closing of the 'drop-in centre' for nearly two months because nobody else in Junjuwa seemed interested in the position. After two months a female Wangkajunga, a relative of the Junjuwa chairman's wife, agreed to operate the centre. Once the 'drop-in centre' re-opened it was obvious to anyone who had visited it before that

something had changed. Bunuba youth had deserted the place and it had become a meeting place for mothers with young children, the majority of whom were Walmajarri and Wangkajunga. Then older children from Kurnangki and Mindi Rardi started to come regularly to the 'drop-in centre' after school. Bunuba councillors from Junjuwa complained about the kids' behaviour (loud music, kids hanging around houses at dusk...) and argued that the DCS initiative neglected Junjuwa children. Michael attempted to answer these critics during the following council meeting. He stated that the 'drop-in centre' was open to all children from Fitzroy Crossing, thus Junjuwa youths were not neglected. His second point was that Junjuwa councillors and leaders had the authority to enforce community rules at the 'drop-in centre' since it was located on Junjuwa premises. Bunuba leaders stated that if they acted as Michael suggested this would develop into a conflict between Junjuwa and other communities because, in the 'Aboriginal way', they had no authority over these children.

The situation deteriorated further when a youth gang of Walmajarri and Wangkajunga established its control over the centre. They came to the centre on two consecutive days and stayed late at night. During the day they monopolised all activities available at the 'drop-in centre' and at night they played loud music. Members of the Bunuba gang which previously controlled the place attempted unsuccessfully to chase them away. According to Bunuba leaders, this time supported by Junjuwa's chairman, these youths created a nuisance for residents (noise, alcohol brought into Junjuwa, food stealing, swearing at old people). The only reason why these young people came to Junjuwa was because of the 'drop-in centre' and in the leaders' views it was up to the DCS people to do something to stop these youths' wrongdoings. Michael and the Junjuwa council approached community leaders from the settlements in which these youths resided. The leaders stated that they could not see any wrong in their children going to places especially created for Aboriginal youths from Fitzroy Crossing. They added that it was up to Junjuwa council to supervise activities conducted at the centre and they could not be responsible for something that happened in another community. Tension grew amongst the leaders within Junjuwa community as it did between Junjuwa council and those from Kurnangki and Mindi Rardi. In Junjuwa, leaders and councillors from the same languages or related to the youths did not blame them as much as the rest of the council, thus it resulted in an internal conflict. Fights took place in various places (school, pub, drinking and gambling places), between people of different age groups from various settlements involved in the 'drop-in centre' affair. For the Bunuba leaders there was no doubt that Michael was responsible because he had given the means to people from other settlements to do whatever they wanted in Junjuwa, but the situation had deteriorated too badly and there was nothing a non-Aboriginal could do at this stage. The outcome could have been different if Junjuwa leaders had taken on their responsibilities right from the beginning instead of blaming a 'Gardiya' for making their 'jobs' more and more difficult. Such were the tensions created by the centre that the Junjuwa leaders decided to act.



**Plate 12**

Rehearsing Bunuba public dance. This dance was part of Arthur's Jumba. During this particular rehearsal some non-initiated young Bunuba and Walmajarri had been invited to join in to show that this was an open ritual. The man in the middle of the picture is a Walmajarri ceremonial leader, he was the first non-Bunuba recruited to take part in a rehearsal by Arthur as part of his strategy to get support from non-Bunuba leaders before he could stage a full version of the Jumba.



**Plate 13**

Sometimes the Junjuwa Council held its council meetings outside. This was the case during the cool season (July/August) or any time of the year when the council had to settle a conflict, because the seating arrangement was more flexible than in Junjuwa community hall. This picture shows a typical seating arrangement in a conflict situation: the opposed leaders are both standing with their supporters seated around them. In the very background are the women. In the foreground from right to left: the Junjuwa community project officer, the Junjuwa chairman, and two councillors, one from each language to which the opposed leaders belonged.

One night the 'drop-in centre' was raided: the house was smashed and burnt down, all equipment was destroyed or stolen. Although it seems that this could not be done quietly, nobody in Junjuwa attempted to stop those who conducted the raid. After two days the local police were able to establish that a Bunuba gang was responsible for the raid. They were school aged boys from Junjuwa who belonged to prominent Bunuba families. When they appeared in Court they did not say anything but their fathers claimed they did this as a result of frustration because they could not have access to the 'drop-in centre' which was controlled by a gang alien to Junjuwa. Michael did not want to press any charges against the boys despite the heavy financial loss and Junjuwa Council representatives stated that the boys were not responsible for what they had done and therefore should not be charged. Outside the Juvenile Court Michael was very upset:

I simply do not understand. I do my best to help these kids, there was \$15,000 worth of equipment, it was theirs, it was for the kids only and they destroyed it all. There is nothing left, further the leaders and the kids' fathers blame me, they say it's my fault because I let other people inside Junjuwa, but it's their community not mine, it was up to them to supervise the 'drop-in centre' not me. I have other things to take care of, I cannot just devote all my time to Bunuba people and Junjuwa's problems.

All Junjuwa leaders, including Bunuba, condemned the destruction of the recreation place, but those who conducted the raid did not bear the responsibility which was directed to a non-Aboriginal who had interfered with Aboriginal rules that regulate people's access to places. As a result of that interference, Junjuwa leaders disagreed amongst themselves and were in conflict with leaders from other settlements as well as with Michael. For Junjuwa leaders a direct confrontation either with the other leaders or with a non-Aboriginal was not possible, therefore some of them took an initiative to solve the problem once and for all. This was why the Bunuba leaders came to organise the raid. A few weeks after the incident one member of the gang which had participated in the raid admitted, during an interview, that it had been ordered by Bunuba leaders. I was rather surprised and asked one of the leaders involved, who confirmed the boy's statement, adding that it was the only way to solve the problem: they could not act directly against Michael because he was an important Gardiya, neither could they confront leaders of other communities because this would have resulted in a more serious conflict.

Other types of interventions by non-Aboriginal people occurred when two or several of them were opposed and played on their relations with specific Aboriginal people to settle their conflict. In such cases non-Aborigines attempted to involve Aboriginal people in their disputes in order to strengthen their position (Tonkinson 1968:101).

In late 1986, there were growing rumours in Junjuwa that Russell (see Chapter Eight), was willing to move back to Fitzroy Crossing to live in Junjuwa. His contract as project officer with the Christmas Creek community was about



to expire and he wanted to supervise the construction of his house which was to be located at Fitzroy Crossing townsite. Mark, Junjuwa's project officer, was not keen to have Russell living in Junjuwa because of his close ties with some Bunuba leaders. Further, Russell had a reputation for interfering with other people's work and Mark was not prepared to add this to his then fragile relationship with Junjuwa council. Because his relationships with Bunuba leaders and councillors in particular were not at their best, he did not want to upset them by making public his feelings towards Russell's plan. Mark decided therefore to approach some Wangkajunga leaders and advise them to contact their relatives from Christmas Creek before Junjuwa council would take a decision. These leaders obtained negative comments about Russell, who, according to Christmas Creek residents, was 'running away' from the place after several serious conflicts with Christmas Creek leaders. Further, the community was facing heavy debts due to Russell's poor management. These comments comforted Mark in his position and he brought the issue to the council meeting for a decision. During this meeting Bunuba leaders did most of the talking. They supported Russell's return to Junjuwa despite the fact that he had been 'tricky' at times, because as they pointed out he had always helped Junjuwa people during difficult times and it was now their turn to pay him back. Wangkajunga leaders made their point by reporting Russell's wrongdoings at Christmas Creek to the council. They added that if they supported the Bunuba decision to have Russell back in Junjuwa this would put them in a difficult situation with their relatives and allies from Christmas Creek. The Junjuwa chairman, Andrew, caught between his Bunuba relatives and his Wangkajunga allies, was too embarrassed to make any suggestion. No decision was reached and the issue was discussed during several council meetings. Depending on the attendance and according to the quality of speeches the council hesitated between a favourable and a negative answer to Russell's request. Bunuba leaders became divided on whether or not they should listen to the Wangkajunga leaders for a council decision<sup>22</sup>. Finally, a compromise was suggested by Andrew: Russell's wife could move into a house since she was a Bunuba, but Russell could only come from time to time, thus he would not officially live in Junjuwa but could come to his wife's house as often as he wished. Russell's wife moved into Junjuwa with two female relatives and several children (hers and two fostered) not long after the council decision. At first, Russell came once or twice a week and did not interfere with Mark's work or with Junjuwa affairs. But when Mark took three weeks' leave, Russell moved into Junjuwa permanently. With the support of his Bunuba allies, Russell did his best to convince the council members to dismiss Mark and to appoint him instead. He also criticised the Wangkajunga leaders publicly for their support of Mark prior to any council decision. As a result most of these leaders left Junjuwa for a while. For the duration of Mark's leave Russell behaved as if he was Junjuwa's community adviser.

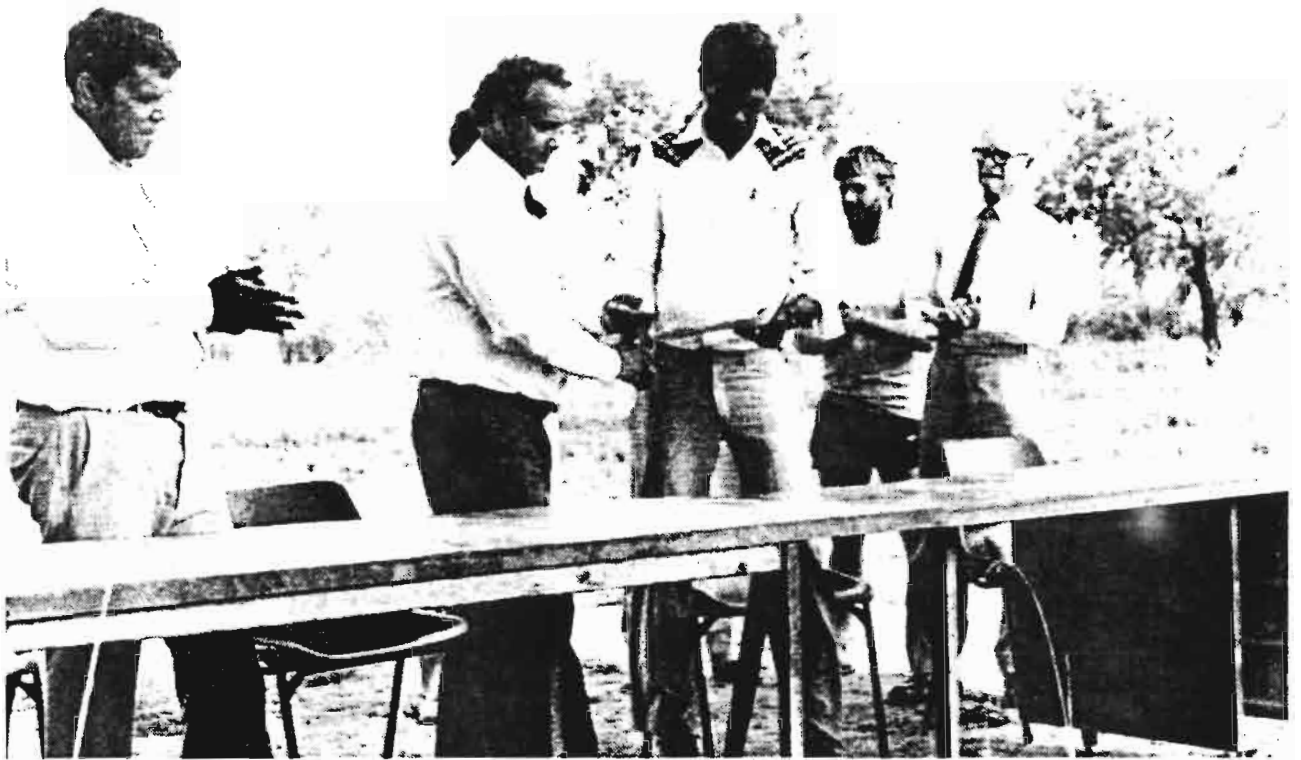
Once Mark returned from leave he faced Bunuba leaders' hostility for several weeks until Russell moved into his own house in the townsite. Then

Wangkajunga leaders moved back to Junjuwa. Later, Mark was able to find a solution to Russell's challenge to his position by appointing him as CDEP coordinator of team workers (see Appendix 2). In this example, one of the two non-Aboriginals was a Junjuwa employee, but it happened that similar interferences with Junjuwa people's lives were caused by white people not appointed by the community.

This was the case for an incident in which Russell was opposed to Tim, a non-Aboriginal adviser working for MWW. These two men had conflicting relationships for several years already. Tim was living in the old post office which he rented from MWW. The Aboriginal controlled organisation had acquired the building during an auction once the new post office had been completed. With Russell's return to living in Junjuwa, Tim was gathering evidence of his mishandling of Aboriginal funds in order to take Russell to court in the name of the Christmas Creek community<sup>23</sup>. Russell approached me one evening in Junjuwa and asked me to take the minutes of a meeting which was to be organised in his wife's house. The purpose of this meeting was to prepare the incorporation of a Bunuba group. I attended the meeting, together with two Bunuba leaders from Junjuwa, Russell's wife, her sister and sister's son, and three Aboriginals of mixed descent, of whom I knew only one. It was Wallace, one of Russell's foster children, who had made the trip from Kununnura. The two others were related to Russell's wife. They worked and lived in Broome and Halls Creek. Wallace and Russell's wife did most of the talking: they claimed that the group called Darlyngunaya, after the name of a deep stretch of water on the Fitzroy right behind the old post office building, wanted to get its land back. In order to be able to do so they had decided to form an incorporated body under the name of Darlyngunaya and were willing to move to the old post office located in an area particularly significant to the Bunuba (see Chapter Six). Most of those who attended the meeting had been living a long way away from Fitzroy Crossing for a long time. The two Bunuba leaders had only agreed to be registered as members to please Russell's wife. Wallace, the group spokesperson, insisted that they wanted to live together as soon as possible because too many external factors had pulled that group apart for far too long and now they were eager to get reunited. I organised the incorporation of the group through Derby ALS office, but when I left Fitzroy nearly a year after that meeting, none of the incorporation documents had yet been signed, and the members of Darlyngunaya had not met again. I will not discuss the legitimate right of these people forming an incorporated body, nor their willingness to apply for land that was significant to them, but it was obvious that Russell had manipulated them to his own benefit: he put Tim in a difficult position with the local Aborigines. The morning after the first and only meeting of Darlyngunaya, some members of the MWW executive committee investigated Tim's rights to occupy the old post office, despite the fact that they were displeased with Junjuwa council which did not approach them directly on the issue. Tensions arose in Junjuwa with the Bunuba sub-groups for which the Darlyngunaya claim was not genuine because made by outsiders and as such a threat to future claims from other Bunuba sub-groups. Junjuwa council

members were upset by Russell's initiative because it resulted in a conflict amongst Junjuwa leaders that worked against community cohesion, which was crucial for finalising negotiations with UAM regarding the transfer to Junjuwa of the UAM compound lease. Russell's intervention, prompted by Tim's investigation into Russell's dealings at Christmas Creek, resulted in tensions within Junjuwa as well as between Junjuwa and MWW. Finally, it also probably compromised Darlyngunaya's chances of successfully claiming the old post office because of the circumstances under which this group sought its incorporation.

Neither Russell nor Tim was employed by Junjuwa, but non-Aboriginal community employees could also use this kind of strategy to settle their conflicts. Jeff, Junjuwa's baker, lived in an house owned by Junjuwa, located opposite the Junjuwa chairman's house near the DCS hostel (see Map 5). He was assisted in his work by three young males from Junjuwa: two baker aides and an apprentice. Jeff did not share Mark's views about the running of Junjuwa's bakery and their differences on many issues made their working relations difficult. Jeff had a bad spell, after some problems with the bakery oven had forced him out of work for nearly two weeks, during which he drank heavily. His behaviour resulted in him coming late to work or, worse still, missing full days' work. In Fitzroy Crossing no baker in Junjuwa bakery meant no bread in town and Jeff's difficulties added to the previous mechanical problems resulting in financial and credibility losses for Junjuwa bakery<sup>24</sup>. Further, one night Jeff organised a party in his house to which he invited young male and female residents from Junjuwa. Many of them drank heavily and made a lot of noise during most of the night. The following morning Andrew notified Jeff that the house he was living in was part of Junjuwa premises and as such consumption of alcohol was banned. The chairman understood that Jeff wanted to organise a party with his friends but he should have sought the council's permission beforehand and above all he should not have invited people from Junjuwa. Both Andrew and Mark were displeased by Jeff's work and behaviour and they asked for a council meeting to discuss his dismissal. Initially, Andrew wanted only to warn Jeff but Mark put such pressure on him that he supported the idea that Junjuwa should look for a new baker. It was pointed out to the councillors that Junjuwa was losing money; it had an increasingly bad reputation with its non-Aboriginal employees; and young people from the community were getting drunk with Gardiya on Junjuwa land; all of which did not leave them with much alternative but to ask Jeff to leave. When he was notified, Jeff was very upset by the decision, obviously forced by Mark, and during the following days he visited most of Junjuwa councillors and leaders in their houses. He asked them to give him a chance to defend himself as he pointed out that the decision was taken without him attending the meeting. Jeff came to the next council meeting, which incidentally Mark did not attend because he was away for the day; he asked for forgiveness and was given a second but last chance.



**Plate 14**

In February 1987, twelve years after Junjuwa community was incorporated as an association. The UAM transferred the lease. This was after several years of negotiations between the UAM, Junjuwa and DAA. In the picture from left to right: A. Lynch from the Aboriginal Land Trust, E. Bridge, State Minister in charge of Aboriginal Affairs, who handed over the lease to the Junjuwa chairman, the Junjuwa project officer and the National Secretary of the UAM.

Mark was puzzled by the council's new decision but he did not want to interfere with it so he gave to Andrew the responsibility of the bakery. This first incident had surprised the community's Aboriginal leadership; people did not approve of what Jeff had done but they also disagreed with Mark's attitude:

Well, myself I don't know what's wrong with them two Gardiya. We got them two working for us Junjuwa mob, alright they should help us, make things easy for us leaders. No way, they make things hard for us, each one goes his own way, one that way, one this way, they make trouble for us councillors too, we don't know which way to go. Now we go our way, we listen them little bit but we go our way, more better, if some of us mob go one way and some more go other way, well it's proper no good for us, too much trouble already to get together in that place, we don't need trouble from Gardiya on the top (Arthur).

Several weeks after the first incident, Mark went on leave. This gave Jeff the opportunity to discuss freely with Andrew Junjuwa's plan regarding the UAM store soon to be handed over to the community. He found out that Junjuwa had no plans and that it was Mark's plan, with which he disagreed totally. Jeff contacted an Aboriginal run cooperative that operates mainly in the Northern Territory and offers a supervising and managing service to Aboriginal controlled stores. A representative of this cooperative came to Junjuwa and had a meeting with Andrew and a few councillors. He explained to them that what was planned for Junjuwa's store was not good in his view and offered some alternatives. Simultaneously, Jeff stirred up his Aboriginal workers against Mark's handling of Junjuwa's affairs. Jeff's initiative and criticisms created more confusion amongst Junjuwa leaders, councillors and many residents who were already confronted with Russell's challenge to the project officer position (this was at the same time). They did not know whose responsibility it was to advise people, who they should listen to, or which person they should follow and support. When Mark returned he had to face a double challenge from (non-Aboriginal) Russell and Jeff, but eventually he received council support for both his position and his plan for the store. Andrew reminded the councillors and leaders that they had chosen Mark together and therefore they should support or dismiss him together. They chose the first alternative since Mark's dismissal was likely to have created more divisions amongst them.

All the examples in this section show that interventions from non-Aboriginal people interfered with Junjuwa residents' lives, the decision making process at the community level as well as group based actions. When such interventions caused serious dissensions within the community, amongst leaders and councillors or between Junjuwa and other communities, Aboriginal people took the necessary steps to remove the problem, in order to re-establish the balance that regulates relationships between groups and within Junjuwa and towards the outside.

## **Endnotes - Chapter Nine**

- 1 Junjuwa was the only town-based settlement which employed a full time project officer. The other settlements received assistance either from DCS or from MWW.
- 2 The place called Kurlku is located about 150 Km southeast of Fitzroy Crossing south of Cherrabun Station (see Map 1).
- 3 No Bunuba were prepared to live in that place at the time and Bunuba leaders would prefer to authorise people affiliated to other languages from Junjuwa to move into that place than to see people from other settlements move here.
- 4 Milimili is a local Kriol English expression for all official documents (leases, certificates of incorporation, constitutions).
- 5 All areas in which Bunuba sub-groups from Junjuwa were willing to establish outstations were located on properties individually owned by non-Aboriginal people and not likely to be on the market for a while.
- 6 This took place after the Broome incident I discussed in Chapter Eight.
- 7 The Junjuwa bus was rented at \$100 a day plus fuel expenses and had to be returned with a full tank. Those who hired Junjuwa's vehicles also agreed to pay for any damage that occurred during the renting period. None of these rules applied when the community's vehicles were used by Junjuwa residents.
- 8 Jumba is a generic term used for a special type of ritual. A Jumba is neither secret nor sacred but has been dreamt by the person who becomes the owner of the story depicted in songs and dances. For a discussion on the possible origin of Jumba in the area and their purpose during and after the cattle-station era, see Rowse 1987:94-96.
- 9 'Easy' rituals were those open to the public, even white people, as opposed to 'hard' ones, as men's secret ceremonies were often called.
- 10 The story associated with his Jumba related events linked with the river people's country, and at this stage he stated that it was not appropriate to have desert people dancing or singing as a part of his corroboree.
- 11 This was the main criticism successive KLC chairmen made of Junjuwa; Junjuwa's lack of commitment could partly be explained by the fact that few of the KLC actions and initiatives directly benefited Junjuwa.
- 12 On the one hand, many tourists bought items locally too cheaply, which discouraged artists; on the other hand, high prices offered by art dealers sometimes tempted people to sell secret objects or old valuable artifacts taken from funeral sites.
- 13 People from Fitzroy Crossing made special trips to Broome, regardless of travelling expenses, because they obtained higher prices for their artifacts there than anywhere else in the area by selling their craft products to tourist places like the Crocodile farm, and souvenir stores. Therefore people suspected that the MWW outlet was a way to buy at cheap prices from them and to sell at better prices in Broome.
- 14 It was the Bunuba descent group that had not intermarried with other language groups.
- 15 I first visited Junjuwa in late 1979 and my last field trip was undertaken in September and October 1988.
- 16 I am aware that other types of intervention existed but either they did not have a lot of impact on Junjuwa or they were not as significant as those presented in this section.

### *Chapter Nine*

17 All the sport and recreation equipment that Michael had acquired for a Junjuwa drop-in centre was made available to Aboriginal youths in Michael's house prior to the opening of the centre.

18 The close relationship between the previous DCS officer and Walmajarri people and the absence of any Bunuba amongst DCS employees had kept contacts between Bunuba from Junjuwa and DCS to a minimum.

19 Local Aboriginal people often used the expressions 'our Gardiya or our boss' when talking about a non-Aboriginal with whom they had privileged ties.

20 She was originally from Christmas Creek and at the time of her visit, all Wangkajunga from Junjuwa had gone away to attend a ceremony.

21 A similar place had been set up in Junjuwa two years before and had rapidly become a drinking and gambling spot which attracted many outsiders and created a nuisance for Junjuwa residents.

22 Even though Wangkajunga leaders had a say in community affairs, there were no speakers of that language appointed as councillors; therefore the Wangkajunga power in decision-making at the council level was limited.

23 The Christmas Creek community employed a community adviser but most of the paper work as well as payment of Social Security benefits was done at MWW office in Fitzroy Crossing. Russell's negative feelings towards the Aboriginal organisation were an obstacle to a further involvement of Christmas Creek with MWW.

24 Prior to this incident, local stores, the roadhouse and the Crossing Inn bought about 50 % of the bread they needed from the Junjuwa bakery. Afterwards, orders dropped significantly, and remote Aboriginal settlements which so far purchased their bread only through Junjuwa, started to get it from Derby.

---

---

# CHAPTER TEN

---

---

## CONCLUSION

---

Villages like Junjuwa have resulted from white settlement in the north-west of Western Australia, the development of the cattle industry and successive state and federal Aboriginal policies. These town based settlements have Aboriginal populations from diverse linguistic groups which have gradually come to co-reside permanently. In this thesis I have shown how the Aboriginal groups and sub-groups that made up Junjuwa's population have progressively developed and maintained a somewhat fragile group identity at the community level. Despite their differences, Junjuwa residents have a lot in common that has facilitated the development of a level of community sentiment. Several factors have combined to make possible the notion of Junjuwa as one group, in particular: a shared history; kinship ties connecting members of different linguistic and territorial groups; the distinct nature of the village and its administration; the appointment of a council and the cooperation between group leaders and appointed community leaders.

The idea of Junjuwa as one group is an emergent phenomenon. It is not something which only existed at the discourse level or an 'ideology supporting nothing' (Trigger 1987:235), even if it is true that groupings of a similar size did not exist outside brief ceremonial gatherings prior to the establishment of the village at Junjuwa. It seems that for Junjuwa residents the ideology was definitely supporting something. I see in the ideology of the Junjuwa discourse a support and justification of all collective actions aimed at preserving community cohesion. The maintenance of a minimal level of cohesion among Junjuwa seems to have been the main purpose of the public discourse. Other types of discourses existed as well, and I identify them as 'private' discourses, in the sense that they were opposed to the public one: the latter reified the notion of Junjuwa as one group, one 'mixed mob'; but the former exposed differences that existed between the various components of Junjuwa: languages, sub-groups within languages, households clusters, ceremonial groups, kin groups as well as



other permanent or occasional association such as those presented in Chapter Seven which were all claimed as the basis of distinctive identities in different contexts.

Each of the subdivisions, groupings and associations which existed prior to the start of the community persisted in Junjuwa as resources to be drawn on or fallen back on in times of conflict and competition. These types of association did not necessarily contradict the idea of Junjuwa as a group but were part of its dynamic. At the community level, many links bound individuals, and families and were extended to sub-groups and groups within Junjuwa. These links were of two kinds: some, such as inter-group marriages or ceremonial cooperation, existed prior to settlement and were intensified; others were new, for example ties growing out of shared work experience or birth of children away from their parents' country. Both combined to set up an overall framework that has become the basis for the emergence of a more coherent group, the community or 'mixed mob'. This development was no doubt facilitated by the settlement in town of Aboriginal population from various cattle stations of the Fitzroy Valley, their permanent association on the mission reserve and firmed up by the government desire to work through incorporated communities. It seems that this period of local history favoured the formation of a kind of community identity expressed in the 'mixed group' ideology. At least, this is how it was perceived by Junjuwa people who experienced it.

The fact that both the public and private discourses co-existed shows that Junjuwa residents were fully aware of differences that existed amongst them, as demonstrated in daily activities when people identified with a particular group or sub-group, but nonetheless the two discourses were also part of the 'mixed mob' ideology. Constant efforts from Junjuwa residents to preserve and maintain its cohesion against internal or/and external disruptive factors indicated their willingness to belong to this 'mixed mob' and to perpetuate it.

Both types of discourse were used inside as well as outside the community, to sustain collective action, and decisions taken by one particular sub-group or by Junjuwa representatives. Thus, Junjuwa residents could usually justify their behaviour either by appealing to the 'public' or 'private' discourses, which could be adapted to almost any circumstance.

The mixed nature of Junjuwa and the persistence of acknowledged differences amongst its residents were factors which caused conflicts both within and between internal grouping that existed within the community. Conflicts were sometimes limited to the groups where they had arisen but often, as a result of alliances and kin solidarity, they expanded to unify several sub-groups and ultimately create a threat to Junjuwa's unity. When this happened, the public discourse came to the fore as community leaders sought to restore community harmony. Using the 'mixed mob' public discourse was usually sufficient to settle conflicts, but sometimes leaders and councillors had to stress

### *Conclusion*

as well major elements people shared: history, descent, countrymanship, kinship and finally the cooperation of various forms of leadership at the community level. All these efforts demonstrated leaders' and councillors' concerns, as well as the residents' willingness to maintain Junjuwa coherences as a 'mixed mob'.

Thus despite having its unity challenged by numerous internal conflicts, Junjuwa survived throughout the years, and it seems that the ideology of a 'mixed mob' was even reinforced. The survival of Junjuwa was made possible by several factors: the limited number of its residents, despite seasonal fluctuations in the core population; a core of residents remaining the same throughout the years; the capacity, at community level, for absorbing internal conflict by tightening and reaffirming what made Junjuwa as a group; the concessions made by both leaders and councillors to preserve community autonomy from external interventions; and finally the ways in which government funds and resource like housing were made available through the incorporated body.

External interventions in Junjuwa's affairs were numerous, and of various origins. They introduced a further element which put Junjuwa's coherence at risk. External interventions, regardless of their origin, were difficult to ignore for Junjuwa residents and their leaders. Because of the nature of its population and its location, Junjuwa was bound to be the target of external interventions: from other Aboriginal settlements, from Aboriginal-controlled organisation and from non-Aboriginal people. As long as these interventions did not contradict the 'mixed mob' ideology and its fragile unity, they were tolerated. But as soon as the cohesion of Junjuwa was threatened as a result of some external interventions, leaders and councillors worked towards limiting these interferences.

The result of internal and external challenges to Junjuwa unity, and the constant efforts from the community leadership to overcome these challenges, resulted in Junjuwa cohesion being a fragile one which had to be continually stabilized. The perpetuation of that delicate balance is what structured the overall dynamic of Junjuwa's unity as a 'mixed mob'. It is through a combination of traditional elements, adaptability and willingness to preserve Junjuwa unity and specificity that this dynamic worked efficiently. Paradoxically, Junjuwa residents built upon their differences to create the settlement cohesion. All those who lived in Junjuwa had little alternative but to do so, although for different reasons according to their origin. They spoke about their differences and the inadequacy of the settlement but they rationalised their situation by bringing up the 'shared history' that had brought them together in that place and made it a unique and specific one in order to sustain the 'mixed mob' ideology.

By contrast, Noonkanbah residents, after a five year self-imposed exile that showed the group's coherence, and its strength, found themselves in the turmoil of a nationwide crisis which ultimately, amongst other consequences, resulted in the breaking up of the community. It seems that prior to the

Noonkanbah crisis the community preserved its unity in spite of internal conflicts and external interventions (Kolig 1990:244-245), but it did not survive the Noonkanbah crisis. Several of Noonkanbah's sub-groups were split off during the crisis, mainly because they have privileged external interventions. Then, during the course of the events, these external interventions grew further, and reached a point which could not be controlled any longer by community leaders, resulting in the fragmentation of Noonkanbah into several groups.

After the Noonkanbah crisis, once the drilling had gone ahead, the failure of the Aboriginal people to stop the white people from taking over their significant sites was attributed locally to Noonkanbah's lack of cohesion: people had failed because they failed to remain together as one group. Later on, the original community which had moved back to Noonkanbah in 1976 split into four discrete settlements. Amongst the group that still lived near the Noonkanbah homestead in 1987, the lack of cohesion was obvious: individual interests were privileged over community based actions and decisions, and gradually many residents moved out of the community.

Initiatives taken by groups internal to the Noonkanbah community during the crisis were channelled towards the outside. As a result, cohesive factors, needed to maintain the community as a group, were neglected. Ultimately, this failure to preserve community coherence resulted in a loss of credibility in the eyes of nearby settlements, despite the national dimension of the crisis. Many Junjuwa residents spoke negatively of the Noonkanbah events because, in their view, the external events had precipitated the collapse of Noonkanbah community.

The regional movement that had emerged in the West Kimberley in support of the Yungnora group during the Noonkanbah crisis did not survive the crisis. This movement sought to bring together too many people from too many different backgrounds and settlements, making it impossible to develop an ideology to sustain a regional identity and political consciousness. These component groups of the KLC did not share a common history, or belong to inter-connected kin groups, nor even, in some cases, did they have kin connections. There was thus no grounds on which they could identify themselves as a group of 'countrymen', nor could any people emerge as leaders to maintain a coherent group sentiment at a such a broad level.

Thus the development of a regional political consciousness in the West Kimberley failed largely because of the ways in which people construct community identities. Further, no real and sustained material interests underwrite this type of grouping at such a large scale. Although many people in the West Kimberley shared "common experience", mainly as a result of their involvement in the cattle industry, only limited numbers combined this with lengthy periods of co-residence. It is only when the two are combined that they represent a significant element in the formation of community identity. In the

### *Conclusion*

case of Junjuwa, most of the people co-resided on stations, then were grouped permanently at the UAM Reserve for several years prior to the start of Junjuwa community. Intermarriages and alliances partially link many Aboriginal communities across the West Kimberley, but insufficiently to form a cohesive set of interrelated groups as in the case of Junjuwa.

Although there is no doubt about Junjuwa's coherence as a group, this kind of grouping is fragile and it is at the limit to which community identity can be extended at the present. Thus, attempts such as that by the KLC to develop regional forms of identity, by bringing communities together, seem destined to fail in this area in the short term. Further, the notion of representativeness was even more divisive. The KLC wanted to re-group all the Aboriginal communities behind one organisation, which would represent them all, when one of the bases of community identity is precisely the opposite (differentiation from other communities). This was the aspect of the KLC project that Junjuwa leaders had most trouble with: they used it to explain the KLC's failure to bring people from the West Kimberley together:

Them KLC blokes, them wanta to talk for us Junjuwa mob, alright.  
But them wanta to talk for all the Kimberley mob too, well this is no  
good, they can't do it. Them mob, us mob, we're not all the same.  
We're different, all of us proper different all the way (Arthur).

The role of government policy has been crucial and remained so in the origin, nature and perpetuation of contemporary Aboriginal groupings. The way successive policies allocated money and resources to Aboriginal people created large scale settlement which persisted mainly because it was impossible for sub-groups to have their own funding. When such opportunities emerged as a result of changes in government policies, small groups pulled out of large scale settlements because they were given the means to exist on their own (see Arthur's and Stanley's comments in Appendix Two).

In the light of changes that have occurred in Fitzroy Crossing from mid-1988 onwards, it is possible to foresee the development of an Aboriginal grouping at the town level. First, all the town based, and surrounding, settlements that were part of a local Community Development Employment Projects (CDEP) scheme, implemented in May 1988, had to cooperate. They shared some equipment, and smaller settlements could only be involved in the scheme through affiliation with Junjuwa Community (see Appendix Two). In order to improve relationships between the various settlements of the Fitzroy Crossing area, an Aboriginal initiative led to the creation of an inter-community council which included representatives from all the settlements as well as from some of their internal groupings. A year later, this council, in response to a suggestion from the Aboriginal Development Commission (ADC), decided to found an Aboriginal cooperative which would assess local business and enterprises which might be purchased by ADC and run by local Aboriginal communities. This wider cooperation would have been doomed to failure a few years ago, maybe because it has no real reason for existence at that time (funds

allocated on the basis of each incorporated community and social security benefits paid individually). Apparently this cooperation had some chance of success, on the basis of information I received in mid-1990, since people had something real to make any decisions about: by getting together they could be eligible to purchase local enterprises through ADC and thus create employment opportunities that will secure their involvement in the CDEP scheme (see Appendix Two).

Junjuwa council had elected two chairpersons, a Walmajarri and a Bunuba men, who in turn appointed for the first time an Aboriginal project officer. These radical changes at the level of Junjuwa leadership had influenced community attitudes towards other town-based settlements: it seems that in some contexts collective Aboriginal interests at the town level could become a priority over community led initiatives.

One may see in what happened at Fitzroy Crossing between 1988 and 1990 a parallel to the development of the Junjuwa mixed identity: various settlements, with the incentive of funds and resources offered by government programs, were keen to cooperate and overcome their differences in order to benefit from them, while they nevertheless sought to maintain their autonomy and specificity at the community level.

The development of community grouping and identity is ultimately the result of a complex interplay of government policy and material interests which necessitate a certain cooperation at the level defined according to government's criteria on one side, and the ever present tendency amongst Aboriginal people to fracture into more localised groupings on the other.

Nevertheless if Aboriginal communities from the Fitzroy Crossing area do cooperate and get together instead of competing with one another, such an attitude would greatly benefit local Aboriginal interests, reinforce their self-determination and give them a fairer access to resources. Of course, it is too early to know whether such a situation has some prospect of survival, considering the mixed nature and various origins of town based settlements. It is also premature to say that the Fitzroy Crossing Aboriginal people will be able to develop a town identity while preserving a 'mixed mob' ideology.

The hypothesis at the origin of this thesis was to question the rather unclear concept of 'Aboriginal community'. Some of the questions I addressed, in order to explore this concept, were: what is an Aboriginal community in contemporary Aboriginal Australia? How did it come into being? What held the community together as a group? How was community identity formed, expressed and maintained, and how did it operate? What was the basis of the community's leadership, and how far did external influences interfere with the community as a group?

### *Conclusion*

Instead of organising the presentation of my data within a theoretical framework relating to other areas in Aboriginal Australia, I have chosen to concentrate on giving a detailed ethnography to show how Junjuwa's residents lived this type of grouping (the community) on a daily basis, and how contradictions inherent to this particular situation were overcome, and then turned into a coercive rather than divisive force. My main aim, in doing so, was to identify in Junjuwa all elements, both past and present, that come into play to form a very complex and fragile grouping common to most contemporary Aboriginal settlements in the North of Australia: the community. The concept of 'Aboriginal community' has been, far too often, taken for granted while implementing States and Federal policies which has led to the neglect of regional and local differences that prevailed behind the notion of such groupings.

There is a major contradiction in Federal Aboriginal policies: they are drafted for the Aboriginal people on the basis that they are a single coherent group and, as such, regional and local differences are ignored. Therefore, once implemented these policies are often inadequate, but nevertheless remain in place for several years. A comparable discrepancy exists at the States' level. Both attitudes, in the light of this thesis, ought to be changed in order to make policies more relevant to the contemporary Aboriginal social reality. I am not saying that each form of contemporary Aboriginal grouping should have its own policy, but on the basis of similarities in the origin, form and nature of Aboriginal settlements, like Junjuwa, for example, settlements described by Chase (1980) and Trigger (1987), an attempt could be made for a broad classification of Aboriginal contemporary social groups as a guide-line for the drafting and implementation of government policies in better congruence with the nature of these settlements and Aboriginal people's needs.

To suggest such changes may be very idealistic and quite impossible to put into practice. Although, I hope that, what I have presented in this thesis, and more particularly when I discussed the discrepancy between the outsider's view of Junjuwa and its internal organisation, makes it of potential use to the people in Aboriginal administration who sought to meet, in their work, the social reality of contemporary Aboriginal communities.

In this thesis, I have emphasized the various factors that made Junjuwa's specificity and showed how people used these factors to build a 'mixed mob' identity and put it into practice despite all internal and external contradictions inherent in Junjuwa. Such a process is by no means unique to Junjuwa and it suggests a basic core of elements, despite regional and local variations, which contribute to group formation, maintenance and dissolution amongst contemporary Aboriginal people, and the expression of new forms of identities.

The historical context cannot be overlooked in this process, nor the intervention of Federal and State governments through their policies and various agencies. Some other preponderant elements in the development of the

'mixed mob' ideology in Junjuwa were: the village and community sentiment formation, the complexity of Aboriginal leadership and the interference of non-Aboriginal people in community leadership, the variable use of kinship and subsection membership, the emergence of more inclusive forms of associations that could lead to new expressions of identities (Christian people, people of mixed descent, gangs). Most of which are common to many remote Aboriginal settlements in Northern Australia, and exist sometimes as well amongst urban Aboriginal groupings elsewhere, making of Junjuwa a starting point for a wider discussion of contemporary social Aboriginal groupings.

With rapid changes in Aboriginal people's living conditions, and the growing awareness of political consciousness amongst younger Aboriginal people, it is possible that a movement similar to the one that led to the development of 'mixed mob identity' could be expanded at the regional level more successfully than after the Noonkanbah events. Younger Aboriginal people in the Fitzroy Valley area recognize, more than their forefathers did in the past, the likeness of various situations as well as the needs for regional based action in order to improve it.

In the Kimberleys, the dissolution of Noonkanbah was caused ultimately when the community closed in on itself. In the light of this outcome, the dissolution of Junjuwa could eventuate if Bunuba people find themselves on their own in the village, as a result of State and/or Federal policies that give opportunities to smaller groupings to establish settlements on their own and ultimately drive non-Bunuba people away from the community. Then, as I have exposed in this thesis, the closeness of Bunuba more inclusive groupings would prevent the maintenance of Junjuwa 'mixed mob ideology', which is based on a playing up of people differences, and did not operate as successfully within language group as it did at the community level.

The KLC's attempt to bring Aboriginal settlements from the Kimberleys area together did not last partly because the Aboriginal-controlled organisation was not seen, by the Aboriginal people from the Kimberleys, as representative of the spectrum of cultural and linguistic diversity that existed in the area as it ought to be but rather perceived as controlled by a few and serving the interests of these people only. The downfall of this attempt does not necessarily mean that any future similar initiatives are doomed to failure.

For example, the East Kimberley Council, formed a decade after the KLC, enjoyed a regional recognition from nearly all the Aboriginal settlements in the East Kimberleys area. Thus, an alternative could be a 'central' or West Kimberley Land Council located at Fitzroy Crossing. Such an organisation would be more representative and better accepted than Marra Worra Worra ever was, because it was identified, by Fitzroy Crossing Aboriginal people, as a branch of the KLC and as such not suitable, in their view, to promote the development of a regional-based grouping.

### *Conclusion*

The implementation of such an organisation in Fitzroy Crossing should be left to Aboriginal's initiative and to some extents supported by Aboriginal funding. In order to be able to do so, and thus to improve Aboriginal self-determination in the area, communities like Junjuwa should be given real opportunities to generate income through scheme similar to CDEP, which so far have contributed to increase Aboriginal dependency on non-Aboriginal skills. Only if the Aboriginal people from the Fitzroy area are actively involved in the setting and funding of an Aboriginal-controlled organisation would they then be likely to develop some enduring regional based-sentiments and groupings as it has occurred amongst Junjuwa's residents for whom the village was, above all, their own achievement.

The creation, in mid-1991, of an Aboriginal co-operative in Fitzroy Crossing, as a potential group-purchaser of non-Aboriginal enterprises and an umbrella-organisation representative of the local Aboriginal people's interests, which included most of the Aboriginal settlements from the Fitzroy Crossing area, could be a step toward the coming into being of such a type of more independent and autonomous Aboriginal-controlled organisation; but, in order to achieve this goal, further legislative changes are needed regarding Aboriginal government policies both at the State and Federal levels.





---

---

# APPENDIX ONE

---

---

## CONSTITUTION OF JUNJUWA COMMUNITY INCORPORATED

---

### NAME:

1.The name of the Association is JUNJUWA COMMUNITY  
INCORPORATED

### DEFINITIONS:

2.In this Constitution

"THE ASSOCIATION" means Junjuwa Community Incorporated.  
"THE COUNCIL" means the Council of Leaders. "LEADER"  
means a member of the Council.

"ABORIGINAL" means any person who is a "native", "aborigine",  
"Aboriginal" or "person of Aboriginal descent" under any law of  
Western Australia or of the Commonwealth of Australia.

"THE COMMUNITY" means the members of the Association.

### OBJECTS:

3.The objects of the Association are:-

- (1). to support the development of the community in all ways
- (2). to help to bring about the self support of the community by the  
development of economic projects and industries.

*Appendix One*

- (3). to hold shares in any company formed to carry out the objects of the Association
- (4). to support education, job training, health services, work and housing for the community
- (5). to help and encourage the community to manage its affairs upon its own land
- (6). to help and encourage the community to keep and renew its traditional culture
- (7). to help to build trust and friendship between the community and other people
- (8). to receive and spend grants of money from the Government of the State of the Commonwealth

**OFFICE:**

4.The office of the Association shall be at Fitzroy Crossing or at such other place as the council may decide.

**MEMBERSHIP:**

5.The members of the Association shall be those Aboriginals who are of the.....

(a) Bunaba tribe, or are related.

(b) Other tribes of the Fitzroy Crossing area, or are related, and who are not members of any other Association, and who live by the rules of the Community.

6. There shall be a register of Members in which shall be recorded the names of all persons who are recognized by the Council as being members of the Association. The name of any person who ceases to be recognized by the Council as a member shall be removed from the Register.

**COUNCIL:**

7. The objects of the Association shall be carried out by the Council of Leaders.

8. Any member may be a Leader.

9. Leaders shall be chosen by the Consensus of the Community at the Annual Meeting. They shall hold office for one year but may be chosen for further years. In the choice of leaders there shall be an equal number of those

chosen from the Bunaba tribe as the total of those chosen from the other tribal groups of the Fitzroy Crossing area.

## **MEETINGS AND PROCEEDINGS:**

10. The Council shall meet for business as often as necessary at such time and place as it may fix.

11. A meeting of the Council shall be held whenever any Leader asks for one to be held.

12. There shall be no limit to the number of leaders but unless and until the members decide that more are needed at least three Bunaba and at least three from the other tribal groups of the Fitzroy Crossing area, shall form a quorum at any meeting of the Council. Whenever the numbers of Leaders is less than the number needed for a quorum the remaining members of the Council may act to convince a meeting of the members to appoint new Leaders.

13. At the Annual Meeting, after the Leaders have been chosen the members shall choose one of the Leaders to be the Chairman of Community.

14. The Chairman shall preside at all meetings at which he is present but if he is not present or does not wish to take the chair, the members present shall choose a chairman for the meeting.

15. The Council may make rules for meetings of the Council and of the Community.

## **ANNUAL MEETING:**

16. Once in every year during October a meeting of the Community (to be called the annual meeting) shall be held at the village site established by the Community.

17. All members shall be invited and entitled to attend the annual meeting.

18. The business to be conducted at the annual meeting shall be:-

(a) to hear from the Council of the Association's affairs and activities since the last annual meeting.

(b) to hear from the treasurer on the finances of the Association for the year ending on the preceding 30 June.

(c) to choose Leaders and Chairman for the next year

(d) such other items of business as the members may wish to deal with

## **MANAGEMENT:**

19.The Council shall be responsible for the management of the affairs of the Association and shall control its funds and property.

20.The Council shall observe the established traditions and customs of the Community and consult with the members on all matters of importance.

21.The Council may give any of its powers and functions to sub-committees consisting of such one or more Leaders and/or other persons as the Council thinks fit. Any sub-committees so formed shall abide by any directions which may be given to it by the Council.

22.The meetings of any sub-committee shall, unless otherwise directed by the Council, be controlled by the provisions in this constitution for regulating the meetings and proceedings of the Council.

## **FINANCES:**

23.All money of the Association shall be deposited in the first instance to the credit of a bank account or accounts, kept in the name of the Association at such bank as the Council shall decide.

24.All cheques and withdrawal forms shall be signed by not less than two persons (whether Leader or not) appointed by the Council for the purpose.

25.Accounts shall be passed for payment at any meeting of the Council or of a committee appointed by the Council for that purpose.

26.Official receipts shall be issued for all money received by the Association.

27.All money or property of the Association not subject to any special trust may be used to carry out the objects of the Association but no part shall be paid or used directly or indirectly by way of dividend, bonus or otherwise by way of profit to any members excepting any proper payment to any Leader, Officer, or employee of the Association for services actually done for the Association.

28.True accounts shall be kept by the Treasurer of all money received and spent by the Association and of the affairs of Association.

29.The books of account of the Association shall be kept at the office or at such other place as the Council may decide and shall be open to inspection by any Leader at all reasonable times.

30.The financial year of the Association shall be from 1st July to 30th June.

31. At every Annual Meeting the Council shall give members present a certified profit and loss or income and expenditure account and a certified balance sheet containing a summary of the affairs of the Association made up to 30th June in that year and prepared by a qualified accountant.

## **OFFICERS:**

32. The Council may appoint a suitable person or persons (who may be a member but need not be one) to carry out the duties of Secretary and/or Treasurer.

33. The Secretary and/or Treasurer shall hold office for such times and on such other conditions as the Council may fix.

## **MINUTES:**

34. The Council and any sub-committees shall keep minutes in books to record:-

(a) the name of all persons who are Leaders

(b) the names of the Leaders present at each meeting of the Council and the names of the persons present at any meeting of a sub-committee

(c) all decisions of the Council and sub-committees.

## **COMMON SEAL:**

35. The Association shall have a common seal upon which shall be inscribed the name of the Association and the word "Common Seal".

36. The Common Seal shall be kept by the Secretary and shall not be used on any document except following a resolution of the Council. Every document to which the Common Seal is affixed shall be counter-signed by the Chairman and the Secretary or such other persons as the Council shall appoint for that purpose.

## **AMENDMENTS:**

37. The Association may from time to time upon a resolution passed by a majority vote of members of the Council present and voting at a meeting of the Council called for the purpose, change its name or vary, rescind, or add to the objects or any of the other provisions of this constitution but no such resolution shall be valid until such time as it has been considered by and approved by a

*Appendix One*

consensus of members present at a meeting of the Community specially called for the purpose.

**WINDING UP:**

38. In the event of the Association being wound up or dissolved and there remaining after payment of all of its debts any property whatsoever, this may be given or transferred to another institution or association having objects similar to the Association (being an institution or association the constitution of which prohibits the distribution of funds or assets to its members) or may be distributed in such manner as the Council shall consider to be in the best interests of the Community PROVIDED THAT no payment shall be made to any individual member of the Association except to the extent permitted by paragraph 27.

---

---

# APPENDIX TWO

---

---

## JUNJUWA UNDER THE CDEP SCHEME

---

During September 1988 and October 1988, I made a seven week visit to Fitzroy Crossing. The purpose of this particular visit was to evaluate the impact of a recently implemented Community Development Employment Projects (CDEP) scheme in Junjuwa<sup>1</sup>.

CDEP schemes have been operating since 1977, they are aimed at creating jobs for Aboriginal people who previously received unemployment benefits. The right to receive UB is surrendered by all eligible members of the community and in its place a bulk payment of the same amount plus a 20 % loading is made to the community council. People work on community controlled projects paid for out of the grant<sup>2</sup>.

I started my field research by conducting a community census in order to compare Junjuwa's population with figures I had collected every second month between December 1985 and March 1987. Census figures indicated that a few groups of people (three groups of about ten people each) had left Junjuwa since the CDEP scheme had been introduced. Although these groups had left Junjuwa, they remained in the vicinity of Fitzroy Crossing. The first group was made up of Gooniyandi people and had moved to Muludja; members of the second group were Wangkajunga who had gone to Christmas Creek, by then known as 'Wangkatjungka' (Hudson & Yu 1987:21); The last group included Walmajarri and Jaru who had started an outstation near the old Cherrabun homestead at a place called Ngalungadji. This movement seems to have been precipitated by the CDEP scheme, for which small communities are eligible providing they are incorporated. Thus, people moved from larger communities to smaller ones since they had the opportunity to be financially autonomous; such opportunity did not exist under the unemployment benefits era<sup>3</sup>. Indeed, this type of social security benefits was not sufficient to support small groups,



and many past attempts had aborted partly because of this but also due to the lack of support from DAA, whose policy at the time promoted settlements such as Junjuwa. All of those who moved out of Junjuwa were members of small groupings for whom the CDEP scheme offered an avenue to affirm their own identity and independence from the larger ones. In the opinion of members of these small groups, those who spoke dominant languages already had more privileges than they did in Junjuwa and the CDEP scheme provided a further opportunity to increase these privileges (access to vehicles, leadership of workers teams see below). Small non-incorporated communities, willing to join the CDEP, could do so but only under incorporated ones because funds from the scheme cannot be passed through a resource agency like MWW, like Social Security benefits. For example, six small settlements were getting their wages through the Junjuwa office which took also care of their paper work in exchange for a 3% levy. It is a fact that expectations from the small communities may have been unrealistic for some, but such dependency on the large communities was interpreted by members of the smaller ones as a strategy to force them to remain in large settlements:

I don't know what's wrong with them government people. First them bin say, alright you can go longa your country start them new places for your mob. Us we bin thinkin, alright let's go. Now look, we bin sittin there long time already, we got nothin: no house, no motokar, nothin. Look them Junjuwa mob, them got plenty, them got us money too in that Junjuwa office, This one money us money, not them mob money, still all the same we can't get him our place we have to get him longa that Junjuwa office like them pension and UB days, I don't know what's wrong with them government people, maybe them want us mob to sit down in Junjuwa again, but us mob like other mobs too we bin finish from that place now (Stanley).

I found that the changes in Junjuwa since I left in 1987 were astonishing. All the houses had been transformed and fixed (see Chapter Four), and were freshly painted; streets and backyards were rubbish free; piles of firewood were lying in various spots; there were five new community vehicles, as well as two trucks, a grader and a tractor; the garage and workshop had been upgraded and many tools purchased; new office space had been built and equipped with modern facilities, and so on<sup>4</sup>. Furthermore, many Junjuwa residents were keen to comment on the community's improvements, which were all attributed to the CDEP scheme. I gathered many enthusiastic statements about the scheme from Aboriginal people, especially amongst the older ones. Junjuwa's residents' positive attitudes were shared by non-Aboriginal people from town. At the police station, at the hospital and at the school, those of the non-Aboriginal staff who had known Junjuwa prior to the implementation of the CDEP scheme acknowledged that the place had undergone positive changes since it had started.

I subsequently examined the organisation of the CDEP scheme in Junjuwa. The scheme was gradually implemented during a three month trial period beginning in March 1988. The full scheme started in May 1988. The aim of the trial period was to reduce progressively the number of people on

unemployment benefits in order to have them all off that type of benefits by May 1988. During these three months people were asked to do several hours of work per week in order to get the same amount of money as they would if on unemployment benefits. After May 1988, no one living in Junjuwa was eligible for unemployment benefits, therefore people had either to be part of the scheme and work or to move out of Junjuwa if they wish to apply for unemployment benefit<sup>5</sup>. Junjuwa council met several times to discuss wages under the scheme. Finally, council leaders agreed that during the first six months of the scheme people on CDEP will get paid the same as they would get on unemployment benefit: that is, \$115 a week for a single person with no dependents<sup>6</sup>. Under the national minimum wage per hour at the time (around \$9), this amount corresponded to three hours of work per day.

In September 1988 there were 99 people under CDEP in Junjuwa, grouped into male and female teams, although one mixed team existed (see below 'store team'). This is how the six male workers teams were organised:

- a/ one team in charge of collecting rubbish;
- b/ one team in charge of fixing taps and toilets;
- c/ one team in charge of upgrading and fixing house fences;
- d/ one team in charge of firewood collection;
- e/ one team in charge of the overall cleaning.
  
- f/ one contract team

Each team was staffed with anything between eight and twelve male workers, under the supervision of a team leader. The contract team worked either for Junjuwa, for local enterprises or for cattle stations. Workers of that particular team received an extra one third of the contract money divided amongst workers, another third was put into one of the community cheque accounts, and the remaining third was for the team leader. This team's leader was Russell (see Chapters Eight and Nine), the only non-Aboriginal team leader, who also acted as the Junjuwa CDEP coordinator.

There were five appointed Aboriginal team leaders, who received an extra \$50 per week. Each of them was responsible for the work carried out by his own team, as well as for work attendance. Each team had been allocated a community vehicle, of which the team leader had full use. All these four teams, except the contract team, were organised along language affiliation lines and according to sub-divisions that existed within each language. Three team leaders were Bunuba men (teams b,c,e); the leader of the first team (a) was a Wangkajunga and the last team leader was a Walmajarri (d), all Aboriginal team leaders were councillors. All workers in three teams were from the same language as their team leaders (a,d,e), and the remaining two teams grouped workers of mixed linguistic origin: Bunuba and Walmajarri (b), Bunuba,

Gooniyandi and Jaru (d). Internally, these teams were organised alongside sub-group divisions, with non-appointed co-team leaders in charge of workers from their sub-group.

The contract team was made up of eight workers who were either people of mixed Aboriginal descent or belonged to a sub-group whose members were of mixed linguistic origin (cf Robin Chapter Six). There was a sixth team of male workers, in charge of the upgrading housing program. It was made up of about twelve to fifteen young men of various linguistic backgrounds, some of them external to Junjuwa. The workers were paid partly by the CDEP scheme (2/3 of the average wage) and the rest by Homewest<sup>7</sup> at a much higher wage. This made this team particularly attractive since in a few days of work a young man could make much more than working full time under the scheme in any other team (but the contract team). But the rapid turn over of workers slowed working progress since some specific construction skills were needed and took time to be acquired.

In addition to these six teams there was a seventh one, called the 'store team' which included twelve people, male and female, who were either Andrew's (Junjuwa chairman) close relatives or Jaru. Four of them worked in each of the following places:

Burawa store, formerly owned by the United Aboriginal Mission and known as the 'Mission store'. This store together with the entire United Aboriginal Mission lease was transferred to Junjuwa in February 1987, and subsequently given an Aboriginal name.

Junjuwa bakery, established within Junjuwa community in mid-1986.

Junjuwa Community store, an outlet of Burawa store conveniently located in the bakery building in order to offer shopping opportunities within the community.

Female teams were organised differently. The Community Council had decided that married women with under school age children would be paid but not required to do any work as long as they kept their house clean and in 'good order'. Single women were asked to clean houses of elderly people living next to their house or related to them as well as to do their washing at the 'mum's and kids' centre which had been set up in one of the empty houses<sup>8</sup>, in which three heavy duty washing machines that had been installed. Married women also got together there and did their washing; meanwhile, their children could play together in the nearby community playground. In the same house, five women, all Wangkajunga, employed by the 'meals on wheels' program, cooked meals twice a day for about 30 of the 53 Junjuwa residents on old age pensions. This program was a community enterprise which has started alongside the CDEP scheme; it also supported the school canteen which was then controlled by Junjuwa. Meals were served to pensioners and others in the centre at the cost of \$2 per meal which could be deducted directly from pension or wages.

There were three women (one per main language: Bunuba, Walmajarri, Wangkajunga), appointed by the council to oversee women's working activities.

I accompanied each male team in their daily working activities and attempted to obtain views on the CDEP (other than those expressed in public and/or general statements) from the team workers. Nearly all the workers were disappointed with their wages. Basically they did not understand why they were getting less money under the CDEP scheme, even though they were employed, compared with what they used to get when paid unemployment benefits. Indeed it was true that weekly wages were, for most of the people under the scheme less than half of their fortnightly UB cheques.

The reduced level of income was partly due to tax deduction but was also due to their being penalized for non-attendance at work, which did not exist under the UB scheme. Thus the social life that had developed under the UB era (1976-1988) was no longer available without financial penalties. Two young men were in charge of checking male workers' names every morning and those who were not attending work would lose one day's pay<sup>9</sup>. This system was both unfair and unreliable; besides, many workers tried to have their names ticked off even though they did not turn up at work. This reinforced tensions between groups since the two young men were affiliated to the two dominant languages (Bunuba and Walmajarri). Furthermore, CDEP workers who had previously been employed elsewhere in recent years, particularly on cattle stations, found the CDEP wages low and pointed out to me that 'it was not worth working to get sit down money' (unemployment benefit). Further, as I have indicated (see Chapter Four), Junjuwa residents who had seasonal employment in the cattle industry, or worked for the community, remained on UB despite the fact they received wages. Consequently, many of Junjuwa workers under the CDEP expected to get their UB cheques on top of CDEP wages. Other complaints were against the type of work people were asked to do under the scheme. Most Kimberley Aborigines are skilled at station work and under the CDEP they were doing jobs they found low status<sup>10</sup>.

I spent several days with the women workers and conducted interviews in order to compare their views with the men's. Older and married women were satisfied overall with the CDEP, especially in regards to facilities that had been made available to them at the 'kids and mums' centre. Single women found it 'boring' to have to stay in Junjuwa and to clean other people's house for at least 'half a day'. Further, work attendance for women was estimated on the quality of the work done rather than on worker attendance, since most of them worked in their own house. Thus, it was a subjective criterion which single workers said was used by the three women 'supervisors' to give them a 'hard time'.

I discussed all these issues with Mark, the community adviser, who shared people's concerns about low wages, the poor quality of work available, and the inadequacy of the scheme, but he argued that the CDEP could not be improved on at this stage. Junjuwa was allocated only sufficient funds under the scheme to cover the cost of current wages paid to workers and Junjuwa enterprises were

not making enough profit<sup>11</sup> for increasing wages or for starting new projects in order to diversify positions. Many of the community councillors, including Andrew, the chairman, were willing to increase wages and workers were also keen to work more but none of this was possible yet. The only possibility for generating profit and thus to change the current scheme would have been for Junjuwa to acquire other types of local enterprises such as a supermarket, video shop or even the local hotel. These were all available for sale, since current owners saw a way of making substantial profits, should they be able to sell to the Aboriginal Development Commission<sup>12</sup>. However, such enterprises required specific skills, both in business and office work, but local Aborigines did not possess such skills. Consequently, if Junjuwa acquired any of these enterprises, it would need to employ more non-Aboriginal staff. The main aim of the CDEP scheme was precisely to increase Aboriginal employment and self-determination. In order to increase Aboriginal employment opportunities in town an Aboriginal co-operative had been created with Junjuwa, Bayulu and Noonkanbah. This co-operative was keen to purchase the roadhouse and had put aside a \$20,000 deposit for that purpose but according to Mark this initiative was supported neither by DAA nor ADC. It seems that ADC studied this option but for Kurnangki Community since this would give it access to the CDEP scheme<sup>13</sup>.

As far as employment of non-Aboriginals as part of the scheme is concerned, Junjuwa employed seven full-time non-Aboriginal people compared to two full-time and one part-time the previous year. The employment situation for non-Aborigines in Junjuwa is summarized as follows:

1985-1987: one community adviser, one baker both full-time; one part-time bookkeeper (community adviser's wife).

1988: one community adviser, one bookkeeper, one store manager, one CDEP coordinator, one team supervisor and two bakers, all full-time.

The fact that Junjuwa employed several non-Aboriginals was not a problem in itself. Most of the non-Aboriginal people employed had skills that none of Junjuwa residents possessed and therefore the non-Aboriginal employees were not taking positions away from Aboriginal people. But on the basis of non-Aboriginal interventions described in Chapter Nine, the situation could create divisions among Junjuwa residents. For example, Russell and the team supervisor had different views on the working organisation. One of the bakers refused to take orders from the store manager if they were not channelled through the community adviser. The non-Aboriginal employees' conflicts were a potential threat to Junjuwa community whose members were regularly dragged into them (Tonkinson 1978:101).

As one would expect, alcoholism, violence and related problems, that plagued the social security benefits era had not disappeared with the introduction of CDEP. But, police station figures for July and August 1988 showed that charges had dropped by one third compared to the same period the

previous year. Similarly, unofficial figures from the hotel indicated that alcohol sales to Aborigines had dropped, but not as significantly as the charges<sup>14</sup>. The 'book down' had been reintroduced both at Burawa and Junjuwa community stores for Junjuwa residents only. Thus, less cash was available at the end of the week since what people owed to one of the two stores was deducted from their wages before payment. Consequently, there was a smaller amount of cash available to purchase alcohol and sales had dropped accordingly. It also seems that the Junjuwa Community Health was more efficient than before: the Aboriginal Medical Service had set up a base at Fitzroy and a second doctor was appointed in town. Further, several Junjuwa women, from different linguistic groups, had undergone a health training program focused on alcohol consumption, and other specific health problems faced by local Aboriginal people. Figures provided by the Burawa store manager indicate that people spent more than before on food, even though smaller amounts of cash were available at once. He also pointed out that vegetables and fruit sales had increased more significantly than others<sup>15</sup>, which indicates a positive change in dietary habits.

It was surprising to see the 'book down' system back in Junjuwa since it had been suppressed by popular demand in 1985. But in 1988 the system was different from what existed until 1985 when no credit limits were fixed and people bought on credit for more than they actually earned. This new 'book down' system was limited to Junjuwa residents under the scheme and to pensioners. These people could book down groceries but only up to one third of their weekly wages, Mondays and Wednesdays were days when shopping on credit was available, and only at one of the two community stores. With such restrictions, the system seemed to operate well and people were happy about it. Many local Aboriginal people would spend their wages within two days after getting them, and this system enabled them to purchase goods in the middle of the week even though cash within the community was very scarce. Thus, according to the community adviser, people were not tempted to ask for credit elsewhere and consequently money from Junjuwa people remained within the community. Figures available from the Junjuwa office show that all Junjuwa residents on CDEP and pensioners took full advantage of the credit facilities which provided Junjuwa's stores with a regular weekly income of around \$4,000<sup>16</sup>. The main difficulty with the system was that credit limits were calculated every week for CDEP workers, thus if people had missed one or several days of work their credit limit was reduced accordingly; similarly, if someone had purchased goods on credit and did not work the following week, credit was no longer available to that person.

Pensioners were also paid weekly. This had been a community Council decision taken one month after the implementation of the CDEP scheme. During the first month that followed the start of the scheme, pensioners received their cheques fortnightly and cashed them accordingly. But since many workers did not have money when the pensioners got theirs, the pensioners

## *Appendix Two*

became an easy prey for unscrupulous workers to the point that several old people were left with nothing. Furthermore, work attendance had significantly dropped during pension week when workers were offered the possibility of gambling or drinking. Therefore at the following council meeting it was decided to split pension cheques in half and to pay pensioners every Friday.

In fact, the entire economic life of the town had switched from a fortnightly to a weekly rhythm 'Busy' nights at the pub, hospital and police station were Fridays and Saturdays, the town being more or less quiet the rest of the week. This change had been noticed by Aboriginal people as well, but for most of them things were not that different under the CDEP scheme compared to the UB era:

Before we used to have them pension days, you remember when all them people got drunk, really mad time that pension week, and we bin havin them biggest fights too. Well all that time we bin havin trouble for one full week, pension week trouble all the way, then nothin all quiet for one week, this one we call'im slack week, and that pension week was coming again. Now with that CDEP business, it's different again, we got them two mad days, you know like Gardiya, two mad days after pay day, Fridays and Saturdays. Well some people reckon it's different know, myself I reckon it's all the same (Peter).

Hunting and gathering activities, visits to distant relatives and some ceremonial activities had declined amongst Junjuwa residents since the implementation of the CDEP. The former activities were then confined to the weekend since many people had to work during the week. Pensioners had no one to take them into the bush for foraging activities, except for a few hours a day which was not enough to reach places where bush products, and wildlife were largely available. Further, the Council had rejected the possibility of foraging activities as part of the scheme, arguing that this was not work, on the basis that they were strongly associated with the UB period. Visits to distant relatives and ceremonies that need long trips or require several days of ritual activities had become less frequent. Travel for ceremonial activity had been a major concern for community councillors in Junjuwa when they made the rules under which the CDEP scheme would operate. It was decided that a special two day leave could be given to attend a funeral but that was all. October is only a few months away from the period during which most initiation ceremonies were held some Junjuwa residents expressed their concerns about the incompatibility between these kinds of ceremonial activities, which require several days of preparation and of participation and the CDEP scheme.

There were twelve people in Junjuwa who were under the CDEP scheme but did not do any work. All of them were heavy drinkers who lived off their relatives' incomes, no one blamed them for their behaviour but relatives wished that these people, who in their view were sick, could apply for UB instead, but this was impossible as long as they resided in Junjuwa.

*Junjuwa under the CDEP Scheme*

I looked at work attendance over a three week period and was able to note differences between male and female workers as well as to connect external disruptive factors (Kurnangki pension day for example) with low work attendance. Table 2 shows the figures for these three weeks (28/09/1988 to 14/10/1988)

As expected, those who did not miss a day of work were: for the women, the three supervisors and the five employees of the meals on wheels project; for the men, the five team leaders and the eight workers from the contract teams, all those who had financial incentive to motivate them. Siblings of the same sex worked often alternatively: one week of full attendance and the next one with two or three working days, and vice versa. According to their numbers siblings had to work one full week out of two, three or four. Fewer women than men had a full work attendance over the three week period, but this may have been caused by the way supervision was done.

	FEMALE	MALE
No work	3	3
1 to 5 days	4	7
6 to 10 days	10	16
11 to 14 days	20	15
Full Attendance 15 days	8	13
	45	54
TOTAL NUMBER OF WORKERS		
99		

**Table 2**  
**work attendance of Junjuwa workers**  
**28/09/1988 - 14/10/1988**

At the end of my field trip I had a long discussion with one of Junjuwa's councillors. He was probably one of the first local Aborigines to ask for a CDEP scheme to be introduced in Junjuwa. Following is his view about the scheme:

Let me tell you something, that CDEP business, well it's not bad thing for us. We gotta lot of things, new cars, trucks, tools and that's good. Them young fella they don't sit down all the time like with the UB money, well they still drink and fight alright, but they are not shame now, they work for their money and this is good too. But you



*Appendix Two*

see what we need now, it's a place on our own, for each mob, my mob, Colin mob, them Walmajarri too, you know some land, not much, just enough for a bit of cattle. Mine place I want'im next to my father country on the river, proper good place too this one. Then we will take them young fella, they will work for us and we gonna be alright. Because you see that CDEP business, he can't last long like that, the place is clean, we gotta big mobs of firewood, women got their place for washin them clothes, old people are fed everyday, what else can we do, nothin... Well if they do nothin the young fella will get mad again and we gonna be in the real shit again like with the sit down money. I tell you, we need places on our own and to look after community business by ourselves, there are too many Gardiya workin for us right now, I hope we can make it this time, we've been screwed too many times...(Arthur)

Whilst Junjuwa may have seemed a better place to live in for Aboriginal people than many others around Fitzroy Crossing, many problems remained. The CDEP scheme is only a temporary solution to the problems which confront Junjuwa residents. In many ways Junjuwa had taken steps which could be seen as retrogressive. For example, an increased number of non-Aboriginal people were employed, even though two young Aboriginal men had been trained community advisers for two years<sup>17</sup>. Also, with the credit system, the low wages and the poor quality and diversity of work available, some Junjuwa residents felt they were not getting out of the scheme as much as they had expected. Further, for most of them the 'CDEP business' was very mysterious and they felt they were cheated:

I tell you what, that CDEP money we don't know where he come from. Before, them UB cheques, alright we bin seen them, all the lot with us names and money, this one we knew it was money longa Perth way. But that CDEP him different, alright pay day you go longa Junjuwa office and you get your money, but that money him never come first to Junjuwa, us we don't know where that money come from. Maybe government, maybe Junjuwa, well if Junjuwa money it's us money too, then we should get more of that money, more money, how come Junjuwa got all that money for them motokar, truck and all that lot, and us we got little bit, I bin to that Burawa store, big mob fifties and hundreds (\$50 and \$100 banknotes), well that's our store our money, how come us we got only little bit. I reckon it's not fair we've bin cheated all the way, we listen them Gardiya all the way: station managers, missionaries, project officers, DAA and ADC mobs, we listen them alright and we gotta nothin out of it (Henry).

My last interview was with Mark who started Junjuwa's projects but nevertheless admitted on the shortcoming of the scheme. The construction worker team had still a lot of work to do: extension of the bakery, building of a basket-ball court and a play ground area next to it; upgrading of the community hall. The fencing team had about three more months of work to redo all the fences around Junjuwa and the former mission compound. Mark and the council had planned several projects: first they had approached the hospital and various enterprises to offer them a washing contract service that would be done by the women. Junjuwa was willing to purchase horses in order to organise

rides in the nearby bush during the tourist season. There were also plans for a market garden whose production would be sold to Burawa and Junjuwa stores, a poultry farm and a mohair goat farm. Finally Bunuba were keen to apply for a land excision somewhere on Brooking Springs or Leopold Station. None of this could be started prior to the end of 1989 and Mark feared that low wages and the poor quality of work could discourage people prior to that time. He blamed local non-Aboriginal people for their lack of support for Junjuwa enterprises and their lack of confidence in Aboriginal controlled projects. He concluded by saying that if many things had indeed changed in Fitzroy Crossing since the implementation of the scheme, but hostile and negative attitudes towards the Aboriginal population amongst local white certainly had not.

The CDEP had largely contributed to the upgrading of living conditions to a reasonable standard in Junjuwa and in that sense the scheme has fulfilled its main objective. But the low wages, and the lack of interesting employment opportunities, leads one to think that the CDEP served more as a transfer of responsibility from the Welfare State to the Aboriginal settlements, for problems faced by Aboriginal people in Fitzroy Crossing, than an opportunity to create employment for Aboriginal people. The way the scheme was implemented in Junjuwa made it almost impossible to generate a profit or to purchase local enterprises so they could operate them through non-Aboriginal managers. As far as the settlements populations were concerned, there were two opposite dynamics that resulted from the six month old CDEP scheme: small coherent groups had moved out from large town-based settlements since the scheme offered them a possibility to subsist on their own. Large settlements initiated co-operative-like associations mainly to develop job opportunities. These two dynamics were once more prompted by government policies and the allocation of funds, two aspects which were at the origin of Junjuwa.

## **Endnotes - Appendix Two**

1 This field trip was supported by a grant from the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies.

2 For a synthetic discussion of the CDEP scheme, see Altman and Sanders 1991.

3 Census data available at MWW confirmed similar movements of population in the Fitzroy Valley area: small groups leaving large communities either to join existing remote small communities, or to form new ones on their own in locations significant to them.

4 Following are the figures given by Mark, Junjuwa's project officer, then in his last month at the position, for the total cost of upgrading Junjuwa houses and office as well as to purchase various equipment: for the former, \$400,000 from DAA and a further \$ 200,000 from the State Housing Commission. For the latter, a total amount of \$131,000 from the CDEP equipment budget, being spent as follows: tip truck \$41,000; six tons truck \$10,000; tractor \$8,000; grader \$12,000; lawn mower \$4,000; tools \$4,000; five vehicles for team leaders \$52,000.

5 Nearly all the Aboriginal settlements in the Fitzroy Valley were under the scheme, even those who had not be willing to be included, such as Christmas Creek and Bayulu. By contrast Kurnangki whose residents and council had expressed their interest in the scheme did not have CDEP in October 1998 on the basis that there was not enough work at Fitzroy Crossing to employ all residents of two large communities (Kurnangki, Junjuwa). A direct consequence was movements of population from Kurnangki to Junjuwa and vice versa; these affected community residential patterns, mainly among Walmajarri people.

6 The rate for the basic unemployment benefit for a single person over 21 years old with no dependents was \$216.80 per fortnight plus a \$14 extra zone allowance (Department of Social Security 1/1/1988).

7 Homewest was one of the main contractors employed by the State Housing Commission in Aboriginal settlements from the Kimberley area.

8 This was in fact the house where the 'drop-in' centre used to be. See Chapter Nine.

9 One day's pay at the minimum wage was \$23. All absences were penalised on the basis 'no work, no pay', but people unfit to work were paid providing they did not miss more than 2 days of work per month, if not seriously ill.

10 'Shame or rubbish work' were the most commonly used expressions.

11 Burawa store made \$100,000 profit during the previous fiscal year, 70% of which had been transferred to UAM on the basis of the agreement it had signed with Junjuwa in February 1987.

12 The Crossing Inn (pub, motel, caravan park) was for sale at \$1,500,000; the shopping complex (Supermarket, take away shop, caravan park) was estimated at \$1,200,000; the owner of Fitzroy Crossing's second garage with the shop (see Chapter Three) asked for \$1,200,000; and finally the video and electric appliances shop was on the market for \$220,000. At this stage ADC was not prepared to invest so large an amount in one single Aboriginal community.

13 Personal communication from the local DCS officer.

14 In Fitzroy Crossing most of the charges are linked to alcohol consumption. Between 1985 and 1987, Police Station records show a correlation between alcohol sales at the hotel and the number of charges at the police station.

*Junjuwa under the CDEP Scheme*

15 He also stressed that a particular effort had been made to offer cheaper and more fresh produce at the Burawa store than anywhere else in town.

16 The exact figures are \$3,840 (30/09/88), \$3,750 (7/10/88), and \$3,865 (14/10/88), (Junjuwa Office Stores Records).

17 An Aboriginal project officer was appointed soon after I had left Junjuwa.



---

---

# APPENDIX THREE

---

---

## CENSUS DATA

---

In this Appendix I present and discuss data from a census conducted in Junjuwa between 10/05/1986 and 20/05/1986. I chose to conduct the census during this period because it would help define the core Junjuwa population, since people who moved to Junjuwa during the wet season generally returned to their own settlements in the dry season. In 1986, there were several families who lived outside Junjuwa although they were members of Junjuwa community. These people were included in the census, which explains the discrepancy between the census figures presented in Table 1 (Chapter Four), where only people living within the village were included.

Tables 3a to 3d show household composition information: total number of people living in one house and their relationships to the 'house boss'. Tables 4a to 4f give data on linguistic identity. These tables show people's linguistic affiliation in comparison to their parents'. Finally Table 5 sums up data on marriages within or/and between languages divisions in Junjuwa.

I provide information to help read these Tables and make some comments about the data and figures.

Appendix Three

H.No.	Male	Female	Child.	G Ch	FM	FF	MM	MF	Frel	Mrel	People
4	1 1	1 1*	1 4								9
5	1	1	2								4
6	1	1	4	2					ZD	BD BS	11
7	1	1 WI 1*	4 3	1							10
8	1 SI 1	1	1							ZD ZS ZSS (2)	7
9	1	1	1 Fo	4							7
10	2 SI 1 SE 1 WI		2	2						ZS	7
11	1 SI 1	1	3								6
12	1	1	4	1					B		8
13	1 1 1	1 1 1* Z	1 Fo 1 1								9
14		1 WI 1* SE 1 SI 1 SE 1* SE	2 1 1 1	2					Z		13
15	1 1 SI	1	2								5
16	1 1	1 1*	3 1								7
17	6 SI										6
18	1 1* SE	1	6 1						BS ZS	BD	13
19	1 1* SE	1	4 1								8
20	1 1*	1 1	4								8

TABLE 3a

Household Composition  
 Junjuwa village 1986  
 houses 4 to 20

Census data

H.No.	Male	Female	Child.	G Ch	FM	FF	MM	MF	Frel	Mrel	People
21	1 SI 1	1	1								4
22	1 WI 2* SE										3
23	1 SI 1 SE		1								2
24	1	1 1*	1 2								6
25	1	1							B BS(2)		5
26	1* SE 1	1 SE 1*	1 1	1					Z ZD(2) ZS (2)		12
27	1 1	1 1*	2 3					1		B	11
28	1	1 1 WI		2							5
29	1	1							B		3
30	1	1	5								7
31	1 1*	1 1* SE 1	6 1 1		1				1 "AU"		15
32	1 SE 1	1	1 1						ZD (2)		7
33	1	1	3+1					1	FB B	STB	10
41	1	1	2+1						Z		6
42	1	1 FB 1	6							B STB	12
43	1 SI										1
44	1	1 1* SE	5 1				1				10
45	1 1	1 1	7		1						12

TABLE 3b

Household Composition  
 Junjuwa village 1986  
 houses 21 to 45



Appendix Three

H.No.	Male	Female	Child.	G Ch	FM	FF	MM	MF	Frel	Mrel	People
46	1	1 1* SE	5 1							MZS	10
47	1 1* 1	1 1 1*	2	1 Fo					B		10
48	1  1  1	1 1 WI 1* MZ 1* BD SE 1* Z	2  1 2								13
49	1	1 1* SE	5 2								10
50	1 SE		3								4
51	1	1 WI 1*	2 2								7
52	1 1 1	1 1* Z 1*	5  1								12
53	1 1	1 1* 1* Z SE	3 3							ZS	12
54		1 WI	1						BS(2)		4
57	1 1* STB	1+1 1	5								10
58	1 1	1 1									4
67	1 1* 1	1 1 1	1 FO 1 2								10
68	1	1	3							"F"	6
69		1 WI 1* SE 1* Z SE	1 3						Z		9
70	1 1	1 1*	4								8

TABLE 3c

Household Composition  
 Junjuwa village 1986  
 houses 46 to 70

H.No.	Male	Female	Child.	G Ch	FM	FF	MM	MF	Frel	Mrel	People
71	1 1 1* B	1 1* 1* Z SE 1	1 2 2								12
72	1	1	2							"B" (3)	7
79	1	1 WI	1	2							7
80	1	1	3								5

TABLE 3d

**Household Composition  
Junjuwa village 1986  
houses 71 to 80**

### Information for Tables 3a to 3d

There are 12 columns that represent different fields of information related to household composition. In column one, H.No. stands for the house number (for location of houses see Map 6, Chapter Four). The next two columns are Male and Female; if a male and a female are on the same line it indicates that they are married: a married couple on the first line indicates the house's main couple whose husband is the house boss. When a male or a female on the first line appears alone he or she is the house boss. The two letters that follow these people indicate their status: SI for single, SE for separated, and WI for widow(er). Male or Female on lines underneath the first one are people who shared the house with the main couple or the house boss. If the digit number is followed by an asterisk (\*) it indicates that the person is related to the one immediately above; in cases where the kin relation is not to that person, an arrow indicates with whom it is (example Table 3d, house 71). If there are no other indications an asterisk means that the person immediately above is the father or the mother; other kin relations appear after the asterisk according to standard usage. For example, in Table 2c, in house 48 the person on the third line (1\* MZ) is the mother's sister of the woman above, the woman on line four (1\* BD SE) is the brother's daughter of 1\* MZ, and she is separated; finally the woman on line five (1\* Z) is the former's sister. In the next column are the number of children belonging to the couple, or the person on the same line. Only single children will be in this column. Whenever a child is followed by the letters FO it indicates a fostered child, officially

### *Appendix Three*

recorded as such by the Department of Social Security. This is also indicated in the next column. When the number of children appears as follows: 3+1 (Table 3b, house 33) or 2+1 (Table 3b, house 41) it indicates that the children's mother had them to two men, the children of her current husband are indicated first. The next column is about grandchildren (G Ch). Individuals only appear under this category if their parents are not living in the house, otherwise they are in the previous column (children) on the same line as them. Thus, one of the children's parents is the main couple's or the house boss' son or daughter, their children are the former's grandchildren. The next two columns indicate whether the mother (FM) or father (FF) of the female on the same line, in column two, lives in the house. Similar data but for the male's mother (MM) or father (MF) appear in the next two columns. Under Frel, next column, are all of the female relatives that resided with her. The kin relation to the female on the same line is indicated according to standard symbols (eg B=brother, Z=sister, FB=father's brother etc.), except when in case of siblings one of their parents was different (example STB stands for step-brother, Table 3d, house 33). When kin relations were classificatory, they appear with inverted commas and correspond to the term of address used by the female: for example "AU" was a female's relative describe to me as her auntie (Table 3b, house 31). The number following the symbol for the female's relative indicates that several of them lived in the house, for example BS(2) means that two of a woman's brother's sons were living with her (Table 3c, House 54). The next column shows the male's relatives (Mrel) with the same symbols as those used in the previous column. The last column shows the total number of people living in the house at the time of the census.

## **Additional information**

Before I discuss the Tables in detail it is important to add information that does not appear in them. River people occupied houses 4 to 33 and desert people houses 41 to 80. Within these categories there were two sections: Houses 4 to 26 was the Bunuba section and houses 27 to 33 was the 'mixed' section for the river people. On the desert side there was the Walmajarri section (houses 41 to 54) and the Wangkajunga section (houses 67 to 80). Finally within each section existed 'transitional' or 'border' houses whose boss or main couple acted as mediators during conflicts between the various sections of Junjuwa. These houses were: house 6 (main couple: husband Gooniyandi, wife Walmajarri); house 12 (main couple: husband Bunuba, wife Walmajarri); house 19 (main couple: husband Bunuba, wife Gooniyandi); house 26 (boss: a Bunuba widow formerly married to a Wangkajunga); house 33 (main couple: husband Jaru, wife Kija); house 48 main couple: husband Walmajarri, wife Wangkajunga; house 72 (main couple: husband Wangkajunga, wife Walmajarri),

Second, house clusters were formed on the basis of kin ties between the house bosses. The main clusters were: houses 4, 11 and 12 (4 and 12 were

siblings and 11 was the daughter of the main couple in 12); houses 7, 8, 10 and 30 (8 and 10 were siblings, their mother was in 7 and her brother in 30); houses 16, 17, 18 and 19 (four male siblings); houses 13, 14, 27 and 31 (siblings); houses 18, 25, 29 and 33 (siblings); houses 20, 24 and 80 (siblings in 20 and 24, mother in 80); houses 23, 67 and 68 (siblings); houses 41, and 44 (siblings and wife's relatives), house 46 and 47 (siblings); houses 49 and 57 (siblings); houses 48 and 50 (mother and daughter); houses 52 and 57 (siblings); houses 72 and 79 (siblings). Several houses belong to two and sometimes three clusters because several of their occupants had relatives in different house clusters. Overall, house clusters on the river people's side linked more houses at a time (three and four houses), and were more cohesive units than those on the desert people's side. Houses which do not appear in any of the above clusters were not isolated on their own: houses occupants usually had relatives in other settlements and, within Junjuwa they had kin ties of some sorts with other house occupants, but of a different kinds to those which generate house clusters.

### **Comments on Tables 3a to 3d**

Figures from these tables show that Junjuwa houses had any number of occupants ranging between 1 (house 43) and 15 (house 31), with an average of nearly 8 people per house. There were 27 houses under the average and the same number over, including 18 house with 10 or more occupants. Most of houses in Junjuwa were three bedroom type (see Map 7), so there is no correlation between the size of the house and the number of occupants.

There were 13 houses (4, 7, 16, 24, 26, 27, 31, 45, 47, 51, 53, 70, 71), in which the married men lived in the same house as their mothers-in-law. This apparent breach of the 'avoidance of the mother-in-law' rule occurred in all sections of Junjuwa. But internal organisation within all these houses made possible the observance of that rule: a man would never be at the same time in the same room with his mother-in-law, they did not talk to each other nor did they look at each other<sup>1</sup>, they took their meals separately, and sleeping arrangements were made accordingly. Nevertheless it sometimes happened that the rule was breached and in that case people minimized the importance of its non-respect stating that they 'did not stick to old days' rules'.

There were only five houses in which the main couple or the boss co-resided with one of their parents (27, 31, 33, 44, 45). In two houses it was the main couples' wife's mother (31, 45), in the third house it was the main couple's husband's father (33), the fourth case was the second couple's husband's father (27) and finally the main couple's husband's mother (45). The low incidence of this arrangement is due to the fact that most of the main couples or bosses were in their 40s or more and did not have their parents any longer. Most tables show that unmarried children lived in their parents' houses all the time, as did married children very often.

### *Appendix Three*

There were two houses for single men (17 and 43). The first one, located in the Bunuba section, was occupied by old and young single men alike who lived there on a permanent basis; the other house had only one occupant, but old single or separated Walmajarri male used to gather in the house every day. In Junjuwa there was no specific place for widows or women after they gave birth, but two houses served that purpose (14 and 69).

There were 21 houses in which relatives of the main or second couple lived. In three houses only, both the wife and husband had relatives staying with them (6, 18, 33). Occupants of 7 houses were related to the husband of the main or second couple (8, 10, 27, 42, 46, 53, 72). Thus, there was a higher incidence of women relatives. This arrangement occurred in 11 houses (12, 14, 25, 26, 29, 31, 32, 41, 47, 54, 69). Three comments can be made on the basis of other data which do not appear in these tables. First, in the case of relatives of both the husbands and the wives, there were likely to be visitors amongst them. Second, relatives of either the husbands or the wives in houses located in the river people's section were mostly permanent residents who moved between their relatives' houses. Finally, relatives of people in the desert people section were short time residents or visitors.

## **Concluding remarks**

In contemporary Aboriginal settlements household composition data cannot be interpreted out of their context. For example, in Junjuwa most of the houses seemed to be occupied by nuclear families but house clusters, internal movements of population and visits by different relatives cannot appear in simple census data. Household composition presented in the tables I have just commented on is only really informative if linked with the dynamics of the community, internal grouping of households and kinship links. Further, taboos associated with the death of a house occupant disrupt patterns of residence and modify house clusters composition. For example, the boss of house 31 died in February 1987 a few weeks before I had left Junjuwa. The house remained vacant for about a year<sup>2</sup>, then people who formerly lived in house 7 moved in and the deceased family moved into their vacated house. But close relative of the deceased who previously lived in house 27, moved to house 11 because they did not want to remain close to the deceased's house. Consequently, three house clusters were modified as follows: cluster one: 7, 8, 10 and 30 became 8, 10, 30 and 31; cluster two: 13, 14, 27 and 31 became 7, 11, 13 and 14; and finally the last cluster which previously grouped houses 4, 11 and 12 became 4, 11 and 27. This shifting of residence due to such taboos was limited to within the river/desert distinction, so the maintenance of these taboos sometimes forced people out of Junjuwa.

Census data

Mother\Father	W	D	G	P	K	V	Y	A	X
W	85	4	2	2	1	8	1	2	24
G	6								
P	2								
V	3								
X	4								22

TABLE 4a

Total W

-----  
166

Linguistic identity of  
parents of Walmajarri people

Mother\Father	B	D	G	H	N	W	X	A
B	49	3	13	10	1	15	8	5
D	2							
G	13							
H	8							
M	1							
N	3							
V	1							
W	12							
X	2						4	

TABLE 4b

Total B

-----  
150

Linguistic identity of  
parents of Bunuba people

Mother\Father	V	D	G	W	A	X
V	21	1	2	8	2	6
B	2					
P	1					
W	16					
X						7

Total V

66

TABLE 4c

Linguistic identity of  
parents of Wangkajunga people

Mother\Father	G	D	H	A	X
G	7	2	3	1	2
B	2				
D	2				
M	1				
W	6				
X	2			1	2

Total G

31

TABLE 4d

Linguistic identity of  
parents of Gooniyandi people

Mother\Father	D	G	H	P	X
D		2	5	1	3
G	3				
X					3

Total D

17

**TABLE 4e**

**Linguistic identity of  
parents of Jaru people**

Mother\Father	H	B	D	G	X
H	4	2	1	2	
D	1				
G	1				
X	2				3

Total H

16

**TABLE 4f**

**Linguistic identity of  
parents of Kija people**



## **Information relating to Tables 4**

Each of the 6 tables (4a to 4f), show data on the transmission of linguistic affiliation within the six larger language groups that were represented in Junjuwa. Those of the languages groups which had 10 members or less are not included in these tables because most of these people grouped themselves within larger linguistic units although their linguistic distinctiveness was admitted. The purpose of these tables is to identify the main trends of linguistic affiliation amongst Junjuwa residents from one language to another.

Each table provides data on parents' linguistic origin for all people affiliated to each language with more than 10 members in Junjuwa. The total number of members of each language appear at the bottom of each table. Languages are symbolised as follows: W for Walmajarri (table 4a), B for Bunuba (table 4b), V for Wangkajunga (table 4c), G for Gooniyandi (table 4d), D for Jaru (table 4e) and H for Kija (table 3f). The same symbols are used for the parents' language, but others need to be added: P for Nyikina, K for Kokatja, and Y for Warlpiri. Other symbols used are A, M and X. A was used for an Aboriginal person of mixed descent associated with a language spoken outside the Kimberley area. M indicates that a person was said to be of 'mixed' linguistic affiliation. Finally X means that linguistic information about one person was ignored, incomplete or conflicting. This was particularly the case amongst older Junjuwa residents who originally lived in the desert and knew little about their parents.

The fathers' linguistic groups are listed horizontally and the mothers' vertically. Each table is to be read as follows: in table 4a, out of 166 Walmajarri there were 85 whose parents were both Walmajarri. In the same table there were Six Walmajarri whose fathers were Walmajarri and mothers were Gooniyandi. In order to identify quickly the percentage of people of 'full' linguistic descent (same language group for both parents) I put the data at the top left corner of each table.

In commenting on the tables I will concentrate on the general trends in linguistic affiliation within each language, as well as evaluating the incidence of paternal or maternal affiliation. I will compare linguistic affiliation with cultural categories as defined by Junjuwa residents to see if they match. I will discuss the atypical cases by using personal data relating to the individuals concerned.

Table 4a: The parents of more than 50% of Walmajarri were of the same language. A large number of people ignored or had conflicting data on their parents' language. This was mainly amongst older people who often stated that they assumed that their parents were Walmajarri but could not guarantee it.

*Census data*

The very high percentage of mothers being Walmajarri (129 out 166) suggests that within that language group the maternal transmission of linguistic affiliation may have been predominant. The horizontal rectangular shape of the table indicates that Walmajarri people's fathers originated from more languages than their mothers (9 languages of origin for the fathers as opposed to 5 for the mothers). It has to be noted that none of the 166 Walmajarri had one of their parents being a Bunuba. This indicates that all children to couples of mixed linguistic origin (Bunuba & Walmajarri) were identified as Bunuba. There is an equal number of Walmajarri one of whose parents were affiliated to languages culturally classified as river people: mother W and father D (4), mother W and father D (2), mother W and father P (2); father W and mother G (6), father W and mother P (2). The high incidence of a Walmajarri linguistic affiliation when one of the parents was a Gooniyandi occurred mainly on Gogo Station. It can be said from interviews and Walmajarri individuals personal data that marriages into languages other than those associated with desert people is linked with Walmajarri settlement in the Fitzroy Valley area.

Table 4b: There were only one third of 150 registered Bunuba whose parents were both members of the same language. This indicates two tendencies: first, that matrimonial strategies covered a larger ranges of language groups compared to Walmajarri; second, that two thirds of the Bunuba were not of full Bunuba descent from a linguistic point of view. The closeness between the numbers of mothers (45) and fathers (42) being Bunuba when the other parents was from a different linguistic origin does not suggest that the Bunuba favour linguistic affiliation with either parent but suggests that having one parent identified as a Bunuba was sufficient to be affiliated with that language amongst Junjuwa residents. There is a greater range of origin groups in the vertical line as compared to the horizontal one; this may suggest that mothers of the Bunuba people were from a greater range of different linguistic origins than their fathers. The most favoured languages in which Bunuba females had married into while their children retained their mother's linguistic identity were Walmajarri (15), Gooniyandi (13) and Kija (10), whereas amongst the Bunuba whose fathers were Bunuba 13 had a Gooniyandi speaker mother, 12 a Walmajarri and 8 a Kija. These three language groups seemed to be those into which most of Bunuba married providing they did not marry another Bunuba. Although Walmajarri represent the largest of the non-Bunuba father category and the second largest of non-Bunuba mothers for people affiliated as Bunuba, there were still nearly twice as many Bunuba whose parents were both members of language classified as river people as those whose parents were affiliated to languages of other various cultural categories: mother B and father either D,G,H,P, (27), mother B and father W (15); father B and mother either D,G,H,N (26), father and mother either W or V (13).

Table 4c: There were 66 Wangkajunga people in Junjuwa, of whom 21 had parents who were both of the same language. Like the Bunuba, two thirds

of the Wangkajunga were of mixed linguistic origin, although a large majority of them were with Walmajarri: mother V and father W (8), father V and mother W (16). That is to say there were more Wangkajunga people of mixed linguistic origin (W & V) than there were of full Wangkajunga descent. There were an equal number of Wangkajunga whose fathers' were affiliated to the same language and mothers' of another one than vice versa (19). But there were more fathers for whom linguistic origin was not established (6), whereas linguistic identity of the Wangkajunga people's mothers, whose fathers were Wangkajunga, was always identified. There were 7 people who did not know or could not establish precisely the linguistic identities of their parents, these concerned exclusively the older Wangkajunga people. The slightly horizontally rectangular shape to the table indicates that there was a greater variety of language groups amongst the Wangkajunga people's fathers than mothers. In fact apart from Walmajarri who appear both horizontally and vertically, fathers' and mothers' language groups other than Wangkajunga are different. For example, Wangkajunga whose fathers were of another language groups were likely to be from Jaru (1), Gooniyandi (2), or from a language outside the Kimberley (2); by contrast, non-Wangkajunga mothers were from Bunuba (2) and Nyikina (1). This may reflect Wangkajunga patterns of migration: they were dispersed to several cattle stations and co-resided with several groups of people of different languages. These mixed linguistic origins amongst Wangkajunga characterise people born on stations, whilst older people born in the bush and young ones whose parents met in the post-cattle station era were for most of the former either of full Wangkajunga descent and for the latter of mixed linguistic descent within desert languages (W and V). There are Wangkajunga whose mothers were Bunuba (2). It is the only example of Bunuba mothers whose children were given the linguistic identity of the other cultural division (desert people).

Table 4d: There were 33 Gooniyandi people of whom less than one fourth were of full Gooniyandi descent. People affiliated to that language born to Gooniyandi mothers were likely to have a father from another language within the river people: Jaru (2), Kija (3), outside the area (2), unknown (6), whereas Gooniyandi whose fathers were Gooniyandi and mothers from other linguistic origins were more diversified: Bunuba (2), Jaru (2), mixed (1), Walmajarri (6), unknown (2). The high incidence of Walmajarri female who had children to Gooniyandi men, who were affiliated to their fathers language confirms earlier comments (table 4a), that Walmajarri and Gooniyandi intermarried while on Gogo Station. These two figures can be compared: there were the same number of Walmajarri whose fathers were Walmajarri and mothers Gooniyandi as Gooniyandi whose mothers were Walmajarri and fathers Gooniyandi (table 3a and 3d). The two Gooniyandi persons whose mothers were Bunuba, and fathers Gooniyandi, came from an area (junction of the Fitzroy and Margaret) where people of both languages are said to have mixed, even before white people came to the Kimberley (See Chapter Two).

Table 4e: The most interesting element of this table is that none of the 17 Jaru people were of full linguistic descent. This is not surprising because Jaru who live in Junjuwa identified themselves as river people (See Chapter Five) on the basis that they had moved into the river people's country and had mixed with them. The mixed linguistic origin of the 17 Jaru confirms that statement. Once more the horizontally rectangular shape of the table indicates that more Jaru people's fathers were of various linguistic origins than their mothers. Eleven of the Jaru had Jaru-speaking mothers, amongst which 2 married Gooniyandi men, 5 married Kija, 1 married a Nyikina and 3 married men whose linguistic identities were unknown. Only 3 Jaru had Jaru fathers, all of them married to Gooniyandi women. There are 3 Jaru for whom both parents' linguistic identities are unknown. These figures seem to indicate that the Jaru linguistic affiliation is likely to be transmitted through the maternal line. Only those whose mothers and fathers were Jaru and had married into another minor language group affiliated to the river people were identified as Jaru.

Table 4f: 25% of the 16 registered Kija people were of full Kija descent, which is interesting considering it is a small group. For the remaining 9 Kija of mixed linguistic descent the non-Kija parents were all affiliated to languages associated with river people as was the case in the previous table. Amongst the 4 Kija who had a mother from another language, 2 were unknown, 1 was Gooniyandi and 1 was Jaru. The 5 Kija with Kija mothers had either Bunuba fathers (2), Jaru fathers (1) or Gooniyandi father. Kija was the only language with which children born to Bunuba speaking fathers remained identified. This seems to contradict information I collected based on Bunuba people statements according to which a child whose father is a Bunuba 'becomes' a Bunuba, as well as data in tables 4a, 4c, 4d, and 4e in which none of the members of languages other than Bunuba had Bunuba fathers. Personal data about these 2 Kija provide interesting information on a practice which suggests alternating the transmission of linguistic affiliation from one generation to another. For example these 2 male Kija had Kija mothers and Bunuba fathers, but both of their fathers were not of full Bunuba descent. Their father's mothers were Bunuba and their father's fathers Kija. Since their fathers were affiliated to the Bunuba language, when later they both married Kija women and their children were affiliated to the Kija language. These two male Kija were still single but they stated that they were likely to marry Bunuba and their children will be given Bunuba linguistic identity. This practice seems to have been used by small language group in order to perpetuate the transmission of language affiliation, even though the number of people of full linguistic descent were diminishing (cf previous table, with 17 Jaru, none of them being of full linguistic descent).

Appendix Three

MARRIED MEN  
LINGUISTIC  
IDENTITY

MARRIED WOMEN  
LINGUISTIC IDENTITY

	Wife	B	D	G	H	M	N	P	V	W	Total Number of Married Men per Languages
Husband											
B		8		2	1			1	1	4	17
D		2		1	1					3	7
G		3		3		1				1	8
H		2	1				1	1			5
M					1				1		2
N		1									1
P										1	1
V		2						1	3	5	11
W		4		1	1				3	17	26
Y										1	1
A										1	1
X		1			1				2		4
Total Number of Married Women per Languages		23	1	7	5	1	1	3	10	33	84 Total Number of Marriages

TABLE 5

Linguistic origins of  
married people

## **Information relating to Table 5**

Table 5 provides data on the linguistic identity of married Junjuwa residents. The purpose of these data is to present the matrimonial dynamic that existed within and between linguistic groups in Junjuwa. Marriages across linguistic groups, transmission of linguistic affiliation and residence were elements used by Junjuwa residents to maintain a distinct identity or to adopt another. All marriages that had involved Junjuwa residents were registered and include in the analysis. Thus people who had married several times were counted. Symbols used to indicate languages are the same as those used in table 4. The horizontal left column shows the married men's linguistic identities and the total number of married men per language appear in the right hand horizontal column. The linguistic identities of married women are recorded horizontally and the total number of married women per language is shown at the bottom of the table. At the intersection of the horizontal and the vertical columns are shown the number of marriages between people affiliated to the two languages. The total in the vertical and the horizontal columns makes it possible to compare each figure with the total of married men or women of each language group and to evaluate the frequency of marriages between members of these languages.

## **Comments on table 5**

The two largest linguistic groups in Junjuwa, Walmajarri and Bunuba, had more married women than men (Bunuba 23 to 17, Walmajarri 33 to 26) which was not the case for other languages. This means that more Bunuba and Walmajarri women married into other language groups than male of these languages. In each of these two languages endogamous marriages were the highest figures of the table (8 for the Bunuba and 17 for the Walmajarri). The vertical rectangular shape of the table shows that husbands were from a more diversified linguistic origins than the wives. The fact there was an excess of Bunuba and Walmajarri married women compared to the men may have caused this phenomenon. This is confirmed by figures that show Bunuba and Walmajarri women married into 7 other languages groups, which was not the case for the men (5 for the Bunuba and 4 for the Walmajarri). This particular situation put these two large group in a powerful position since both are spouse providers to men from other language groups. Bunuba and Walmajarri people did intermarry frequently as shown in the table since it is the second largest number of marriages for Bunuba men after endogamous marriages and the third for Walmajarri males. The movement of female members as spouse between these two types of grouping is balanced (4), and was not likely to change in the near future on the basis of the data I collected while at Fitzroy Crossing, mainly because the linguistic groups are not acting as units of

### *Appendix Three*

exchange. Walmajarri provided male Bunuba with wives in the early stage of their settlement in the Fitzroy Valley and later Bunuba men had 'paid them back' evenly. Amongst recent marriages there was a trend to limit marriages within language groups if possible, otherwise with linguistic groups of the same cultural category. This dynamic has already appeared in the table for speakers of language who were minority groups in Junjuwa. For example, Wangkajunga males married mostly with Walmajarri and Wangkajunga (8 marriages out of 11), and females of the same language did the same (6 marriages out of 8 identified, and 2 unknown). This is also true for Gooniyandi: male Gooniyandi married mostly Bunuba and Gooniyandi (6 marriages out of 7 identified and 1 mixed), female Gooniyandi marrying mostly men of their own language, Bunuba and Jaru (6 marriages out of 7). This confirms overall figures of three time more endogamic marriages within river and desert people than exogamic to that type of grouping (see chapter Six).

## **Endnotes - Appendix Three**

1 If for example a woman wanted to borrow her son-in-law's car, she would ask her daughter to ask him for the car keys. Then she would put a blanket on the driver's seat so her son-in-law would not sit where she had sat next time he drove his car. Similar arrangements were made with cooking utensils, plates and cups, for example.

2 The deceased's family will not move back into the house but once the mourning taboo after the inside house has been re-painted and the end of the wet season that followed the death has been reached, a new occupant will move in.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

---

Akerman, K.

1979a

"Material Culture and Trade in the Kimberleys Today" in R.M. and C.H. Berndt (eds), **Aborigines of the West**, pp. 243-251. Nedlands: University of Western Australia Press.

Akerman, K.

1979b

"The Renaissance of Aboriginal Law in the Kimberleys" in R.M. and C.H. Berndt (eds), **Aborigines of the West**, pp. 234-242. Nedlands: University of Western Australia Press.

Anderson, C.

1989

"Centralisation and Group Inequalities in North Queensland" in J.C. Altman (ed.), **Emergent Inequalities in Aboriginal Australia**, pp. 67-83, Oceania Monograph 38. Sydney: University of Sydney.

Arthur, W.

1986

**Aboriginal Employment in the Fitzroy Valley, Western Australia, 1985/1986**, 110 p., Unpublished Report. Derby: Kimberley Land Council.

Altman J. and Sanders W.

1991

**The CDEP Scheme: Administrative and Policy Issues**, Centre for Aboriginal Economic Policy Research, Discussion Paper 5. Canberra: Anutech.

Bell, D.

1980

"Desert Politics: Choices in the Marriage Market" in M. Etienne & E. Leacock (eds), **Women and Colonization**, pp. 239-269. New York: Praeger.

Berndt, R.

1977

"Aboriginal Identity: Reality or Mirage?" in R.M. Berndt (ed.), **Aborigines and Change: Australia in the '70s**, pp 1-12, Social Anthropology Series 11. Canberra: Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies.



*Bibliography*

- Berndt, R. and Berndt, C.  
1987           **End of an Era. Aboriginal Labour in the Northern Territory.** Canberra: Australian Aboriginal Press.
- Biskup, P.  
1973           **Not Slaves Not Citizens: The Aboriginal Problem in Western Australia, 1898-1954.** St Lucia: University of Queensland Press.
- Bolton, G.  
1953           **Alexander Forrest, University Studies in History and Economics, II(1):21-77.**
- Bolton, G.  
1954           **The Kimberley Pastoral Industry, University Studies in History and Economics, II(2):7-53.**
- Bolton, G.  
1958           **Alexander Forrest. His Life and Times.** Carlton: Melbourne University Press.
- Bolton, G.  
1981           **"Black and Whites after 1897" in C.T. Stannage (ed.), A New History of Western Australia, pp. 124-178.** Nedlands: University of Western Australia Press.
- Buchanan, G.  
1933           **Packhorse and Waterhole.** Sydney, Angus and Robertson.
- Capell, A. and Elkin, A.  
1937           **The Languages of the Kimberley Division, Oceania, 8(2):216-246.**
- Chase, A.  
1980           **Which Way Now? Tradition Continuity and Change in a North Queensland Aboriginal Community, Ph. D. Thesis.** Brisbane: University of Queensland.
- Collman, J.  
1979           **Women, Children, and the Significance of the Domestic Group to Urban Aborigines in Central Australia, Ethnology, 18(4):379-397.**

**Department for Community Welfare**

1976 **Aboriginal Communities and the Department for Community Welfare in the Fitzroy Valley**, Unpublished report 26 p., Fitzroy Crossing: Department for Community Welfare.

**Department for Community Services**

1985 **Index of the Fitzroy Crossing Aboriginal Population**, Department for Community Services Files. Fitzroy Crossing: Department for Community Services.

**Department of Native Welfare**

1948-1974 **Western Australia Department of Native Welfare Files and Reports on Cattle Stations**, Unpublished Reports on Cattle Stations: Brooking Springs, Calwynyardah, Cherrabun, Christmas Creek, Gogo or Margaret Downs, Ellendale, Fairfield, Jubilee Downs, Kalyeeda, Laurel Downs, Leopold Downs, Noonkanbah. Fitzroy Crossing: Department of Native Welfare.

**Duncan, L.**

1975-6 **Aboriginal Protest: One Movement or Many?**, *Anthropological Forum*, 4(1):56-69.

**Durack, M.**

1959 **Kings in Grass Castles**. London: Constable.

**Elkin, A.**

1932 **Social Organization in the Kimberley Division, North-Western Australia**, *Oceania*, 2(3):296-333.

**Fred, M.**

1985 **Training as Cultural Broker. Practicing Theory as Anthropology**, *Ethnos*, 51(3-4):246-258.

**Green, N.**

1981 **"Aborigines and White Settlers in the Nineteenth Century"** in C.T. Stannage (ed.), **A New History of Western Australia**, pp. 72-123. Nedlands: University of Western Australia Press.

**Hawke, S.**

1979 **Blacks Stand up**, *Legal Service Bulletin*, 4(6):229-233.

*Bibliography*

- Hawke, S. and Gallagher, M.  
1989               **Noonkanbah. Whose Land, Whose Law?**, Fremantle:  
Fremantle Arts Centre Press.
- Heatley, A.  
1982               "Regional Administration and Planning Structures in the  
Kimberley, in P. Loveday (ed.), **Service Delivery to Remote  
Communities**, pp. 78-86. Darwin: North Australia Research Unit.
- Hudson, J. and Richards, E.  
1984               **The Walmatjari, and Introduction to their Language and  
Culture**, Work papers of the SIL-AAB Serie B Vol. 1. Darwin:  
Summer Institute of Linguistics Australian Aboriginal Branch.
- Hudson, J. and Yu, S. (eds)  
1987               **Kimberley Aboriginal Communities**, Compiled by J.  
Hudson and S. Yu as a resource for the Social Studies Unit,  
Kimberley Past and Present, Unpublished 50 p. Broome: Mulungu  
Catholic College.
- Junjuwa Community Association Inc.  
1975-1988 **Minutes of Council Meetings**, unpublished community files.  
Fitzroy Crossing: Junjuwa Community Office.
- Kaberry, P.  
1936               **Spirit-Children and Spirit-Centres of the North Kimberley  
Division**, *Oceania*, 6(4):392:400.
- Kaberry, P.  
1937               **Subsections in the East and South Kimberley Tribes of  
North West Australia**, *Oceania*, 7(2):436-458.
- Kaberry, P.  
1939               **Aboriginal Woman: Sacred and Profane**. London:  
Routledge.
- Keen, I.  
1988               "25 Years of Aboriginal Kinship Studies" in R.M. Berndt  
and R. Tonkinson (eds), **Social Anthropology and Australian  
Aboriginal Studies**, pp. 79-123. Canberra: Aboriginal Studies Press

*Bibliography*

- Kolig, E.  
1974                    **Tradition and Emancipation: An Australian Aboriginal Version of 'Nativism', Supplement to Newsletter, Aboriginal Affair Planning Authority Western Australia, I(6):1-42.**
- Kolig, E.  
1975                    **A Report of the Aboriginal Population of Fitzroy Crossing with Special Reference to its Political Structures, Aspirations and Background, Unpublished Report. Perth: State Housing Commission.**
- Kolig, E.  
1977                    **"From Tribesman to Citizen? Change and Continuity in Social Identities among South Kimberleys Aborigines" in R.M. Berndt (ed.), *Aborigines and Change: Australia in the '70s*, Social Anthropology Series 11. Canberra: Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies.**
- Kolig, E.  
1981                    **The Silent Revolution: The Effects of Modernization on Australian Aboriginal Religion. Philadelphia: Institute for the Study of Human Issues.**
- Kolig, E.  
1987                    **The Noonkanbah Story: Profile of an Aboriginal Community in Western Australia. Dunedin: University of Otago Press.**
- Kolig, E.  
1990                    **"Government Policies and Religious Strategies: Fighting with Myth at Noonkanbah" in M. Howard and R. Tonkinson (eds), *Going it Alone? Essays in Honour of R.M. and C.H. Berndt*, pp. 235-252, Canberra: Aboriginal Studies Press.**
- Lamond, W.  
1986                    **Tale of the Overland. Queensland to Kimberley in 1885. Carlisle: Hesperian Press.**
- Laurie, A. and McGrath, A.  
1985                    **"I Once was a Drover Myself" in I. White, D. Barwick and B. Meehan (eds), *Fighters and Singers: the Lives of Some Aboriginal Women*, pp.76-89. Sydney:Allen and Unwin.**

*Bibliography*

- Love, J.  
1936                    **Stone age Bushemen of to-day.** London: Black.
- Marks, S.  
1960                    **Mission Policy in Western Australia, 1846-1959, University Studies in Western Australian History, 3(4)60:106.**
- Marshall, P., ed.  
1988                    **Raparapa Kularr Martuwarra. All Right now we Go'Side the River, along that Sundown Way.** Broome: Magaboola Books.
- Mathews, R.  
1900                    **Divisions of Some West Australia Tribes, American Anthropologist (2):185-187.**
- Mathews, R.  
1901,                    **Some Aboriginal tribes of Western Australia, Journal and Proceedings of the Royal Society of New South Wales, 35:217-222.**
- Merlan, F.  
1978                    **'Making people quiet' in the Pastoral North: Reminiscences of Elsey Station, Aboriginal History, 2(1):70-106.**
- Merlan, F.  
1981                    **Land, Language and Social Identity in Aboriginal Australia, Mankind, 13(2):133-148.**
- Myers, F.  
1986                    **Pintupi Country, Pintupi Self.** Washington & Canberra: Smithsonian Institute Press & Aboriginal Studies Press.
- McConvell, P.  
1985                    **The Origin of Sub-Sections in Northern Australia, Oceania, 56(1):1-33.**
- McGrath, A.  
1987                    **'Born in the Cattle'. Aborigines in Cattle Country.** Sydney: Allen and Unwin.

McLaren, N.

1975

**A Plan for the Development of the Aboriginal Community in Fitzroy Crossing**, Unpublished Report for the Western Australian Department for Community Welfare, 23 p., Fitzroy Crossing: Department for Community Welfare.

McMahon, A.

1984

**An Aboriginal Village: Junjuwa Community Inc, Fitzroy Crossing, W.A.**, unpublished Report for the Western Australia Department for Community Welfare, 31 p., Fitzroy Crossing: Department for Community Welfare.

Northern Area Co-ordinating Committee (NACOC)

1981

**Junjuwa Community Review**, Unpublished Report for the Western Australia Department of Aboriginal Affairs, 6 p., Fitzroy Crossing: Department for Community Welfare.

Pedersen, H.

1984

"Pigeon': an Australian Aboriginal Rebel" in R. Reece and T. Stannage (eds), **European-Aboriginal Relations in Western Australian History**. Studies in Western Australian History vol. 8, pp. 7-15. Nedlands: University of Western Australian Press.

Read, P. and Japaljarri, E.

1978

**The Price of Tobacco: The Journey of the Warlmarla to Wave Hill, 1928**. *Aboriginal History*, 2(2):140-148.

Ross, H.

1987

**Just for Living. Aboriginal Perception of Housing in Northwest Australia**. Canberra: Aboriginal Studies Press.

Rowley, C.

1970

**The Remote Aborigines**. Canberra: Australian National University Press.

Rowse, T.

1987

'were you ever savages?' Aboriginal Insiders and Pastoralists' Patronage, *Oceania*, 58(1):81-99.

- Sandefur, J. and Sandefur J.  
1982           **An Introduction to Conversational Kriol, Work Papers of SIL - AAB, Series B Vol. 5. Darwin: Summer Institute of Linguistics Australian Aboriginal Branch.**
- Sansom, B.  
1978           **"Sex, Age and Social Control in Mobs of the Darwin Hinterland" in J.S. La Fontaine (ed.), Sex and Age as Principles of Social Differentiation, ASA Monograph 17, pp. 89-108. London: Academic Press.**
- Sansom, B.  
1981           **"Processural Modelling and Aggregate Grouping in Northern Australia" in L. Holy and M. Stuchlik (eds), The Structure of Folk Models, ASA Monograph 20, pp. 257-280. London: Academic Press.**
- Sansom, B.  
1982           **The Aboriginal Commonality" in R.M. Berndt (ed.), Aboriginal Sites, Rights and Resource Development, pp. 117-138. Nedlands: University of Western Australia Press.**
- Schacklotch, L.  
1950           **The Call of the Kimberley, London: Macmillan.**
- Shaw, B. and Toby, J.  
1980           **"We Still Got the Idea": Opportunity not Identity Change, in the East Kimberley, Paper presented at the Australian Anthropological Society Annual Meeting, 26-29 August. Brisbane: Unpublished.**
- Sullivan, J.  
1983           **Bangaiyerri: The Story of Jack Sullivan as told to Bruce Shaw, Canberra: Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies.**
- Swain, T and Rose, D. (eds)  
1988           **Aboriginal Australians and Christian Missions, Special Studies in Religion, vol. 6. Bedford Park: Australian Association for the Study of Religions.**

*Bibliography*

- Tindale, N.  
1974                   **Aboriginal Tribes of Australia**, Canberra: Australian National University Press.
- Tonkinson, R.  
1974                   **The Jigalong Mob: Aboriginal Victors of the Desert Crusade**, Menlo Park: Cummings.
- Tonkinson, R.  
1978                   "Aboriginal Community Autonomy: Myth and Reality" in M.C. Howard (ed.), **"Whitefella Business." Aborigines in Australian Politics**. pp. 93-103. Philadelphia: Institute for the Study of Human Issues.
- Tonkinson, R.  
1988                   **The Politicisation of Identity among Western Desert Aborigines**, Paper Presented at the 5th International Conference on Hunting and Gathering Societies, Session 1, August 29-September 2, Unpublished, 18 p., Darwin.
- Trigger, D.  
1987                   **Languages, Linguistic Groups and Status Relations at Doomadgee, an Aboriginal Settlement in North West Queensland, Australia**, *Oceania*, 57 (4):217-238.
- Yallop, C.  
1982                   **Australian Aboriginal Languages**, London: Deutsch.