Ernabella Rules football:

Australian Rules football at the Ernabella Mission,

1937-1974

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Cultural warning

Purkarari! Nyangangka picture munu wangka Anangu wiyaringkuntja tjuta ngaranyi.

Warning! Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara readers are warned that this thesis contains images and names of people who have passed away. Where possible, their use has been discussed with the relatives concerned and permission has been granted. Nonetheless, this thesis should be used with care by Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara.

Dedication

I dedicate this thesis to my family. To Sudhida and our children, Ned, Natasha and Jasmine. I hope all of this work is an investment in our lives and futures.

Abstract

The experience of sport for First Nations peoples on missions and government settlements in Australia, and on comparable missions in other settler colonial societies, has become a growing field of scholarly study. This thesis aims to build on insights from current sports historiography by examining the origins and significance of Australian Rules football to the people of the Aṉangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara (APY) Lands in the far northwest of South Australia. In particular, it investigates their historical engagement with the game at the Ernabella mission (now known as Pukatja) during the years of its operation from 1937 to 1974. It traces the spread of the game from Ernabella to other nearby communities in the 1960s and investigates the conception that football originated in the town of Alice Springs during the Second World War and gradually spread outward into the hinterland where most Aboriginal people lived. Based on ethnographic fieldwork conducted on the APY Lands, this thesis draws on Aṉangu oral histories, and a careful examination of local historical materials and photographs held in the Aṟa Irititja Archive to produce detailed descriptions and portrayals of Australian football at the Ernabella mission from the perspectives of those who lived, worked and played the game at the mission. It argues that a focus on the agency of Aṉangu at Ernabella is crucial to understanding how the game of Australian football took off and became embedded in local society and culture.

Acknowledgements

It has been a long road to complete my PhD and I extend my lasting thanks to everyone who helped me along the way. First and foremost, I wish to acknowledge Aṉangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara of the APY Lands, who since my first interactions in 2002, have shared their stories, knowledge and lives and supported my learning. Their remarkable stories have inspired me, and I am privileged to have been able to document the 'Ernabella football story'.

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Declaration

This thesis contains no material published elsewhere or extracted in whole or in part from a thesis by which I have qualified for or been awarded another degree or diploma. No other person's work has been used without due acknowledgement in the main text of the thesis. This thesis has not been submitted for the award of any degree or diploma in any other tertiary institution.

Signed: Adam Beck 30 April 2023

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List of Abbreviations

AEW Anangu Education Worker

AFL Australian Football League

AFLNT Australian Football League Northern Territory

AGTC Australian General Transport Corps

AI Ara Irititja

AIATSIS Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies

AIF Australian Imperial Force

ANRC Australian National Research Council

APBM Australian Presbyterian Board of Missions

APY Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara

AnTEP Anangu Tertiary Education Program

BAR Board for Anthropological Research

CAFL Centralian Australian Football League

DAA Department of Aboriginal Affairs

DOMF Darwin Overland Maintenance Force

NAB Native Affairs Branch

NT Northern Territory

PBM Presbyterian Board of Missions

SA South Australia

SANFL South Australian National Football League

UAM United Aborigines Mission

VFL Victorian Football League

WA Western Australia

Introduction

This thesis has emerged from my ten-year learning journey in remote Indigenous Australia. In 2004, I began my teaching career in the community of Pukatja on the Aṉangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara (APY) Lands in the northwest corner of South Australia (**Figure 0.1**). Over the intervening years, I lived and worked on the Lands as an educator and researcher. I taught Aṉangu children and youth and supported Aṉangu teachers and Aṉangu Education Workers (AEWs) to deliver Pitjantjatjara language and Aṉangu domain through the community based Aṉangu Tertiary Education Program (AṉTEP). I came to this research interested in the strong ways in which many young Aṉangu men have extended their learning and social practices through participation in a very important, but often unacknowledged, youth-focused community-based space – the local football club. However, what began as a thesis about young men's outside of school learning changed direction during my early fieldwork when I began to talk with older members of the community about their earliest memories of football. Their stories began at a time when the surrounding ranges were relatively unaffected by the spread of white settler contact and the mission at Ernabella was newly established, and as such, the breadth of their knowledge and experience of activities in the region was remarkable. Given their confident and storied ways, this thesis changed direction to explore the origins and development of APY Lands football. It does so by mainly focusing on the football that was played at the Presbyterian mission at Ernabella, now called Pukatja, during the years of its operation from 1937 to 1974.

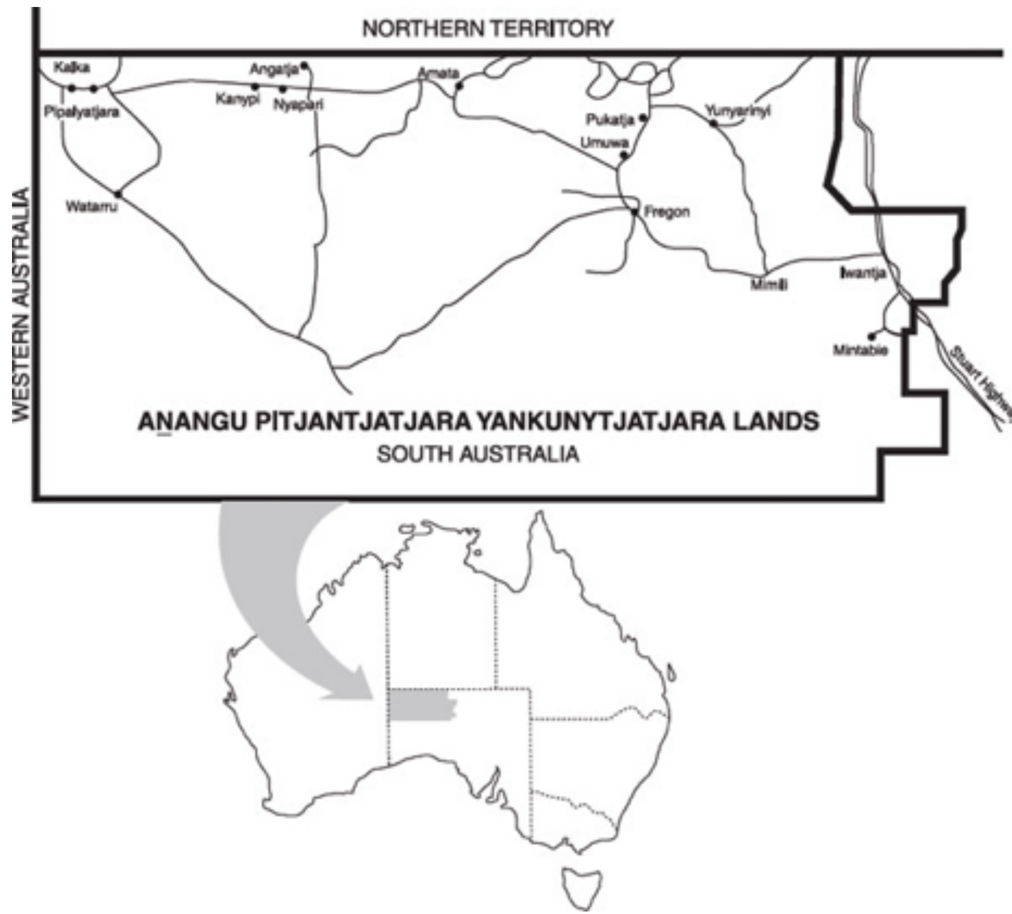


Figure 0. 1 Map showing the Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara (APY) Lands. Source: Lee & Lewis (2018: 5).

At the centre of this research are the historical remembrances of *tjilpi* senior lawman and highly respected Elder, Gordon Ingkatji (hereinafter referred to as Kunmanara Ingkatji as part of the cultural protocol for a person recently deceased). I often interviewed Kunmanara in the men's room of the Ernabella Arts centre (**Figure 0.2**), situated in the heart of the old mission compound. Kunmanara first arrived at the newly established mission at Ernabella in 1937. He was one of the first students at the mission school in 1940 and was introduced to missionary sports and games in the earliest days of the mission. By the 1950s, he was part of a group of young Anangu men who started to play a localised informal brand of Australian football at the

mission compound and in bush camps surrounding the mission. Over the last sixty years, Kunmanara has seen Australian football slowly grow and develop into the game that is played today in Pukatja and other communities throughout the APY Lands.

Figure 0. 2 Kunmanara Ingkatji in the men's room of the Ernabella Arts centre, 2015. Source: Photograph by author. Kunmanara Ingkatji began painting in 2007, often depicting Wanampi Tjukurpa (Water snake creation story) which traverses important sites around the Mann and Tomkinson Ranges where he spent much of his early life. In 2015 Kunmanara was a Finalist in the prestigious 32nd Telstra National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Art Award.

Kunmanara's stories were one of several oral history narratives that this thesis relied upon for data. A body of oral histories told by Anangu who were part of the first generation to be born and raised under the new moral authority of the mission are interwoven with his stories. Together, their historical remembrances of the game

illuminate an Anangu understanding of Australian football that is complex and nuanced. My conversations with Kunmanara and other Anangu community members seeded some of the questions that inform this thesis.

Research Questions

This thesis aims to inform understandings of Aboriginal football across the APY Lands region in Central Australia. Consequently, three primary research questions have guided this study:

1. When and how was Australian Rules football first introduced to Anangu Pitjantjatjara and Yankunytjatjara people at the Ernabella mission?

2. What role did missionaries at the Ernabella mission play in the introduction and development of sport, particularly Australian Rules football, and in the spread of the game to other settlements in the region?

3. In what ways have Anangu Pitjantjatjara and Yankunytjatjara people at the Ernabella mission developed and shaped the game of Australian Rules football to meet their social and cultural needs?

Chapter outline

Chapter one is based on the notion that any understanding of sport during the mission years at Ernabella needs to be underpinned by background understandings of the intellectual antecedents of the Ernabella mission. Based on recent research that has opened new approaches and understandings of the history of the Ernabella mission (Kerin, 2011; Foster, 2019), the chapter begins by exploring early colonial interests in the region and the campaign that led to the creation of the North-West Reserve. The

exchange between science and religion regarding the conception and management of the reserve is examined through to the late 1930s when the mission was established in 1937 on its eastern boundary.

Chapter two examines early sporting encounters between A<u>n</u>angu and the missionaries at Ernabella. Based mostly on archival sources, the chapter shows that from the earliest days of the mission sport was a prominent feature of mission life. The chapter highlights the active role of A<u>n</u>angu in the ways they participated in sport. In doing so, it lays a platform for understanding how the game of Australian football took off and became embedded in A<u>n</u>angu lives and culture in this region.

In Chapter three, the focus is on A<u>n</u>angu understandings of how the game of Australian football was introduced and developed at the mission during the 1950s. It describes the unique brand of Australian football that was developing in the domain of the A<u>n</u>angu camp and explores historical evidence of its early beginnings at the mission. Lastly, it shows how the game was taken on and transformed in ways that were suggestive of A<u>n</u>angu values and cultural processes.

To understand how the game of football found its way to the remote mission at Ernabella Chapter four searches for the origins of football played by Aboriginal people in other nearby towns, settlements and missions. It argues that troops of the Second Australian Imperial Force (AIF) stationed in the Northern Territory (NT) during the Second World War were a catalyst for the introduction and diffusion of Australian Rules football in Alice Springs and other neighbouring regions where high-quality competitive football had seldom been seen.

Chapter five explores the development of post-war football played in Alice Springs and its emergence in surrounding settlements. In doing so, it showcases the extraordinary Australian sporting story of how a group of young Aboriginal men built a football team from scratch, and despite the significant racial and social divide in post-war Alice Springs, experienced significant success on and off the field**.** The chapter concludes by demonstrating that the national game started to blossom in several government and mission settlements within a day's truck drive of Alice Springs where many Western Desert people lived by the early 1950s.

Chapter six returns to the story of football at Ernabella to examine the emergence and development of inter-community football from the 1960s to the 1970s. It explores how the mission used football to promote its missionary activities and highlights the role that inter-school sports and the motor vehicle played in the development of inter-community sports and carnivals throughout the region. The chapter emphasises the ways in which Aṉangu took on and transformed the game for their own sociocultural purposes.

A word on ethics

This thesis aimed to produce detailed descriptions and portrayals of the significance of Australian football during the mission era of Ernabella (Pukatja) from the perspectives of its members. Most important was the consideration of how to ensure that this construction of knowledge derived from research conducted in a culturally safe and respectful manner (Rigney, 2001). Central to the research was the aim to work with Aṉangu and create a research space where their voices are heard and privileged in the processes of sharing stories and making history (Rigney, 2001). Accordingly, this study celebrates the achievements of Aṉangu men, youth and their

community by looking at the role football played in the maintenance of individual and community cultural values and identity.

Another ethical consideration is my position as a non-Indigenous academic researching Indigenous history. To avoid the ongoing colonisation of Kunman̲ara's story, and the stories of other Aboriginal participants, this research gives prominence to Aboriginal people as the main subjects and actors in the wider historical context (McGrath & Russell, 2022). The privileging of Aboriginal voices, histories and knowledge and cultural practices aligns with decolonising methodologies and approaches (Smith, 2021) and the Indigenist methodological principle of ensuring that peoples who have been previously voiceless in academic literature and research are being heard (Rigney, 1999, 2006). Accordingly, the aims of this research subscribe to the principles of Indigenist methodologies by working through a collaborative approach between myself, as a non-Indigenous researcher, and the Indigenous participants.

This project obtained ethics approval from the Federation University Human Research Ethics Committee following extensive preliminary face-to-face community consultation on the APY Lands in June 2014. Further, a permit for research was granted from the An̲angu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara (APY) Lands Council. Consent and ethics procedures were based on National Health & Medical Research Council (NHMRC) *Values and Ethics: Guidelines for Ethical Conduct in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Research* endorsed 2003. In regard to the subsequent generation of project benefits, An̲angu made it clear that being able to view the results (via Ar̲a Irititja Archive) was the main aspiration.

A note on terminology

A couple of observations are needed about the use of linguistic and racial terms in this thesis. Throughout this thesis, I use the term ‘Anangu’ to refer to people who belong to the Pitjantjatjara and Yankunytjatjara, and other associated language groups that traditionally occupied the vast Western Desert region of the central and western interior of Australia (Goddard, 1996). The word Anangu means ‘person’ or ‘people’ and is commonly used by Western Desert language speakers to refer to themselves. There is some spelling and pronunciation variation across the region. For example, the same word is Yarnangu in Ngaanyatjarra. When Anangu identify themselves as belonging to a particular language group, for example Pitjantjatjara or Yankunytjatjara, I use the more specific term. While I privilege the term Anangu, I also use the more general term ‘Aboriginal’ to refer to peoples who do not identify as Anangu or who belong to an unidentified language group/s. This is a term commonly used and accepted on the APY Lands. The term ‘Indigenous’ is used to refer to Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. It should be noted that both terms have been recognised as diminishing the diversity of First Nations peoples and their experiences of colonialism across Australia (For discussion see Attwood, 1989).

Choosing an appropriate term for non-Indigenous Australians has been more problematic. When referring to missionaries, scientists, protectors, doggers and superintendents, I have tried where possible to name them according to their specific roles. However, the question of how to group them together was problematic. My choices have shifted throughout the writing of this thesis. In the end I have chosen to use the term ‘settler’, ‘settler-colonist’ or ‘white settler’ to refer specifically to settlers of European descent and ‘settler society’ to refer to settler societies established by Europeans on non-European soil. Sherene Razack describes this construct in the

introduction to her edited collection, *Race, Space and the Law*:

> A white settler society is one established by Europeans on non-European soil. Its origins lie in the dispossession and near extermination of Indigenous populations by the conquering Europeans. As it evolves, a white settler society continues to be structured by a racial hierarchy. In the national mythologies of such societies, it is believed that white people came first and that it is they who principally developed the land; Aboriginal peoples are presumed to be mostly dead or assimilated. European settlers thus *become* the original inhabitants and the group most entitled to the fruits of citizenship. A quintessential feature of white settler mythologies is, therefore, the disavowal of conquest, genocide, slavery, and the exploitation of the labour of peoples of colour (Razack, 2002:2).

When I am using Pitjantjatjara or Yankunytjatjara words, for the first time, a brief English translation will follow (see glossary for further information). Throughout this thesis, the name Ernabella is used to refer to the mission settlement (1937-74) and Pukatja to refer to the community as it now stands (onwards from 1974). Finally, working with historical material from the early to mid-twentieth century inevitably means dealing with nomenclature that would be considered disrespectful, divisive and inappropriate in the contemporary context. Use of terms such as ‘half-caste’ or ‘full-blood’ for example, are acknowledged to be offensive and are only used in quotations specifically relating to the period. The use of these terms is not endorsed by the author and only included, where unavoidable, because in white discourses of assimilation from that period a distinction was made between Aboriginal people, which had major implications for the way they were treated.

Introducing A<u>n</u>angu

This ethnographic study of Australian football at the Ernabella mission focuses on the Aboriginal people of A<u>n</u>angu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara (APY) Lands in the

northwest corner of South Australia. Predominantly, people connected to the Pukatja Community. These people refer to themselves as Anangu and their traditional country covers the desert uplands of the Central Ranges and the northern part of the Great Victoria Desert in the Northwest corner of South Australia and adjacent areas of Western Australia and Northern Territory. They are part of what anthropologist Ronald Berndt in 1959 termed the *Western Desert cultural bloc* and they are related to other Western Desert people by kinship, genealogy and language (Berndt, 1959). The Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS) map of Indigenous Australia (**Figure 0.3**) represents the language groups of South Australia. While it mainly focuses on the larger groupings of Aboriginal people it identifies the Pitjantjatjara and Yankunytjatjara and neighbouring language groups in WA and the NT.

Figure 0. 3 Detail from Aboriginal Australia Wall Map, 1996. Horton, D.R., Aboriginal Studies Press, (AIATSIS)

Many An̲angu living on Country in the Mann, Tomkinson and Musgrave Ranges remained unaffected by the spread of European white settlement, for much longer than the majority of Aboriginal people across the continent after 1788. A combination of geographical isolation, unsuccessful prospecting for mineral wealth and a dry climate that discouraged pastoralists, meant that contact between An̲angu and white settlers in this region was comparatively recent. By the early twentieth century, European white settlement was starting to be felt in the region. In 1921 the North-West Aboriginal Reserve was established to provide An̲angu with a supposedly

inviolate reserve upon which to continue their traditional customs and practices (Layton, 1986; Forster, 2019). At the eastern edge of the reserve, the Presbyterian Church took over a sheep lease at Ernabella in the Musgrave Ranges and established the Ernabella Mission in 1937 (Duguid, 1972; Edwards, 2012).

In 1970 the administration of the Ernabella Mission was transferred to the South Australian government, and soon after, in 1974 to the community itself. Since the granting of land rights by the South Australian government in 1981, the land has been held by the Pitjantjatjara people as inalienable freehold title under the *Pitjantjatjara Land Rights Act*. Today, this Country is known as the Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara (APY) Lands, and it makes up 102 500 sq. km or 10.4 per cent of the area of South Australia (APY, 2022). The APY Lands are considered to be "very remote" and are situated 1,000 km from the nearest capital city (Adelaide). In this region, encompassing the rocky Musgrave and Mann Ranges and groupings of single hills including the Tomkinson and Everard Ranges, and their immediate foreland of alluvial fans that merge into extensive flood plains (Robinson et al. 2003:1), there are a spread of APY communities including Indulkana, Mimili, Kaltjiti, Pukatja, Amata, Pipalyatjara, and Watarru. Many of these communities are linked with a set of satellite communities called homelands, the larger ones being Kalka, Kanpi, Nyapari and Yunyarinyi (For a map of APY communities and homelands see Figure 6.1). The APY administration centre of the Lands is located at Umuwa. It is estimated that APY communities and homelands have a population of 2,064 permanent residents, plus a large and mobile visitor population (ABS, 2021). Pukatja, also known as Ernabella, is the largest APY community (with a population of about 450) and is approximately 440 km by road from Alice Springs (APY, 2022).

Methodology

This thesis draws upon ethnographic fieldwork conducted on the APY Lands to study Anangu experience of Australian football during the mission years at Ernabella. Blomberg et al. (2003) outlined four dimensions to ethnography. First, it must take place in natural settings. Second, it must be holistic. Third, it must be descriptive. Fourth, it must strive to describe a particular culture in its own terms. The fourth dimension requires using an emic, or inside, perspective. It follows a tradition in cultural anthropology of understanding culture from the members' point of view (Malinowski, 1922) and is essential to this project's aim of understanding the significance of football to Anangu lives. This insider point of view coincides with broader calls among Indigenous scholars and historians for the inclusion of Indigenous voices and perspectives in research (For example, see Bamblett, 2013)

Three field trips were undertaken to the APY Lands, two in 2015 and one in 2017 for a total of forty days fieldwork. To accommodate this timeline, I employed a compressed ethnographic research design as described by LeCompte and Schensul (1999). This compression was possible for a number of reasons. First, the project was underpinned by my own experience of living and working in the Pukatja community since the early 2000s. Over this time, I came to know many Anangu and their families after gaining their trust and building rapport, so to some extent, I was already familiar with people, the field setting and cultural context and speak basic conversational Pitjantjatjara. Second, the project is focused solely on one aspect of culture, participation in Australian football, primarily, at one site, the community of Pukatja. In the field, the research relied on several qualitative methods. These included participant-observation in both public and private settings, semi-structured, key

participant and oral history interviews, field notes written *in situ* and away from the situation that contained the results of observations, and camera and audio recordings of interviews, football matches, training and pre and post-match situations.

Interview guides

In seeking to be guided by Anangu perspectives of football at Ernabella, semi-structured key participant and oral history interviews represented the primary methods of data gathering. Both interview guides were conducted as a means of clearly identifying relevant themes and beliefs of participants. Interviews were conducted with over thirty informants including past and present players and coaches, and community members mainly from the Pukatja community, but also from the communities of Amata, Fregon, Indulkana and Mimili, along with former missionary staff and government teachers who worked and lived in these communities. Most of the participants were identified through their association with current football teams in Pukatja - the Pukatja Magpies and the Wintjalangu Saints - while others, particularly older participants from the mission era, were either previously known by the interviewer or identified following the lead of key participants on the ground through snowball sampling strategy. It should be noted that due to the limitations of my small-scale research, I was unable to speak to all of the suggested people, so there is more to learn about the history of APY Lands football, particularly from the perspective of people from communities outside of Ernabella such as Amata, Fregon, Mimili, Indulkana and Pipalyatjara. Some key informants were interviewed multiple times throughout the data collection process. In most cases interviews were conducted in person on a one-on-one basis or, less often, over the phone or via email with interviewees being free to respond in either English or Pitjantjatjara. In-person interviews took place at a range of locations in the Pukatja community including the

Ernabella Arts centre, AṉTEP facility, and the Pukatja football oval before, during and after football matches and training. Typically, the participants were Aṉangu men in their sixties, seventies and eighties who took an interest in preserving memories of their past. Women and young people also shared their stories, but for the most part, older men took on the responsibility of narrating sport histories about football at Ernabella. Note, during the mission years, sport in Ernabella followed dominant gender norms. Football was constructed as the gender preserve for men while sporting opportunities for women existed in netball and rounders. All of the participants shared their oral histories in Pitjantjatjara and/or English. Interviews were recorded, transcribed and translated and checked for accuracy by Pitjantjatjara interpreter-translators.

Oral Histories

The primary sources of information for this thesis were Aṉangu oral histories. Oral history, as defined by Collins Dictionary, is about 'the memories of the living about events or social conditions which they experienced in their earlier lives taped and preserved as historical evidence' (Collins Dictionary, 2022). Coinciding with the emic purposes of ethnography, the method and stories of oral history were used to capture lived experiences as seen from an Aṉangu point of view.

In Australia, many historians and anthropologists have come to recognise the valuable insights that Indigenous oral histories offer regarding how Indigenous Australians and communities interpret events of the past (for example, see: Shaw, 1981; Attwood, 1987, 2005; Rose, 1991, 2003; Goodall, 1994; Bamblett, 2013). In such cases the aim of the research is not so much to reveal 'facts' about the past but rather Indigenous Australians' perceptions of what is true and meaningful about the past (Attwood,

2003: 9). Some scholars (Rose, 1991) have sought to reconcile the different non-Indigenous and Indigenous perspectives and representations so that both Western and Indigenous Australian traditions are respected – thus enabling individuals and their communities who have been absent, marginalised, misrepresented or 'hidden' within the archival record to be revealed (Portelli, 1997) and a more inclusive and nuanced Australian identity and history to be created (Attwood, 2003). In recent years, sport historians and scholars have been increasingly drawing on oral history accounts to uncover the memories and histories of people and communities (Adams and Cronin, 2015: 1132; Osmond, 2021). Particularly since most of the sporting activity that takes place in former missions, government settlements and Aboriginal communities may not be apparent in the archival record. While I draw from a number of Anangu oral histories throughout the thesis, I have mainly focused on the oral histories of three Anangu men whose memories span mission life from 1937 to 1973; Kunmanara Ingkatji, Trevor Yawirki Adamson and his older brother, Tony Yaluriti Adamson (hereinafter referred to as Kunmanara Adamson). Their narratives form the backbone of chapters three and six.

I applied the method of oral history to this study because I recognised the benefits that oral history could bring to my research. I am not an oral history expert. For the most part I learnt about the oral history process, namely the interview and subsequent analysis of Anangu memories of football as I went along. My method to each interview varied but essentially followed the ethical precepts of Indigenous research methodologies by privileging the voices of Anangu participants. This involved following the lead of the interviewees, who were all highly experienced and confident storytellers, and allowing each interviewee to tell me their story about past experiences with football in their own way, while refraining from any active

participation on my behalf. Kunmaṉara Ingkatji's oral history, which he called the 'Ernabella football story', was audio recorded over two sessions at the Ernabella Arts centre. Kunmaṉara Ingkatji was practiced in telling stories and had told the 'Ernabella football story' and certain aspects of his life story countless times throughout his life. In addition to our sessions at the art centre, we had many conversations at the Pukatja oval during the football season that were recorded in field notes. I also drew on the oral histories by Kunmaṉara Adamson and his younger brother Trevor Yawirki Adamson. Born in 1943 and 1954 respectively, they were both raised at the Ernabella mission and offered perspectives of the 'Ernabella football story' as members of the 'mission generation' who grew up and played football at the mission and surrounding settlements from the 1960s to the 1970s. Kunmaṉara Adamson preferred to tell long, uninterrupted narratives while Yawirki Adamson preferred to be asked targeted questions to facilitate a flowing conversation that was interspersed with relevant, topical stories. Both were interviewed over two sessions at AnTEP, a community-based tertiary education space in Pukatja. They were shown several photographs of football at Ernabella in the 1950s to the 1970s as a visual elicitation tool.

The interview process and the material yielded were to some extent influenced by my relationship to football at Pukatja (I had watched countless games of football at Ernabella over the years), the relationship of the interviewee to football and how these respective relationships played out between me and the interviewee within the interview situation (Adams and Cronin, 2015). In addition to this interview process, as previously touched upon in the methodology, to some extent I was a cultural insider who was familiar with Pitjantjatjara language, the interviewees and, to some extent, their families, communities and homelands on the APY Lands. Or at least it

was expected I did since I had worked and lived in Pukatja for ten years. This position helped me to navigate their memories and stories.

Focusing on the intercultural nature of relations at the Ernabella mission (Merlan, 1998), this thesis takes the approach of presenting, contextualising and juxtaposing A<u>n</u>angu oral history narratives with a larger body of historical sources such as interviews with former mission and government staff who were living and working together at Ernabella, particularly during the mission years (1937–74). Told by different situated peoples, these narratives come together to present views and interpretations of the history of football at Ernabella. Together, they represent an exchange of knowledge between A<u>n</u>angu, missionaries and other settler-colonists (Attwood, 2005: 190).

It should be noted that historians have perceived oral sources to be problematic (for example, Hobsbawm, 1997: 206). Most of the objections to the use of oral history are based on the supposed flaws in terms of the reliability and validity of oral accounts. Common arguments target forgetfulness, distortions, intrusion of subjective or social biases, and inconsistency of human memory leading to incorrect accounting of events and circumstances (Thomson, 2012: 101).

Finally, this thesis has applied a number of conventional methodological skills to selected oral history narratives and historical sources of evidence associated with the Ernabella mission. These include background research to situate oral history narratives and other sources of evidence in their historical and social context; triangulation with evidence from a range of primary and secondary sources; and checking for internal and external consistency (cf. Thomson, 2012).

As previously mentioned, to avoid the colonisation of Aṉangu narratives, this research centres Aṉangu as the main subjects and actors in the wider historical context (McGrath & Russell, 2022; Rigney, 1999). The privileging of Aṉangu voices, histories and knowledge and cultural practices aligns with decolonising methodologies and approaches (Smith, 2021), and the Indigenist methodological principle of ensuring that peoples who have been previously voiceless in academic literature and research are being heard (Rigney, 1999, 2006).

Historical sources of evidence

By the late nineteenth century, Aboriginal people from the Musgrave, Mann and Tomkinson Ranges in the northwest of SA were considered to be some of the last remaining groups of Aboriginal people in Australia unaffected by settler colonisation. As will be detailed in chapter one, such was the colonial fascination for so-called 'primitive' Indigenous Australians, and what was seen as one of Australia's last frontiers, that the early history of this region involved numerous scientific, religious and geological expeditions. As a result, vast amounts of historical materials and information about Indigenous people, culture and history were collected, classified and contained in the archives of institutions such as the SA Museum from this time. As will be discussed further, archives have become an increasing focus for analytical consideration in recent years. Scholars have stressed their instrumentality and entanglement with discourses of power as well as their key role in the productions of categories of race, gender and culture (Edwards, 2012).

When discussing African missionary sources, Gareth Griffiths stated that 'missionaries invested an inordinate amount of energy in producing written material' (2005: 153). The same can be said about the missionaries at Ernabella. Apart from the

production of materials with the primary aim of conversion, such as Pitjantjatjara translations of the Bible, primer readers of the Bible stories, hymnals and a small catechism, missionaries at Ernabella left behind a trove of written materials. Personal accounts of daily life at Ernabella in the form of missionary journals, private letters, autobiographies and publications arising from these such as the *Ernabella Newsletter* (1939-55), are particularly plentiful. Many of these accounts represent the lives and experiences of Anangu who were in contact with mission. While cultural and linguistic differences, the conventions of evangelical writing and the sometimes propagandistic nature of missionary sources, limit our understanding of Indigenous experiences, through these accounts, scholars, nonetheless, have highlighted their importance for exploring Indigenous agency and viewpoints (Griffiths, 2005; Mitchell, 2011: 8). Griffiths demonstrated that a careful reading of these sources, beyond the dominant mission narratives, allows the reader to discern cultural engagements that would otherwise remain contained within the conventions of the mission text and quite possibly lost to history (2005: 93).

Photography

Archives housing large collections of photographs documenting Indigenous people's lives and histories, have become the focus of sustained research over the last few decades. Scholars such as Elizabeth Edwards (2009) and Jane Lydon (2005a) have significantly increased our understanding of colonial photography. Their work has sought to examine scientific and popular motivations behind the photography of Indigenous peoples, connections between anthropology, colonialism and photography, and the significance of historical photographs as an important form of cultural heritage (Lydon, 2014).

This thesis engages with a vast body of photographs mainly relating to Anangu participation in sport at Ernabella from the early 1930s to the early 1970s. Early photography of the Ernabella mission and the North-West Reserve upon which it was situated, is dominated by ethnographic images of the material culture and lifestyles of Anangu and their early experiences of life at the mission. Seeking to record what was believed to be a disappearing way of life, photographers such as Cecil Hackett, Norman Tindale and Charles Mountford took photographs and collected materials as part of their anthropological expeditions into the 'frontier' of the North-West reserve in 1933 and 1940 respectively. As argued by Jane Lydon (2016/2005a), such images reflect a history of engagement between the white photographer and black subject. Scholars have shown how they have been used to position Indigenous peoples within colonial discourses as 'Other' and how they have been taken up to recontextualise and redress such discourses (Edwards 2001; Lydon 2005a).

By the mid-twentieth century, the portable Kodak roll film camera, already in wide use in Australia, was part of the missionaries' belongings. A number of missionaries at Ernabella including Superintendent Bruce Edenborough, Bill Elliott, Winifred Hilliard, Margaret Bain and others, were untrained amateurs who embraced the snapshot photograph in the 1950s and 1960s. Their images of life at the mission station reveal the complexity of cultural exchange between Anangu and missionaries. For example, photographs taken in the 1950s and 1960s, depict everyday mission life, and also show social change through participation in modern sports, the construction of the church, Anangu gatherings for worship, schooling, training and work. Often spontaneous and natural, the purpose of many of these snapshots was, most likely, to capture the character of the people and the natural environment, and the everyday happenings of mission life for family and friends. Some of these photographs featured

in *Ernabella Newsletter* and other mission friendly publications, and served the purpose of propaganda, while other images suggest a degree of involvement from Aṉangu participants. Such images show relaxed and confident individuals playing sport and games in the domain of the Aṉangu camp and suggest a connection between the missionary photographer and the photographed. An outlier to the photography of the missionaries are the fine photographs taken by Phyl and Noel Wallace, a husband and wife team, who visited the Ernabella mission, Musgrave Park station (Amata) and other places in the region for several months in 1966. Their collection of images, published in *Children of the Desert* (1968), focused on the changing lives of Aṉangu children as they negotiated life at school and in the community and through a range of social practices including the playing of traditional and modern sports and games.

As already mentioned, some of the photographic images of Aṉangu found their way into a variety of illustrated newspapers and books (for example see Hilliard, 1968; Mountford, 1948). Publications such as the *Ernabella Newsletter*, sponsored by Presbyterian Board of Missions (PBM), used photographs of events, people and locality for illustrative, promotional and propagandistic purposes. In so doing, the many photographs that were published in the *Ernabella Newsletter* from 1941 to 1957 created an "Ernabella" for readers. The achievements at Ernabella were represented by photographic images of 'the Pitjantjatjara tribesman' in contact with the early mission, children 'getting ready for school', 'senior Girls at craftwork', 'bible translation', the building of a hospital and new church, 'candidates for baptism', 'worship and Industry', and Aṉangu on 'highway to assimilation'. To a distant mainstream audience of supporters of the mission, the photography communicated a range of ideas about the 'progress' or movement of community life from the so-called 'bush folk' towards ideas of assimilation and inclusion in Australian society.

Missionary photographers also photographed individual Anangu and their families. Many of these photographs and other cultural materials are of great significance to Anangu and their cultural heritage. As discussed by Lydon (2016, 2019), such photographs represent important resources for Indigenous families and communities, history writing and telling and culture.

Historians of sport have increasingly accepted that photography offers another dimension to social research into sport and its history (Huggins, 2015). Drawing upon recent methodological and interpretative developments in work on the visual (Phillips, et al., 2007; Phillips, 2012; Lydon, 2016), I adopt a mix of approaches to critically analyse visual representations of colonial encounters between Anangu and missionaries around sport. In addition to using visual grammar to identify elements of an image (Kress and Van Leeuwen, 2006), tools relating to discourse analysis have been used to study a visual image in relation to its cultural and social context. (Edwards, 2001; 2021).

Ara Irititja Archive

As briefly suggested, there has been increasing scrutiny to the practices of collecting, classifying and containing historical materials. In light of national and international movements to open and decolonise colonial archives (Lydon, 2019), much of the aforementioned local historical materials are now also contained in the landmark APY Ara Irititja Archive, an Aboriginal-owned, interactive digital archival project. Meaning ‘stories from a long time ago’, the aim of Ara Irititja is ‘to deliver back home materials of cultural and historical significance to Anangu by way of interactive multimedia software’ (Ara Irititja, 2019). Anangu reclamation of local historical materials also represents a reclamation of control over the use of these materials.

Accordingly, this research, which critically engages with a range of historical materials from the Ara Irititja Archive, particularly photographs, accesses these materials according to Ara Irititja project protocols and procedures that stem from Anangu social and cultural needs. Since access to knowledge is strictly controlled by gender, seniority and initiation status, the maintenance of men's-only and women's-only archives and the use of photographs of the deceased (sorrow) are two ways in which Ara Irititja has worked to enact and replicate Indigenous protocols in digital form (Thorner, 2010). In the spirit of the Anangu cultural norms of reciprocity and exchange, it is hoped that this research will not only contribute to academic knowledge but also, in turn, contribute to the Ara Irititja Archive and the Anangu management of Anangu narratives, histories and knowledge.

Anthropology

While this thesis draws on the testimony from multiple sources in the anthropological literature on Western Desert peoples, it primarily relies upon the analytical paradigm of Fred Myers, an anthropologist who conducted fieldwork among the Pintupi of the Western Desert. His 1986 ethnography, *Pintupi Country, Pintupi Self*, attempts to examine, from the point of view of the Pintupi themselves, the central tensions between the key cultural values of individual autonomy and relatedness (1986:22). His insights into the areas of social organisation and kinship, life cycles, politics and religion, and additional key Aboriginal concepts such as *ngura* (country), 'shared identity with others' or relatedness and '*kanyininpa*' (looking after, holding) have been invaluable when applied to Anangu Pitjantjatjara and Yankunytjatjara at the Ernabella mission, particularly the cultural logic underlying their participation in Australian football and other sports.

Literature review

While Australian Rules football has been an important part of the lives of First Nations peoples for more than 170 years, the significance of the game for First Nations peoples and the contribution they have made to the game remains relatively uncharted (Gorman et al., 2015). Most of the literature to date has focused on their influence on the origins of Australian football, their participation and achievement in the game at an elite level, particularly, from the late twentieth century, and how players have responded to barriers such as racism and discrimination along their football journey (Poulter, 2003; de Moore, 2008; Hallinan and Judd, 2012; Hess et al., 2008; Gorman, 2005; Tatz, 1987, 1995; Bamblett, 2011). Despite a growing range of sources that address the relationship between sport and Indigenous Australian identity, culture and history across a range of colonial and post-colonial settings over the last twenty years (for example, McCoy, 2008; Bamblett, 2011), there remains much to be explored and understood about the contribution of Indigenous Australians to the game, particularly at a community and grass roots level (Gorman et al., 2015).

The contested origins of Australian Football

The origins and early growth of Australian football has become a fiercely contested aspect of Australian sporting history. In his influential history of Australian Rules football, *A Game of Our Own: The Origins of Australian Football*, Geoffrey Blainey supported the idea that the game of Australian football originated during the height of the 1850s Victorian gold rush, when pioneer rule makers and players borrowed from the various kinds of English football, especially the still evolving game of rugby, to invent their own football code, which became the game we now know as Australian Rules (Blainey, 2003: ix). Blainey’s view of the history of the national game, held by

the overwhelming majority of historians up until the 1990s, largely excluded Aboriginal people from the early history of the game. In more recent years, the dominant Anglo-Australian history of the game, along with the methods and paradigm that produced it, has been challenged by Aboriginal histories and voices (Hallinan and Judd, 2012). Scholarly research led several writers and historians to theorise that early Australian football may have had its origins in the cultural practice of *marngrook*, a game of football played by the Djabwurrung and other Aboriginal peoples throughout the area now called Victoria (Poulter, 1983, 2003; Judd, 2008). While the game is now widely referred to as the generic '*marngrook*' each Aboriginal language group most likely played its own variant with its own name (Hocking & Reidy, 2016).

Central to both theories was the remarkable and highly controversial figure of Thomas Wentworth Wills (1835-1880). Considered to be one of the inventors of the early game of Australian football (Blainey, 2003), the place of Wills in football history was seemingly secured following his inclusion in Leonie Sandercock and Ian Turner's comprehensive history of Australian football, *Up Where, Cazaly? The Great Australian Game*, published in 1981. Sandercock and Turner credited Wills as a founding father of the game and described his 1858 open letter to *Bell's Life in Victoria*, calling for the formation of a football competition during the winter months, as 'the founding document, the Declaration of Independence, of a new game' (1982: 18).

The link between the games played by Aboriginal people and the origin of Australian football is largely based on accounts of the childhood of Wills in the western districts of Victoria. Wills grew up on Djabwurrung Country near the Gariwerd region (the

Grampians), his family having established a pastoral station in what is now known as the Moyston region, near Ararat, after arriving in 1838 (Flanagan, 1998). It has been widely acknowledged that the young Tom Wills socialised with the Djabwurrung and other Aboriginal people who lived in the area. Poulter and other writers and historians such as journalist Martin Flanagan (1998) and historian Barry Judd have suggested that through experiences of cultural exchange associated with large gatherings or ceremonies between Djabwurrung and neighbouring Aboriginal peoples in the Grampians region, that Wills not only witnessed the football game of *marngrook* but was also influenced by these experiences when creating the game of Australian football (See, for example Flanagan, 1998; Poulter, 2003; Judd**,** 2008: 46).

The debate came to a head in 2008 with the release of the official AFL sanctioned history of Australian football, *The Australian Game of Football: Since 1858* (Slattery, 2008). Commemorating the 150th anniversary of the game, the publication was considered important in terms of how it dealt with the question of a link between Aboriginal football, Wills and the origins of the Australian football. Given the AFL had positioned itself as a national advocate of reconciliation there was an expectation that the official history would provide an opportunity for a reconsideration of the influence of Aboriginal people on the early game (Hallinan and Judd, 2012: 978), or at least represent the game's complicated and contested history in a balanced manner (Cazaly, 2008:84). However, the publication failed to acknowledge the possibility of Aboriginal influence on the early game of Australian football (Hallinan and Judd, 2012: 978).

Included in the publication was a contribution by Gillian Hibbins on the origins of Australian football. Widely considered to be an authority on sport in nineteenth

century colonial Melbourne (See for example, Hibbins et al., 1987; Hibbins, 2007), Hibbins's thesis regarding the English origins of Australian football positioned her as an opponent to the argument of Aboriginal influence on the origins of Australian football. Her chapter, 'Wills and the Aboriginal Game: A Seductive myth' responded to Poulter's claims that football had its origins in *marngrook* games by dismissing them as a 'seductive myth' and a 'falsifying history' to 'recompense for the errors of the past' (Hibbins, 2008: 45). Hibbins argued that there was no mention of *marngrook* in the extensive written history of the period to support the question of a link between *marngrook* and Tom Wills and the claim that elements of *marngrook* were incorporated into the game of Australian football. Hibbins pointed out that there was, however, considerable evidence to show that Wills was influenced by Rugby School football (Hibbins, 2008: 45), a claim that received ardent support from several historians (For example see De Moore, 2008; Collins, 2011; Hay, 2019).
Some scholars have observed that the understanding and use of evidence for the origins of the game is at the core of the debate (Cazaly, 2008; Hallinan and Judd, 2014). In her 2008 article aptly titled, 'Football's History Wars', Ciannon Cazaly argued that the historical methodology of Hibbins and other historians was limited since they relied on evidence of a connection between *marngrook* and Australian Rules football drawn exclusively from the colonial record and therefore it exclusively represented a colonial perspective of the history of football (Cazaly, 2008: 85; see also Hallinan and Judd, 2012: 980; Gorman et al., 2015: 1949).

In 2016, Jenny Hocking and Nell Reidy contributed to the debate by providing historical accounts of *marngrook* that situated the game at precisely the same place where Wills grew up (Hocking & Reidy, 2016). A personal recollection by Johnny Connolly, of the Mukjarrawaint people, an extended family group that were part of

the complex social network of Aboriginal communities of the Gariwerd region, described playing *marngrook* in the Grampians region as a child in the 1830s and 1840s. Found among the personal papers of the ethnographer A.W. Howitt in the State Library of Victoria, Connolly's eye-witness account offered significant written evidence that the game was played in the area where Wills lived before his family's arrival and after, and could, therefore, have influenced him (Hocking & Reidy, 2016; See also Judd, 2008:46).

In June 2019, the AFL adopted a new position on the contested origins of Australian Rules football by recognising *marngrook* as an 'undoubted influence' on Australian Rules football (AFL Press Release, 2019).

Participation at an elite level

Much of the literature on First Nations peoples in Australian football to date has concentrated on their participation from the late twentieth century to the present, mostly at an elite level where they have made a significant contribution (See, for example: Hess & Stewart, 1998; Hess et al., 2008). Many of these histories have concentrated on how First Nations peoples have had to overcome significant barriers such as racism and discrimination, both on and off the field, to excel at their sport. This theme was established in early historical writing about Aboriginal people in sport with Richard Broome's 1980 article, 'Professional Aboriginal boxers in Eastern Australia 1930–1979', which challenged the conception that boxing offered Aboriginal people an escape from 'basic oppression' of a racist society (1980: 69). Colin Tatz also addressed the issue of racism through the lens of sport. His landmark history, *Obstacle Race: Aborigines in Sport* (1987; 1995), traced racism across different sports back to the nineteenth century and throughout twentieth century

Australian history. His main argument, that sport is a mirror of the broader Aboriginal experience since the mid-nineteenth Century (1987; 1995: 5) represents a dominant theme in the field of writing about Indigenous peoples across a range of sports.

This focus on race relations continued into the 1990s and 2000s as researchers explored race relations across sports (Hallinan and Judd, 2012). It is most apparent in the field of Australian football. The racial abuse of St Kilda player Nicky Winmar and Gilbert McAdam by a hostile crowd at Victoria Park, Collingwood in 1993 and the photographic image of Winmar's demonstration of activism against racism became a powerful symbol of opposition to racial abuse (Klugman and Osmond, 2009). Gorman et al. (2015) argued that such was the social, cultural and political significance of Winmar's stance that it 'transcended the realm of sport' and 'tapped into a discussion around race, culture, Indigenous people, and national identity that needed to be had' (2015: 1954). Indeed, the stand against racism and discrimination by Winmar and other Indigenous players such as Michael Long (for example see, McNamara, 2000; Judd, 2008; Flanagan, 2015) had were instrumental in the development of the AFL's racial vilification code - the first of its kind in any Australian sport (Gardiner, 1999; Gorman et al., 2015). The theme of racism in sport continued to resonate with subsequent literature on Australian sporting histories (Tatz & Tatz, 2000: 7 & 2018).

However, as pointed out by Wiradjuri scholar Lawrence Bamblett (2011: 11; 2013), while these works made strong representations against racism, over time, scholarly works were limited in the way they represented Aboriginal people and their communities. Bamblett argued that many representations of First Nations peoples in sport foreground deficit and the politics of 'victimhood' (2013).

Aboriginal participation in local community football

While First Nations footballers' participation in the game at an elite league level has been the focus of considerable research, the extent and significance of First Nations people's participation in community and grass roots level football across the continent remains comparatively neglected (Gorman et al., 2015). In recent times, a small but growing body of literature has begun to examine Aboriginal football played on Country in remote desert communities (for example, McCoy, 2008, 2012; Mackinnon and Campbell, 2012; Judd and Butcher, 2015). One of the most insightful of these is Brian McCoy's (2008) study, *Holding men: Kanyirninpa and the Health of Aboriginal men*. Drawing from Indigenous voices and his long involvement with Aboriginal people living in the Western Desert region of Western Australia, McCoy focuses on key Kukatja concepts and values through contemporary circumstances/activities such as Australian Rules football to explain the loss and possible ways of regaining health and wellbeing. Of particular interest is how Australian football has been shaped by Kukatja cultural values and processes to meet the health and wellbeing needs of Aboriginal men.

Research by Bruce Hearn Mackinnon and Liam Campbell (2012) conducted in the Warlpiri community of Yuendumu located in the Tanami Desert of the NT traces the history of Australian football in Yuendumu from its introduction to the community in the 1950s, to its growth in popularity through inter-community football in the 1960s and 1970s (cf. Tatz, 1995), and finally, to Yuendumu's success in the Alice Springs town competition in the 2000s, which culminated with Liam Jurrah becoming the first Aboriginal man from a remote community in Central Australia to play AFL football (See also Mackinnon, 2011). In doing so they reveal the importance of football for

Warlpiri society and cultural life, and the development of men's masculine identity as 'modern-day Warlpiri warriors'. Also focusing on the importance of community football to individual and community well-being and culture in the Western Desert region is research by Barry Judd and Tim Butcher. Researching the relationship between Pintupi-Luritja community of Papunya and the organisation of competitive fixtures in the Central Australian Football League (CAFL), they argue that there is a need for dominant Australian Football organisations such as the AFL and the CAFL to develop strategies for an interface that is inclusive of Aboriginal understandings of football.

Outside of Central Australia, a historical account of Aboriginal people's participation in Australian football across rural missions and government reserves in Victoria between the late 1850s and the early twentieth century can be found in recent work by Roy Hay, *Aboriginal People and Australian Football in the Nineteenth Century: They Did Not Come from Nowhere* (2019). Drawn from archival records, the central tenet of Hay's book is that Aboriginal people picked up the game of Australian Rules Football, almost from its inception, and have ever since, played a significant role in the game's evolution (For other examinations of Indigenous Australian football teams see also Roy Hay and Athas Zafiris, 2017; Marshall and Klugman, 2019).

Sport and Aboriginal missions and settlements

While this thesis helps fill a gap in the history of First Nations peoples involvement in Australian rules football, it also addresses a much broader gap in the sport historiography on Aboriginal missions and government settlements nationally and on comparable missions in other settler colonial societies (for example, see Norman, 2006, Judd, 2010; Osmond and Phillips, 2018). Much academic work in this field is

reflected in the work of Lawrence Bamblett, a Wiradjuri man and community member of the former mission of Erambie. His book, *Our Stories Our Survival* (2013), centres on the continuity of Wiradjuri identity, culture, and storytelling through the lens of sport. As previously noted, Bamblett's significant contribution to sports history is his finding that the field has been dominated by a 'discourse of deficit' that has constrained representations of First Nations peoples. Accordingly, Bamblett advocates for scholarship that encourages more nuanced representations of First Nations people and their communities. Particularly, academic work that opens up the historical record by recognising the importance of Indigenous voice in understanding Indigenous sporting encounters.

Scholarly works by Indigenous and non-Indigenous scholars such as Heidi Norman (2006), and Murray Phillips and Gary Osmond (2018) exemplify this new approach. Norman's history of the New South Wales Aboriginal Rugby League Knockout shows how rugby has also been used by First nations peoples as a vehicle for a number of important values and meanings. Drawing on interviews from people who participated in the Knockout, Norman argued that this community-controlled and community-run event is an articulation of a particular kind of Aboriginal activism that affirms kinship and relationships to country, identity, and community (2006: 170). Other works such as Gary Osmond's case study of the long running Yarrabah sports day, held at Yarrabah in North Queensland since the Anglican Church founded the mission in 1892, Barry Judd's (2010) study of Aboriginal cricket at the Coranderrk Aboriginal Station in the nineteenth century Victoria, Bob Reece's account of cricket at the Benedictine Mission of New Norcia in Western Australia, and Murray Phillips and Gary Osmond's (2018) investigation of sport, gender and assimilation through the

Cherbourg Aboriginal settlement marching girls and marching teams in the 1950s and 1960s also represent notable examples of research on sport in mission historiography.

Contribution to literature

This thesis adds to growing academic research on First Nations people's use of sport while under the control of settler-colonial authorities (Broome, 1996; Bamblett, 2013; Norman, 2006; Osmond and Phillips, 2018). It does so by recognising the importance of Anangu voice and memory in understanding sporting encounters at the Ernabella mission during the years of its operation from 1937 to 1974. By emphasising the perspectives of past players, coaches and community members, this thesis pays homage to Indigenous research methodologies that mandate guidance by, and the inclusion of, Indigenous voices (cf. Osmond, 2021). As a result, this thesis adds to work that is opening up the historical record by offering more complex and nuanced representations of Indigenous Australians in sport (Bamblett, 2011, 2013).

There are significant gaps in the history of Australian Rules football regarding Indigenous people's participation in community level football across the continent, especially those football clubs that have been built and managed by Indigenous people with a cohort composed entirely or predominantly of Aboriginal players (Gorman et al. 2015). This is especially true for Indigenous Australians' participation in football at a community level in Central Australia.

Finally, in the spirit of the Anangu cultural norms of reciprocity and exchange, it is hoped that this research will not only contribute to academic knowledge but also, in turn, contribute to the Ara Irititja Archive and the Anangu management of Anangu narratives, histories and knowledge.

1 The Ernabella Mission

Introduction

Missions have played a defining role in shaping the colonial encounter between First Nations peoples and Europeans in many parts of Australia (Swain & Rose, 1988; Harris, 1994). From the earliest decades of the nineteenth century, settler colonists sought to confine First Nations peoples within colonial boundaries where they would be 'civilised'. Judy Birmingham's (1992) seminal work on the Wybalenna Station on Flinders Island in the Bass Strait (1833-47) revealed insights into nineteenth century methods of Christianising and civilising First Nations peoples. Established for surviving Aboriginal people from Tasmania, Wybalenna was similar to many mission settlements with government rations, a program of education, work and compulsory church attendance (Birmingham, 1992; Harris, 1994). Although the process of segregating or virtually incarcerating First Nations peoples within missions and government reserves and institutions varied across the country and time periods, it became a central feature of government policy and legislation. Grimshaw and Nelson's (2001) analysis of the 'civilising mission' in colonial Victoria, for example, demonstrated close ties between missionary goals and government policies that led to a situation where missions appeared to be run almost as prisons (2001: 297).

Sutton (2003) found a similar situation in Queensland, where severe discipline and punishment and the use of locks, barred windows and verandas, barbed wire fences, regimented spaces, and segregated buildings were an important part of mission life (2003: 79). In such places people's lives were regulated by governments and legislation that dispossessed them of their land, controlled their family lives and

forcibly removed their children, signalling the beginnings of the 'Stolen Generations' (Lydon, 2005b). Concepts such as total institutions (Goffman, 1962) have been applied to missions and reserves and Foucauldian ideas, such as governmentality (Foucault, 1977), have been used to analyse underlying power relations (For example, see Rowley, 1970; Sutton, 2003).

However, at the same time, research has shown that missions variously strove to ameliorate the worst effects of colonialism upon First Nations peoples. The multiple roles played by missions in colonial relations across Australia and the complexity of First Nations peoples' responses are addressed in the comprehensive study of the two hundred year encounter between First Nations peoples and missionaries published by John Harris in 1994. As Harris (1994) noted, nineteenth-century missionaries often defended First Nations people's rights despite forceful opposition from pastoralists and other settlers, who sometimes participated in violence and abuse and saw the exploitation of their unwaged labour as a perfectly acceptable practice (see also Swain & Rose, 1988). In such circumstances, missions and reserves served as a sanctuary from a hostile settler population (Cole, 1988).

Postcolonial analysis has shifted attention to the multiplicity of viewpoints relating to missionisation, with an emphasis on First Nations people's agency and perspectives. An early exploration into this field was the landmark collection of 33 ethnographic and historical studies, *Aboriginal Australians and Christian Missions*, edited by Tony Swain and Deborah Bird Rose (1988). In this context, the historiography of missions in Australia has flourished as historians and other scholars explore the multiple roles of missions as places of survival, community, cultural exchange and transformation, and the status they hold in First Nations people's memory and identity (for example,

Brock, 2005; Schwartz and Dussart, 2010; Grimshaw and May, 2010; and Trigger, 1986, 1992). Given the diversity of mission contexts and experiences within Australia, this chapter explores the intellectual antecedents of the Ernabella mission. It is based on the notion that any understanding of sport during the mission years at Ernabella needs to be underpinned by background understandings of the nature of the Ernabella mission.

A new type of Mission

Established in 1937 by the Presbyterian Church, the Ernabella Mission has been widely portrayed as no ordinary mission. It was distinguished from the other missions of its day by its policies of minimal interference and respect for tribal beliefs and ways of life (Hilliard, 1968; Broome, 2010: 206). Ernabella's policies included teaching children in Pitjantjatjara; encouraging families to maintain traditional hunting and gathering practices, and not separating children from their families by confining them in dormitories. This 'culturally sensitive approach' has led historians to view the nature of the mission encounter at Ernabella along comparatively liberal and progressive lines (Harris, 1994: 820, 883; Broome, 2010: 206-207). Richard Broome in his *Aboriginal Australians* (2010), for example, regarded Ernabella as a 'gem of Australian missionary endeavour' (2010: 206), while John Harris in his study of Christian missions, *One Blood: 200 Years of Aboriginal Encounter with Christianity* (1994) considered it 'outstanding' (Harris, 1994: 820, 883). A<u>n</u>angu generally have fond memories of the Ernabella mission. Representing the views of many A<u>n</u>angu who grew up at the mission, one senior A<u>n</u>angu woman stated: 'mission time wiru [good]' (Eickelkamp, 1996: 17). For examples of a range of A<u>n</u>angu perspectives of the mission era, see Ute Eickelkamp, *Don't Ask for Stories:*

The Women from Ernabella and their Art (Aboriginal Studies Press, 1999). Looking beyond the colonial history of Ernabella, for many Aṉangu the Ernabella mission was not only a place of transformation - it was also a home, and today, nearly fifty years after the mission was incorporated as a community in 1974, it remains a significant place of Aṉangu memory and identity.

Dr Charles Duguid, an Adelaide surgeon, Presbyterian elder and tireless campaigner for Aboriginal rights, has been widely considered by many historians and scholars to be the driving force behind the establishment of the mission (See, for example, Winifred Hilliard's, 1968 book, *The People in Between*). As shown by historian Rani Kerin (2011) in her monograph of Duguid, *Doctor Do-Good: Charles Duguid and Aboriginal Advancement, 1930s-1960s*, much of this literature has attributed the establishment of the mission to Duguid's 'visionary thinking' and the anthropological nature of the mission to his 'enlightened' approach. However, research by Kerin and more recent work by Robert Foster (2019) has opened new horizons to our approach and understanding of the history of the Ernabella mission. Kerin argued that a lack of context has severely limited a historical understanding of the Ernabella mission, while Foster (2019) suggested that the establishment of the mission is better understood in relation to exchanges between scientific and religious authorities regarding the conception and management of the North-West Reserve, that date back to the 1890s and the beginning of the twentieth century, decades before the mission was established.

Hence, this chapter will examine the early history of the Ernabella mission and the establishment and management of the North-West Reserve, upon which the mission was later established on its eastern boundary. Drawing on a range of archival and

published sources, it will interrogate a number of assumptions underpinning the dominant discourse of the establishment of the Ernabella mission (Hilliard, 1968; Duguid, 1972) and explore the impact scientific, religious and government authorities with interests in the region had on Anangu and their society. In doing so it shall significantly enhance our understandings of the nature of the colonial encounter between Anangu and the missionaries, the introduction and development of sport at the mission, and the role it played in the social and cultural lives of Anangu. The chapter begins by exploring anthropological and religious interest in Aboriginal people from the late nineteenth century. In its latter part it shifts to the role played by Duguid and other agents in the establishment of the mission.

Anthropological interest in Aboriginal people, c.1890s-1920s

In the period between the 1890s and the early 1920s, when the North-West Reserve was proclaimed, scientific curiosity in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander societies and cultures blossomed. Central to this interest was the developing discipline of Australian anthropology. A.P. Elkin, who wrote extensively about the history of Australian anthropology, described anthropology in this period as a phase that was moving away from the collection of ethnographic materials for museum collections, to one based on more sophisticated methods of investigation and field-orientated research among Indigenous Australian societies (Elkin, 1963, 1975-6; Sutton, 1986). Of unique and significant value to anthropology were the so-called 'tribal' Aboriginal people of the central and western interior of Australia. They were seen as some of the last Aboriginal societies on the continent who continued to live a relatively unchanged existence as they had for thousands of years. Drawing inspiration from the evolutionary paradigm that dominated anthropology at this time, particularly the work

of American anthropologist Lewis Henry Morgan (1877), which put forward the notion that human social evolution followed a 'line of human progress' from savagery to civilisation, many early anthropologists believed Aboriginal Australians were representative of an early stage of human evolution that had survived, much like the fauna and flora of the Australia, through isolation, from the rest of the world (For example see Fison and Howitt, 1880; Spencer & Gillen, 1927). The study of 'full-blood tribal' Aboriginal Australians, thereby, was thought to have afforded anthropologists 'an insight into certain beliefs held and customs practiced by our far-away ancestors' (Spencer, 1921: 89), which in turn, promoted a deeper understanding and appreciation of the progress made by Western civilisation and universal questions relating to the nature and origins of human society (Howitt, 1891; Fison, 1892; Spencer & Gillen, 1899, 1927).

Pre-eminent among early researchers to spend prolonged periods in the field with Aboriginal people was natural scientist Baldwin Spencer, Professor of Biology at the University of Melbourne, and member of the Horn expedition to Central Australia in 1894. His collaboration with Alice Springs Telegraph Station master Frank Gillen, an amateur ethnographer, led to the publication of the landmark anthropological study *The Native Tribes of Central Australia* (1899). Other specifically anthropological expeditions to Central and Northern Australia followed with the Cambridge Expedition to the Torres Strait led by Alfred Haddon in 1898, Spencer and Gillen's second year-long expedition to Central and Northern Australia in 1901, and most notably, the Oxford and Cambridge Anthropological Expedition to Western Australia headed by Radcliffe-Brown in 1910-11. As noted by Nicolas Peterson (1990), this spate of research stimulated significant interest in Europe, particularly among British anthropologists, and by the

early twentieth century, virtually every European theory tracing human evolution was drawing either entirely or extensively on Australian anthropology (1990:5).

However, the time available for scientific study was seen to be rapidly running out. As Russell McGregor (1997) has pointed out in his analysis of the 'doomed race theory', embedded in the beliefs of scientists, and, in particular, of anthropologists, was the 'expectation of Aboriginal extinction' (McGregor, 1997: 2). It was a theory that has been shown to dovetail neatly with social Darwinism and the notions of a 'struggle for existence' and the 'survival of the fittest' (McGregor, 1997). By the early twentieth century, the key question that consistently occupied anthropologists' minds was how to save, and record the knowledge, customs and beliefs, and characteristics of the last populations of a 'dying race' before it was too late (McGregor, 1997: 26). Most scientists recognised that the establishment of reserves were pivotal to the long-term survival of Aboriginal people (Holland, 2019: 62). It was with a certain sense of urgency to preserve and protect, for both scientific and humanitarian reasons, the 'surviving' populations of 'full-blood' Aboriginal people in the north of the state that campaigns for the establishment of the North-West Reserve played out (McGregor, 1997: 57; Foster, 2019).

The campaign for the North-West Reserve

One of the first campaigners for the Aboriginal people of the North-West of South Australia was leading scientist Herbert Basedow. Considered to be a man of many talents, his interest in Aboriginal people grew following his involvement as a geologist and naturalist with a South Australian government sponsored prospecting expedition into the Musgrave, Mann and Tomkinson Ranges in 1903. Basedow's anthropological notes on the journey, published the following year, praised the

continuity of the Aboriginal peoples' culture and observed that the region had been 'practically unexplored, from an ethnographical point of view' (1904: 12). The campaign for a reserve in the North-West of the state was put into motion several years later, in March 1914, when Basedow wrote to leading Methodist preacher, Rev. Henry Howard, pointing out the importance of protecting the Aboriginal tribes he encountered in 1903:

> At present there remains only one area, in the State of South Australia where aboriginal tribes are living in their primitive, uncorrupted and uncontaminated condition - that is in the north-western region (*Daily Herald*, 3 March 1914 p.5).

Basedow went on to suggest that should the Methodist church 'feel inclined to start independently a mission among the aborigines' then 'the area referred to would be most suitable' **(***Daily Herald*, 3 March 1914; Foster, 2019: 341**)**. In June 1914, Basedow and Howard met the South Australian Commissioner of Public Works (CPW) and lobbied him to protect the Aboriginal people in the north-western corner of the state through the establishment of a reserve. Basedow also sought adjacent areas in Western Australia and the Northern Territory to be included in the reserve (Foster, 2019: 341-2). While the South Australian premier, Archibald Peake, was 'sympathetic' to the proposal, the Commonwealth government raised a number of issues and dilemmas (Holland, 2019: 65). Ultimately, with the outbreak of World War One a couple of months later, the idea was put to one side.

The campaign for a reserve was taken up again in mid-1919 when deputations made to the South Australian Government requested a 40,000 square mile block of land in the northwest of the state be reserved for the benefit of the Aboriginal people of the region (*The Advertiser*, 7 May 1919; *The Register*, 7 May 1919; *The Register*, 11 June

1919). Once again, Herbert Basedow was a driving force behind the proposal. Basedow proposed a reserve, which was ‘a very necessary isolation from white men’, be set aside in the interior. It was only in the interior, Basedow argued, where there was space for Aboriginal people to ‘resume their former mode of living’ (*The Advertiser*, 7 May 1919). The campaign for the North-West Reserve achieved success in late 1919 with the South Australian government making the necessary reservations and seeking support from the Commonwealth and Western Australian governments to act in cooperation with them (Foster, 2019:345). Following representations to the Western Australian and Commonwealth governments to create an area totalling about 42,000,000 acres or (65,000 square miles) in Central Australia, adjacent reserves were created in Western Australia, (14,000,000 square acres had been ‘temporarily reserved’ since August 1918), and January 1920 in the Pitjantjatjara country of the Petermann Ranges and Uluṟu area in the southwest corner of the NT (Layton, 1986:72). The South Australian state government gazetted its portion of 21,900 square miles (56,721 square kilometres) in the far northwest corner of South Australia as the North-West Aboriginal Reserve on 3 March 1921. The land was to be ‘for the use and benefit of the Aborigines’ though at the same time the government reserved the right of resumption of the area ‘for other uses should the occasion demand it’ (South Australia, 1978: 40-41). The three reserves formed the Central Australian Aboriginal Reserve (**figure 1.1**) and provided Aboriginal people with a cross border and supposedly inviolate reserve upon which to continue their traditional customs and practices (Duguid, 1963). Once the reserves were proclaimed, questions about how they were to be managed opened to debate between anthropologists and scientists, along with church missionary societies and Aboriginal Protection League organisations (Foster, 2019:346).

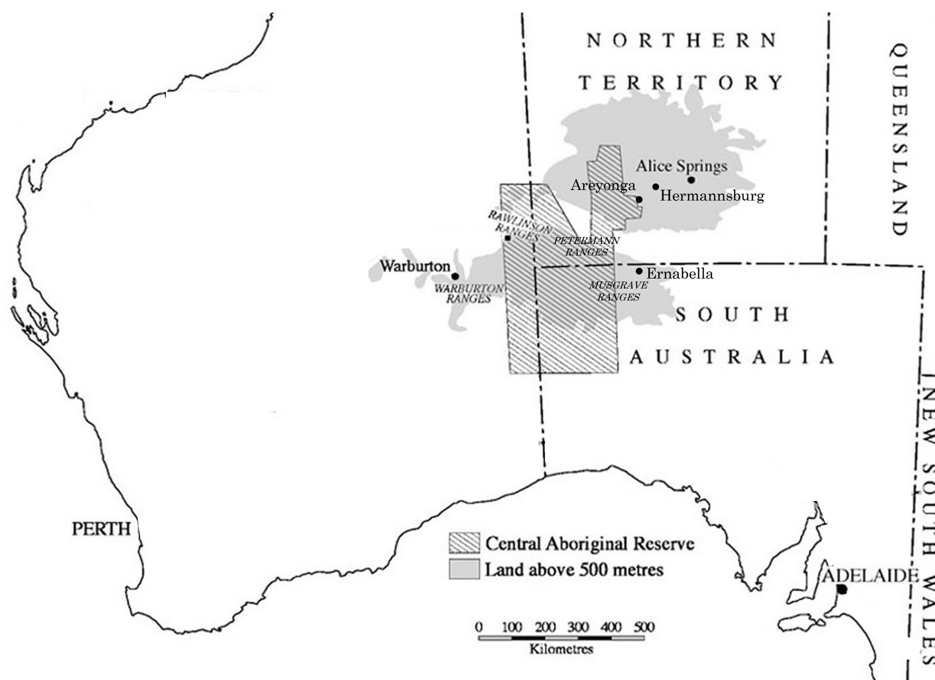


Figure 1. 1 Central Aboriginal Reserve, 1950s. Adapted from National Museum Australia, https://www.nma.gov.au/explore/features/indigenous-rights/civil-rights/warburton-ranges/expansion-folder/overview-of-the-warburton-ranges-controversy The North-West Reserve was one of three large Aboriginal reserves adjoining one another on the state borders of Western Australia, South Australia and the Northern Territory.

Missionary interest in the North-West Reserve

In the years following the proclamation of the North-West reserve, there was a flurry of missionary activity undertaken by evangelical and non-denominational bodies in South Australia to shape government policy and explore the prospects of missionary work in the reserves (Foster, 2018). The Adelaide-based Aborigines Friends Association (AFA) was a long running lobby group dedicated to Aboriginal welfare that was actively exploring missionary outreach opportunities in Central Australia. Since the early 1920s, the Association had been subsidising itinerant Evangelical

preacher E.E. Kramer's 'Australian Caravan Mission' to preach the gospel and distribute rations, utensils and medicine to Aboriginal people in Central Australia (Barry and Grimshaw, 2008; Foster, 2019). The Australian Aborigines' Mission (AAM), which opened missions at Oodnadatta in the Far North in 1924, and in the following year at Swan Reach on the Murray River, also looked to establish a missionary presence in the reserve. In May 1927, the missionary Will Wade and a young and later legendary R.M. Williams, undertook an 'exploratory and evangelical' expedition traversing through the Musgrave, Mann, Tomkinson, Deering and the Everard Ranges on camels from Oodnadatta, which at this time, was the terminus of the northern railway and base for camel expeditions into the interior. The object of the enterprise according to Wade's report, which was serialised in the AAM monthly publication of the *Australian Aborigines' Advocate* (AAA), was 'to seek out the natives and find if there would be scope for mission work in these parts' (*The AAA*, October 31, 1927:6).

The prospects for missionary work were boosted by Wade's musical evangelism and eccentric nature, which made him widely known and accepted by many of the Aboriginal groups he encountered in the reserves (Williams, 1984: 26). A<u>n</u>angu oral histories reach back to the 1920s and make numerous general and specific references to early encounters with Will Wade. For example, drawing from Bill Edward's collection of Pitjantjatjara oral stories (1997), Kunma<u>n</u>ara Ingkatji's older brother, Kunma<u>n</u>ara Tjilari, who was born in approximately 1928 in the area near Mount Davies in the eastern Tomkinson Ranges, provided an account of seeing Wade and his camels as a young child (most likely from the 1933 or 1934 trips Wade made to the Warburton area before he established the Warburton mission in 1935). He recalled that the people gave him the name Alilulanya because he frequently said '*Aliluya*'

(Hallelujah) (Edwards, 1997: 41). Furthermore, on a visit to the Operinna waterhole in 1962, Jacky Tjupuru, who was born in approximately 1907 in the area of the Deering Hills, south of the Mann Ranges, showed Bill Edwards, the then Superintendent of the Ernabella mission, a depression in the ground where he said 'Mr. Wade' had buried his food for the return leg of one of his journeys. Such was the lasting impression that Wade made on Jacky that he sung a chorus that 'Mr. Wade' had taught him (Edwards, 1997: 41).

On the strength of the 1927, and the follow-up 1928 expedition (**Figure 1.2**), the AAM, which became part of the United Aborigines Mission (UAM) in 1929, attempted to persuade the government to support the establishment of a permanent Australian Aborigines' Mission base in the Musgrave Ranges in 1929. However, their proposal was rejected on the basis that the proposed site, being on the eastern edge of the North-West Reserve, would attract Aboriginal people out of the reserve (Foster, 2019:347). Other proposals for the establishment of a mission or government station on the Central Aboriginal Reserve such as the Aborigines Friends Association (AFA) campaign for a Commonwealth government training station (Foster, 2018 & 2019) were also rejected or shelved with the impact of the Great Depression deepening.

Figure 1. 2 Men on expedition, 1928. Source: Ar̲a Irititja, University of Sydney (Elkin) AI-0030448. This photo is most likely from the second AAM expedition to the northwest of SA. The man second from the left in the photo is Will Wade.

Anthropological interest in the North-West Reserve

In the 1920s, at a time when change was sweeping through the discipline of anthropology, a rising generation of scientists and medical specialists, which included the likes of Professor Frederic Wood Jones, John B. Cleland and Norman B. Tindale, brought recognition to Adelaide as a major centre for anthropological research in Australia (Jones, 1987; Sutton, 1986; McGregor, 1997). In 1926, a year after Adelaide lost the first chair of anthropology in Australia to Sydney University, the Board for Anthropological Research (BAR) was established by Professor Frederic Wood Jones, Chair of Anatomy at the University of Adelaide and the Curator of Anthropology at the South Australia Museum since 1919, Thomas Draper Campbell, a Professor of Dentistry and anthropologist, John B. Cleland, a Professor of Pathology at the

University, and a network that included members of the South Australian Museum, as a permanent committee of the Council of the University of Adelaide (Jones, 1987). Unlike their counterparts on the east coast of the continent such as A.R. Radcliffe-Brown who were instrumental in the emerging discipline of social anthropology and the study of human societies, the main purpose to which the Board directed its activities was the study of physical anthropology (Jones, 1987: 77; Sutton, 1986: 50). Operating within an evolutionary paradigm, the intention of the Board was to investigate the question of where Australian Aboriginal people, as living examples of supposedly 'primitive' man, stood in relation to contemporary theories of genetics and evolution (Jones, 1987; Anderson, 2002: 210). This research direction was reflected in an emphasis on the collection of anthropometric data on Board expeditions, and an approach to Aboriginal people as passive objects of scientific enquiry (Anderson, 2002).

It was with a sense of urgency to do something for Aboriginal people before it was too late that the University of Adelaide-based Board for Anthropology Research (BAR) undertook fieldwork every year for a decade, mostly to Central Australia, to determine the morphological and physiological features of Aboriginal bodies. The *modus operandi* of the Board was a 'teamwork' approach to fieldwork involving a cross-disciplinary team of medical specialists working intensively among Aboriginal groups for two to three weeks (Jones, 1987: 79). It was an approach to fieldwork that was eschewed by the Australian National Research Council (ANRC) who stressed the need for extended periods of fieldwork through the Malinowskian model of 'participant observation' to gather social anthropological data of value (Jones, 1987: 79; Sutton, 1986: 50). It should be noted that the University of Adelaide has acknowledged many of the experiments and tests conducted by the Board were

‘crude’, ‘degrading and in some cases barbarous’ (Adelaide University Media Release, 2002). Little is known of what Aboriginal people made of the Board’s activities on these expeditions. A newspaper reporter accompanying the Mt Liebig expedition in 1932 made his own enquiries and was told that:

> They could not understand why the white men came all this way to ask them so many questions, smear white stuff over them, and stick prickles in their ears. … The natives said they did not mind these indignities because they were good men, although ‘quite silly’ and what was important, they brought good tucker for the black men (Jones, 1987: 81).

In 1933, the Board turned its attention to the Aboriginal people in the North-West Reserve and mounted a two-part expedition to the Musgrave and Mann Ranges. As a prelude to the Board’s main expedition in August to Ernabella in the Musgrave Ranges, the SA Museum ethnologist, Norman Tindale, accompanied by Cecil Hackett, a medical scientist and physical anthropologist, and cameleer Allan Brumby, designed an expedition to the Mann Ranges in June and July (**Figure 1.3**). According to Tindale’s preliminary report on his fieldwork, its purpose was to study population movements and obtain census data of the people living in the North-West Reserve and adjacent areas in the northwest of South Australia (Tindale, 1933 & 1935).

Figure 1. 3 Tindale and group of men, women and children on the move, 1933. Source: Ara Irititja, South Australian Museum Collection (Hackett) AI-0031980.

Foster speculated that the Mann Ranges field trip was probably designed to further a 'scheme' that Cleland had started to formulate in 1932 (2019: 350). The scheme would become a central and defining characteristic of the Ernabella Mission, both before and after its establishment. Based on reports from previous Board sponsored expeditions to Central Australia, Cleland was concerned that pastoral leases were beginning to occupy land adjacent to the North-West Reserve, leading to increased contact between white settlers and Anangu still living in the reserves, and endangering 'tribal' customs and ways of life (Foster, 2019:350). The pastoral leases that concerned Cleland were established along the eastern boundary of the reserve in the 1930s and were primarily bases for dingo scalping or, as it was known, 'dogging' (Hilliard, 1968:81; Gara, 2005). Dogging was a new industry among the inhabitants of the far north of South Australia that took off in the tough years of the Depression

(Gara, 2005). The practice had its beginnings in the south of the state in 1912 when the South Australian government introduced bounty payments for the scalps of dingos, or any breed of dog deemed to have run wild. Bounties of seven shillings and six pence paid per scalp was enough money for experienced bushmen, who came to be known as 'doggers', to make a good living from large returns of scalps (Gara, 2005; Kerin, 2009: 136).

Using proceeds from the sale of the scalps, many of the doggers established small pastoral leases in the far northwest of the state. The most northerly of these leases was held by Stanley Ferguson, a former resident of Oodnadatta, who by 1933 had established a sheep station on 500 square miles of land surrounding the Ernabella soak, one of the principal water sources in the eastern Musgrave Ranges (Edwards, 1992:7; Hilliard, 1968; *Advertiser* (SA), 14 July 1936 p.18). While Ferguson ran sheep, with stock that numbered 1950 sheep and 220 goats when purchased by the Presbyterian Board of Missions in 1936 (Hilliard, 1968: 95), given the low annual rainfall and other obstacles in the way of successful sheep pastoralism in the region, the Ernabella pastoral station quickly became known as a centre for dogging operations (Sons of the Bush, *Advertiser* (SA), 14 July 1936 p.18; Hilliard, 1968: 95-6). Indeed, all of the pastoral enterprises situated along the eastern boundary of the North-West Reserve such as Shirley Well, Red Ochre and Upsan Downs, primarily relied on dogging to make a living (*Advertiser* (SA), 14 July 1936 p.18; Kerin, 2009:144-5; Edwards, 1992). Like Ernabella, these leases represented a 'gateway' to the reserves further west and trading relations with 'the only natives in South Australia who [were] still living the tribal life of their ancestors' (*Advertiser*, 02 April 1937 p.24).

With increasing contact between doggers and Anangu occurring in the early 1930s, the nature of these trading relations was becoming a concern to scientists and authorities back in Adelaide. While many of the doggers operating on the reserves were experienced bushmen, most relied on Anangu hunting skills and knowledge of the local habitat to ensure a greater yield of scalps. Having observed doggers at work while collecting desert mammals in Central Australia in the period of 1931-35, Hedley H. Finlayson, the curator of mammals at the South Australian Museum, claimed that it was a common practice for doggers to acquire the 'great bulk' of their scalps 'by trading with the blacks, whose minute knowledge of the habits of the dogs, and particularly of their seasonal movements and breeding places, enable them to get results quite beyond the reach of white man alone' (1935: 143). In return for their labours, Anangu were paid in varying amounts of rations such as flour, sugar, tea and tobacco, and other items including clothing, steel tools, pipes and matches (Hilliard 1968:81, 95; Duguid, 1972:110; Young, 2010: 93). Given that for many Anangu, the doggers represented their first contact with white settlers and experiences of settler food, technologies, clothes and ways of living and working (Kerin, 2009:137; Young, 2010), there were concerns about what impact contact would have on Anangu culture and society.

Of greater concern, if not alarm in some quarters, was the doggers' cohabitation with Anangu women and the increasing numbers of so-called "half-caste" children (Duguid, 1963; 1972; Kerin, 2009). The story of these relationships is contested and complex. Kerin has shown that the varied characterisations of doggers' sexual relations with Aboriginal women depends largely on the perspective of the storyteller. With the acknowledgment that some doggers treated Aboriginal people 'appalling badly', Kerin argued that this 'undesirable association' was shaped not so much by

the doggers' perceived exploitation and/or mistreatment of Aboriginal people, particularly young Aboriginal women, but more so by the close living and working relations they formed with Aboriginal people (2009: 156).

There are limited records of Anangu perspectives of this period but accounts from Anangu who did remember life in the central ranges before the establishment of the Ernabella mission recall that interactions between Anangu and doggers, though diverse and complex, were often of Anangu making or choosing (cf. Kerin, 2009: 148). When reflecting on her early childhood, Nganyinytja Ilyatjari, a cousin to Kunmanara Ingkatji who was born near Angatja at the eastern end of the Mann Ranges a few years before the 1933 expedition, recalled seeing white people passing through her country on camels, and had heard stories about early explorers, prospectors, doggers and other travellers in the 1930s (James, 2014: 17). Nganyinytja recalled that her father and his brother, walked hundreds of kilometres to interact and form trading relationships with doggers. This often involved walking from the Mann Ranges to the Ernabella station in the eastern end of the Musgrave Ranges to trade dingo scalps for rations. Nganyinytja recalled how she and the other children ran to greet their fathers with delight when they arrived with large bags of mixed flour, tea and sugar on their heads:

> So, we waited until they were closer and ran to meet them. We reached up to touch the flour, looking at the flour and the jam. We grabbed the jam and cried out, "Daddy show us, show us!" We were so happy they brought home the flour (James, 2014: 18).

In late 1932, Cleland wrote to the commonwealth minister about the threats to the 'uncontaminated' Aboriginal people in the Central Australian Reserves and proposed a scheme for their better protection. Stressing the importance of the governments'

protection legislation for the ‘preservation’ of Aboriginal people, Cleland argued that the reserves ‘must be considered inviolate from European settlement, either religious or commercial, if the aboriginal population is to survive’ (Memorandum: Protection of Aboriginals cited in Foster, 2019: 351). To further ensure their protection, Cleland proposed an extension to the boundaries of the central reserves and went on to add that ‘consideration might be given to the possibility of the reserve being leased to some responsible body in trust for the native population’ (Memorandum: Protection of Aboriginals cited in Foster, 2019: 351).

Reported stories of doggers illegally entering the reserve and ‘living among the natives’ were further confirmed with the return of the 1933 BAR expedition from the Musgrave and Mann Ranges. In his preliminary report, Tindale highlighted the central role that the Ernabella pastoral station played in the dogging trade. In a two-week period following his arrival at Ernabella in late May 1933, Tindale recorded that a total of 134 Anangu had journeyed to the station from the reserves to trade dingo scalps with doggers (Tindale, 1933). Tindale also noted that large numbers of Anangu were attracted to the doggers’ camps and often travelled through the ranges with them (**Figure 1.4**). On the Mann Ranges expedition’s return leg to Ernabella, Tindale observed that ‘a dogger camped at Konapandi’, an area south-east of the Musgrave Ranges, was leaving for Ernabella ‘accompanied by 27 natives’ (Tindale cited in Young: 2010: 94). Perhaps most concerning to scientists were accounts of doggers actively impeding scientific research. In preparation for the arrival of the main expedition to Ernabella in August 1933, Tindale highlighted the difficulty he had finding Anangu to travel with him to take part in the Board’s field work: ‘The doggers have runners out and are attempting to hold as many natives as possible; we may have an uphill go to get natives to Ernabella’ (Tindale cited in Young: 2010:94). Upon his

return, Tindale expressed his concern to the Aborigines Protection Board and the South Australian Government (Tindale cited in Young, 2010: 94), thereby adding to the pressure placed upon the governments to do something about the presence of white men on the reserves.

Figure 1. 4 Aṉangu men trading dingo scalps for flour, 13/06/1933. Source: Aṟa Irititja, SA Museum (CJ Hackett) AI-0036406-001. Note camel packs and dingo scalps arranged on ground. The caption for this photograph in Hackett's account of the 1933 expedition states: 'This is Allan [Brumby] trading at Konapandi. Musgrave Range is in the background. For each scalp are given roughly 4 pounds of flour, some tea, half stick of tobacco, a clay pipe and a box of matches' (Hackett cited in Jones, 1987). Nephew to Stan Ferguson, Allan Brumby was a controversial figure at this time (see Kerin, 2009, for discussion on views of Brumby as a cameleer and guide, courageous bushman, dogger and scoundrel).

Cleland, who could clearly see the benefits of the buffer scheme for the study of Aboriginal people, presented a proposal to the University of Adelaide Council for the purchase of a lease on land abutting the North-West Reserve as a 'buffer zone' (Jones, 1987; Foster, 2019). The university's involvement, as the 'responsible body' would, according to Cleland, be:

> … in the interests of the native… afford better opportunities for the study of them… and (would) ensure their protection for many generations to come…' (Memorandum to the Council of the University of Adelaide cited in Jones, 1987:79).

The Council declined the proposal on the grounds that it went beyond the university's mandate (Jones, 1987: 79; Foster, 2019:351).

Cometh the hour, cometh the man

By the mid-1930s, the contest between scientific and religious authorities over the future of Aboriginal people in the North-West Reserve, was beginning to heat up (Foster, 2019:352). Both parties, with some notable exceptions, deemed Aboriginal people in the region to be on the verge of extinction and that something had to be urgently done about the threat that doggers posed to them before it was too late (McGregor, 1997; Kerin, 2011:25). To campaigners from all sides, the good governance of Aboriginal people involved the provision of large inviolable reserves where Aboriginal people could be isolated from Europeans (Foster, 2018, 2019; Holland, 2019). However, the physical anthropologists and medical scientists, demanded the creation of inviolable reserves for the sole occupation of their Aboriginal inhabitants, and the missionaries who had a concern not only for the physical health but also the 'uplift' of Aboriginal people through education, training and Christian instruction, wanted inviolable reserves with a mission on them. It was at

such a ‘crucial time’, according to Winifred Hilliard, that Dr Charles Duguid, ‘a man of vision and purpose entered the scene’ (1968: 86).

This chapter shall conclude by looking at the central role that Duguid played in reviving the idea of establishing a mission at Ernabella, and how his conception of the mission reconciled the often-conflicting agendas of scientific and missionary authorities. Duguid announced his arrival in Aboriginal affairs in March 1935, during his moderatorial address to the South Australian Assembly of Presbyterian Church, when he presented his proposal for the establishment of a new type of mission – a ‘Christian Anthropological Mission’ on the edge of the Musgrave Ranges (*Presbyterian Banner*, April 1935: 10; cf. Kerin, 2006: 83-84). As noted by Kerin in her biography, *Doctor Do-Good*, Duguid’s stimulus for the proposal was to put an end to the ‘futile talk’ about whether missionaries or anthropologists were best suited to help Aboriginal people, and ‘get on with the job of saving one of the finest as well as one of the most interesting races on earth’ (Duguid cited in Kerin, 2011: 27). Most likely drawing on the ideas of contemporary anthropologists and missionaries of long experience but without acknowledging their obvious influence on his thinking (Kerin, 2011:26), Duguid insisted that ‘whoever [took] up the work [would] have to learn the language and understand the ways of the people among whom he [was] placed’. To that end, he pledged a contribution towards the salary of an ‘approved Christian Medical Missionary who had anthropological training’ (*Presbyterian Banner*, April 1935: 9). Unlike many other Australian missionary enterprises that presumed there wasn’t anything of religious, social or cultural value in Aboriginal life, Duguid declared that the proposed mission was a place where the white missionary staff could ‘learn much from the native and the native much from us’ (*Presbyterian Banner*, April 1935: 10).

Duguid's conception of the mission was formed at a time when missionary work in Australia was influenced by a worldwide shift of opinions on missionary methods (McGregor: 2001). Embodying an approach that favoured a combination of scientific and spiritual methods was A. P. Elkin, professor of Anthropology at the University of Sydney and an Ordained priest of the Church of England in Australia. Considered to be Australia's preeminent anthropologist of the mid-twentieth century, Elkin was a strong advocate of reformed missionary policy in the 1930s (McGregor, 2001). Rather than demolishing Aboriginal culture as part of the missionary endeavour to 'Europeanise the natives', Elkin's constant plea in a series of articles on missionary methods, was for missionaries to 'build upon' Aboriginal religion and culture (Elkin, 1934: 38). In Elkin's view, missionary success could only be achieved through the integration of Christianity into Aboriginal people's own social, cultural and religious life. Drawing inspiration from an evolutionary paradigm, this involved transforming Aboriginal spiritual beliefs and practices into what Elkin considered to be 'a richer view of life and a loftier system of moral and social sanctions' (Elkin, 1932: 40-1). To prepare missionaries for this task, Elkin insisted on the need for extensive education, including training in social anthropology and linguistics (Elkin, 1934: 39-40). It was from these sorts of ideas that Duguid's conception of mission appears likely to have been drawn (McGregor, 2001:45; Kerin, 2011:26).

With an intention to gather further information for the Board of Missions to support the case for a mission and 'medical patrol', Duguid visited the Musgrave Ranges in June 1935 (Kerin, 2011:29). According to his autobiography, Duguid was impressed by his first contact with the Pitjantjatjara people of the Musgrave Ranges. He wrote:

> They were a fine people with a striking dignity, living naked and with few possessions amid the

> rocky hills and escarpments of the Ranges, wandering their tribal territory in the constant search for food and water, and yet contented and virile (Duguid, 1972: 110-11).

However, he was disturbed by his encounter with doggers. Like most visitors to the region, Duguid stayed at the homestead at Ernabella owned by sheep pastoralist, Stan Ferguson. At the time, Ferguson was known to have ‘controlled much of the dogging’ in the region by either employing other men to collect scalps for him, or else financing their dogging trips to the reserves (Gara, 2005:3). After staying at Ernabella and travelling through the ‘dogging country’ of the Musgrave Ranges, Duguid observed, that ‘every white man, without exception, [was] living with a black woman and breeding half-castes’ (Duguid cited in Kerin 2009:147; See also, Duguid, 1963:29). As far as Duguid and other critics of the doggers were concerned, the doggers’ seemingly apparent economic and sexual exploitation of Aṉangu and the abandonment of their mixed descent children confirmed their status as ‘undesirables’ and underlined the need to prevent further associations between them and Aṉangu in the far northwest of the state (Kerin, 2009). To Duguid, the people to replace Ferguson and other doggers in the region were obviously missionaries informed by the insights of anthropology (Kerin, 2011:29). Thus, his solution to the doggers’ intrusions into the reserve was to recommend the immediate establishment of a Christian mission in the Musgrave Ranges, ideally in the location of Ferguson’s homestead at Ernabella (Kerin, 2009:149).

Mission established.

In September 1936, the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church agreed to support Duguid’s proposal for the establishment of a mission in Musgrave Ranges. In November of that year, the South Australian government pledged its support, agreeing

to contribute a subsidy of up to one thousand pounds for the mission's inauguration (Kerin, 2011: 31). While the Chief Protector, Milroy McLean, was supportive of the proposal, he had long been 'opposed to any fixed missionary work' in the area (Mclean to CPW, 1932 cited in Foster, 2019: 352), and as a consequence, he insisted that any such mission must be careful 'to prevent the detribalisation of the natives' (McLean cited Foster, 2019:352). As discussed by Foster, Duguid's conception of a mission seemed to accommodate this directive, by combining the knowledge of anthropology, and the languages and culture of Aṉangu, with an ideal of Christian beliefs and practices (Foster, 2019: 355). In doing so, it was in line with the reformed mission policy and practices that Elkin had been promoting in Australia since the early 1930s (Kerin, 2011).

The Presbyterian Board of Missions (PBM) purchased the pastoral lease of Stan Ferguson's Ernabella Pastoral Station on 4 December 1936, and with the support of the Chief Protector and the Advisory Council, chaired by Cleland, was given the authority to establish the Ernabella Mission in November the following year. Prior to the opening of the mission, the Board of Missions sent Reverend J.R.B. Love and Dr Lewis J. Balfour to examine the situation in Ernabella. Based on their assessment of the good health of the Aboriginal people at Ernabella, they argued that 'there would not be enough work for a medical man' at the mission, and as a result of their report, the Presbyterian Church appointed the Reverend Harry Taylor, a clerical missionary, as the first Superintendent at Ernabella (Kerin, 2011:31). Thereafter, Ernabella was reconceptualised as a 'Buffer Mission'. The notion of a buffer zone had become an *idée fixe* during the 1930s (Jones, 1987:79), and Duguid, who could clearly see the 'importance of naming and capitalising on current trends' (Kerin, 2011), was quick to apply the buffer concept by claiming that '[f]irst and foremost Ernabella has been

called into being to act as a buffer between the white settlers east of it and Native Reserve west of it' (Duguid to Minister, 26 June 1938, cited in Kerin, 2011: 32). Duguid envisaged that the mission would both protect Anangu from the wider society and prepare for their 'recognition as citizens of Australia' (1963:48).

The decision to establish the mission as a 'buffer' also enabled the Presbyterian Church to control interactions between Anangu and white settlers. The government aided the mission in this task by drafting amendments to the *South Australian Aborigines Act*, which prohibited relations between white men and Aboriginal women (*South Australian Aborigines Act, 1934-1939*: 34a). The secretary of the newly established Aborigines Protection Board, W.R. Penhall, viewed the amended legislation as the beginning of the end for doggers' relations with Aboriginal women on the reserve (Penhall to Duguid, 12 December 1939 cited in Kerin, 2009:153). Further legislative changes to the *Aborigines Act* in 1938, which made it possible to take actions against persons trespassing on the North-West Reserve, and the appointment of the superintendent at the Ernabella Mission as an official receiver of wild dog scalps, further aided the mission. As hoped, the mission was able to reduce and ultimately entirely remove the influence of the doggers on the reserve by paying Anangu the full government bounty for scalps either in the form of cash or exchanged for goods at the newly established mission store (Young, 2010: 96). Most doggers in the district could not compete with this payment and their leases, which adjoined the reserve, were cancelled in May 1939 and subsequently added to the Reserve in 1949 (Edwards, 1992). Correspondingly, the missionaries hoped to encourage Anangu to stay within the borders of the reserve, ideally at the mission itself (Hilliard, 1968:95). In the end, Cleland achieved the buffer zone adjacent to the North-West Reserve

supervised by people who wouldn't interfere with Aboriginal ways of living but as suggested by Foster, not in the ways he possibly first imagined (2019: 353).

Conclusion

To better understand the nature of the colonial encounter at Ernabella, this chapter has focused on the exchange between well-intentioned South Australians and scientific, religious and government authorities that lead to the conception and management of the remote North-West Reserve, and the establishment of Ernabella as a 'buffer' mission, on its eastern boundary. In this light, Dr Charles Duguid, who most historians and scholars have portrayed as 'a man of vision' is arguably better represented as 'a man of action' who was one of main driving forces behind the revival of the idea of a mission in the Musgrave Ranges (Kerin, 2011). His anthropologically inspired 'founding principle' that, 'there was to be no compulsion or imposition of our way of life on the Aborigines, nor deliberate interference with tribal custom (Duguid, 1972: 115), which reportedly underpinned mission policy throughout the mission years (Duguid, 1972; Hilliard, 1968), was to afford A<u>n</u>angu a high degree of independence that was unique among other missions of its day (Broome, 2010). A<u>n</u>angu were able to accept or reject what the mission had to offer materially and spiritually and come and go from the mission for periods as they chose. As a result, A<u>n</u>angu maintained core Western Desert values and responsibilities for longer than other regions, while also engaging with mission activities such as church, employment in the sheep and handcraft industries, and schooling, on their own terms and at their own pace (Hilliard, 1968). It is perhaps for these reasons that the former mission settlement remains a significant place in A<u>n</u>angu memory and identity today (Eickelkamp, 1999: 17-30). As shall be discussed, sport, particularly Australian

football, played a part in the social and cultural transformation and persistence that took place at Ernabella. It is to the introduction and development of sport at the mission, beginning with sport and games in the earliest years of the mission, that the discussion now turns.

2 Colonial sport at the Ernabella Mission from 1938 to 1950

Figure 2. 1 Christmas Day Sports, 1938. Source: Aṟa Irititja, Allan Pound Collection, AI-0025938

Introduction

On Christmas Day 1938, Reverend Harry Taylor, the first superintendent of the newly established Presbyterian Ernabella mission in the northwest of South Australia, introduced sport to a growing population of Aṉangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara (APY) in contact with the mission. It was an occasion imbued with Christian ideals and rituals and the promotion of a mix of European sports and Aboriginal cultural events. A black and white photograph (Figure 2.1) of the 1938 Christmas Day sports, provides a glimpse of some of the day's activities. Taken in the open area outside the superintendent's quarters, where early morning Christmas services had been held, it shows a large group of men, some of whom are watching the running of a race for young children, otherwise engaged in a spear throwing contest. Mission stockman

Len Young, who was working sheep at the mission station over the Christmas of 1938, provided an account of the day in his journal:

> 187 people mustered for Christmas, nearly equal quantities of men, women, and children. The morning was begun with a short service, after which presents were given. The children received a special treat – a bon-bon each and a Christmas stocking…. Dinner was provided in the form of flour and a camel; after this was devoured and slept upon, sports were enjoyed by all. The men had spear throwing contests, long distance and at a target... Races were provided for the women and children… A very happy day was spent (Young, 1938: 7).

The 1938 Christmas Day sports was significant not for anything that happened at the mission that afternoon, but because it was, most probably, the first time that those Anangu men, women and children had ever seen or experienced European sports and games. It was another example in colonial Australia of the close relationship between Christian activity, colonialism and sport. Since landmark work by scholars Tony Swain and Deborah Bird Rose (1988), the historiography of missions in Australia has flourished. Gary Osmond's (2021) case study of the long running Yarrabah sports day, held at Yarrabah in North Queensland since the Anglican Church founded the mission in 1892, Barry Judd's (2010) study of cricket at the Coranderrk Aboriginal Station in the nineteenth century Victoria, and Bob Reece's (2014) account of cricket at the Benedictine mission of New Norcia in Western Australia from 1879 to 1906, represent notable exceptions.

The aim of this chapter, then, is to examine the available data on the earliest forms of sport and games that were played at the Ernabella Mission. The chapter builds a picture of these sports and makes the case that they represented a foundation for Anangu participation in modern sports such as Australian Rules football, netball and

basketball that would become immensely popular at Ernabella in subsequent years. It shall highlight the roles played by the missionaries and Anangu Pitjantjatjara and Yankunytjatjara and at the same time, show that sport was a site of contest, struggle and exchange.

The missionaries' motivations for actively introducing and encouraging Western sports and games among Anangu populations at Ernabella may, in part, have been drawn from an evangelical tradition. Evangelical missionaries, particularly British Christian missionaries, had been taking both 'the gospel of Christ and the gospel of games' to the most distant colonial outposts in Africa, the Indian subcontinent, Southeast Asia and beyond since the latter half of mid-19th century (Mangan, 1998:175). Among them, J.A. Mangan's publications on sport and mission schools in India during the colonial period are perhaps the most well-known (for example Mangan, 1986). One of the most acknowledged influences on the diffusion of sport across the globe was the idea of the 'muscular Christianity'. Drawing inspiration from the characteristics of Thomas Hughes and Charles Kingsley novels, Evangelical missionaries saw sport as a means of augmenting a Christian man's moral character with a distinctive muscular or physical dimension (Mangan, 1998). In this view, sports such as cricket and the different codes of football were recognised as a means of enforcing colonial rule and authority, and delivering 'a series of moral lessons, regarding hard work and perseverance, about team loyalty and obedience to authority' (Mangan, 2010: 409; See also Mason, 1992).

The playing of sport on Christmas and Boxing Days was a regular feature of life in missions and other Indigenous settlements across Australia in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The oldest settlement in Central Australia, the Lutheran

Mission of Hermannsburg (Ntaria), had a long tradition of promoting sport as an adjunct to the 'Hermannsburg Christmas'. In the 1930s, for example, up to a 'thousand souls' from Alice Springs, the Jay Creek Aboriginal Reserve and the Haasts Bluff area, gathered at the Hermannsburg Mission to participate in a mix of up to fifty sporting events featuring modern sports and spear throwing and spear dodging on Boxing Day or 'Third Christmas Day' as it was known, following celebrations on Christmas Eve and church services on Christmas day (Edmond, 2013: 175-176; Henson, 1992).

This article draws extensively from a trove of missionary and other historical sources that document early life at the Ernabella mission. Despite the widespread popularity of sporting afternoons at Ernabella and other settlements in the region, there are limited accounts of what Aṉangu thought about these new experiences. Historical accounts from these places are dominated by missionary discourses, which tend to emphasise Christian progress and deny or overlook Aṉangu voices and views. Nonetheless, Aṉangu perspectives can be gleaned from these sources. Here, I note Emma Wild-Wood's (2021) discussion of the problems and possibilities of missionary literature with reference to nineteenth and twentieth century European sources in sub-Saharan Africa. Wild-Wood argued that evidence contained in these sources, when carefully analysed and triangulated with other sources, can reveal Indigenous perspectives of recorded events (2021: 108).

Walking into the mission

With a view to understanding early sport at the mission this section briefly examines the nature of Aṉangu engagement with the Ernabella Mission during its early years. From the late 1930s to the early 1950s, a period characterised by the dominant policy

paradigm of protectionism, large numbers of Aboriginal people were understood to have migrated out of their Country and taken up residence in missions, government settlements and pastoral stations across Central Australia (Rowse, 1986: 177). Settler society at the time interpreted this migration as a confirmation that Aboriginal societies were disintegrating (Rowley, 1970: 328-30). Kunmaṉara Ingkatji, whose oral narratives about football at the mission in the 1950s are central to chapters three and six, was part of this movement.

Born in the bush at Aparatjara, a traditional camping place at the western end of the Mann Ranges in 1930, Kunmaṉara lived most of his early life relatively unaffected by the spread of European colonisation (See Layton, 1986:53) in the Mann and Tomkinson Ranges. In 1937, a young Kunmaṉara and his family decided to follow the footsteps of their relatives by walking to the newly established Mission at Ernabella (Kunmaṉara Ingkatji, 2015). Situated in the eastern end of the Musgrave Ranges, the mission station consisted of the old Stan Ferguson homestead (Figure 2.2), which became the superintendent's quarters, and ran about 2000 sheep and goats (Hilliard, 1968: 96). As well as being previously known as a dogging station and 'ration depot of sorts', Ernabella was known to Aṉangu as a reliable water source, good hunting ground and a traditional meeting place (Young, 2010).

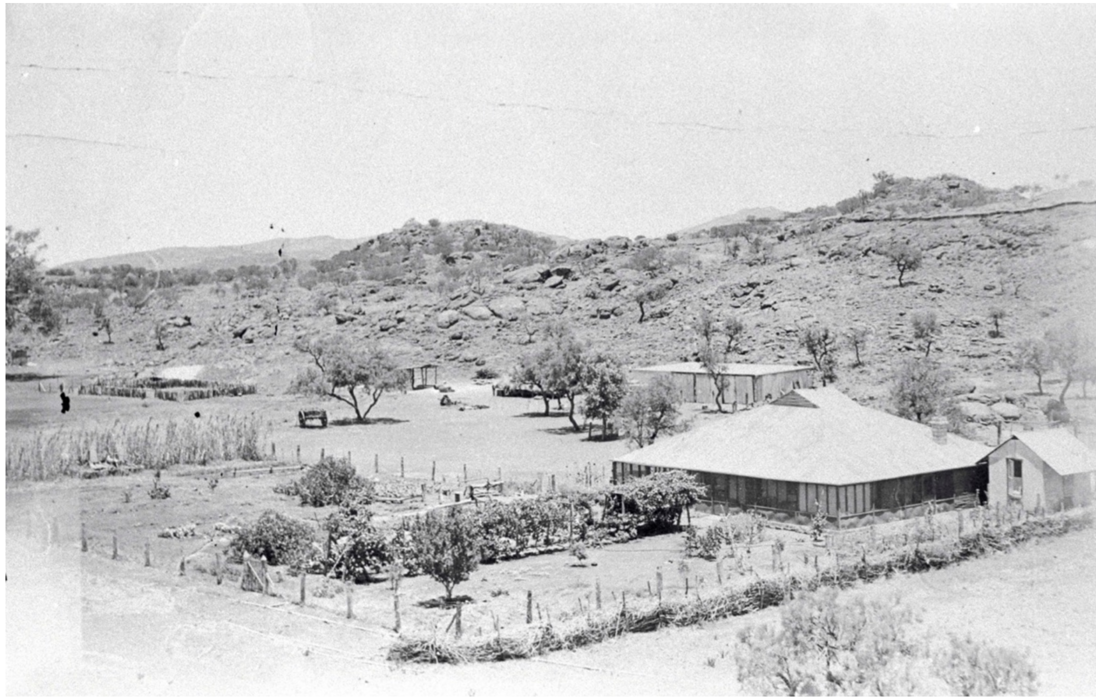


Figure 2. 2 Original Ernabella station homestead, 1943. Source: A_r_a Irititja, State Library of SA (JRB Love) Collection, AI-0005175-001. Throughout the 1940s, sports days were conducted in the open area just outside the homestead in the centre of the mission compound.

Much has been written about why Aboriginal people, such as Kunmanara and his family, walked out of the Western Desert. Explanations have centred on the attractions of a regular food supply and a reliable supply of water especially at times of significant drought (See for example, Meggitt, 1965; Layton, 1986: 59). Most of the literature has referred to these movements as an "exodus" from the Western Desert, which as pointed out by Shannyn Palmer, suggests 'a mass, one-way movement away from homelands towards white settlements' (2016: 490). Jeremy Long (1989) added complexity to the explanation by arguing that Aboriginal people's decision to not so much 'leave' their country but more 'come and go' for periods as they chose, was consistent with 'a tradition of opportunist exploitation of resources when and where they appeared' (Long, 1989:40). While the circumstances surrounding Aboriginal people's movement to missions were unique, oral history

narratives show that when Kunmanara and his family were not living on Country, they were often travelling between missions, government settlements and pastoral stations in the region, and that their comings and goings were always strategic and often motivated by maintaining relationships with relatives. From Ernabella, which seems to have been a hub for many of their journeys, they visited relatives at the neighbouring settlements of Areyonga, Warburton and Hermannsburg throughout the 1940s (Edwards, 1997; Kunmanara Ingkatji, 2015; Osborne, 2015).

At this time, only a handful of Anangu would have considered the mission to be a permanent residence. Coming in from the bush or nearby pastoral stations, the majority continued to lead relatively autonomous lives and travel widely. This continued to be the case for much of the 1940s and was, to a certain extent, encouraged by the mission. Particularly, by Superintendent Reverend J.R.B. Love, who enthused that 'all of the people of Ernabella are nomadic. None stay here for long at a time, boys, girls and adults. Let them continue to be nomadic' (*Ernabella Newsletter,* December 1944: 4). The missionaries, at this time, were in no position to coerce Anangu to stay at the mission. Anangu were familiar with a life away from the mission and could leave if they were not happy. Kunmanara was staying at one of the camps at Ernabella when he was photographed by ethnologist Charles Mountford (Figure 2.3) while Mountford was travelling through the region during his four-month expedition to Central Australia in 1940. The view of Anangu not so much caught in a 'helpless drift' (for example see Stanner, 2009: 134), particularly towards settlements in the east, but rather making a 'series of highly motivated and purposeful moves' (Long, 1989:40) emphasises Anangu agency and broadens our understanding of the ways in which Anangu strategically engaged with settlements such as the mission at Ernabella.

Figure 2. 3 Portrait of Kunmanara Ingkatji, 1940. Source: Ara Irititja, Mountford-Sheard Collection of Ethnology (State Library of South Australia) AI-0000063

The Christmas Day sports

The story of sport at Ernabella began within the context of local struggles and exchanges between mission staff and Anangu. Len Young's account of Christmas Day sports in 1938 as being a 'very happy time' with the sports being 'enjoyed by all' belied the tension between people at the mission station in the lead up to Christmas. Up to that point, the mission station, which ran about 2000 sheep and goats (Hilliard, 1968: 96), and consisted of a rough homestead and a few sheds and little else, had been beset with problems. Reports of Ernabella's 'uncleanliness' accompanied by accusations of sheep stealing and cattle spearing led H.C. Matthew, secretary of the Presbyterian Board of Missions, to question superintendent Reverend Harry Taylor's competence to manage the mission station (Kerin, 2004:76). When Young reported

that he had found a sheep cooking in a fire near a rationed sheep camp and bones in the vicinity that indicated a goat had also been killed and eaten there recently, Taylor was placed under further pressure. His response was to threaten Anangu with the cancellation of Christmas. Taking a paternalistic position, he reportedly told Anangu: 'if they killed any more sheep, they would get no Christmas!' (Young, 1938-43: 07). Whether Anangu had previously experienced Christmas or the festivities typically associated with Christmas Day is unknown, but no further sheep were killed, and a few days later, the Christmas day sports were introduced to a growing population at the mission.

Based on the success of the 1938 Christmas Day sports, sports days at Ernabella became a regular occurrence throughout the mission years. They were most commonly held in conjunction with significant days of the missionary calendar such as Christmas and Easter, and other events which marked the growth of the mission. Less frequent but no less successful in attracting large numbers of Anangu to the mission were informal, *ad hoc* sports meetings that were typically held for visitors to the mission. While these events were occasionally staged with the help of Anangu, sports meetings were organised by the missionary staff during this period of the mission's history. The most spectacular and enduring display of missionary sport at Ernabella was the Christmas Day Sports. Celebratory in nature, the occasion was highlighted by a mix of modern sports and games, such as the sprints, egg and spoon, sack and three-legged races, tug-of-war, and the immensely popular 'native sports', which included the men's spear throwing and fire making competitions and the women's 'treasure hunts' for small objects hidden on a rocky outcrop. Occupying a central place on the sports day program, the native sports were based on traditional, everyday practices that were adapted by the mission so that the sports were 'of a

nature to suit the people' (*Ernabella Newsletter*, May 1942:3). Some of these sports resembled games and activities played by Anangu before the arrival of missionaries. For example, before the arrival of the mission, boys and youth developed their spear-throwing skills by throwing a spear at a bark disc, a *tululu,* that was rolled along the ground as a moving target (Figure 2.4). These skills were showcased in the spear throwing competition when the men and boys targeted a life-size kangaroo drawn in charcoal on a hessian background. Aboriginal people's participation in 'native sports' during sports days was common on mission stations and government reserves throughout Australia in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries (For example, see Osmond, 2021; Henson, 1992). As will be discussed further on, the missions' use of Anangu culture encouraged participation but in ways that emphasised certain characteristics valued by the missionaries.

Figure 2. 4 Playing traditional game, 1955. Source: Ara Irititja, Allan Vial Collection, AI-0030331.

While sport at Ernabella was undoubtedly part of the 'civilising' project at the same time it was frequently experienced as being quite simply fun and enjoyable. The

Ernabella Newsletter, which contained reports on sports days throughout the 1940s, suggested that they were 'always a source of fun and laughter' (*Ernabella Newsletter*, November 1947: 3). The enjoyment and 'great pep' that Aṉangu invested in their sport is highlighted in the following account of the 1940 spear-throwing competition (See also Figure 2.7):

> The men had a spear-throwing contest and they enjoyed it thoroughly… These folk enter most heartily into their sports and put great pep into their entertainment. Occasionally, a man would miss the target altogether, and there would be a great laugh at his expense. The 'miss-es' proved more entertaining than the good shots. Some of them rolled onto the ground with laughter (*Ernabella Newsletter*, May 1941:03).

The women's billycan race was another immensely popular feature of the sports day program. Throughout this period, it was common for Aṉangu women to carry a range of objects such as a *piti* (large wooden bowl) on their heads while travelling through Country. The billycan race was a variation of this practice. An account of the 1945 Christmas Day women's billycan race reveals not only the sheer enjoyment the women received from participating in such events, but also the degree to which the spectators participated in these sporting events at the mission:

> The women had billycan races, with billies full of water on their heads. They have bushy heads of hair, some plastered with mud, etc., and tore like mad, of course the water falling everywhere. The wetter they got, the more they laughed, and the ones that didn't win just poured the water over their heads. They all had great fun and the onlookers screamed and yelled (*Ernabella Newsletter*, March 1946: 7)

A photograph of the 1951 Christmas sports billycan race (Figure 2.5) highlights the 'great enthusiasm' that Aṉangu had for sport. The image shows several women and girls, each with their own style and grace, moving from the start line of the billycan

race. They appear to be racing in the open area between the school, which was built in 1948, and the manse, or superintendent's quarters. A couple of the ladies smile but all of them are intensely focused on the activity of racing and balancing the billy.

Figure 2. 5 Women and girls during billycan race at Christmas sports, 1951. Source: Ara Irititja, Museum Victoria (Richard Seeger) Collection, AI-0053148

Some sports days verged on having an almost *inma* or ceremonial like aspect. In 1947, for example, over one hundred people gathered at the mission for a sports meeting that had not only recreational but also social and cultural dimensions. Competitors added an element of cultural expression by donning 'stripes of paint or a bunch of cockatoo feathers in their hair' and 'all entered into the show with their wonderful zest and fun' (*Ernabella Newsletter*, November 1947:3). Invested with fun and laughter, sports days consistently attracted hundreds of people from the bush, or nearby settlements and pastoral stations to Ernabella.

The Gospel of sport

In addition to the fun and enjoyment that sport and games brought to Anangu and missionaries alike, Superintendent Taylor and subsequent superintendents in the 1940s, recognised the integral role that sports days could play in the missionary project. Based on ethnocentric assumptions that European culture was superior and Christian, the missionary project, according to Taylor in his 1938 *Statement of Policy and Principles*, was always informed and guided by the broad agenda 'to present Jesus to these people' and in doing so 'transform the meaning of their ancient customs' (Taylor cited in Pybus, 2012: 9). Reverend Love, who guided the development of the mission in its formative years and through his role as superintendent from 1941 to 1946, reiterated this primary aim: 'Our activities at Ernabella have the one end in view – to win the Aborigines to Christ and to His way of life' (*Ernabella Newsletter*, May 1943:1). However, the Ernabella Mission hoped to achieve its 'civilising' aims though non-coercive measures rather than through enforcing colonial rule and authority (Hilliard, 1968; Duguid, 1972; Harris, 1994: Broome, 2010; Edwards, 2012). Sports days were a key component in this enterprise.

An understanding of the role that sport played in the missionary project at Ernabella is, in part, pursued by way of a close reading of the pioneering work of anthropologists Jean and John Comaroff (1986) among the Tswana people of Africa. Central to their work was the argument that the nature of missionary power, that is, their 'capacity to impose the conditions of being on others', did not only involve the 'concrete exercise of power' but also the ability to 'exert power over the common-sense meanings and routine activities diffused in the everyday world' (1986:2). This second, 'less visible' aspect involved the incorporation of people into the taken-for-granted forms of mission life and associated common-sense meanings. The nature of

the colonial encounter at Ernabella bore similarities to the missionary project distinguished above. Particularly, the mission's use of everyday forms to influence Anangu cultural values and ways of being in the world. Reverend Love was an important influence in this respect. Possessing a greater appreciation of Aboriginal culture than most missionaries of his day (Trudinger, 2004; 2010), Love's missionary method was to facilitate the 'grafting' of European social norms, values and belief systems, what he called 'higher principles', onto Aboriginal communities (Love, 1936: 245). At Ernabella, this involved incorporating Anangu into the everyday life and economy of the mission. In 1943, Love stated:

> All that we have at Ernabella, in sheep and goats, in workshop and tools, in gardening and cultivation, we hold and use as means to teach and guide the Aborigines in their new relations with the white people and our way of life (*Ernabella Newsletter*, May 1943:1).

However, it was a long-held belief that Aboriginal people who visited Ernabella should remain 'tribal' during their 'progress and elevation' to European civilisation. By engaging with the mission and returning to the ranges of the North-west reserve for periods of time, it was the hope of the mission that Anangu would be 'protected' from a rapidly encroaching European civilisation. The efficacy of such a complicated ideal came under constant review throughout the mission years (For further discussion see Kerin, 2004). Problems came to a head in 1944 when the Presbyterian Board of Missions feared that the young people were moving eastwards, away from the influence of the mission and 'forsaking their nomadic life', and were, therefore, in danger of becoming 'detribalised' (*Ernabella Newsletter,* December 1944: 1). Love argued that the larger problem for the mission was related to the reason why the younger generation were visiting nearby pastoral stations:

> They come back here with a great collection of old ragged clothes, presumably obtained from their compatriots who are employed and clothed on the stations. Here is one problem for us: we must make Ernabella more attractive than any other station. The attractions are mainly white man's clothing and white man's food (*Ernabella Newsletter,* December 1944:1).

Thus, the problem facing the mission, according to Love, was to 'make Ernabella more attractive than any other station', a place where Anangu could 'get goods beyond the resources of the bush, equal to what they can get anywhere else, and where they can find something in the spiritual life of the Mission that they cannot find elsewhere' (*Ernabella Newsletter,* December 1944: 4). Sport was one part of a complex story about how the mission attempted to incorporate Anangu in a range of activities that were aligned with the mission project. This was particularly the case in the early 1940s, when the missionaries used the Christmas Day sports, to attract Anangu to the mission so they could experience what material and spiritual benefits the mission had to offer (Hilliard, 1968).

'Ernabella is a mission, not a ration depot'

The Christmas Day activities showcased the mission as a place where Anangu could acquire Western goods. Anangu were rewarded for their participation in Christmas Day sports from a seemingly, never ending supply of gifts and rations, and 'prizes' for the 'winners' of competitions and races. Missionary Ethel Ward, the wife of Acting Superintendent, Stephen Ward (1939-40), reported in the *Ernabella Newsletter* that children were 'delighted' to receive lollies for participating in races on Christmas Day in 1940. The women also received lollies along with 'prized items' such as combs, mirrors and scented soap, while the men received an issue of tobacco for the longest or most accurate throw in the spear-throwing contest. Indeed, for every "kill"

or spearing of a life-size kangaroo drawn on a jute target, the men were rewarded with a stick of tobacco and ‘some men won three sticks’ (*Ernabella Newsletter*, May 1941: 3). However, behind the giving of gifts and winning of prizes came an agenda.

Despite wishing that Aṉangu would continue their traditional nomadic lifestyle (*Ernabella Newsletter,* December 1944:4), by the early 1940s the mission conceded that the impact of European civilisation was ‘inevitable’ and hoped that, in the long run, Aṉangu would accept what the mission had to offer (Duguid, 1941). The receipt of European culture such as prizes on Christmas Day, particularly highly valued items such as clothes, blankets, billy cans and steel tools, provided the mission with an opportunity to emphasise the “superiority” of European culture while also promoting the mission as a place where they could acquire that culture (cf. Jones, 2019). As Aṉangu accumulated material possessions, their hunter-gatherer lifestyle, which was signified by mobility and few possessions, was undermined. From the missionaries’ perspective, it was hoped that Aṉangu would look towards a more ‘settled’ life at the mission station and eventually also become attracted to the spiritual benefits that the mission had to offer (Hilliard, 1968; Edwards, 2012).

The aim of the mission, according to Winifred Hilliard, the handcrafts advisor to the mission, was always to help the ‘whole man’ (1968: 181). Accordingly, the missionaries placed high importance in church attendance. The Christmas Day sports provided the mission with a means of engaging with Aṉangu on a spiritual level. In exchange for the organisation of sport and the provision of gifts, rations and prizes, the missionaries expected Aṉangu to attend church services such as the early morning Christmas Day worship. According to Hilliard, if Aṉangu ‘did choose to accept what the mission offered materially, it was expected that they should at least attend services

and hear what the gospel had to offer spiritually. Ernabella is a mission, not a ration depot' (Hilliard, 1968: 181). Mission records show that most A<u>n</u>angu who participated in the afternoon Christmas Day sports also attended Christmas services. The black and white photograph, *Xmas 1941 Morning worship* (Figure 2.6), shows that a large congregation of over two hundred A<u>n</u>angu men, women, and children, out of a population of 242 present at the mission on Christmas Day in 1941, attended the morning worship (*Ernabella Newsletter*, May 1942: 2). Taken outside the superintendent's quarters in the centre of the mission compound, the photo also shows the Acting Superintendent, Walter MacDougall (1940-41), and Ethel Ward, who appear to be leading the service. Sitting before the missionaries in a tightly knit semi-circle, with women adjacent to men and children in the middle, A<u>n</u>angu appear keenly interested in the service.

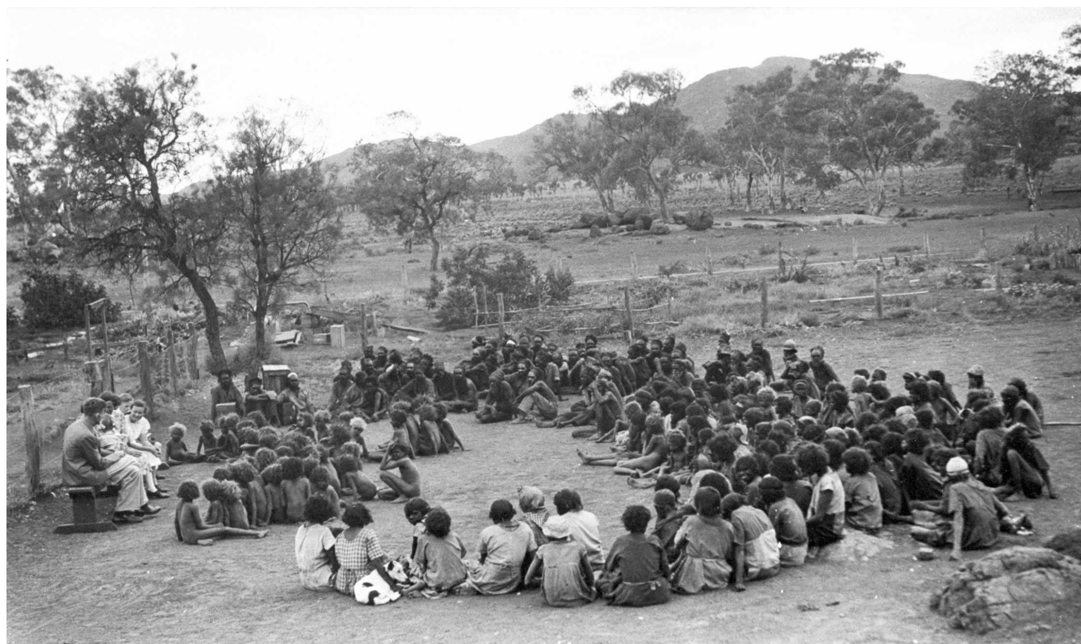


Figure 2. 6 Xmas 1941 Morning worship. Source: A<u>r</u>a Irititja, State Library of South Australia (JRB Love) Collection, AI-0005191.

The presence of so many Aṉangu at the 1941 Christmas morning worship reflects a degree of missionary control and social power but at the same time it may also indicate that Aṉangu, like many Indigenous Australians, were generally curious about the spiritual world of the missionaries. Indeed, Hilliard described Aṉangu as an 'essentially spiritual people' (Hilliard, 1968: 94), and archival research by Regina Ganter (2018) argues that missionaries, with their own set of ceremonies and rituals, ideas, and sacred objects, were considered spiritually 'intelligible' to many Indigenous Australians (2018: 81). According to the dominant missionary narrative, Aṉangu were said to be 'free to accept or reject' what the mission had to offer spiritually or materially (Hilliard, 1968: 181). Duguid underscored this point in a report to the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in 1936: 'when they have seen and experienced the best that the *new* civilisation brings them they will desire it. We must be content to wait until then. The process will be slow, but it is worthwhile' (Duguid cited in Hilliard, 1968: 94).

It may also be surmised that a degree of reciprocity existed in social interactions between Aṉangu and the missionaries during the Christmas Day sports. Interpreting Aṉangu participation in the Christmas Day sports through a Western Desert cultural frame of 'social relatedness', that is, within the traditional norms of reciprocity, requiring an obligation to provide for and share resources with other people (Myers, 1986), it can be speculated that Aṉangu understood that their attendance and participation in Christmas services and other religious activities was an expected exchange for the mission's organisation of sport and provision of food and prizes. Missionaries such as Love and McDougall, who had extensive experience working with Aboriginal people at the Kunmunya Mission, most likely recognised the importance of Aṉangu consideration for people and used it to build trust and

relationships with Anangu. As shall be discussed in subsequent chapters, a connection between a gathering for sport and a gathering for church *inma* services and singing is a consistent and enduring aspect of Anangu life throughout and beyond the mission years.

A subtle colonisation

As previously discussed, the Comaroffs argued that missionaries impacted most deeply on indigenous populations through their ability to exert power over the common-sense meanings diffused in the everyday life of the mission (1986:2). The Presbyterian Board of Missions alluded to the subtle nature of the mission's power in the colonial process, when discussing the success of Ernabella since its establishment: 'We believe that on the Ernabella Mission Station there are daily results unseen by, and unknown to, even the missionaries themselves (*Ernabella Newsletter*, April 1945: 2). At Ernabella, this dimension of missionary power can be demonstrated in a photograph of the 1942 Christmas spear throwing competition (Figure 2.7).

Figure 2. 7 Men spear throwing during Christmas Sports, 1942. Source: Ara Irititja, State Library of South Australia (JRB Love) Collection, AI-005247. Note Len Young (in fedora hat) and to his right, teacher R.M. Trudinger.

While the photo reveals the strength and vitality of men's culture and society, perhaps its most striking feature is the organisation of Anangu into geometrically arranged lanes, taking turns to throw and following rules most likely instituted by the mission. When compared to the photograph of the 1938 Christmas Day spear throwing competition (Figure 2.1), which shows a more casual event taking place in the shade of a desert oak, the 1942 photograph draws attention to a fundamentally different notion of temporal, social and spatial ordering. It is an arrangement that seems to be natural for the purposes of this sort of competitive sporting event, but in this colonial context, gives the event the appearance of being heavily shaped by the ideologies of European forms and practices.

The men, who appear completely absorbed in the contest, were most likely unaware of the influence exerted by the mission. According to the Comaroffs, this is what gave the role of everyday activities such as sport in the process of colonisation their 'enormous historical force' (1986: 16). They were a less visible but nonetheless intrusive medium to work upon the processes that shaped the self and reality of indigenous peoples (1986: 12). And, as such, were considered to be a critical part of the 'subtle colonisation' by the missionary, of indigenous modes of perception and practice (1986: 2).

Examining the image further, the contest takes place in the open area outside the superintendent's quarters where the Christmas services were conducted. This was the heart of the mission compound and the location of all sports days during the 1940s. standing front and centre among the thirty or more competitors, is the authority of superintendent Love. Holding a short-handled steel axe, which was most likely the prize for the longest or most accurate throw, Love appears to be officiating the 'scratch line' to ensure a fair competition. While Anangu expected a degree of 'equivalence' in social exchanges, that is, that things should be *lipula* (level or equal) for everyone (Myers, 1986), the notion of a "fair competition" most likely had little meaning or relevance to them. Indeed, the missionaries frequently found, often to their dismay, that many of the seemingly 'common-sense' meanings they wanted to inculcate through participation in sport were not automatically repeated but rather, at best, had to be worked out over a period of time. For example, Love stated in his report of the 1941 Christmas Day sports, that notions of 'competition' and 'winning' were a 'novelty' and that in the fire lighting contests many of the participants did not understand the 'idea of a race' (*Ernabella Newsletter*, May 1942:3). Other missionaries at Ernabella made similar observations. When reflecting on Christmas Day sports during the early years of the mission, R.M. Trudinger, the mission's first schoolteacher (1940-45) and later Superintendent (1949-57), stated that Anangu did not have 'the idea of races and competitions' (Trudinger, 1995).

It is most likely, that the provision of European goods such as the highly valued steel axe or, more commonly, an issue of tobacco as a 'reward' for each win or hit of the target, was meant to stimulate individual competition and a desire to win, and thereby challenge the reality of kinship and other key features of people's self-identity (Myers, 1986).

While the work of Jean and John Comaroff has been considered salutary it has also been criticised for ‘over-determining’ the efficacy of the mission regime to accomplish its goals (Lydon and Ash, 2010). Elizabeth Elbourne argued that the Comaroffs presented missionaries as ‘powerful figures’ who were ultimately able to set in train a ‘restructuring the native conceptual universe’ (Comaroff & Comaroff, 1986:2), despite the resistance of many Tswana people (Elbourne, 2003: 459). The framing of African people as victims of missionary activity, has led to the Comaroff study being widely criticised for denying the agency and voice of African people in using and reshaping Christianity to meet their own ends, and who perhaps did not see themselves as victims at the time (2003: 454).

Aṉangu, like the Tswana people of Africa, were not passive recipients of Christianity and European culture. While the missionaries used the everyday forms of sport and games to influence Aṉangu, there were limits to how effective these ways were in influencing Aṉangu values and ways of being in the world. This article concludes by examining some examples of Aṉangu power and agency in their engagement with mission sport, with a particular focus on how Aṉangu participation often took place on Aṉangu terms. For example, research by Carol Pybus (2012) has drawn attention to Aṉangu agency while remaining attentive to power imbalances between missionaries and Aṉangu. In her thesis, *‘We grew up this place’: Ernabella Mission 1937-1974*, which explores the history of contact between the Ernabella Mission and Aboriginal people, Pybus has shown that Aṉangu relationships to Christianity can be seen as an agentic response that led to a blending of Aṉangu and Christian religious beliefs and practices to form distinct identities (2015: 23; See Brock, 1988 for other examples of Aboriginal people maintaining their cultural identity despite long

associations with missions). In her history of the Ernabella art centre, researcher Ute Eickelkamp (1999) recorded the life histories of Anangu who had grown up at the mission, which accord with this view of Anangu choosing to engage strategically with the mission at Ernabella. For example, Kunmanara (Nura) Rupert, who was a baby when her mother brought her to the mission, told Eickelkamp that her parents remembered their first meeting with Duguid and Superintendent McDougall and that Anangu chose to play a part in the development of the mission:

> Anangu helped setting up the mission – men and women became church leaders and ministers. The missionaries came and lived amongst Anangu. Dr Duguid and Mr MacDougall built three little houses, one of which was the ration shed. The church was a *wiltja* [shelter] and Anangu learnt about the church (Rupert cited in Eickelkamp, 1999: 9).

Kunmanara (Wally) Dunn, who grew up at Ernabella, noted that the mission has an important place in the memory of Anangu and suggested that Christianity was an essential part of his identity as a Pitjantjatjara man:

> The missionary been put church. Saturday, all the church coming up, and the people Christian. Christian leaders, everybody church leader now. We're interested in God's story. God, and my history underneath, both – *kutjara* (Dunn cited in Eickelkamp, 1999: 30).

This chapter concludes by examining some examples of Anangu participation in the Christmas Day sports and games, with a particular focus on how Anangu participation often took place on Anangu terms.

Anangu engagement with mission sport

Missionary accounts of the Christmas Day sports from the 1940s, suggest that sport did not always play the role that had been envisaged in the wider scheme of the

mission's civilising objectives. As discussed, Aṉangu were not motivated by the ego-centric aspects of Western individuality such as 'winning' and 'striving to be better than others' for recognition or possession of material goods that were promoted by the mission through sport. In fact, such notions were entirely alien to many Aṉangu, and as shall be discussed, incongruent with deeply embedded Aṉangu cultural values and processes. At times, early sport represented a site of conflict between key European and Western Desert values and ways of being in the world. This is demonstrated in Trudinger's reflection on the running of the Christmas Day sprints:

> …it was very hard to run a race because they had no idea of competition. A very interesting psychological feature, in my opinion, that until we introduced the idea of races and competitions, they didn't have it. Everybody was equal, and it took quite a while to persuade them to adopt the idea of winning, of racing to beat somebody, because... you'd line the boys up and "ready, set, go!" and the ones that were in front would pause and wait for the others to catch up…That's how they were trained, in the tribal life; you didn't try to get ahead, you didn't race anybody, you didn't consider yourself somebody because you ran a little bit faster (Trudinger, 1995).

While Aṉangu saw sport as being fun and entertaining, Aṉangu most likely participated in sport according to Aṉangu cultural values and processes. The work of influential anthropologist Fred Myers, who conducted fieldwork among a neighbouring Aboriginal group, the Pintupi, offers a framework for understanding the logic of Western Desert societies, such as Aṉangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara at Ernabella. In his study of social relatedness, Myers (1986) has shown that the Pintupi seem to have a specific view of the self that extends beyond the individual reality of the self to encompass identification with other persons (Myers, 1986: 108). Defined as 'shared identity with others', or more precisely *walytja*, meaning family, kin or 'relatedness', Myers has shown that these relationships are not a 'given' or something

that can be simply 'taken for granted' but are rather something that must be sustained through constant social action (1986: 72).

Accordingly, it can be surmised that participation in sport offered Anangu the opportunity to say something about themselves in relation to *walytja*. Trudinger's account of the Christmas Day races demonstrates that the social ties of shared identity with others were clearly negotiated and affirmed in the arena of sport. For example, it may be surmised that the front runners' action of pausing and waiting for the others to catch up indicates a recognition and acceptance of shared identity between themselves and the other runners. It is an exchange that enables the front runners to say something about themselves by being 'compassionate' to *walytja* and looking after them. Indeed, among Western Desert people, Myers (1986) has shown that there is minimal motivation to dominate others, which in Trudinger's example of the Christmas sprints, could mean 'running to beat someone' or considering 'yourself somebody because you ran a little bit faster'. These are demonstrations of emotions that Anangu would have desired to avoid. By being compassionate and waiting for the other racers to catch up the front runners were emphasising something that was external to themselves and morally binding on all of them (Myers, 1986).

If the arena of sport offered an opportunity to recognise the ties of shared identity, it may be surmised that a failure to recognise and accept these relations through sport may lead to accusations of rejecting or neglecting *walytja* and provoke conflict, serious or otherwise, or at least evoke the sociocultural disposition of *kunta* (shame). Moreover, individuals who fail to constrain their desires by valuing recognition or the winning of material goods over relations could be considered *manyu*, (selfish or greedy) (1986:111). Thus, being singled out and rewarded for winning a competition

could, in some circumstances, be considered the opposite to key Anangu social values, and as a consequence, may involve a degree of shame or conflict with others, a cost far greater than any reward, material or otherwise. Another conflict between Anangu and Western values can be seen at play in the 1940 Christmas Day children's sprints. Mrs. Ward, the wife of the acting Superintendent, 'related the doings of the day' in the *Ernabella Newsletter*:

> First, we had an all-in race for the children. Toys and bon-bons were places in a row for about 25 yards. The children were lined up – the bigger ones on scratch and the toddlers on a generous mark. At the word "go", they ran to the line and took what appealed to each one most (*Ernabella Newsletter*, May 1941 p.3).

This event brought together all the children at the mission for a competitive 'all-in race'. A black and white photograph taken by acting Superintendent Stephen Ward (1939-40) of infants lined up for a race during the 1939 Christmas sports shows a similar 'all-in race' (Figure 2.8).

Figure 2. 8 Infants lined up for race during Christmas Sports, 1939. Source: Ara Irititja, Strehlow Research Centre (Stephen Ward), AI-0057447-001. Note children lined up in rows according to age and the large group of mothers observing the proceedings in the background.

At the conclusion of the race, it seems that not every child was able to win a prize, or perhaps the one they wanted, and this created problems. Unlike the older participants in the aforementioned sprints who were *ninti* (knowledgeable) by being able to demonstrate the value of compassion to others (by waiting for them to catch up), young children, especially infants, were still in the process of learning about how and when to be a compassionate person and would have been unable to subdue their desire for a prize. Young children who were *mulyara-mulyara* (sulky) about missing out on a prize would have most certainly been considered *ngaltutjara*, that is, someone who was deserving sympathy or compassion. Underlying this concept of compassion was a recognition of relatedness between the person who is compassionate and the person making the claim of compassion (Myers, 1986: 113). Accordingly, it was expected that *walytja* would be responsive to children who had a claim on their sympathy. Demands by children were rarely ignored. Hence, at the conclusion of the race, Ward states that a group of mothers confronted the mission staff and displayed their compassion by exclaiming, 'wia, wia' (no, no)[1], which in this case indicated their disagreement with the result of the race:

> Of course, there was the usual group of mothers, later on, bringing their respective off-spring along and saying 'wia, wia' (wia is their negative) – so consolation prizes had to be found for these youngsters who had not been fast enough (*Ernabella Newsletter*, May 1941: 3).

[1] Standard spelling is *wiya*.

Ward's account suggests a degree of disapproval with the mothers' behaviour. A presupposed notion of "fair play", that is, the expectation that competitors and spectators will respect and honour the rules of the race may have been behind Ward's position. The organisation of the 'bigger' children on 'scratch' and the toddlers on a 'generous mark' to ensure that all of the children had an equal opportunity of winning shows that the notion of fair play was an important consideration to the missionaries before the start of the race. Thus, it can be surmised that Ward believed that the mothers' demonstration went against the competition rules and spirit of fair play. Of course, from the Western Desert cultural frame of social relatedness, the mothers were obligated to help their children and it was the missionaries who could be considered not to be in touch with the moral reality upon which all Aṉangu agreed upon. In a way, by demanding the missionaries share resources, the mothers were inviting the missionaries to be responsible like *walytja* and show mutual concern for the children through the social action of sharing.

However, Wards' response suggests that it was unlikely that the missionaries interpreted the situation from this perspective. While demands for sharing could be refused (Peterson, 1993: 864), the missionaries, in the end, seem to have recognised and accepted the mission's place among Aṉangu and were unwilling to deny the mother's demands. Ward's begrudging response that 'consolation prizes had to be found for these youngsters who had not been fast enough' suggests that in this particular contest or ontological struggle it is the group of mothers and their children, or more generally, Aṉangu, who could be considered the 'winners'. They exercised power and agency in their interactions with the Ernabella mission. Particularly, in the ways they understood and participated in sport.

Conclusion

This chapter has relied on mainly archival research to explore the early sporting history of the Ernabella mission and the historical roles played by the missionaries and Anangu Pitjantjatjara and Yankunytjatjara. Focusing on early sporting encounters at the mission such as the 1938 Christmas Day sports, has shown that sport was one part of a complex story about how the mission attempted to incorporate Anangu in a range of activities that were aligned with the mission project. While the Ernabella mission was not considered to be an evangelical force, its incorporation of Anangu into taken-for-granted forms of mission life such as sports days, and diffuse control over associated meanings could be considered a subtle but effective dimension of the mission's power. However, this article does not emphasise mission agency in the colonial process to explain the nature of Anangu participation in sport. To do so, would be to overplay the efficacy of the 'missionary project' in transforming Anangu subjects. Rather, an examination of early missionary sport at Ernabella highlights the agency of Anangu in the ways they saw and participated in sport.

While sport may have been encouraged to be played in accordance with powerful individualising values of the new world, this article has shown that what Anangu adopted was not so much the way of playing sport introduced by the missionaries, as those elements in it which made sense to them in terms of their own cultural values and processes. These values were a major impediment to the powerful individualising ethos of mission sport, and, as shall be discussed in subsequent chapters, are as morally binding on many Anangu today as they were among the Anangu who participated in the 1938 Christmas sports.

Within the space of a generation, Aṉangu were regularly playing a variety of modern sports with a high degree of proficiency at the isolated desert mission. The sports and games introduced by the missionaries in the early years of the mission can be viewed as a foundation for Aṉangu participation in more organised modern sports such as Australian Rules football and netball. Not just in how they were played elsewhere in Australia, but also in how they were played in ways redolent of the cultural values and processes of Aṉangu. Indeed, it is to the introduction and development of a unique brand of Australian football in the assimilation era of the 1950s that the discussion now.

3 Early Football at the Ernabella mission 1950 – 1960

Introduction

On Sunday morning, 9 November 1952, approximately 400 Aṉangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara and Presbyterian church leaders gathered at the remote desert mission at Ernabella for the dedication of the newly built church (*Ernabella Newsletter*, December 1952: 5-6). The baptism of twenty young people indicated that Aṉangu were beginning to adapt to the interventions of settler society and adopt new cultural forms and practices. In the afternoon, the playing of modern sports further signalled to church leaders the sort of rapid progress that was being made at the frontier mission. While women played netball, a group of men played a game of Australian Rules football on open ground not far from the church (Figure 3.1). The match was significant not for anything that happened that afternoon, but because it was, most probably, one of the first occasions that many Aṉangu had ever seen or experienced Australian football.

How long the men had been playing Australian Rules football at the mission station before this commemorative game is unknown. However, from this point on, records show that Australian football became a regular part of Aṉangu social life at the mission. The game was played on missionary sports days such as the Christmas Day sports, and it was played in the mission compound during *kapati* (cup of tea) breaks from work and school, but more often than not it was played on the other side of the creek, away from mission buildings and industry, in the everyday setting of the Aṉangu camp. It was played there on Saturday afternoons during the cool season, or simply 'whenever Aṉangu wanted to play the game' (Yawirki Adamson, 2015). The

game was fast, tough, and unconventional. How it started, and how it was shaped, is a remarkable story.

This chapter offers an analysis of Australian football at the Ernabella mission in the 1950s, relying upon collected oral histories about Australian football told by Anangu who played football at the mission during the 1950s. A master among these storytellers was Pitjantjatjara Elder Gordon Ingkatji (hereinafter referred to as Kunmanara Ingkatji as part of the cultural protocol for a person recently deceased). Born in the bush at Aparatjara around 1930, Kunmanara and his family decided to follow in the footsteps of their relatives by walking to the newly established mission at Ernabella in 1937 (Kunmanara Ingkatji, 2015). Kunmanara was one of the first students to attend the mission school that opened in 1940. By the early 1950s, he was part of a group of young Anangu men who started to play a localised, informal brand of Australian football at the mission. Interwoven with Kunmanara's narratives are a large body of Anangu oral histories. These include Kunmanara (Yaluriti) Adamson (1943-2018), and his younger brother Trevor Kawirki Adamson (1954), who were part of the first generation to be born and raised under the new moral authority of the mission. Together, their memories of the game illuminate an Anangu understanding of Australian football during a period of profound outward change for the desert and its people.

Focusing on the intercultural nature of relations at the mission (Merlan, 1998), Anangu oral histories are presented alongside interviews with missionaries, such as former superintendent William (Bill) Edwards (1958-72), who were living, working and, at times, playing football with Anangu at Ernabella during the mission years. This chapter also draws extensively from a trove of missionary and other historical

sources that document life at Ernabella. Superintendent reports, official correspondence, Presbyterian mission publications such as the *Ernabella Newsletter* (1939-55), coupled with personal accounts of daily life at Ernabella in the form of missionary journals, private letters and a large collection of photographic images offer glimpses of sport at the mission.

The chapter begins by exploring the earliest beginnings of Australian football at the mission. It examines what the early game looked like and the significant role it played in the social and cultural lives of Anangu at the mission. The roles of the mission and Anangu in introducing and developing Australian football at this time are also examined. The chapter argues that an understanding of the active role of Anangu at Ernabella and in neighbouring settlements in developing and encouraging Australian football from its earliest beginnings is crucial to understanding how the game took off and became embedded in Anangu lives and culture in this region.

Ernabella mission in the 1950s

This section begins with an outline of the broader political context within which the mission at Ernabella operated in the period between 1950 and 1960. As discussed in chapter one, the Ernabella mission was established, in part, to act as a 'buffer' between the North-West Reserve and the colonised world beyond. It was a concept that proved to be effective. By the mid-twentieth century, the colonial impact on Anangu in the region had been minimal. However, the idea that the mission would act as a 'indefinite sanctuary' was under pressure (Rowse, 2012: 67). The policy paradigm of protectionism was shifting towards the more idealistic socio-cultural model of assimilation (for a fuller discussion on policy shifts in this period see Rowse, 2005). In 1952, Paul Hasluck, the Minister for Territories and influential

advocate of assimilation, explained what this model of assimilation meant: 'Assimilation means that eventually, as they make progress, all the aboriginal people are to live as we do' (Hasluck, 1952: 35). Unlike preceding policies implemented in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries which singled out so called 'mixed-blood' Aboriginal people for assimilation, Hasluck's formulation included 'all Aboriginal people', regardless of whether they were 'full-blood' or 'mixed-blood' (McGregor, 2005a). For the 'tribal full-blood' Aboriginal people living at Ernabella or in the remote areas of the North-West Reserve, they were expected, eventually, to be assimilated into the 'imagined community' of the Australian nation (Anderson, 2002; Haebich, 2002). While Hasluck's formulation of assimilation represented a 'fundamental innovation' in Aboriginal affairs, at the same time, it has been considered to be 'profoundly pessimistic' about the continuity of 'tribal' culture and identity (McGregor, 2005: 17). Emphasising 'social homogeneity', Hasluck demanded that 'if anyone of Aboriginal descent is to be accepted as a full member of our society, he must cease to be a primitive Aboriginal and change in outlook and habit' (Hasluck cited in Kerin, 2011: 137).

At Ernabella, missionary records indicate an alternative model of assimilation already in place. As discussed by historian Rani Kerin in her monograph *Doctor Do-Good: Charles Duguid and Aboriginal Advancement, 1930s-1960s*, Charles Duguid, who Kerin demonstrated to be a 'strong supporter of Hasluck and assimilation' but 'not supportive of all that was done in the name of assimilation' (2011: 138), promoted Ernabella as an exemplar of the sort of 'social advancement' that was possible at a mission or settlement (2011: 137). Duguid claimed that Ernabella offered a 'quiet and gradual assimilation' and that this model of assimilation had been in place since the mission had been established in 1937 (Duguid, 1964: 16). Rather than attempt the

'drastic idea of immediate assimilation' by removing Aboriginal people from their families and country and suppressing cultural traditions, approaches favoured amongst missions and other settlements in parts of Australia, the Ernabella Mission, according to Duguid, sought to provide the necessary training for Anangu to eventually take part in the economy of white Australia while recognising the importance of first offering it 'to them on their own terms and in their own tribal land' (Duguid, 1954: 58; 1964: 16). Underpinning this alternative model of assimilation was the mission's policy of non-interference in ritual and, as far as deemed possible, traditional modes of living (Duguid, 1972). Such an emphasis was to afford Anangu a high degree of freedom that was unique among missions of its day (Broome, 2010: 206-207; Harris, 1994: 820, 883).

By the early 1950s, Anangu associated with the mission were responsible for most of the work at the mission station. Central to the economy of the mission was the merino sheep industry and thousands of square kilometres of pasture ranges with wells and windmills. Anangu men worked intermittently as shepherds, shearers, and wool graders classifying the fleece of over four thousand sheep (Edwards, 2012). Following the establishment of the craft room in 1949, Anangu women used the locally produced wool to create marketable art and craft (Hilliard, 1968; Eickelkamp, 1999). Anangu were remunerated in rations and a small amount of money on a 12-week work period, for pastoral and craftwork, as well as labour from construction, well sinking and, most crucially, dingo-scalp collection (Edwards, 2012).

To meet to the needs of its growing population and industry, the mission had expanded from the original homestead, which became the manse, to include four mission residences, cooking and dining amenities, a trade store, school, craft room,

hospital and clinic, church, shearing shed, workshops and industrial school, and several small sheds (*Ernabella Newsletter*, December 1952: 3). An aerial view of Ernabella (Figure 3.1) shows the mission site bounded by the Ernabella Creek (the line of River Red Gums) and the low ranges and outcrops to the west. The site appears to be loosely based on the 'English village' layout with the church dominating the central open space, not far from the original homestead, with other residences (the Oleanders and Cottage), the hospital and clinic, school and craft room constructed around this space (See *Ernabella Newsletter*, December 1948, p.4). Such a layout represented a power structure that placed the church and the missionaries and their activities at the centre of the community.

Figure 3. 1 Aerial view of mission from plane, 1967. Source: Ara Irititja, Allan Wilson Collection, Archive AI-0005951. Note the tennis court between the Manse and Oleanders. Constructed by Superintendent Bill Edwards, the surface of the court was made from hard, tightly compacted soil collected from ant mounds (Cameron, 2015).

An unusual feature of the mission's layout was the location of the young men's Industrial School. Built away from the centre of the community, the industrial school trained young men, many of whom were *nyiinka* (initiates) progressing through stages of a Western Desert initiatory cycle or 'men's business' (for description of male life cycle see Myers, 1986; Meggitt, 1962; Peterson, 2000), and were expected to be segregated from the general community. The mission's consideration for Anangu cultural values and socio-spatial arrangements represented a contrast to the layout of other missions such as the nineteenth-century Moravian Mission at Ebenezer in north-western Victoria, which attempted to create an 'idealised didactic landscape' that was designed to teach Aboriginal people how to live like white people (Lydon, 2009). Also, unlike most missions in the mid-nineteenth and early twentieth centuries there were no dormitories to separate children from their families and culture at Ernabella. However, conversion remained the central aim of the civilising mission at Ernabella. The opening of the Ernabella Church in November 1952 and baptism of twenty young people indicated that some Anangu were beginning to engage with Christianity more closely and accept cultural change (Hilliard, 1968: 187). However, Christianity and Christian practices did not resonate with all Anangu, many resisted the acquisition of a new meaning system. Even though the number of Anangu Christians grew, most if not all Anangu, continued to maintain core Western Desert values and responsibilities (Edwards, 2005: 149). Bill Edwards, who became Superintendent at Ernabella in 1958, claimed that Pitjantjatjara Christians 'continued to fulfil the obligations expected of them as members of totemic groups. In general, they see no conflict between their acceptance of these obligations and their commitments to the Christianity' (Edwards, 2005: 149).

Importantly, the gradual and comparatively benign nature of the missionary encounter allowed Anangu - who maintained their connection to Country, kin and ceremonial practices - to engage in church, employment in the sheep and handcraft industries, schooling and other activities such as sport on their terms and at their own pace (Hilliard, 1968). Looking beyond the colonial history of Ernabella, for many Anangu the Ernabella mission was not only a place of transformation - it was also a home, and today, nearly fifty years after the mission was incorporated as a community in 1974, it remains a significant place of Anangu memory and identity.

Early accounts of Australian football at Ernabella

It is difficult to say with any certainty when and how Australian football first arrived at Ernabella. It appears to have had multiple entry points. One of the earliest accounts of Anangu from Ernabella coming into contact with Australian football can be found in Edwards' (1997) collection of Pitjantjatjara oral stories that describe the first encounters of Anangu with settler colonists and their culture. When reflecting on the strange new customs that he encountered, Kunmanara Ingkatji's older brother, Kunmanara Tjilari, stated that he first came into contact with a football in 1948 during a family visit to Hermannsburg (Ntaria), a Lutheran mission located approximately 130 kilometres west of Alice Springs: 'We went out for a cup of tea and after drinking a cup of tea we were kicking a football. Someone kicked it towards me, and I ducked – I did not know about it' (Edwards, 1997: 43). There are several written and visual records that show Kunmanara Ingkatji and other young Anangu men were playing a localised, informal brand of Australian football at the Ernabella mission a few years later in the early 1950s.

The earliest record of football being at the mission can be found in a letter written by Aṉangu teacher Tjuwilya Windlass to missionary teacher Mary Baird (1949-51) who was recovering from a burns injury in Adelaide. Written in Pitjantjatjara, the letter refers to the older boys '*tjaputjapuṉi*' (playing football) '*tjiṉtu kutjupa tjiṉtu kutjupa'* (day after day) at the mission in 1951 (Windlass, 1951a). *Tjaputjapu*' was the word for a child's small ball that also denoted an Australian Rules football. In a second letter to Baird, Windlass again talks about the older boys playing football, but this time, more distinctively, refers to the football as the '*tjaputjapu panya waṟa tjinangku kantulpai*' (the long ball that you can kick high) (Windlass, 1951b). At the time there were 138 children enrolled in the mission school with an average daily attendance of 49 (*Ernabella Newsletter* 1951, p.3). 'Organised sport' was part of the syllabus for the mission school but whether that included football, or not, is unclear.

Reflecting on her experiences as a missionary teacher at Ernabella, Nancy Sheppard (1955-1961) recalled the boys playing a 'football game of sorts' but stated that football was never part of any school sports program during her time at Ernabella. Sheppard's account of the boys playing football at the mission provides more insight into its nature by omission than by detailed description. Sheppard recalled that whenever 'the boys found a large ball of any kind they would kick it about and say they were playing "football"' but did not 'remember ever hearing the word "goal" or knew of "teams" playing each other' or 'anything like a goal post being erected' (Sheppard, 2015). As shown in a photograph from Phyl and Noel Wallace's study of Pitjantjatjara people at Ernabella, *Children of the Desert* (1968), the game most likely involved a group of boys playing non-stop, unbounded football in the dry sandy bed of the Ernabella creek that ran through the community (Figure 3.2**)**. The purpose of the game was to win the ball, artfully evade other players, run and carry the ball for as

long as possible and then dispose of it with a certain amount of skill and flair. Similar to the games of football that Anangu children play in Pukatja today – there were no teams and no goals, and the way the boys played the game and what that said about them in relation to others was more important than any score or count.

Figure 3. 2 Playing football in creek bed, 1965-67. Source: Ara Irititja, Phyl & Noel Wallace Collection, AI-00041781-001

A black and white film stock image taken by Reverend Hamilton Aikin in 1952 demonstrates that men were playing Australian football at Ernabella around the same time as the boys. Originally part of the film strip *Ernabella One*, which was produced by the Australian Presbyterian Board of Missions (APBM) to commemorate the opening of the church, the film stock image is composed of two frames that focus on Aboriginal peoples' adoption of modern Western sports. The top image is a waist high shot of a young woman in a staged netball shooting pose. The bottom image

(Figure 3.3) is a wide-angle shot of a large group of young men playing football on a flood plain adjacent to the Ernabella creek just south of the church.

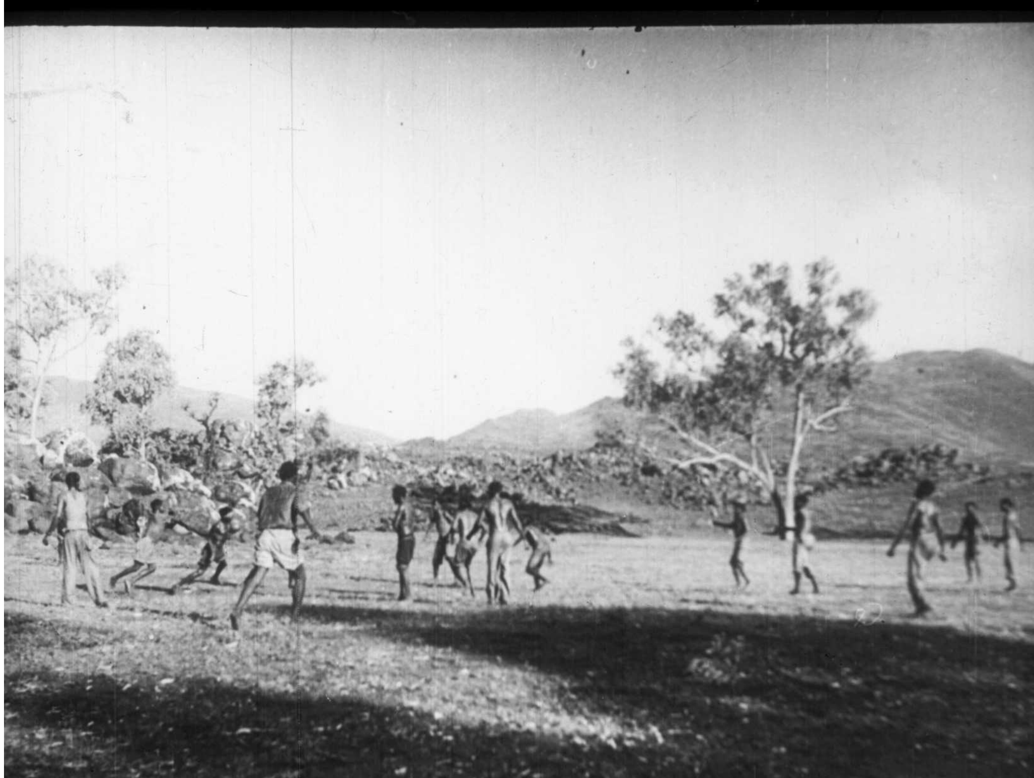


Figure 3. 3 Film strip 'Ernabella One', 1952. Source: Aṟa Irititja, Bill & Allison Elliott Collection, AI-0004530. For script see Lex & Lessie Dunbar Collection. AI-0091113.

At this time, sport at the mission was largely a male dominated field. As it was elsewhere in the country, sport at Ernabella followed dominant gender ideals that privileged male identities. As noted by Osmond and Phillips (2018), the most popular sports in Indigenous missions and settlements – boxing, cricket and football – were constructed as 'male' preserves that excluded female participation. The gendering of sport at the mission is apparent in the APBM narrative accompanying the *Ernabella One* film strip. The narrative, which stated that 'netball is universally popular, not less here among the Aboriginal girls' but 'the boys prefer football with no holds barred

and no rules and regulations to worry them', represents netball as a popular feminine sport and differentiates it against football as a masculine sport through the mechanisms of physicality, aggression and the idiom of 'no holds barred' competition. While sporting opportunities existed for women in sports such as netball and rounders, and in later years, basketball and softball, they appear to be less appreciated. For example, football in 1958 at Ernabella was played every Saturday afternoon in the Aṉangu camp, while historical accounts of woman's sport are limited to school sports and mission organised sports day such as the annual Christmas Day sports. Foundational research, which includes the voice of Indigenous women, is required into Indigenous women's sporting experiences historically, as well as in the present, to better understand the place of sport in their lives (Stronach et al. 2016).

Sport and missionary activity

At first glance, it would seem most likely that missionary activity was the driving force behind Aṉangu experience of Australian football at the mission. The aforementioned film stock image of Aṉangu men playing Australian football at the opening of the Ernabella church in 1952 (Figure 3.3), the earliest record of men playing football at the mission, demonstrates that the mission most certainly encouraged Aṉangu participation in modern sports as part of an assimilationist agenda. At a time when thinking about the future of 'tribal' Aboriginal people was shifting towards the possibility of sociocultural assimilation, the promotion of modern sports at the mission could be considered a form of visual propaganda that was intended to show a wider Christian audience the type of progress that was being made at the frontier mission station. Furthermore, the statement that 'netball is universally popular, not less here among the Aboriginal girls' points to the use of sport as a tool

of civilisation and assimilation. As demonstrated in chapter two, missionaries had a track record of introducing and using sport to advance the missionary project that dated back to the earliest days of the mission. The introduction of the Christmas Day sports to Aṉangu populations in contact with the mission in the late 1930s and 1940s demonstrated that the 'civilising' and evangelical objectives of the mission and participation in Western sports and games were closely intertwined.

By the 1950s, the appeal of modern sports was growing amongst the younger generation, and Christmas Day sports began to include games of football and netball. However, as noted in Edwards' account of the 1961 Christmas Day Sports, the 'traditional' Christmas sports and games, particularly the 'native sports' such as spear throwing, were beginning to wane but still had acceptance with older generations: 'On Saturday afternoon we went down the creek a short way for the picnic. Had a new football for the men and they were quite happy playing football. The older men had a spear throwing competition' (Edwards, 28 December 1961). This shift in sporting preferences was representative of a widening gap between the older generation and the younger generation who had grown up at the mission. It may be speculated that young people were more likely to experiment with modern sports since they were interacting daily with the missionaries and acquiring some of their social and cultural practices, and as a consequence, were less anchored to the way things were done in the past.

Family photos of mission staff with their children holding a football or children at the mission playing football together in the 1950s suggest that the mission most certainly contributed to the early game of football in unplanned ways that were dependent on the haphazard activities and influences of missionary staff and their families who

enjoyed the occasional kick of the football amongst themselves and A<u>n</u>angu men and children at the mission. The image of the Ernabella Sheep Overseer's young son about to throw the football up between two A<u>n</u>angu boys facing off in a ruck contest is emblematic of such engagements between people at the mission around football at this time (Figure 3.4).

Figure 3. 4 Children playing with ball, 1958. Source: A<u>r</u>a Irititja, John Fletcher Collection. AI-0012951.

Perhaps the single most influential aspect of missionaries' encouragement of the game was their provision of footballs. As was the case in other Aboriginal missions across Australia, sporting equipment was often scarce (Osmond, 2021: 41). In correspondence to his family, Edwards made numerous mentions of purchasing or

appealing for donations of second-hand footballs from Presbyterian Church associations and local football clubs in the Wimmera Football League:

> If Stawell can send up any footballs they will be most appreciated as the men are very keen and the balls do not last long (Edwards, 20 May 1959).

> The Rupanyup footballs can wait until John Fletcher comes, if he has room, as we have one or two on hand (Edwards, 29 July 1965).

Ernabella Rules football

While missionaries at Ernabella played an important role in promoting the game of Australian football, Anangu oral histories have shown that the biggest influence on the introduction and development of the game at Ernabella came from Anangu themselves. This point was emphasised by Kunmanara Ingkatji, who began his narrative by stating that Anangu were the ones who started the game at Ernabella and that they did so with minimal intervention from the missionaries or any other settlers: 'This one [Australian football] we starting when I was young, and nobody was teaching us the football' (Kunmanara Ingkatji, 2015). Such a contention, though weak in detail, is supported by oral histories and historical records which show that an informal and unique brand of Australian football had taken off and become embedded in the local society and culture of Anangu at Ernabella when Kunmanara was a young man in the early 1950s. The game was 'based on Australian Rules' but was something quite different from the dominant ways the game was played elsewhere in the country (Edwards, 21 May 1958).

Kunmanara Ingkatji described the early game with great mirth. It had the distinctive features of Australian football such as 'kicking, marking and a little bit of handballing' but it was also '*kali-kali*' (wrong or crooked). 'Bouncing *wiya*' (no

bouncing of the ball) and '*ampaya wiya munu nampa wiya*' (no umpire and no scores). Indeed, on most occasions, Kunmanara Ingkatji suggested that the young men would play 'anyway' - meaning they played football their way with little or no reference to the standard rules of the game (Kunmanara Ingkatji, 2015). Kunmanara (Yaluriti) Adamson, recalled watching the men play an informal brand of football when he was a 'young fella' in the 1950s:

> In those days, there was no umpire, no whistle, there was no rules. When they grab the ball, they used to run, run, run. In those days people were fit. When someone tried to get away with the ball someone grabbed him, someone jumped over on top, and over on top and over on top, like um… rugby (Kunmanara Adamson, 2015).

Up to this point, it is highly unlikely that most Anangu had ever seen or played an organised game of football outside of the games played at the remote mission. According to Kunmanara Ingkatji they relied on their experience of playing and, at the same time, learning about the game: 'We just playing… everybody playing, playing and learning' (Kunmanara Ingkatji, 2015). A well-known community anecdote exemplifying Anangu unfamiliarity with the rules of the game in the early days of mission football tells the story of a young man who took possession of the football during a game of camp football and ran all the way through to the goals, and beyond, without bouncing or disposing of the ball:

> …that young man he play anyway in camp. He holding, running, running, running and never passing. He look like he see kangaroo coming and he go. And everyone laughing (Kunmanara Ingkatji, 2015).

Yawirki Adamson saw men play in a similar way:

> When I was a *tjitji* [child] we seen older people, older men, bin doing a bit of rugby football, you know? They used to get the football and run all the way through to the goal post. *Tjana wirtjapakalpai munu inkangi* [they would run fast and play] at that time (Yawirki Adamson, 2015).

There are several historical accounts and photographs that shed light on the developing game at Ernabella. The image *Men playing football* taken by stockman Bill Elliott (**Figure 5**) offers a frozen moment of play from a game in 1953. Most likely representing teams of married and single men, a mass of players, some wearing the distinctive red *puṯuru* (headband), which is associated with being a *wati* (an initiated man), can be seen following the flight of the ball. The energy of the contest is depicted by the convergence of players from all directions with outstretched arms attempting to intercept the play. A fence running alongside the saltbush in the background and the trampled, powdery dirt surface of the oval suggests the game was played in a stockyard outside the mission compound. The large, open-playing arena with 44-gallon drums to mark the goals and a goal umpire standing between them indicates the game was constantly evolving throughout this period.

Figure 3. 5. Men playing football, 1953. Source: Ara Irititja, Bill & Allison Elliott Collection, AI-00018704. Congestion on the field may be exaggerated by a group of men in the centre of the image who appear to be cutting across the field of play.

Mission superintendent Edwards stated that football grew in popularity among the boys and young men at the mission during the late 1950s and throughout the 1960s and that he regularly observed Anangu play 'kick to kick' during lunch breaks from school and work and matches 'every Saturday' in the 'native camp' (Edwards, 2015; Edwards, May 21, 1958). Kunmanara Adamson highlighted the agentive role of Anangu in propagating the game at its earliest stages: 'back in the mission days everybody was working and getting a small amount of money. Every weekend they started playing footy then' (Kunmanara Adamson, 2015). Representative of such occasions is the image *Playing football in mission compound* taken by evangelistic assistant Margaret Bain, which shows a group of boys and men playing football in the open area by the church during a work break from fencing (Figure 3.6).

Figure 3. 6 Playing football in mission compound, 1964. Source: Ara Irititja, Margaret Bain Collection, AI-0037074.

Superintendent Edwards described a football match he observed during a visit to the 'native camp' in 1958:

> On Saturday some of us went down to the native camp for inspection. They live about ¾ mile from the Mission buildings. There are about 70 spinifex wiltjas or wurleys [bush shelters] in the camp. The site is changed every few months and as this is a fairly new one it was being inspected for cleanliness. A football game was in progress, and I watched it for a short time. They [the men] are keen on it and play every Saturday – generally, the singles v the marrieds. The game is based on Australian Rules – they allow a mark but run a fair way with the ball. They do not drop kick because of bare feet and the punts are a bit erratic. However, some of them are very fast (Edwards, May 21, 1958).

Here Edwards describes the essence of Ernabella Rules football - fast, tough and unconventional. It was a style of game played in bare feet, on flat, open ground with the occasional *punu* (tree or shrub) being an accepted obstacle (Kunmanara Ingkatji, 2015). Often unbounded, the game utilised found objects such as 44-gallon drums or 'a couple of poles or rocks to mark the goals' (Edwards, 2015) and was responsive to the surfaces on which it was played - usually the hard, gravelly soils of the flood plains alongside the Ernabella creek where Anangu most often camped. These makeshift grounds were hardly ideal surfaces to support reliable kicks and bounces of the football, so Anangu adapted the game to suit the land and its features. They preferred drop punts over drop kicks and endeavoured to keep their feet and not go to ground as often as possible to minimise injury and conflict. There was an emphasis on high-speed running to break congestion, create space and keep the game moving. The pace and unconventionality of the game are reoccurring features of Anangu football.

As noted by Margaret Bain, the evangelistic assistant to the superintendent, who provided an account of the 1961 Christmas Day football match in a letter to her family: 'the men played very fast football – almost Australian Rules' (Bain, 18 January 1962).

The way Anangu played the game at Ernabella is suggestive of Brian McCoy's proposition that the Indigenous footballers from Western Desert communities in Western Australia that he played with drew on their cultural heritage of being a 'hunter' when they entered the football arena (McCoy, 2002). As explained by McCoy, hunting involved more than the use of a set of physical skills but rather encompassed a 'social, mental and physical technique nurtured within ancient connections to the land and in relationship with other men' (McCoy, 2002: 32). Such a technique of being a hunter would seem applicable to the way Anangu footballers moved their bodies at ground level with speed, agility and careful coordination with varying landforms, the football, and the bodies of other players. Greg Wilson, a schoolteacher who played football for the Pukatja (Ernabella) team in the 1970s, also likened hunting to playing football:

> You didn't just spear a kangaroo, emu or goanna - often there would be a chase. That leaping, that running, that change of direction all comes into a game of football (Wilson, 2015).

Football and the Anangu camp

Although games of football in the 1950s were associated with significant events on the mission calendar such as Christmas Day, Anangu oral histories and other historical sources suggest that games were often Anangu run, spontaneous affairs, more commonly played outside the mission compound, in the everyday setting of the Anangu camp. The Anangu camp represented a significant social space in the

landscape at Ernabella. Like camps at many other Aboriginal missions (Loos, 2007: 59-61), it functioned as an ‘in-between space’ where Anangu were able to maintain a relatively independent lifestyle separate from the mission while also being able to move back to living with relatives on country or distant settlements for periods as they chose. They were usually located on the other side of the Ernabella Creek, up to a kilometre away from mission dwellings and were occupied on a semi-sedentary basis by Anangu men and women who were working at the mission. Thus, they offered Anangu and missionaries a degree of privacy from each other. Often omitted from historical discourses (O’Rourke, 2013), the camp was a source of power and authority, cultural exchange, and wider processes of cultural identity formation, and as such, it was essential to the evolution of Australian football at Ernabella.

John Fletcher’s 1958 photograph, *Ernabella Rules football*, offers a glimpse into the football that was played in the open spaces of the Anangu camp throughout the 1950s (**Figure 6**). The image captures a young man visually tracking the ball with his arms outstretched in the motion of taking a chest mark. Entering the frame from the right, another player, wearing a *puturu*, struggles to intercept the play. Several other men are actively watching the contest. Similar to other missionary accounts of Anangu football, the title of the photograph indicates that the game was being played in a manner that was unique to Ernabella. In the background of the image, amongst the corkwood trees, numerous bush shelters, or *wiltja tjuta*, constructed out of mulga limbs, covered with clumps of spinifex and branches and weatherproofed with a tarpaulin are noticeable. With no provision of housing, Anangu typically camped in these “traditional-style” semi-permanent bush shelters throughout most of the mission years.

Figure 3. 7. Ernabella Rules football, 1958. Source: Aṟa Irititja, John Fletcher Collection. AI-0012963. This image may well represent the same Saturday afternoon game that Edwards watched for a short time during his inspection of the 'native camp' in the same year and later described in a letter to his parents.

Yawirki Adamson, who was born and raised at the mission during the mid-1950s and 1960s, had fond memories of the *wiltja* as a family-orientated space, rich in social life:

When I growing up, we used to go live around in areas like close to the compound area. We used to live outside of it in humpies, spinifex humpies. We had *waru* [fire], my blankets and a few little things in the corner. We had billycans and a bag of sugar and flour. My family was around there, and my

brother might be in the bush camp. We used to take *mai* [food] in the afternoon and give him a bit of a feed (Yawirki Adamson, 2015).

Adamson's recollection of his older brother, a *nyiinka* (a young initiate), who was living in ritual seclusion some distance away from the main community, shows that Anangu at this time continued to be socialised into an environment that was strongly connected to the past. In relation to the Pintupi, Myers observed that such camps were typically socio-spatially organised by a variety of affinal and kinship connections to reflect the value of 'relatedness' (Myers, 1986: 44). Drawing on Marshal Sahlins' proposition that 'people act upon circumstances according to their own cultural presuppositions' (Sahlins, 2009: 67-68), the style of football that was developing in Anangu camps, was also created or ordered in part, through complex engagements with deeply embedded cultural values and processes. Indeed, it may be surmised that before Anangu knew the basic rules of football they knew how the game was to be played according to Anangu Law and culture. This distinctive aspect of Ernabella Rules football is most apparent when looking at how Anangu played or interacted on the football field.

Football and Law

As previously discussed, Anangu often played football 'anyway' with no umpire and limited knowledge of the game and its rules, however, this did not mean that the game could be characterised as unruly, disorderly, or violent. There were most certainly important rules for behaviour and living together outside of the game, embodied within the fundamental ontological conception that Anangu call the *Tjukurpa* or 'Law', that players needed to follow or negotiate on the football field (for interpretations of the *Tjukurpa* see Spencer and Gillen, 1899; Stanner, 2009; Meggitt,

1965; Munn, 1970; Myers, 1986; see also Nakata, 2007 for a discussion on the limitations of non-Indigenous understandings of Indigenous knowledge systems). The work of influential anthropologist Fred Myers, who conducted fieldwork among a neighbouring Aboriginal group, the Pintupi, offers a framework for understanding the logic of Western Desert societies, such as the Aṉangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara at Ernabella. In his study of social relatedness, Myers demonstrated that *Tjukurpa* underpinned all human action and that it was driven by the primary value of sustaining ‘shared identity with others’ or ‘relatedness’. Defined as a view of the self that extends beyond the individual reality of the self to encompass identification with other persons, shared identity with others was not a ‘given’ or something that could be simply ‘taken for granted’ but was rather something that must be sustained through constant social action (Myers, 1986: 72, 108). So, when Aṉangu came together for football their focus was not only on the enjoyment and activity of playing the game, it was also on negotiating the varied and complex social relations that existed on the field. Usually, through some form of interaction, reciprocity or exchange of favours such as sharing the football among cousins or by limiting or avoiding physical contact with certain opposition players.

The negotiation of these values on the football field can be seen in those particular relationships where great respect needed to be demonstrated to another player (McCoy, 2002: 32), such as one’s *waputju* (initiator and father-in-law or potential father-in-law/son-in-law by initiation). This relationship is constituted in ceremonies relating to men’s initiation. The *waputju* relationship required restraint or formal avoidance when the father-in-law and son-in-law were in each other’s company, and it was expected that the son-in-law should always defer to his father-in-law (Myers,

1986: 174). Yawirki Adamson pointed out that on the football field this meant that a son-in-law couldn't tackle or touch his *waputju*, even if he was about to score a goal.

> Cousins all right, you can play with cousins, but when you play with your son-in-law there, you can't run and grab him, you know? *Wiya* [no]. And *tjinguṟu waputju*, maybe father-in-law there playing, you can't touch him, you know. *Wiya*. He can get the ball and keep running and kick a goal. That is Aṉangu way – Law. It must be from Law (Yawirki Adamson, 2015).

Negotiating these and other such relationships on the playing field was problematic. Especially with the emergence of inter-community football in the 1960s and 1970s when community teams were striving to win, and players and spectators became caught up in the heat of the moment and 'really excited' (Yawirki Adamson, 2015). Tackling and bumping a player in possession of the ball could be heavily fraught and were largely absent from early games of football. Such physical acts, combined with the hard dirt surface of the grounds, could easily be interpreted as being excessive or overly violent and lead to displays of anger. On such occasions, Aṉangu could expect that any offence, serious injury, or wrongdoing would be considered a violation of the core value of relatedness and would, depending on the circumstances, be met with some form of exchange or 'payback' that was *lipula* (level or equivalent).

Superintendent Edwards referred to *ngapartji* (reciprocity or return) when discussing the nature of football at Ernabella in the 1950s and 1960s. He stated that Aṉangu 'didn't play the game too hard because of *ngapartji*' and that *ngapartji* ensured a 'gentler interpretation of the game' (Edwards, 2015). Ted Egan, superintendent at the Yuendumu Settlement in the NT, made a similar observation when discussing football games involving the Yuendumu team during the late 1950s and early 1960s:

> There was never any venom or spite in the game. Because… there's more to life than football as there are social rules that discouraged unnecessary vigour. There was no prospect of a punch up or anything like that (Egan, 2008).

Brian McCoy discussed the connection between football and aspects of kinship and suggested that, over the years, players adapted to these social codes by playing a hard and fast game that was not ‘too hard’ or ‘too rough’. Thus, players learned to avoid excessive body contact by emphasising evasion skills and ways of pressuring an opponent that also offered him respect and compassion (McCoy, 2002: 33; Butcher and Judd, 2016). As will be discussed in chapter six, the challenges that relatedness and other values sometimes created for Aṉangu on the field, were accentuated in the decades of the 1960s and 1970s when Aṉangu at Ernabella and across the region started to play a more competitive brand of inter-community football.

More important to Aṉangu than game rules was a playing style that focused on individual skills and abilities. Aṉangu put emphasis on speed and skill in kicking and handling the ball. Skill in high marking or leaping at the ball was a feature of the play at this time, as shown in the photograph *Playing football near the creek* taken by Superintendent Rev. Bruce Edenborough (1957-58) of an Aṉangu man jumping up on the back of an opponent to attempt a high mark (Figure 3.7).

Figure 3. 8 Playing football near the creek, 1957-59. Source: Ara Irititja, Bruce Edenborough Collection, AI-0009596. Note that this is the same ground that was used for the 1952 football match to celebrate the opening of the church (Figure 3.4) and most probably represents the first ground used for football in the community.

Despite the value Anangu placed on sustaining relatedness, conflict and violence were an unavoidable reality in the lives of many Western Desert people (Myers, 1986: 170). The relationship between conflict and relatedness is shown in a key moment in Kunmanara Ingkatji's narrative of football at Ernabella when he recalled being speared in the thigh at the mission in 1955: 'I watching a big fight and this man coming behind to me and he speared me and he run away' (Kunmanara Ingkatji, 2015). The spear passed through Kunmanara's thigh and ruptured the main artery. Kunmanara remembered the desperate attempts to save his life:

> I nearly… nearly die in the hospital here [Ernabella]. I went to Alice Springs because all the blood, all the time, everyday coming up and plaster pulling tight but comes through the bandage… and I

> might not make it, but that one doctor, he's a good doctor, he's a good Christian and he said to me, "Gordon, we might be taking your leg". So, they taking my leg (Kunmanara Ingkatji, 2015).

Kunmanara was held culpable for the actions of a family member and, in accordance with the customary law, was speared in their stead. Based on the concept of reciprocity, this form of dispute resolution aimed to reduce ongoing violence by restoring order and balance between groups in conflict (For a discussion of significance of Aboriginal dispute resolution see Jerry Jangala Patrick cited in Hendry et al., 2018: 149-150). Kunmanara's experience demonstrates whether it was relatedness or conflict that was manifest in social relations at this time, Anangu expected that *ngapartji* (reciprocity and equivalence) would be the guiding principle.

Singles versus the marrieds

A significant feature of early football games at Ernabella was the enthusiasm that men had for being in the company of other men. It is perhaps one of the reasons why the game was so attractive to many Anangu. This enthusiasm was arguably reflected in the arrangement of teams. Drawn from the camp population, the teams were, as the name suggests, made up of men who were married and those who were single. According to Edwards:

> They played singles versus the married ones. The singles were young men, and the married ones were older men in their mid-twenties. Then you didn't marry until you were in your mid-twenties. (Edwards, 2015).

Marking teams in this way is not unique in early forms of football across Australian missions and government reserves in the twentieth century (See examples from Taroom, 1924 and Thursday Island, 1928 and 1959: *Worker* (Brisbane), 8 May 1924: 10; *The Catholic Press (*Sydney) 30 August 1928: 7; *Torres News* (Thursday Island)

21 April 1959: 9), and to a large extent it reflects a distinct lack of football opponents in and around Ernabella in the 1950s, but in this social context the arrangement also suggests a recognition of some of the strong lifetime bonds that existed between older and younger men within Western Desert culture.

To begin with, it needs to be established that when Anangu refer to football teams of 'married men' or 'single men' they are specifically referring to men as *wati*, that is initiated men who were progressing through stages of a Western Desert initiatory cycle or 'men's business'. Within this group of initiated men, there are several relative, hierarchical stages of development, with each stage ranking as subordinate to the next higher stage (Myers, 1986: 236-7). In the 1950s, it is most likely that all of the Anangu men playing football at Ernabella would have been progressing through the male life cycle and recognised their relation to the men they were playing football with and against. While both married and single men were equal in being responsible for themselves, an important distinction between the two is that single men had not progressed as far along the male life cycle as older, married men and were not considered ready for the responsibility for 'looking after' others and marriage (Myers, 1986: 238; Hilliard, 1968: 112). Conversely, older men or married men with 'higher status' were considered to have the power and authority to take responsibility for others and look after or guide younger men and where necessary control their behaviour. In this way, older men contributed to the social development of younger men. The frequent selection of 'married versus single men' suggests that early football may have reinforced some of the strong lifetime bonds that existed between older and younger men within Western Desert culture and some of the various ways these relations shaped younger men as they progressed towards greater autonomy and the responsibility of 'looking after' others. That is not to say that football was

connected to 'men's business'. Young men's progression through the male life cycle only took place through participation and performance in ceremonial activities (Myers, 1986: 237). According to a former player of the Ernabella football team: 'Men's business is separate from football. In summertime we look after men's culture, wintertime we play football' (Ernabella footballer, 2015).

McCoy in his text *Holding Men* (2008) arrived at a similar understanding. Having been closely involved with Aboriginal men as a player and coach of Australian football since the mid-1970s, McCoy suggested that young men's engagement with football opened up a pathway into adulthood and for intergenerational bonding with senior men. Drawing on Fred Myers' recognition of the core Western Desert value of *kanyirninpa*, that is, to metaphorically 'hold' or 'look after' or be responsible for others, McCoy argued that senior men such as leading players and coaches represented 'strong role models for young men transitioning into the cultural and engendered space of adulthood' (McCoy, 2008: 158). The arrangement of A<u>n</u>angu men at Ernabella into teams of the 'singles and the marrieds' implies a similar relationship between older, married men and younger, single men much like that of a modern-day coach or senior player, with an emphasis not so much on the values of competition or winning but rather on guidance and becoming a social person.

For good reason because being a social person in the comparatively new social context of the mission presented A<u>n</u>angu at Ernabella with challenges. For a group of people who had, in years past, travelled in small family groups of rarely more than thirty people and formed no permanent camp (Finlayson, 1935), large numbers of A<u>n</u>angu living in proximity together in camps at Ernabella for extended periods sometimes created social tensions and conflict (Edwards, 1992). Arguably, one of the

benefits of camp football was that it enabled groups of men to come together, create a social or communal identity and sustain the appearance of everyone being related or, of being from what Myers called the 'one camp' (Myers, 1986: 164). As 'one camp' Aṉangu men were in a better position to work cooperatively and help each other, and in doing so, minimise the potential for conflict between local groups and individuals.

'The man from Areyonga'

Kunmaṉara Ingkatji's involvement with football did not end with the amputation of his leg after the spearing. On most Saturdays during his rehabilitation in Adelaide, Kunmaṉara found himself at the local football club. He was inspired by what he saw:

> I looking every Saturday in Adelaide at white people playing football and I thinking, "Alright, I might be taking later when I go back to Ernabella… and might be teaching the young men" (Kunmaṉara Ingkatji, 2015).

Kunmaṉara took his newfound knowledge of the game back to the mission. A photograph taken by stockman Bill Elliot captured the moment of Kunmaṉara's triumphal return to Ernabella (**Figure 3.10**).

Figure 3. 9 Kunmaṉara returning from his long stay in Adelaide, 12/1955. Source: Aṟa Irititja, Bill and Allison Collection. AI-0017985. Kunmaṉara returns to Ernabella from eight month rehabilitation with a Presbyterian church family in Adelaide in truck from Finke.

However, when reflecting on his teaching of football from this time, Kunmaṉara conceded:

> I teaching wrong… no not wrong, I teaching a little bit straight because I learning. The man from Areyonga, he know and he talking and he making straight, and he teaching a lot of young men and married men (Kunmaṉara Ingkatji, 2015).

Up to this point, Anangu from Ernabella had played football with very little intervention or guidance from other people. They had been 'just playing… and learning' (Kunmanara Ingkatji, 2015). According to Kunmanara, this situation began to change when relatives from Areyonga and other settlements where competitive football was played, shared knowledge about the game and guided men's participation in the practices of their regions. Highlighting the process of how knowledge of the game was spread from place to place, Kunmanara stated:

> Nobody was teaching us the football but other people starting and playing in Areyonga, mission Areyonga. We just playing but Areyonga people, they learning from white people in Alice Springs, a little bit of learning, and the man from Areyonga, he coming to Ernabella (Kunmanara Ingkatji, 2015).

The 'Areyonga people' were Pitjantjatjara countrymen who had moved from their country in the Petermann Ranges and surrounding areas in the NT to the government settlement at Areyonga (now known as Utju), 200 kilometres west of Alice Springs. Situated at the end of a narrow rocky valley of the James Ranges on Western Arrernte country (**Figure 3.12),** Areyonga was established as a ration depot by the Hermannsburg mission, with assistance from the Australian Army and the Territory Administration, during the Second World War in 1943 (Rowse, 1998: 98). By the 1950s, Areyonga was considered to be an outpost of the Hermannsburg Mission, along with the Haasts Bluff Native Settlement, which was established in similar circumstances in 1940 (Rowse, 1998: 98-9). Located north of the Petermann Ranges within Western Arrernte country, Pitjantjatjara at Areyonga were separated by 250 kilometres from their family and kin at Ernabella.

Figure 3. 10. Areyonga settlement, 1958. Source: Northern Territory Library, Ellen Kettle Collection. PH0127/0185.

Most of the people at Ernabella were connected culturally, linguistically, economically and spiritually to the whole of the Western Desert population - to what Myers argued was a 'vast and interlocking network of persons' (Myers, 1986: 27). Despite the geographical distance between Ernabella and other missions and settlements throughout the region, many Anangu in the 1950s and early 1960s travelled widely and temporarily co-resided with relatives for periods as they chose (For example, see Rose, 1965; Tjilari cited in Edwards, 1994). Often it was the performance of ceremonies and the transmission of ritual knowledge between older and younger members within each group that brought Anangu together (Layton, 1986: 78). This was the case in 1963 when superintendent Edwards reported that over 200 people from Areyonga arrived in Ernabella for a men's initiation ceremony

during the holiday period at the end of the shearing season in July, known at Ernabella as the annual 'walkabout':

> A big crowd arrived in here this evening from Areyonga settlement about 200 miles north for a corroboree. Probably over 200 in the party… our people will move off with them on the annual walkabout (Edwards, 24 July 1963).

At this time, Anangu often used camels to support their mobility and independence (see Rose, 1965; McKnight, 1969; Vaarzon-Morel, 2012) while others walked. In an oral history recorded for a Tjanpi Desert Weavers exhibition catalogue, Niningka Kunmanara Lewis, an Anangu woman born half-way between Areyonga and Ernabella, recalled the walking route between Ernabella and Areyonga taken by her family to visit relatives in the 1950s, and attested that the journey took about two weeks if you were 'walking fairly slowly with a string of donkeys' (Kunmanara Lewis, 2009).

Kunmanara Ingkatji's account of the Areyonga people learning football from white people in Alice Springs aligns with an understanding of football originating in the town of Alice Springs and spreading outward into the hinterland where most Aboriginal people lived. As shall be discussed in chapters four and five, competition football had been flourishing in Alice Springs since the Second World War when troops of the Second Australian Imperial Force (2nd AIF) stationed in the Northern Territory played Australian football as often as possible and wherever they went. The post-war establishment of the immensely popular Centralian Football Association (CAFA), which included one of the first organised Aboriginal football teams in the nation, the Pioneers, most likely provided a degree of impetus for the diffusion of football throughout the region.

During the 1950s, football started to blossom in settlements within a couple of days drive of Alice Springs. While many of these histories have yet to be told, the oldest settlement in the region, the Hermannsburg mission (established in 1877), which had an earlier introduction to football than the rest of the region, had established its own football team, the Hermannsburg Harriers, by at least 1952, and was playing high profile games against teams from the CAFA, both in Alice Springs and Hermannsburg throughout the early to mid-1950s (*Centralian Advocate* [Alice Springs], 9 April 1954). Despite Hermannsburg being on Western Arrernte country, well north of Pitjantjatjara and Yankunytjatjara homelands, many A<u>n</u>angu travelled from Ernabella to Hermannsburg via Areyonga in the 1940s. Indeed, as we have seen, Kunma<u>n</u>ara Ingkatji's older brother was first introduced to the game of football when his family travelled to Hermannsburg in 1948. Elsewhere, research has shown that Walpiri from the government ration station of Yuendumu played a central role in the emergence of inter-settlement football in the central desert region (McKinnon and Campbell, 2012). Ted Egan, then a Department of Aboriginal Affairs superintendent in Yuendumu is credited with formally introducing football to the settlement in 1958. By the late 1950s, the Yuendumu team travelled to the Warrabri settlement (Ali Carung) about 400 kms to the northeast and, less frequently, to Areyonga and the Hermannsburg mission to play football (Egan and Richards, 2008). A couple of years later in 1960, an inter-settlement competition was established between Hermannsburg, Areyonga, Yuendumu, Papunya and Warrabri (McKinnon and Campbell, 2012: 967; Tatz, 1995). According to Kunma<u>n</u>ara Ingkatji, interactions between visiting Pitjantjatjara countrymen transformed the way the game of football was played and understood in Ernabella:

> The man from Areyonga, he coming to Ernabella, and he umpire and he putting goals and teaching young people and he talking, talking, talking and they starting and playing (Kunmanara Ingkatji, 2015).

By the early 1960s, Aṉangu had well and truly embraced Australian football. The game was being played 'straightway' not only according to Western Desert Law and culture but also, to a certain extent, according to how the game was played elsewhere in Australia.

Conclusion

This chapter offers insights into Aṉangu Pitjantjatjara and Yankunytjatjara experiences of Australian football at the Ernabella mission during the 1950s. Through the memories and voices of former members of the mission and a careful examination of local historical sources, it reveals a remarkable story of Aṉangu adoption and adaptation of Australian football during a period of profound change.

Local historical sources show that by the early 1950s, an informal brand of Australian football was being played at the remote desert mission. It was based on Australian Rules but was something quite different to the game played elsewhere in the country. It had the distinctive features of Australian football, but it was a little bit '*kaḻi-kaḻi*' (wrong or crooked). There was no bouncing of the ball, no umpire, no scores and on most occasions the men would play with little or no reference to the standard rules of the game. It is difficult to say with any certainty exactly when and how Australian football first arrived at Ernabella. There is no one person or event that stands out in the historical record. Instead, it appears to have been shaped by many people and influences throughout the 1950s.

While the mission had a history of using sport as an instrument of civilisation and assimilation, this chapter does not emphasise the mission's role in the introduction and development of football. Instead, it adds to growing academic research on First Nations people's use of sport while under the control of settler-colonial authorities (for example, see: Norman, 2006; Bamblett, 2013; Osmond and Phillips, 2018) by focusing on the agency of A_n_angu at Ernabella, and in neighbouring settlements, to explain football at the Ernabella mission. In particular, it has shown that games of football played in the camp, that is the social space outside the mission, and wide-ranging travel and engagements between A_n_angu around football, had transformative effects on the way the game was understood and played throughout the 1950s.

Most significantly, this chapter has shown that A_n_angu not only engaged with football as a new cultural form but also transformed it in ways that were redolent of underpinning core values and cultural processes. This adaptation of football allowed A_n_angu to negotiate and affirm the social ties of relatedness that existed at that moment through some form of interaction, such as looking after reciprocal relations or by avoiding physical contact with certain opposition players (cf. McCoy, 2008: 158). By sustaining relatedness between family groupings in the new social space of the mission, Ernabella Rules football promoted cooperation and order within the camp and, in turn, represented a way of ensuring that A_n_angu identity and society would be sustained and reproduced across generations.

Having established the key role played by A_n_angu at Ernabella and in the neighbouring settlement of Areyonga in the development of football at the mission, we are left with the questions of how the game of Australian football arrived in neighbouring Aboriginal communities such as Areyonga? And who were the 'white

people in Alice Springs' that the Areyonga people were learning from? To explore these questions further, chapters four and five delve deeper into the origins of football in the greater region of Central Australia. They briefly explore how the game was most likely introduced to the region by Australian service personnel garrisoned in Alice Springs during the Second World War and developed in post-war Alice Springs and subsequently spread to surrounding Aboriginal communities such as Hermannsburg, Areyonga and ultimately, Ernabella. Kunmaṉara Ingkatji's 'Ernabella football story' will pick up again in chapter 6 which examines football at the mission from the 1960s onwards.

4 Football along the Road to War

Figure 4. 1 Army convoy drivers, NT, 1942. Source: Australian War Memorial. Accession No. 150144

Introduction

By the 1950s, Aboriginal people at Ernabella and other widely dispersed missions and government settlements in Central Australia had embraced the game of Australian Rules. While many of these histories have yet to be told, early research has revealed that in 1952 the Hermannsburg Mission had a football team, the 'Hermannsburg Harriers', and that they played several high-profile games against teams from the Central Australian Football League (CAFL) in Alice Springs (*Centralian Advocate*, July 1952). Scholarly research has also shown that by 1961 regular inter-settlement matches were played between Yuendumu, Papunya, Areyonga (Utju), Hermannsburg (Ntaria) and Warrabri (now Ali Carung) settlements (McKinnon and Campbell, 2012;

Tatz, 1995). However, the question of just how Australian football first found its way to most Aboriginal communities in Central Australia remains a matter of anecdotal evidence. Despite Australian football continuing to be central to the cultural life of Aboriginal people and their communities, there is a significant gap in the history of the origins of Australian football in this region of Australia. This chapter explores the popular contention that the troops of the Second Australian Imperial Force (2nd AIF) stationed in the Northern Territory (NT) during the Second World War played a significant role in the introduction and diffusion of Australian Rules football in Alice Springs and along the central inland corridor through which the strategic North South supply route passed and where high-quality competitive football had seldom been seen (for a history of the Darwin Football League see Stephen, 2009a). Moreover, it puts forward the case that participants in the game of Australian football at this time also included enlisted Aboriginal soldiers and civilian labourers and their families, and that their participation in the game continued in post-war period in Alice Springs and spread to nearby Aboriginal settlements, such as Hermannsburg, Areyonga and ultimately to Anangu at the Ernabella Mission.

The history of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people's contribution to the nation's defence is a rapidly growing field of academic inquiry. Most significant has been the work of Robert Hall, whose seminal text *The Black Diggers* (1989; 1997) remains the most comprehensive history of Indigenous Australians' Second World War experiences. Drawing mainly on archival materials, Hall examines Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander enlistment in the services amid growing concern that the north of Australia was vulnerable to invasion, and the role of Indigenous labour in the northern frontline. The work of Kay Saunders (1995) and other scholars such as Heather Goodall (1987), and Elizabeth Osborne (1997) has enhanced understandings

of the scale and nature of Indigenous participation in the First and Second World Wars. As highlighted by Noah Riseman (2015), Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities have long been aware of the history of their men and women in the Australian armed services. Several Indigenous publications such as Kruger & Waterford (2007), Jackomos and Fowell (1993) and Kartinyeri (1996) have told the personal histories of Indigenous service men and women and their families in wars from World War One to Vietnam. In more recent times, amidst growing public recognition and commemoration of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander war time service, a growing body of work from both Indigenous and non-Indigenous scholars has contributed to the historiography of Indigenous peoples' involvement in the Australian military (Riseman, 2011, 2014; Riseman & Trembath, 2016; Maynard, 2015; Scarlett, 2018).

Relying on archival materials from the Australian War Memorial, Indigenous autobiographies and oral histories from the National Library of Australia Oral History Collection and a range of primary and secondary sources, this chapter explores the scope and nature of wartime Australian football amongst the 2nd AIF in Alice Springs and links between the game and local Aboriginal people. The focus of the chapter is to make visible Aboriginal servicemen and civilian labourers and their families, working and living with defence force personnel in staging camps such as Alice Springs because this was where Australian football was played and where interaction and cultural exchange took place.

The chapter begins by briefly discussing the strategic value of Alice Springs and the north south transport corridor to the defence of Australia during the Second World War. Focusing on Government approaches to the supervision of Aboriginal people in

the Alice Springs area, the chapter goes on to explore relations between Aboriginal people and the Native Affairs Branch of the Territory Administration and where the Services positioned themselves in this picture. It focuses on two wartime periods - the arrival of the Army in Alice Springs in 1940, a time when the Services tended to follow the social norms of the NT's white settler population when shaping their relations with local Aboriginal people (Hall, 1997:135), and following the bombing of Darwin in early 1942, when a critical mass of over 100,000 service personnel of the 2nd AIF found themselves stationed in camps throughout the NT (Hall, 1980:79) and the demand for Aboriginal labour shaped relations between Aboriginal and white settler populations in ways not previously seen in many parts of the Territory (Hall, 1997:135). Central to the chapter is a representation of the culture of sport that existed in the Australian defence forces in the NT. Whether Australian troops were upholding a sporting tradition established by the Anzacs of the 1st AIF or relieving the boredom of spending months or even years stationed in the NT, sport was pervasive among the troops. Many of the participants were well-known league players from towns and cities in South-eastern Australia while hundreds more were unknown but more than proficient at the nation's most popular sport. This chapter shows that some of the participants, whether they be players or spectators, also included enlisted Aboriginal soldiers, and most likely, civilian labourers and their families from Alice Springs and regions throughout the NT. In doing so, this chapter establishes a foundation for the succeeding chapters which show that Aboriginal people's participation in the game was significant and continued in Alice Springs and in other areas of Central Australia in the post war period.

Setting the scene

A year after Australia's commitment to war in Europe, there was growing concern that the north of Australia was vulnerable to invasion, particularly after 27 September 1940, when Japan entered a tri-partite pact with Germany and Italy (Donovan, 1990). Darwin, key to Australia's northern defence, was particularly at risk of attack. As one of the most remote towns in Australia, Darwin had no railway connection with the rest of the continent and the only overland supply route to the south was little more than a rutted, dusty, often-impassable dirt road, locally known as "the track". The threat of war from the north and the reliance on supplies from northern shipping-lanes prompted the government to establish a number of defensive works in Darwin and throughout the NT (Donovan, 1990). One of the most strategically significant of these works was to strengthen the overland route to the south, the North South Military Highway (Figure 4.2) (Donovan, 1990; Powell, 1988; Smith, 1991).

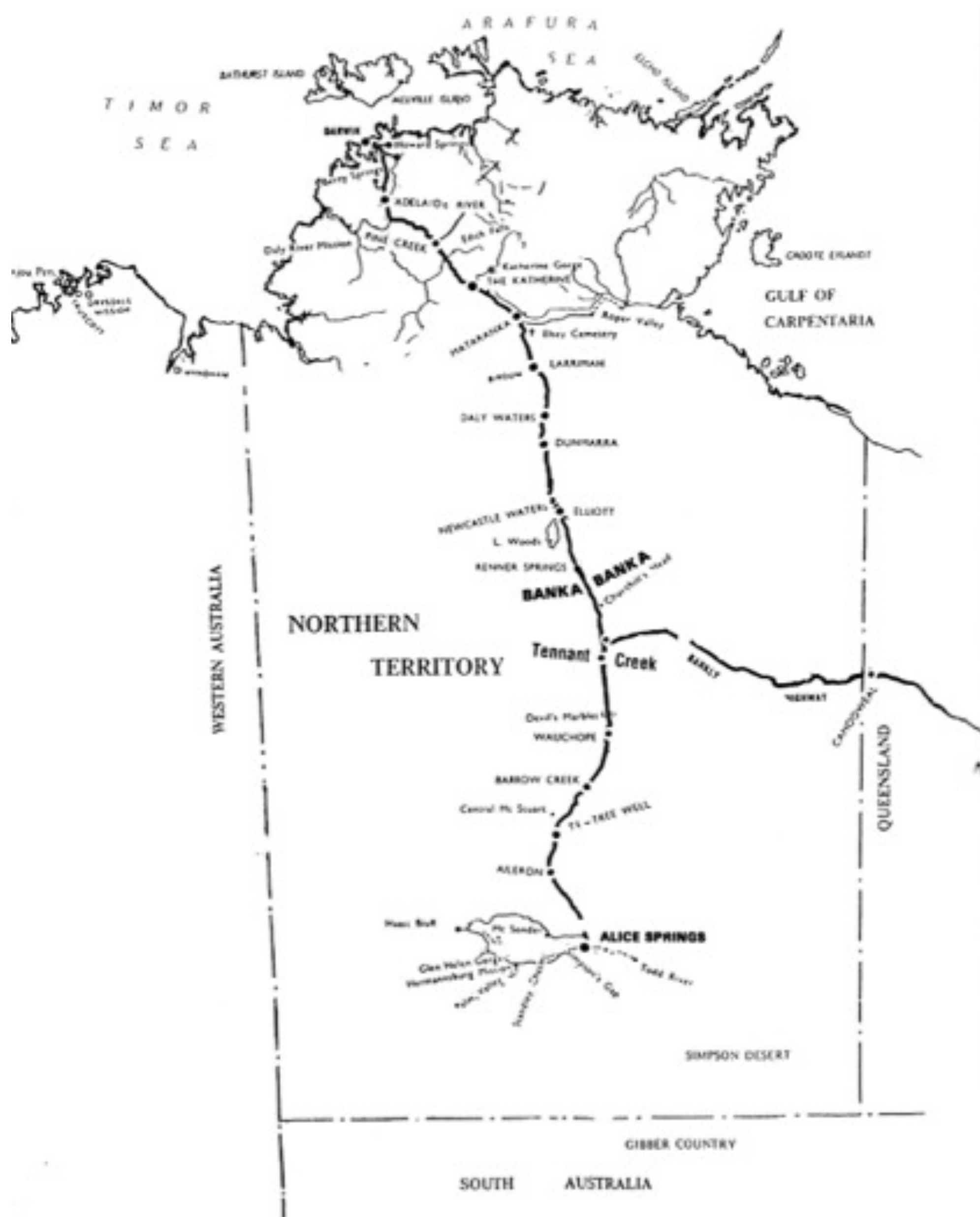


Figure 4. 2 The North South Military Highway connecting Alice Springs with Darwin. Source: Smith, 1991

Following approval by the military board in August 1940, work was undertaken by Army and civilian road construction gangs, mostly from south-eastern Australia, to grade the road from Tennant Creek to Birdum (it should be noted that a few months later, Larrimah, nine kilometres north of Birdum, became the effective railhead due to its proximity to the North South Road). At the same time, the Department of the

Interior carried out improvements to the road between Alice Springs and Tennant Creek. Traversing the country of several Aboriginal language groups, it was a project that would continue for most of the war period, with nearly 1000 kilometres of unformed track between the railheads of Alice Springs and Larrimah converted to an all-weather sealed highway capable of carrying heavy military vehicles (Donovan, 1990:80; Powell, 1988). From September 1940 until October 1944, almost 200,000 Australian servicemen and women staged through the region (Donovan, 1990:81). Most of the combat forces were stationed near Darwin while logistic support units were stationed along the length of North-South supply route. Further south, up to eight thousand troops and 3000 vehicles were stationed in the central staging base of Alice Springs as the North South Road became the only supply route to the forces in the north (Donovan, 1990:81). These unprecedented numbers of service men and women opened the region up to processes of cultural interaction and exchange with local Aboriginal people and as shall be shown, were essential to the introduction of sport, particularly football, in this region.

Aboriginal people in Alice Springs

Despite its reputation as a sleepy colonial outpost, Alice Springs was a deeply divided society in 1940 (Rowse, 1998). Interaction between people in town and hinterland, was generally understood by white people in terms of hierarchical relations based on skin colour - the myth that light-skinned Aboriginal people were superior, or above, so-called ‘full-blood’ dark-skinned Aboriginal people but remaining well below the level of a small, tight knit community of white people (Anderson, 2002: 193-94). This notion of racial hierarchy was instituted by Ordinance relating to Aboriginal people made under Commonwealth control of the Northern Territory, the *Aboriginals*

Ordinance 1918. Despite its intention to protect Aboriginal people from economic exploitation and abuse, the Ordinance took the form of segregationist and discriminatory laws, which deprived Aboriginal people of choice and control in their lives and made them subject to the direction and control of the Chief Protector of Aborigines or Protection Board (Rowse, 1998). Under S.7 (1) of the *Aboriginals Ordinance 1918 (NT)*, which replaced the *Aboriginals Ordinance 1911*, the Chief Protector, represented by a protector in each Protector's district, was appointed the 'legal guardian of every Aboriginal and every half-caste child, notwithstanding that the child has a parent or other relative living, until the child attains the age of eighteen years'. The implications of this were quite definitive, and in due course it became usual for the Chief Protector to remove any Aboriginal child with light skin from their family and detain them within the boundaries of any mission, segregated reserve or institution.

The power of the Ordinance was particularly evident in Alice Springs. Since May 1928, the town of Alice Springs had been gazetted a 'prohibited area' for any person in the region classified as 'aboriginal or half-caste' under Section 11 of the Ordinance (s.11). This included the traditional owners of the Alice Springs area, the Arrernte people. All Aboriginal people were not permitted to be within a radius of two miles from the centre of town unless they were recognized as serving a licensed employer but only then between the hours of sunrise and sunset. Controlled by the office of the Chief Protector, they could also be directed to live upon declared 'reserves' (s.10) and if camped within the limits of or near a prohibited area they could be ordered to remove their camp or proposed camp to such distance as directed (s.17).

The Bungalow and other 'supervised camps'

Despite the restrictions imposed by the *Aboriginals Ordinance*, Aboriginal people continued to live in and around the town of Alice Springs. Their presence expressed the contradiction between the white townsfolk's need for cheap labour and their desire to keep Aboriginal people at arm's length (Rowse, 1998:71). According to the 1940 census statistics that Dr. Cecil Cook, Chief Protector of Aborigines in the Northern Territory (1927-1939), instructed police to collect from their districts, there were 658 Aboriginal people living in the Alice Springs district, which included nearby pastoral stations and the ration depot at Jay Creek, about 30kms from Alice Springs (Cook cited in Rowse, 1998:50), a figure roughly equivalent to the number of white settlers in town around the same time (Rowley, 1971: 36). Of this group, the census records that 136 were 'regularly employed', most probably in a limited range of positions in the pastoral industry as stockmen, or in town as domestic servants. While some of these workers lived on pastoral stations, many of them and their 'selected' dependents were contained in 'supervised camps' that were established in the town area. A 'supervised camp' in this sense meant a camp that was rationed food and goods, and its residents were sedentary (Rowse, 1998: 50). These included local institutions such as the Lutheran mission block and the Catholic 'Little Flower' Mission (Figure 4.3).

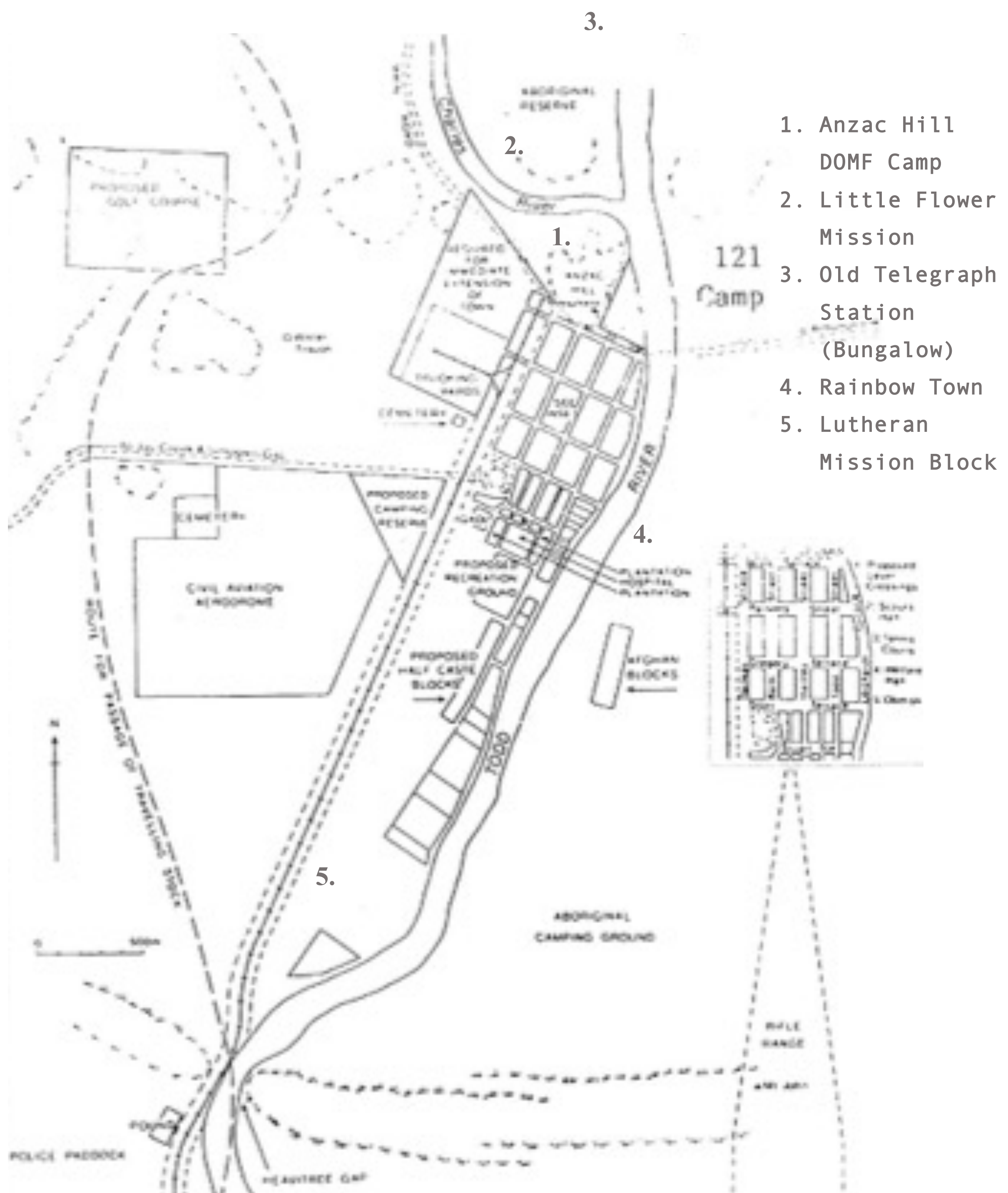


Figure 4. 3 Alice Springs, 1943. Source: Smith, 1991. Note key was not part of original map.

The most significant of the supervised camps was the so-called ‘half-caste’ children’s institution, which became known as ‘the Bungalow’. Established for the town in 1914 on land allotted to the police station, the Bungalow housed children of mixed descent

who had been forcibly removed from their families throughout Central Australia under the direction of the Chief Protector in the Northern Territory. The institution existed at several locations in Alice Springs (then the town of Stuart), before briefly moving west of Alice Springs to a site at Jay Creek in 1928 and thence to the old Telegraph Station, on the north side of Alice Springs, in 1932.

As discussed in chapter one, the dominant position in official discourse and practice at this time was that Aboriginal people were inferior and doomed to inevitably 'die out' (McGregor, 1997: 134; see also Rowley, 1970). By the turn of the twentieth century, however, there were concerns about the increasing numbers of people of mixed descent which gave prominence to the term 'half-caste problem' among government and scientific circles. The government's solution to the 'problem' was to limit the 'half-caste' population through the control of inter-racial marriage and relationships and the removal and institutionalisation of children (Haebich, 2000:18). By the 1940s, the government hoped that by removing children of mixed descent from their families and sending them to school and, after a period of time, to work as domestics, labourers and pastoral workers, they would, eventually, 'merge' or 'assimilate' into the ways of white settler populations. In the NT, where settler fears about the territory's future were deeply rooted, Chief Protector Dr Cecil Cook, notoriously advocated biological absorption, a practice that aimed at 'breeding out the colour' of the 'mixed race', in the hope that their Aboriginality would be lost (Austin, 1990; Haebich, 2000:19; Van Krieken, 1999, 2004).

The shocking effects of these experiences on children are typified by the story of Alec Kruger (Kruger & Waterford, 2007; See Schaefer, 1998, for *Kruger v The Commonwealth of Australia*). Born in 1924 at Donkey Camp, just outside Katherine,

to an Aboriginal mother and white father, Kruger was removed from his family when he was three years of age and placed in a succession of far-away institutions including the Kahlin Compound (Darwin), the Pine Creek Institution (Katherine region) and the Bungalow in Alice Springs. In 1935, at the age of ten, Kruger became part of the Alice Springs labour force when he was picked from a line-up at the Bungalow and put to work sixty kilometres away at the Loves Creek cattle station where he worked unpaid for several years. Kruger's autobiography, *Alone on the Soaks* (2007) and the story of several other ex-Bungalow inmates, are utilised in this chapter to show that football was adopted by Aboriginal people in Alice Springs and other parts of the region.

Other less supervised camps existed along the sandy creek beds and surrounding hills of Alice Springs and areas to the north of the Bungalow reserve. They housed the relatives of those working in town, and other family groups who had moved to Alice Springs from the hinterland to be close to their children in the Bungalow. The most prominent of these was 'Rainbow Town', a cluster of about thirty-five shelters located between Todd Street and the Todd River south of Stott Terrace. In the 'racially stratified' society of Alice Springs, it was a place that the Native Affairs Branch (NAB) of the Territory Administration – which succeeded the Aboriginal Protector in 1939, afforded to people of mixed descent, many of whom were 'graduates' of the Bungalow, to meet the town's need for Aboriginal labour (Rowse, 2000: 90-1). Kruger recalled that:

> The mixed descent community had grown up Rainbow Town as a camping ground… People lived in shacks and humpies. There were about three hundred living there, nearly all Central Arrernte people. A lot of them had lived as kids in the Bungalow, either in town, at Jay Creek or at the Telegraph Station (Kruger & Waterford, 2007: 122).

Not only had the mixed descent community ‘grown up Rainbow town’ but since most of its members were taken from their families as children the community had also to a large extent ‘grown up’ or raised each other:

> As a child I had no mother’s arms to hold me. No father to lead me into the world. Us taken away kids only had each other (Kruger & Waterford, 2007: 31).

For Kruger, Rainbow Town was a place where he felt a sense of belonging. It was a place where he could ‘hang out with mates’ from the Bungalow, Loves Creek and other pastoral stations in the region. Through a shared a history of hardship and suffering the boys from the Bungalow, and other members of the mixed descent community, developed close social bonds, trust and mutuality.

> They knew what you were up against and had a strong bond of having been oppressed by the same group of bastards. You would always get a welcome (Kruger & Waterford, 2007: 122).

The Army, the Territory Administration and Aboriginal people

The war caught up with the population of Alice Springs in September 1940 when the Darwin Overland Maintenance Force (DOMF), an Australian Army transport unit, under the command of Lieutenant Colonel, later Brigadier, Noel Medway Loutit, arrived in town to prepare a camp on the sports oval at the foot of Anzac Hill (Figure 4.4) (Smith, 1991: 66). Within a week there were about 730 officers and other ranks and 150 three-tonne trucks. It was their task to run convoys of supplies, equipment and personnel between the Alice Springs and Larrimah railheads. This initial contingent of DOMF servicemen and women alone almost doubled the white settler population of Alice Springs. The dramatic increase of Service personnel in Alice Springs had a profound effect on the town's Aboriginal population. The Army represented a new authority in town, and together with the NAB Administration they formed an uneasy partnership to manage the town's Aboriginal population and labour force (See Rowse, 1998 & 2000).

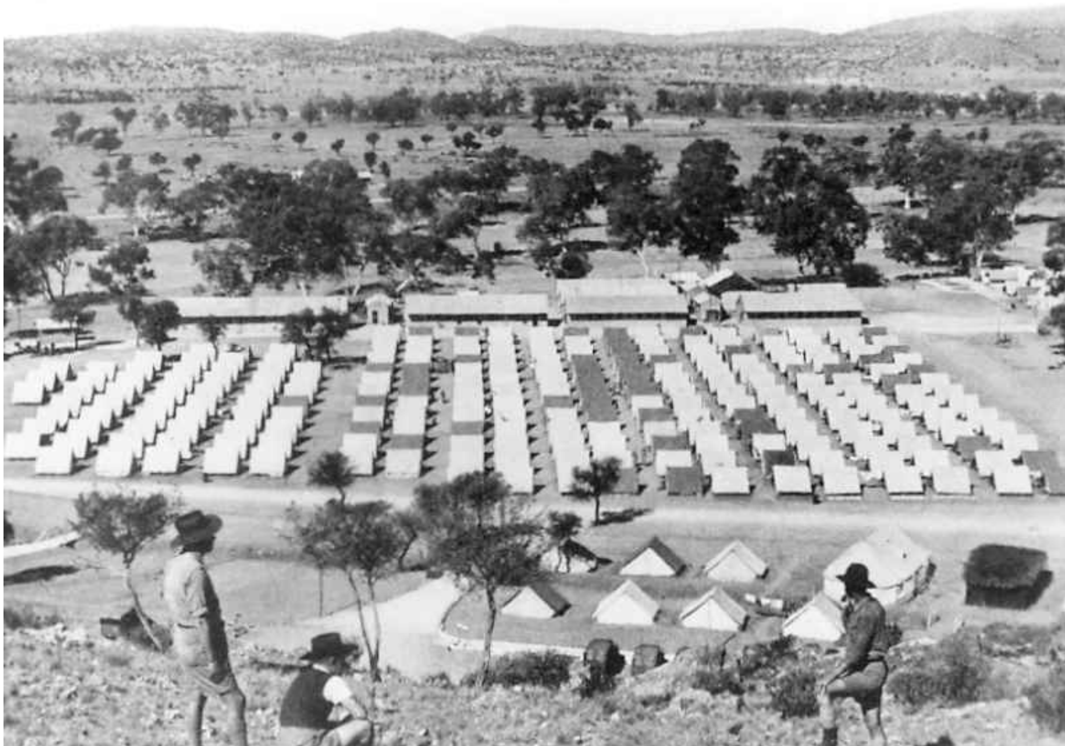


Figure 4. 4 Army Tents in Alice Springs, from Anzac Hill, 1940. Source: Northern Territory Library, World War II Collection. PHO425/0013.

The militarisation of Alice Springs led colonial authorities to adopt a more 'comprehensive and systematic approach' to the control and regulation of Aboriginal people in town and throughout the region (Rowse, 1998: 92). As pointed out by Rowse (1998) a central feature of this approach was the colonial practice of rationing goods to Aboriginal people. Rowse argued that rationing represented a material means of controlling the Aboriginal population and implementing policies. Encouraged by Government Secretary L.H.A. Giles who noted that 'the presence at Alice Springs of Defence personnel has made it desirable to remove certain of the Aboriginal population', those being 'over 100 aged and infirm natives, and those not in employment' (Giles cited in Powell, 1988: 248), the NAB Administration closed the ration depot in Alice Springs in November 1940, two months after the arrival of the DOMF, and those people who received rations in town were evacuated to the ration depot at Jay Creek. In these early years of the war, the Services, especially the Army, tendered to follow the social norms of the NAB when shaping its relations with local Aboriginal people (Hall, 1997: 135). They agreed with the Administration's view that all unemployed people camping in town should be removed from Alice Springs and combined with the Territory Administration to assist the Hermannsburg Lutheran mission to establish ration depots further west at Haasts Bluff (1940) and Areyonga (1943) and planned for another (which became Yuendumu in 1946). Regarding the employment of civilian Aboriginal people, the Services negotiated employment contracts with the Native Affairs Branch of the NT Administration and provided the minimum conditions set by the *1918 Ordinance* and accompanying

regulations (Hall, 1997: 135). However, relations between the services and Aboriginal people changed dramatically in late 1941 when Japan entered the War.

The bombing of Darwin

The bombing of Darwin on 19 February 1942 and the rapid advance of Japanese Imperial Forces towards Australia's north saw a dramatic increase of personnel in the region. By late 1942 four AIF brigades had returned from the Middle East to strengthen the defences of Northern Australia and over 100,000 servicemen and women and Civilian Construction Corps were stationed throughout the NT (Hall, 1980: 79). Most of the combat forces were stationed near Darwin while logistic support units were located along the length of North-South supply route. Alice Springs became the supply base for Northern Australia and the North South Road, which became known as 'the road to war', became the only supply route to the forces in the north. As forces poured into the Territory the service's need for local labour became a priority. Army support units such as hospitals, workshops and store depots required local labour (Hall, 1980: 80). Despite widespread opposition from the Native Affairs Branch of the Territory Administration and the Department of the Interior, (See Saunders, 1995; Hall, 1997 for discussion of ensuing debate), large numbers of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people were mobilised to work in labour camps throughout the NT.

Native labour camps

In Alice Springs, the Army set about clearing the decks by removing Aboriginal people who were not working from the town area. The Bungalow and the 'Little Flower' mission were closed (Powell, 1988: 248). Many of the residents of the

Bungalow were evacuated to institutions in the southern states (See Rowse 1998: 92 for consequences to children) while the Army transported the residents of the 'Little Flower' mission to the old Arltunga gold mine site, 110 kilometres east of Alice Springs (O'Grady, 1977: 72; Heppell & Wigley, 1981: 16). The Bungalow was transformed into one of several 'native labour camps' located along the length of the North South Road between Alice Springs and Darwin (Heppell & Wigley, 1981: 16). By December 1942, there were 105 civilian workers in what became known as the Aboriginal Compound at the Old Telegraph Station. Thirty-nine workers had been recruited from Hermannsburg and the Lutheran mission block in town and twenty-nine from Jay Creek (Rowse, 1998: 95).

By early 1943, labour camps were set up along the North South Road at Koolpinyah (near Darwin), Adelaide River, Manbulloo (Katherine), Mataranka and Larrimah, with smaller camps located near staging camps along the four-day run from Alice Springs, at Barrow Creek, Banka, and Elliot before the journey's end at Larrimah Railway Siding (Powell, 1988: 257; Hall, 1980). Sample figures drawn from Captain F.R. Morris, a member of the NAB who had enlisted in the army in 1942 and held the position of Controller of Native Personnel, showing the extent of army employment of Aboriginal people from May 1943 reveal that an average of 665 Aboriginal men and women were employed by the Army in the Darwin to Larrimah area and the Alice Springs to Eliot area from May 1943 and September 1945 (Morris cited in Hall, 1980: 81). Furthermore, for each labourer employed, the Army housed, schooled, rationed and clothed perhaps two or three of their dependents according to a pay and conditions scale negotiated by the Administrator of the NT, C.L.A. Abbott, on Aboriginal people's behalf (Hall, 1997: 142).

While Aboriginal workers' experiences in labour camps across the NT were varied and influenced by local working and living conditions, many Aboriginal people were attracted to the camps by the conditions of employment offered by the Army (Hall, 1997: 156). In contrast with the working conditions on pastoral properties, which in many stations were deplorable, employment in the Army labour camps, although more regimented, provided a good diet, clothing and medical care, the housing and sanitation facilities were better, and cash wages were actually paid (cf. Catherine and Ronald Berndt's 1944-46 survey of pastoral properties: Berndt & Berndt, 1987). Furthermore, Army employment also offered Aboriginal people a more varied and wider range of unskilled and semi-skilled positions than the pre-war labour market (Hall, 1997: 144). At the Mataranka workshops (431 kms Southeast of Darwin), for example, Aboriginal men maintained and repaired motor transport vehicles and other Army equipment. In the area of Motor Transport, several Aboriginal men had obtained Army driver's licenses and drove trucks. Others sorted and reconditioned tools and other stores and were part of gangs that loaded and unloaded practically all freights to and from trains (Morris & Mulvaney, 1992).

By mid-1944 the Army was employing one-fifth of all Aboriginal people in the NT (Hall, 1980: 81), and given that the number of Aboriginal people employed by the Army didn't include their dependents, a significantly higher proportion of the Aboriginal population in the NT was brought into direct contact with the Services, particularly the Army. As discussed by Hall (1980, 1997), the arrival of huge numbers of white service personnel resulted in thousands of men from the cities and towns of south-eastern Australia interacting with Aboriginal people and culture for the first time (1980: 79). Similarly, Aboriginal people met white people who were comparatively untouched by the racial attitudes and discrimination common among

white people in the Territory. As a result of Aboriginal labourers and white servicemen working side-by-side in Army camps across the NT, opportunities for the exchange of cultural knowledge and practices between white servicemen and Aboriginal people were increased.

Enlistment of Aboriginal people in the Army

As discussed by Powell (1988), Saunders (1995) and Hall (1980, 1997) wartime exigencies forced the Army to change its attitude towards the enlistment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Despite little change to the provisions of the Defence Act and the Australian Military Regulations and Orders (AMRO), which had exempted persons 'not substantially of European origin or descent' from compulsory service and voluntary enlistment, the threat posed to Northern Australia by the Japanese from late-1941 and the demand for additional labour in Northern Australia became urgent and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples began to be recruited into the armed forces in relatively large numbers (See Hall, 1980: 74-5 for discussion). The precise number of Indigenous servicemen and women who contributed to the war effort is not known because race was not recorded on enlistment documents, but Hall (1989, 1997) estimated that approximately 3,000 Aboriginal people and 850 Torres Strait Islanders served in the regular armed forces during the Second World War. These estimates do not include the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men and women who were employed by the military on the home front, most noticeably in Northern Australia, where Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people served as civilian labourers, waterside workers and coastal observers in irregular warfare units. Subsequent estimates by Heather Goodall, Kay Saunders and Elizabeth Osborne place the number around 5,000 and 1,000 Aboriginal and

Torres Strait Islander service personnel in the First and Second World Wars respectively (Goodall 1987; Saunders, 1995; Osborne, 1997).

One of the Aboriginal people in Alice Springs to enlist in the army was seventeen year old Alec Kruger. For Kruger, several years of unpaid labour at Loves Creek Station had become untenable and like many of his fellow stockmen, he saw the army as an alternative source of employment: 'I remember us stockmen talking of leaving station work and giving the army a go… We knew that the Army was taking a lot of people and paying good money' (2007: 121). Kruger enlisted in 1942 and found himself in a specially assembled Aboriginal unit that included young men from the Bungalow and Rainbow Town. Kruger found the Army to be an 'exciting world compared to station life' (2007:121):

> We found ourselves mixing with more strangers than we had ever had to deal with before. It took a lot of getting used to. Some were friendly and showed us to get away with things. Others were ugly and complained about having to share the same space as us (Kruger & Waterford, 2007:125).

Despite the racism of the day, which saw the Aboriginal unit separated from many of the main army units, the Army's emphasis on equality within the ranks and social cohesion meant that everybody had the opportunity to represent their unit and play football. For Kruger, being accepted as a 'regular army bloke' amongst the men he served with meant that he played inter-unit football and socialised afterwards just as everyone else did: 'Everyone got to play. I got a start as a rover near the centre bounce, following the ball around' (Kruger & Waterford, 2007: 135).

Kruger and other members of his unit, were introduced not only to the game of Australian Rules football but also to the social value of the game and its capacity to

break down social and racial barriers between the Aboriginal and the white soldiers and forge friendships:

> Football was one of the social events that brought people together on Saturdays. The teams played as units. Afterwards you had a few beers and got to know people a bit. It was how friendships were made. It broke down some of the racism (Kruger & Waterford, 2007: 135).

Kruger became immersed in a culture of sport that existed in and between military units throughout the NT. Accounts of military sports and games are particularly apparent in the months following the bombing of Darwin on 19 February 1942 when a critical mass of Australian troops found themselves stationed together in Alice Springs and camps along the North South Road. Veteran Allan Pedder, who was garrisoned just outside Darwin with the 7th Australian Infantry Battalion between February 1942 and July 1943, described the pervasiveness of inter-unit sports and games among the Australian troops in the Northern Territory. He wrote:

> With the troops becoming more and more acclimatised to the environment, sport of all kinds flourished. Football was most popular but cricket, boxing, swimming, athletics and tug of war, being some of the other kinds which became routine features of everyday life (Pedder, 1989:17).

A similar description can be found in Powell (1988):

> Sport of all kinds flourished. Football of every code, shooting, cricket and boxing became the basis of inter-unit competitions all the way from Darwin to Alice Springs. Some were of considerable scale: in November 1942, Alice Springs army units sponsored a football tournament that lasted for eleven days (Powell, 1988: 192-3)

Sport and the Anzac tradition

Many soldiers in the NT felt that excellence at sport was an important part of being an Australian soldier. As detailed in Kevin Blackburn's (2016) study of sport and the Anzac tradition, there was an assumption in the early years of the war that the Australian soldiers of the 2nd A.I.F. were inheritors of a sporting and martial tradition that had been established by the Anzacs of World War I. Qualities such as physical and mental toughness or 'manliness', mateship and prowess on the sporting field were believed to foster a certain prowess on the battlefield. Drawing on the idea of 'soldiers as athletes' a chorus of public figures and Australian war correspondents of the day espoused this strong belief (Blackburn, 2016: 67). While sport was often played informally during free time in Alice Springs and in camps along the North South Road (Figure 4.5), the Australian Army recognised that organised sport supported recruits to develop those qualities that were deemed to be make them a good soldier and patronised sport in a variety of ways.

Figure 4. 5 Impromptu game of Football at Ti Tree Wells Camp, 1944. Source: Australian War Memorial. Accession No. 067033

Led by local area commander and distinguished Gallipoli veteran, Brigadier Noel Medway Loutit, company commanding officers such as Major Forster, the 121st Australian General Transport Company (AGTC) Commanding Officer, who 'knew from his First World War experience', according to 121st AGTC member Alan Smith (1991), that 'the moral influence of games was very strong in inducing a sense of mateship' (1991:172), organised highly competitive sport meetings and competitions to encourage a sense of loyalty and social cohesion within units. However, among military personnel stationed in Alice Springs, and indeed throughout the Territory, it was football matches that were seen as 'proving grounds' for troops to live up to the Anzac ideal. According to Pedder, it was football that 'offered a chance for the battalion team to show off its prowess' (Pedder, 1989:20).

Sport in army camps in the NT was used not only as a preparation for war. Once the threat of Japanese invasion receded in the latter half of 1942 (Long, 1963) and the majority of Australian troops were restricted to garrison duties in Northern Australia, the army command used sport for different reasons. While there were significant campaigns in Papua and New Guinea in 1942-43 and over the succeeding years a series of 'mopping up operations' in the Southwest Pacific (Grey, 2008: 187), troops stationed in the tropical north or arid interior of the Northern Territory spent months, even years, retraining and waiting for whatever future campaigns may occur. Many of the troops never saw front-line action. Gavin Long (1963) wrote of disenchantment in the 2nd AIF observing that these were 'years of anti-climax for a big proportion of the men who enlisted in the first two years of the war' (1963: 80). Boredom was a major

factor in the poor morale, frustration, anger and ill-discipline that crept into NT Defence Forces (Donovan, 1990:104). Concerned army commanders used sport to relieve boredom and maintain discipline amongst the troops. Large-scale inter-unit events and competitions featuring competitive sports such as football, boxing and athletics were held throughout Central and Northern Australia. Indeed, in November 1942 one football tournament in Alice Springs continued for eleven days (Powell, 1988:193).

‘There were a lot of gun footballers in the army’

The enthusiasm of the troops for competitive sport while stationed in the NT reflected their participation in sport before enlistment. A survey of 3,700 veterans of the 2nd AIF by Barrett (1987) suggests that 75% were involved in some sport at some level before enlistment and that 50% were engaged at a competitive level in sport (1987: 62). Some of the troops in the NT, such as Des Fothergill who played football and cricket for Victoria, were well known, while hundreds more were unknown but more than proficient at a range of sports. The Australian press, various sports associations and the general public were said to have placed considerable pressure on sports people to enlist (Blackburn, 2016: 70). By the end of the war, almost 1500 players from the Victorian Football League (VFL) had enlisted in the military corps (Cullen, 2015: 235). Furthermore, unrecorded numbers of players from the Victorian Football Association (VFA), the secondary level of club competition in Victoria underneath the VFL, and other state league competitions such as the SANFL and WAFL also enlisted. Most of these players, along with ex-players, coaches and training staff were drafted into the local unit or battalion teams.

Inter-unit football competitions were immensely popular within the services. In Melbourne, where many servicemen in the NT had undertaken their training, Army sporting authorities, with 'great enthusiasm' from wider military circles, established the Inter-Services football Competition in 1942 (*Argus* May 6, 1942, p.8). The competition included six teams from the Army, RAAF and Navy, each representing various units and bases, and invited the Victorian Football League (VFL) to provide grounds, attendants, umpires, trainers and footballs. With marquee players from the VFL, the Victorian Football Association (VFA), country football leagues and from interstate having joined the services, the competition was both high quality and known to a range of football followers across the country (Riley & Mansell, 2012). In South Australia, Service unit teams also had a strong connection to league football and played 'curtain raisers' to each South Australian National Football League fixture during the 1942 season (Hess et al, 1998: 200). By 1942, Australian Rules football was recognised as an official military game in the Australian Military Recreation Programme and internal football games or games between services were designated as essential in the training routine of the 2nd AIF (Blackburn, 2016: 77).

The inter-unit Competition in Alice Springs

In Alice Springs, there was 'great interest' among the military and civilian population in the inter-unit football competition, or as it was known, the Association Competition (Smith, 1991). A showpiece for Australian football in the region, the competition was dominated by teams from the 110, 121, 122 and 163 Transport Companies. Elite players included Pat Cahill, who played for Footscray and St Kilda in the VFL, Bert Deacon, who later played for Carlton and won the 1947 Brownlow medal, and a young Charlie Sutton, who played a few games with Footscray before he enlisted in

1944 and resumed his stellar career after his discharge in May 1946 (Cullen, 2015). Other teams included the Australian Electrical and Mechanical Engineers (AEME), Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF), Civilians and Tigers and Area HQ (Smith, 1991: 173). Run by the Army, the competition was 'quite rigorous' and enabled promising young league players from Victoria and South Australia to 'keep in touch' with the game and gain 'additional experience' while stationed in the NT for considerable periods of time (*The Age*, 18 July 1946 p.5; *The Age*, 12 August 1949 p.3). Deacon, whose form in Army football, particularly in interstate Army matches, won him recognition, stated, 'I learnt most of my football in the Army' (Cullen, 2015: 296). When discussing football in Alice Springs, Alec Kruger opined, 'it was the war, the road crews from Victoria and the transport units that really took the game to a new level. There were a lot of gun footballers in the army' (2007: 135). Football was also played in staging camps along the four-day run from Alice Springs to Larrimah Railway Siding. In 1943, the Army formed a combined 'Track' Sporting Association that featured teams made up of troops permanently based at Elliot, Banka, Barrow Creek, Bore 6A (Southeast of Banka on the Barkly Highway) and the Engineers Unit at Morphett Creek (South of Banka Banka) (Smith, 1991: 265). Most army transport units in the NT, particularly those from Victoria, were said to be 'incurably addicted to Australian Rules football' (Powell, 1988: 196). A 1943 letter to the 'Services Sporting Mail Bag' in the *Sporting Globe* newspaper entitled 'Transport's Success' underscored the quality of the Army football competition in Alice Springs (*Sporting Globe*, Saturday 23 October 1943 p.5):

> Transport Unit was the most successful of the Victorian units. It was a talented combination early led by Pat Cahill who finished the season at Footscray. Despite the loss of Cahill at a critical stage, Transport was able to call upon Archie Knott (Fitzroy defender and follower) to handle the side.

> Archie showed championship form and his brother Dan, who played with Collingwood early this season, played in the centre and trounced all opposition, including Len Foweraker, former S.A. interstate centre and J. Templeton S.A. centre. Frank Kennedy from Melbourne Seconds showed that he will be among the League stars when better days come along. Charlie Reynolds, former Yarraville star, gave some sterling performances (*Sporting Globe*, Saturday 23 October 1943 p.5).

The 121st AGTC football team - more commonly known as the 121 team - were in the thick of most football games played in Alice Springs. Transport driver Max Gage, the vice-captain of the "SA" 121 Team, stated 'the 121 had so many good players – our team was superior to teams in the Alice Springs area. They were premiers in 1943' (Smith, 1991:174). According to Smith (1991), the Company Commanding Officer, Major Forster, was keen for the 121st AGTC to be not only the best military unit in the area but also the best sporting unit, particularly at football. Such was the emphasis on sport, that Forster went so far as to ensure that the best footballers, cricketers, boxes, wrestlers, tennis players and so on, were available for sport meetings and competitions to develop the respective sports and build up highly competitive teams even if it meant releasing them from convoy duty (Smith, 1991:172). The services, particularly the Army, were recognised for keeping many leading football players from being deployed overseas if possible (Blackburn, 2016: 77).

Most inter-unit football matches and Area Sports Days were played on the '121 Oval' (Figure 4.6). Situated on the eastern side of the Todd River around Spencer Hill and the 121 workshops, the full-size playing field was built under the directions of Major Forster who was keen to improve the standard of Army football in Alice Springs (Smith, 1991:172).

Figure 4. 6 Area Sports Day on the 121 Oval. Source: Smith, 1991

Between 1942 and 1945, the 121 Oval played host to several memorable football matches that drew substantial crowds. As recorded in the Army newsletter *Mulga*, in 1943, the oval was the venue for a match between 'Victoria' and 'South Australia' who were then traditional interstate rivals. Drawn from local transport units, the teams featured several marquee league players from each state including Bert Deacon, Dick Russell (121 games for Port Adelaide and 18 interstate games for SA), Bunny Skelley (103 games for Port Adelaide) and Jim Templeton (161 games for South Adelaide and 5 interstate games for SA). Victoria wore the traditional navy blue guernsey with a white 'V' collar while S.A. chose maroon. The oval was said to have presented a 'gala appearance' for the occasion:

> Numbers of semi-trailers were linked together around the oval, and with accompanying seats, each was a self-contained grandstand. A special enclosure was reserved for the official guests, including the area Commandant and his staff and CO or OC of every unit in the area (*Mulga* cited in Smith, 1991: 173-174).

Such was the popularity of the occasion for both military personnel and local Territorians that a crowd of 1500 to 2000 were drawn to the match. It is most likely

that the crowd for such football matches included not only Aboriginal service personnel but also other Aboriginal people who were working for the Army as civilian labourers and living in the nearby Native Labour Camp. Since the 121 Oval was close to many of the known camps of Aboriginal people in Alice Springs, such as Rainbow Town, it can be speculated that other Aboriginal people camping in the area may also have been drawn to the mass of Australian football matches that were played by the Army throughout the war years. Australian football, played at an elite standard on full size grounds, must have represented a spectacle for many Aboriginal people in the NT. Indeed, when reflecting on his wartime service, Kruger who went to play football in post-war Alice Springs in the 1950s, stated: 'Australian Rules football became a part of my life at this time' (2007:135).

Conclusion

Between 1942 and 1945 sports of all kinds flourished among Australian troops stationed in the arid interior or the tropical north of the NT. Australian Rules football was the most popular. Whether Australian troops were upholding a sporting tradition established by the Anzacs of the 1st AIF or relieving the boredom of spending months, or even years, restricted to garrison duties, they played Australian football as often as possible and wherever they went. Many of the participants were well-known league players from towns and cities in South-eastern Australia while thousands more were unknown but more than proficient at the nation's most popular sport. The Army's emphasis on equality within the ranks meant that Aboriginal servicemen such as Kruger had the opportunity to represent their unit and play football just as everyone else did. It can reasonably be assumed that Australian football was part of the cultural exchange that took place between Aboriginal labourers and white servicemen

working side-by-side in Army camps across the NT. Furthermore, despite the restrictions imposed by the *Aboriginals Ordinance* and other regulations, it is most likely that Aboriginal townsfolk from camps throughout Alice Springs had numerous opportunities to join the throng of both military personnel and local white Territorians and observe Army football matches that were played throughout the war years. Indeed, so popular had the game of football become that local Aboriginal and white townsfolk in Alice Springs looked towards forming their own football teams and competition when the Australian military forces departed town in late 1945. It is to the development of football in post-war Alice Springs, and the beginnings of Aboriginal football in the town of Alice Springs and its influence and spread to Aboriginal communities in the region, that the discussion now turns.

5 Post-war football in Alice Springs 1945-1954

Introduction

This chapter explores the development of Australian Rules football in post-war Alice Springs, particularly football played by Aboriginal people living in town, and the pivotal role it played in the broader dissemination of Australian football to Aboriginal communities in Alice Springs and throughout the region. In doing so, it uncovers the extraordinary story of how a much-maligned group of young Aboriginal men mostly from the Gap Cottages in Alice Springs built their own football team despite the significant racial and social divide in town. Embraced by the Aboriginal community in town, and throughout the region, their team, the Pioneers Football Club, represented not only a foundation club in the Central Australian Football League (CAFL) but also, most significantly, one of the first organized Aboriginal football teams in the nation. This chapter argues that by the early 1950s football in Alice Springs had captured the imagination of numerous Aboriginal populations and as a consequence was being played in a number of government and mission settlements in Central Australia.

Workplace football in Alice Springs

Following the departure of the military from Alice Springs in late 1945, the institution of the workplace provided new football teams and impetus for the fledgling game of football to grow. Local newspaper reports in 1946 indicate that a series of five Sunday afternoon football matches were played between the newly formed workplace teams of the Railways and the Post-Master General (PMG) (*Dead Heart*, 29 July 1946). The

PMG team played a further match against the 'locals' on one occasion (*Dead Heart*, 3 August 1946). The initiative for the formation of the workplace teams is unknown but research on the social history of workplace Australian football, between 1860 and 1939*,* by John Burke (2008), has shown that this form of football often played an important role in the development of grass roots Australian football and that it enjoyed widespread support and encouragement from workers, unions and employers alike (See Burke, 2008: 283,197). The characteristics of the workplace teams in Alice Springs are unknown but they were most likely comprised of people with some obvious association with each workplace and included returned servicemen. During the war, when there was a resurgence of workplace football (Burke, 2008: 273), some of the players associated with workplaces in Alice Springs that had been important to the war effort, such as the Civil Construction Corps (CCC), Allied Works Council (AWC) and local workplaces such as the Railways, are likely to have formed workplace teams to compete against military teams or combined to represent the 'Civilians team' in the Alice Springs Army competition. The matches in 1946 were most likely played on the bare ground of the old 121 A.G.T. Coy grounds – where cricket was played between the workplace teams of the Town-Railways, Ex-servicemen and Administration-Post Office on Sunday afternoons during the summer months (*Dead Heart*, 16 November 1946, Vol.1, No.17). The Anzac Oval, which had been the town's sports ground before the war may also have been utilised depending on when it was restored following the departure of the DOMF. In the following season of 1947, the *ad hoc* competition grew to become an association, the Central Australian Football League (CAFL), and as a result of a shared vision between two Aboriginal men, Henry Peckham and Mick Costello, one of the nation's first all-Aboriginal football teams was founded.

Early Aboriginal football in town

Interviews with William Cole, an Aboriginal man who came to Alice Springs from Tennant Creek in 1946, and ex-Bungalow resident Harold Thomas for the Sport Oral History Project (Cole et al, 2008), illustrate that a number of Aboriginal people in Alice Springs were playing the game of Australian football amongst themselves by at least 1946. The earliest memories of Aboriginal people playing football in Alice Springs that Cole and Thomas could recall were of renowned Aboriginal footballer Henry Peckham and the 'coloured boys' kicking a football around their houses in the Gap area (Cole et al., 2008:25).

Born in Darwin in 1926, Henry Peckham was removed from his family as a child and transferred to several institutions in Northern Australia before ending up at the Bungalow in the 1930s. It is likely that he cut his teeth playing football at these institutions, particularly the Kahlin Compound and Half-caste Home in Darwin, which had its own football competition that supported three Aboriginal football teams in the early 1920s (Stephen, 2009b: 224). Furthermore, like many young men living in Alice Springs during the post war period, Peckham would certainly have encountered the game during the war years and may have even played recreationally with servicemen. Such was his passion for the game, that from 1947, Peckham played two seasons of football each year. His work as a truck driver enabled him to play in Alice Springs during its winter competition and in Darwin during its 'wet' season competition (Stephen, 2009b: 284). Peckham was acknowledged to have had 'a tremendous commitment to the game' (AFL NT Hall of Fame, 2012), particularly for the game's development amongst the Aboriginal community in Alice Springs. According to Cole, Peckham 'wanted to get a team going of coloured people here in

Alice Springs' and to achieve that aim 'he'd sort of help you in any way he could to learn the game' (2008: 26). This involved Peckham bringing young men together and teaching them the basic skills of the game.

> Henry… lived down in the Gap area. And ah he used to more or less get boys to kick to each other. And he'd show you, you know, how to hold a ball and… well, we didn't know anything about that (2008:26).

The 'Gap area' where Peckham and many of the mixed descent community lived and played sports together, was the location of a subsidised housing scheme for mixed descent couples and their families (Figure 5.1). At a time when government approaches to Aboriginal people in the region, or more specifically only the Aboriginal people of mixed descent living in the town of Alice Springs, were shifting away from official practices of segregation and protection to become assimilationist, the NAB administration pressured the families of Rainbow Town to move a mile and a half further south of town, to new houses that had been built on the town side of Heavitree Gap (Haebich, 2002). Known as the 'Gap Cottages', the twenty-four austere cement-brick dwellings were allocated to mostly families with strong connections to the Bungalow when it was the 'Half-caste' institution. As historian Anna Haebich (2002) has shown, occupation of a standard European home was a hallmark in the 'imagined assimilation' process of the post-war period. It was supposed to re-orient Aboriginal people to adopt new ways of being and dwelling that reflected the norms of non-Indigenous Australia; nuclear families, mainstream gender divisions, and domestic socio-spatial practices.

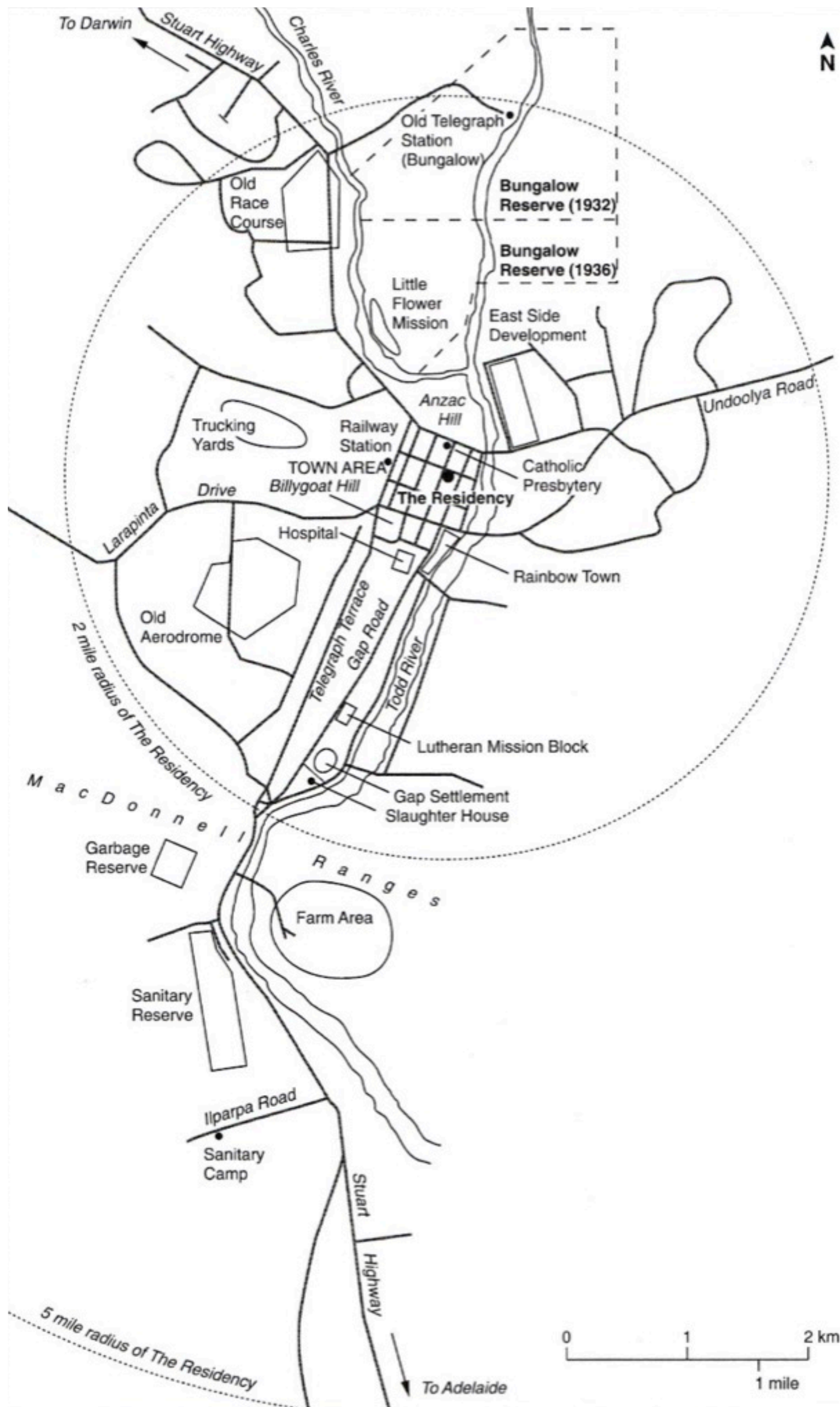


Figure 5. 1 Alice Springs, c. 1950. Source: Rowse, 1998

In discourses of assimilation and protection from that period, distinctions were made between so-called 'half-caste' and 'full-blood' Aboriginal people, which had major implications for the way they were treated by white authorities (Haebich, 2000). Despite being subject to the restrictions of the *Aboriginals Ordinance*, unless exempted, nearly all of the mixed descent community living at the Gap Cottages in the post-war period had become used to a kind of 'customary' or 'secondary' level membership of the town (Rowse, 1998:192). While this acceptance was conditional and continually scrutinised (For example, see police enforcement of prohibited areas between 1950 and 1953 in Rowse, 1998:192-3; and inspections of Gap Cottages by Welfare Branch in Kruger & Waterford, 2007:246; Haebich, 2000:21 and Rowse, 1998:192), there appears to have been comparatively fewer restrictions placed upon their participation in town-based football. For other groups of Aboriginal people residing in and around Alice Springs the circumstances were different. Since Alice Springs continued to be segregated from its bush hinterland, residence and movement in town for the vast majority of Aboriginal people who lived in mission stations and government depots and settlements in the bush hinterland, was legally prohibited and strictly controlled, unless they were employed. Such distinctions between Aboriginal people in the region became more pronounced following changes to the NT's Welfare Ordinance in 1953, when all Aboriginal people of mixed descent over the age of 18 were excluded from the definition of 'Aboriginals'. Unlike 'full-blood' Aboriginal people who could be declared 'wards' and be taken into custody or detained in institutions because of the manner of their lifestyle or perceived inability to manage their own affairs, behaviour or personal associations, Aboriginal people of mixed descent were no longer within the amended classification of 'Aboriginal' (Rowse, 1998). In regard to the hundreds of Aboriginal people employed in the town area and

housed on the Aboriginal Reserve (1945-63), formerly the site of the Bungalow, government officials endeavoured to keep them segregated from their mixed descent kin at the Gap Cottages on the other side of town (Haebich, 2000). As a result of the segregation, the mixed descent community in the Gap Cottages, or the 'Gappies' as they were commonly called, developed into a close-knit community.

Besides Peckham, the other person recognised to have played a prominent role in establishing football in Alice Springs was Mick Costello. Born at Deep Well, about 60 kilometres Southeast of Alice Springs in 1923, Costello was the son of an Arrernte woman, Alice (née Perkins) and a white father, Joe. His parents lived and worked at the Bungalow when it was an institution and Army labour camp for several years. Having grown up with other children of mixed descent in the Alice Springs area, Costello was sent to Rostrevor College in Adelaide where he was first introduced to organised games of Australian football. Discharged from the Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF) on 30 April 1946, after serving as a leading aircraftman in England, Costello returned to his family in Alice Springs and set his sights on 'realising a long-held dream' – the establishment of an Aboriginal football team in town (*The Australian*, September 4, 2010).

Despite the social and racial barriers that existed in Alice Springs, Costello and Peckham found a way to walk in both worlds of Alice Springs society. Not only were they accepted within the tight knit mixed descent community living at the Gap Cottages, but they also had standing among the town's white population. While Peckham was celebrated and accepted as a sportsman, a subject that will be discussed later, Costello, a tall, athletic young man was recognised for his service with the

RAAF and his performances for the Post-Master General (PMG) workplace football team (AFLNT, 2019) for whom he worked. Given Costello's alliances with the PMG football team, it is most likely that Costello, with the support of his father, a well-known Territorian and businessman, networked with sponsors of town football to arouse interest in the formation of a local Aboriginal team and matches against workplace teams.

In 1947, the 23-year-old Costello and the younger Henry Peckham, set about gathering their mates, many of whom knew each other from their shared experiences at the Bungalow when it was 'the Half-caste Institution', to form an Aboriginal football team from scratch. Peckham and Costello had little trouble putting together a team. The nucleus of a team had been playing informal or 'mucking around' games of football on a local makeshift dirt oval, a few hundred metres east of Rainbow Town and less than a kilometre north of the Gap Cottages near the Aberdeen valley, since the end of the war and possibly even during the war. According to Cole, the location of the football oval was located near an area where 'Miss Olive Pink', a botanical artist and anthropologist, lived and later established the 'Australian Arid regions Flora reserve' in 1956 (renamed Olive Pink Botanic Garden). Thomas suggested they played on the oval in 1947 but went on to say it was 'older than that actually' (Cole et al. 2008: 54).

> …about forties, '45, '46 or something we first ah played a few games, you know? Ah no shirts, and shirts, sort of thing. And boots…no boots (Cole et al., 2008: 26).

In 1947, Costello was named captain and coach of a team that mainly included a number of talented and enthusiastic players from the Gap area. On June 29 of that year, at the beginning of a football season that was still being sketched out, Costello's

team played what was possibly a ‘tryout’ game against the workplace team of the Allied Works Council (AWC). The local newspaper, the *Centralian Advocate*, enthusiastically covered the football match. Described as a ‘battle for both teams’ from the first bounce and ‘very fast’, Costello’s team, the so-called ‘Half caste Boys Team’ from the Bungalow, won the match (*Centralian Advocate*, 5 July 1947 p.12). Henry Peckham, who kicked five goals, was said to have ‘played one of the best games on the field as yet seen in Alice Springs’ (*Centralian Advocate*, 5 July 1947 p.12*).* The performance of the ‘Bungalow boys’ against the more experienced AWC team must have raised a few eyebrows in town but with enthusiasm for a regular Sunday football competition growing and a small pool of players available in town, the talented Bungalow boys’ exuberant, skilful, tough, fast and unconventional brand of football presented a real challenge to the competition. It must have been clear to the players and supporters of football in Alice Springs that any future town competition would be mediocre without the participation of the ‘barefoot’ boys from the Bungalow. Peckham and Costello’s shared dream of ‘getting a team going of coloured people’ in Alice Springs was on the road to being realised.

Establishment of CAFA

With ‘the object of enthusing further interest in the Sunday football matches’, a general meeting of players and supporters was held in Alice Springs on the Thursday of the following week (*Centralian Advocate*, 19 July 1947 p.4). By the end of a ‘very satisfactory gathering’ it was decided that an association was to be formed, the Centralian Football Association (CAFA), and that it would consist of three town-based football teams. The first team announced was referred to as the ‘existing team under the captaincy of Michael Costello’ (*Centralian Advocate*, 19 July 1947).

Comprised of players from the 'Half-caste Boys Team' who had played against the AWC a week earlier, Costello's yet unnamed team were officially part of the new football association. On Sunday August 10, in their first match of the inaugural '1947 Alice Springs premiership season', Costello's team became known as the Pioneers (*Centralian Advocate*, 16 August 1947). According to Costello's sister, Betty Rawson, 'the team became known as the sons of Pioneers because, although the boys were Aborigines, most of their fathers were white settlers who pioneered the region' (*The Australian*, 4 September 2010). In what was described as a 'keen game' against the newly formed Rovers FC, the Pioneers recorded an 'easy victory' by forty points with the 'brilliant kicking of eleven goals' by Henry Peckham being a highlight of the game (*Centralian Advocate* Saturday 16 August 1947 p.2).

Derived from workplace football teams, the other two CAFL teams became the Federal and the Rovers Football Clubs. Both teams were mostly composed of white players who had played grade football in the southern states. When discussing the background of early CAFL teams in an interview for the Sport Oral History Project (Penhall & Stephen, 2008), Leslie Penhall, a former NAB patrol officer in the NT, stated that the Federal team, 'were mainly all either public servants or bank blokes', while the Rovers were connected to the Department of Works (Penhall & Stephen, 2008:27). Similarly, Cole stated that 'the bank boys, they were all first-class footballers. The post office boys, they were really good footballers too', while the Rovers team, 'they was all workingmen, you know… the Rovers… they done everything. Truck drivers. And they formed their team too… more of a moving mob' (Cole et al., 2008:27). While players were seemingly free to play for any team, as it was in the larger society of Alice Springs, football reflected the social divisions of race and class that existed between and within different social groups (cf. Bourdieu,

1989). These social divisions fostered strong allegiances and rivalries between teams and their supporters. For Kruger, who was living in the Gap Cottages with his young family in the 1950s, the Gap Cottage residents identified with only one club:

> For most of us Gappies there was only one side we supported. The Pioneers were our club. We had built it up and made it the best club in the competition (Kruger & Waterford, 2007: 254).

Penhall stated that the Pioneers were 'all Australians of Aboriginal descent' and 'came from all sorts of areas' (Penhall & Stephen, 2008: 27). However, this description of the team's background belies the complexity and diversity of the Pioneers team (**Figure 5.2**). One of the original members of the team, Jack Rawson, was a white player married to Mick Costello's sister. Rawson most likely identified with and was accepted by the local Aboriginal community at the Gap Cottages. Further, despite the racial distinctions made between Aboriginal people in the Alice Springs region, there is evidence that Aboriginal people from areas outside of the Gap area represented the Pioneers. William Cole stated that in the early years of the Pioneers, the team included 'two full blood players' living 'out at the Bungalow' who 'played for us all the time, in all the grand finals' (Cole et al., 2008: 62-3). When generalising about the background of the Pioneers, it would be more accurate to say that the Pioneer players were drawn mainly from the mixed descent community located at the Gap Cottages. As studies of this group indicate, many of them had become used to a kind of 'customary' membership of the town (Rowse, 1998: 192) and, as such, were free to participate in social activities such as the town-based football. If anything, the participation of the mixed descent community appears to have been encouraged and may have represented an instrument and outcome of assimilation, which will be discussed in the next section.

Figure 5. 2 Pioneers Football Team, 1947-1949. Source: Aṟa Irititja, Myra Ah Chee Collection. AI-120665. **Back Row,** from left to right: Alec Taylor, Jack Rawson, Edgar Wanganeen, Peter Kopp Senior, Willy Cole, Ron Brady, Gordon Perkins, Willy Taylor, Freddy Hayes and Charlie Ah Chee. **Front Row:** Henry Peckham Senior, George Peckham, Robert Roman Senior, Steve O'Donaghue, Mick Costello (Captain Coach), David Branson, George Caroll, Micky Goodhall, Maxwell Fly, and Robert Espie (Mascot)

Australian football as cultural assimilation

One explanation for the inclusion of the Pioneers in the CAFL was that it was consistent with a narrative of sociocultural change that was emerging in the post war era. In the aftermath of the Second World War and international developments such as the drafting of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, of which Australia was a signatory, new attitudes towards inequality and fairness were becoming apparent in Australia. Australian Governments were moving away from official discourses of protection and assimilation as 'biological absorption', which were often understood in conjunction with the "doomed race" theory (McGregor, 1997), and instead sought to enact a 'vision' of Australia as a 'modern racially harmonious nation' (Haebich, 2002:

62; Hasluck, 1988). Framing assimilation in terms of sociocultural assimilation was central to this new vision (for example, see Hasluck, 1988). Theories of sociocultural assimilation generally recognised that Aboriginal people were 'biologically' equal to white people and that they should be allowed to eventually attain the same manner of living as other Australians and thus attain equality with them. However, it is important to note that equality for Aboriginal people was only recognised upon the adoption of Western culture. Sociocultural assimilation was grounded in the belief that Aboriginal culture was not equal to Western culture. NAB sociologist, Anne Harvey summed up the lived reality of assimilation for mixed descent people in Alice Springs in the mid-1940s saying 'legally the half-caste is treated as a European unless living predominantly as an Aboriginal' (Harvey cited in Rowse, 1998: 192).

By the post-war period most residents of the Gap Cottages had regained a greater level of choice and control in their lives (Rowse, 1998). In addition to housing and the adoption of a suburban mode of Australian life, many had jobs in the region, and by 1953, their children made up one quarter of school enrolment in Alice Springs (Rowse, 1998: 192). Participation in the CAFL was further indication that they were willing to engage themselves in the process of socially integrating into Alice Springs society. Tied into this process was the struggle for human rights.

Matthew Stephen (2009a) offers some observations of Australian Rules football in Darwin in the 1920s that may be useful to determine how the struggle for rights played out on the football field in Alice Springs. Like Alice Springs, Darwin was a 'racially segregated hierarchy' of white people foremost, followed by Asian people, people of mixed descent and, lastly, the so-called 'full-blood' Aboriginal people (2009a: 61). Sport was an important part of this racial stratification. White people

believed that sport was their 'private domain' and attempted to strictly controlled the participation of non-white people (2009a: 61). Australian football, established in Darwin in 1916, was the first sport in which non-white participants challenged white people's control and prejudice on and off the field (2009a: 61). Stephen argued that the Darwin Oval and its surrounds became a 'battleground' for respect and recognition in the face of oppressive institutional racism and social sanctions (2009a: 73). Ultimately, Australian football in Darwin played a critical role in forging a 'multi-racial community identity' and challenging racial stereotypes (2009a: 70). While social and racial tensions in Alice Springs in the late 1940s may not have been as pronounced as they were in Darwin in the 1920s, it is not difficult to imagine that similar battles for recognition, rights and community identity were also waged on the football oval in Alice Springs. Indeed, we know, for example, that Jack Rawson, one of the first white men to play for the Pioneers, was regularly heckled and taunted by the crowd because of his affiliation with the Pioneers. 'He was given plenty of stick from the crowds' his partner, Betty Rawson recalled (*The Australian*, September 4, 2010).

As demonstrated by Haebich (2000 & 2002), federal and state government agencies understood that a policy of social assimilation could only be achieved with the cooperation of the general white population. During the 1950s and early 1960s, a number of official campaigns were launched to persuade members of the public to make a place for Aboriginal people in the local white community and accept them as 'fully participating citizens' (2002: 62). Nation-wide newspapers and newsreels often promoted the official line of assimilation and played a role in shaping public understandings of the policy. In Alice Springs, newspaper reports of Henry Peckham's achievements on and off the football field presented what Haebich

characterised as a 'deliberately attractive and reassuring view' of assimilation to the white Australian public (2002: 64).

Henry Peckham: A 'footballer of renown'

In 1950, Henry Peckham's status as a fine Australian Rules footballer was confirmed when he became the first Territorian to play in an interstate league competition playing with SANFL side West Adelaide. His league debut was described in *The Adelaide Advertiser* as an 'outstanding success' (*The Adelaide Advertiser*, 15 May 1950 p.9). Peckham kicked five goals, was named best player on the ground and after the match he was chaired from off the ground by supporters of both teams:

> When the game finished, dozens of excited fans ran on to the oval to give him a handshake or clap on the back, and a big crowd at the exit gate cheered as he was chaired to the dressing room (*The Adelaide Advertiser*, 17 May 1950 p.9. See also *Centralian Advocate*, 17 May 1950 p.1.)

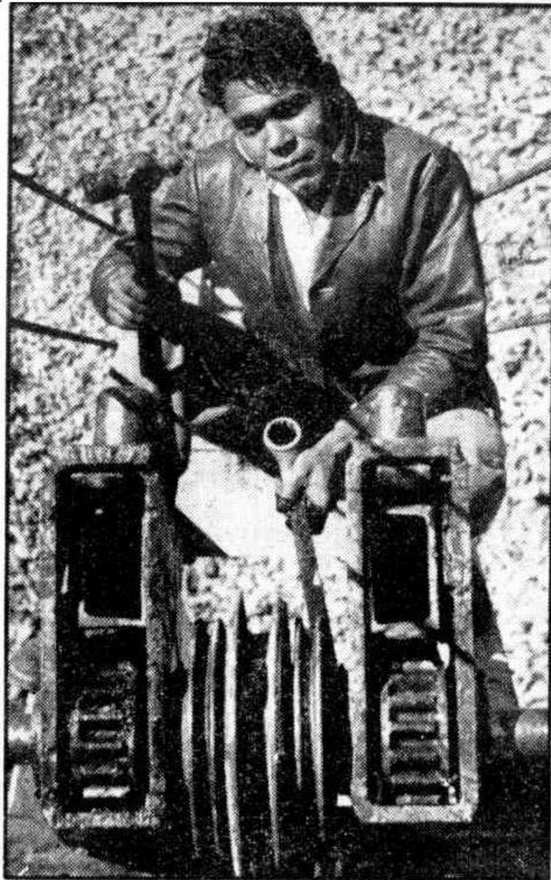
The 'outstanding success' of Peckham's debut represented more than the playing of an outstanding game of football. At a time when 'representations of assimilation flooded the public domain' (Haebich, 2002: 62), Peckham's journey from the outback town of Alice Springs to SANFL footballer and 'good citizen of Adelaide' mirrored a narrative of assimilation that was commonly promoted in newspapers publications and newsreels of the day. Haebich (2002) described this narrative as being:

> …an imagined, seamless, unproblematic and inevitable passage from a receding Aboriginal past to an assimilated present of modern suburban domestic life (Haebich, 2002:63).

The afternoon tabloid *The News* (Adelaide) depicted such a narrative of assimilation the day after Peckham's league debut. Replete with an image of him back at work on Monday repairing machinery on an excavator (Figure 5.3), the article presented an

‘attractive view of assimilation’ to a white audience. Here was a responsible Aboriginal man who had embraced the ‘Australian’ way of life, not only was he a successful league footballer but he was also employed as a skilled worker providing for his family back in Alice Springs. Change had been ‘seamless’ and ‘unproblematic’ - a simple matter of accepting the new way of life that the white society had offered him. Indeed, in both Adelaide and Alice Springs, Peckham was celebrated as ‘a good citizen’ and worthy representative of each town, on and off the field:

> It was said that Alice Springs was confident that Henry would be a worthy representative of the town in sport and in general life. There is no doubt that Henry quickly established himself as a good citizen of Adelaide, and now looks as though he is set to go on and make a really good name for himself – and Alice Springs – as a footballer of renown (*Centralian Advocate*, 17 May 1950 p.1).



Brilliant league debut

HENRY PECKHAM, West's aboriginal rover, kicked five goals in his first league football match on Saturday against South at Adelaide Oval. A mechanic, he is shown at work today repairing machinery on an excavator at Beaumont. (Story Page 19.)

Figure 5. 3 Brilliant League Debut, 1950. Source: *The News* (Adelaide), 18 May 1950, p.3. National Library of Australia.

As a postscript, Peckham played a handful more league matches for West Adelaide before injuries cut short his SANFL career (AFL NT Hall of Fame, 2019). The following season he returned to the CAFL and continued a career that was instrumental in breaking social and racial barriers by encouraging participation in Australian football. In 2005 Peckham was inducted into the AFL Central Hall of Fame and the AFLNT Hall of Fame in 2012.

While the Pioneers' inclusion in the CAFL was played out against a background of social assimilation, Peckham and more generally the mixed descent community embraced football for reasons and motivations of their own. According to Kruger, who was living in the Gap area with his young family and playing for the Pioneers in the 1950s, participation in football, beyond the recreational benefits to the players, enabled the Gap residents, the 'Gappies' as they called themselves, to connect with family and forge a strong sense of community identity and pride:

> Everyone knew each other and looked out for each other's children. The ever-growing tribe of Gap kids lived and played across all the different houses. Us men worked and played sports together. Pioneers was the only club for us (Kruger & Waterford, 2007:241).
>
> For most of us Gappies there was only one side we supported. The Pioneers were our club. We had built it up and made it the best club in the competition (Kruger & Waterford, 2007:254).

Kruger recalled that Sunday afternoon football matches featuring the Pioneers at the Anzac Oval were 'very social affairs with lots of family and kids running around' (Kruger & Waterford, 2007: 254), and that Aboriginal people not just from Alice Springs but also from all over the region came together to be with family and to be looked after by family:

> Weekends over the fifties, sixties, seventies and even the eighties were often spent as a family with a picnic lunch down at the Anzac Oval watching the football. Football was one of the things that continued to bring people in from their work out bush (Kruger & Waterford, 2007:254).

It is most likely that many of the Aboriginal people who participated in the Sunday afternoon football matches, whether it be as players or spectators, took their knowledge and experience of the game back to their families and communities.

The spread of football

By the early 1950s the national game had captured the imagination of Aboriginal populations in the region and was being played in a number of government and mission settlements within a couple of days truck drive of Alice Springs (**Figure 5.4**). Many of the people in these settlements and stations were connected culturally, linguistically, economically and spiritually to the whole of the Western Desert population; to what Myers argued was a 'vast and interlocking network of persons' (Myers, 1986: 27). In Alice Springs, many of the Western Desert people, including members of the mixed descent community, were part of this wide network of social 'relatedness'. Despite the directions of government authorities, which were in line with policies of segregation and protectionism of the day, many of them continued to maintain their obligations to family and Law. For example, Rowse (1998) detailed an account of two Aboriginal men from the mixed descent community in town who submitted to Luritja men's initiation ceremonies (1998:193-4). One of the men was a 'graduate' of the Bungalow while both had been exempted from the Aboriginals Ordinance.

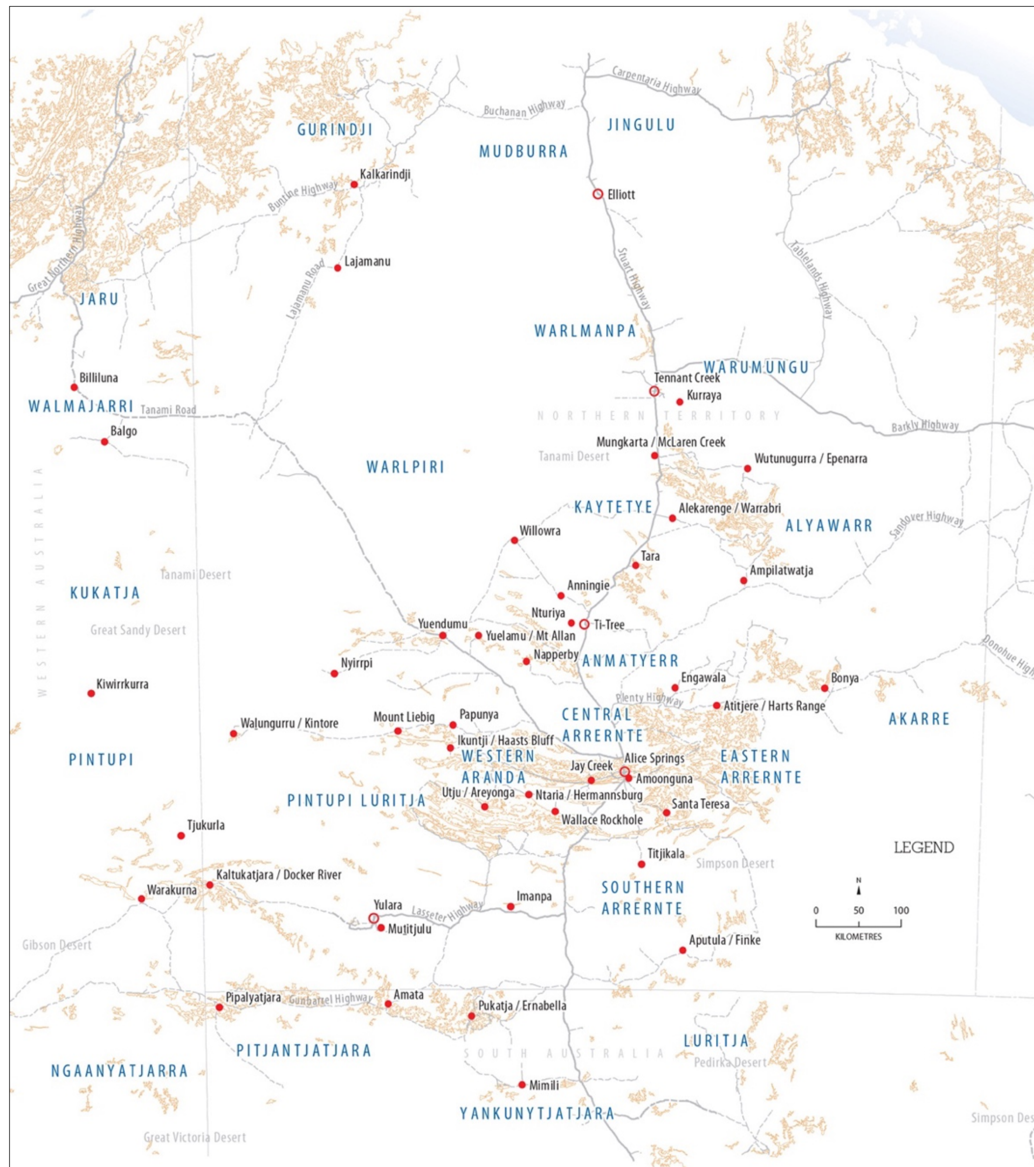


Figure 5. 4 Central Australian Aboriginal Languages and communities. Source: Central Land Council.

To maintain ‘relatedness’ to others, Aboriginal people travelled widely and temporarily co-resided with relatives in camps at settlements and cattle stations throughout the region for periods as they chose (see Layton, 1986; Rose, 1965 & Long, 1989: 40). As they travelled, their knowledge of the world expanded, and they took in new perspectives. Kunmanara and his older brother journeyed with their

family from the Ernabella Mission to other settlements throughout the 1940s including Areyonga and Hermannsburg, where they went to school (Osborne, 2017). As previously mentioned, Kunmanara's older brother recalled that he first encountered football while visiting relatives at the Hermannsburg mission in the 1940s:

> We went for a cup of tea and after drinking a cup of tea we were kicking a football. Someone kicked it towards me, and I ducked. I didn't know anything about it (Edwards, 1997).

From the 1940s until the late sixties, many Aboriginal people, like Kunmanara and his family, travelled between communities on camel and by walking to reconnect with relatives and family and more broadly sustain relatedness. It is most likely that the game of Australian football made the journey to communities in the region through family ties and kinship networks. Opportunities for participation soon became widespread with the diffusion of football to local Aboriginal populations. While it is not within the scope of this research to investigate these histories, this section will proceed by briefly looking at football at the most central 'settlement' in the region, Hermannsburg.

Australian Football at Hermannsburg

As the oldest 'settlement' in the region, Hermannsburg (Ntaria) (established in 1877) has a deeper history of contact between Aboriginal people, white settlers and experience of social activities such as sport. It also seems to have had an earlier introduction to football than the rest of the region. Patrol Officer Ted Strehlow made one of the earliest reports of football in the region while visiting the Hermannsburg Mission in 1937:

> The lads kicked about the first football that has been made at Hermannsburg from their own tanned leather. Mr. Batterbee cut it out from an old football pattern' (Strehlow cited in Stephen, 2009b: 259)

With very little exposure to the way the game was played elsewhere in Australia, the mission population's first sustained exposure to organised football most certainly occurred during the war years, when the game flourished amongst the troops stationed in Alice Springs, and a large number of Arrernte people from the mission lived and worked in town. The Hermannsburg mission contributed substantially to the 'native labour unit' set up by the army at the Bungalow. Of the 105 civilian workers at the 'native labour unit' in December 1942, thirty-nine had been recruited from Hermannsburg and twenty-nine from Jay Creek (Rowse 1989:95). There were also several family groups of Western Arrernte people camped at the Lutheran Mission Block in Alice Springs (See figure 5.1). Given the Army ran a regular, high quality inter-unit football competition, which included Aboriginal soldiers, and conducted numerous high profile, large scale inter-battalion football carnivals during the war, it would be remarkable if Aboriginal people from the Hermannsburg Mission, and other settlements for that matter, didn't participate in football during this period. Indeed, it is quite conceivable that hundreds of Arrernte, and other groups of Aboriginal people, witnessed football games in Alice Springs during, and after the war, and brought their knowledge of the game back to the mission, and other settlements or stations where the game was beginning to emerge.

The football links between Alice Springs and Hermannsburg continued after the war and by at least 1952, the Hermannsburg Mission had established its own football team, the Hermannsburg Harriers, and were playing teams from the CAFL. According to the *Centralian Advocate* newspaper, the 'newly formed' Hermannsburg Harriers

played what was described as the ‘most extraordinary game of 'Rules' ever played in Central Australia’ against the visiting Federal Football Club from Alice Springs (*Centralian Advocate*, July 18, 1952, p.1). Led by the famous Arrernte artist, Edwin Pareroultja, the Hermannsburg Harriers ‘excelled in high marking and burned up the “bull dust” at terrific speeds’ and finished the match five goals in front, much to the ‘wild enthusiasm’ of a ‘great crowd of Mission spectators’. Besides taking to the field wearing riding boots, and umpire ‘interpretations the like never before see in Australia’, what really made the match extraordinary was the employment of ‘unheard of positional tactics’ that were exemplified by the performance of a Hermannsburg Harrier ‘speedster’ who turned the traditionally defensive role of a back pocket on its head by having an extraordinary twelve shots on goal (*Centralian Advocate*, July 18, 1952, p.1).

> An idea of the tactics of the aborigine team can be gleaned from the fact that their back-pocket man, a cheerful speedster by the name of Patrick, kicked two goals and ten behinds (*Centralian Advocate,* July 18, 1952, p.1).

While a characteristic of Aboriginal football in Central Australia was the comparative unconventionality of its play, many Aboriginal players also performed some of the basic skills of football with their own particular style and panache. It was this style of play that was promoted as an attraction for the Hermannsburg Harriers’ Easter Monday football match against a combined CAFL team in Alice Springs in 1954:

> The high flying, pacy Hermannsburg Harriers, the team of full-blood aborigine footballers from the mission, will be seen in action in Alice Springs on Easter Monday (*Centralian Advocate*, April 9, 1954, p.3).

Matches between the Hermannsburg Harriers and Alice Springs teams became an annual feature of the football season throughout the early to mid 1950s. Prior to their Easter Monday match at the fully grassed Anzac Oval in 1954 against a combined CAFL team, the Harriers had met Alice Springs teams on at least five occasions and had won three of the contests (*Centralian Advocate*, April 9, 1954, p.3).

Conclusion

By the 1950s the game of Australian football had well and truly arrived in Central Australia. In addition to Hermannsburg, the game had started to blossom in neighbouring settlements populated by Western Desert people such as Ernabella and Warburton, and by 1961 regular inter-settlement matches were played between Areyonga, Yuendumu, Hermannsburg, Papunya, and Warrabri (now Ali Carung) settlements (McKinnon and Campbell, 2012; Tatz, 1995). This chapter has explored the game's antecedents in the region, focusing on the post-war development of the CAFL in Alice Springs and the game's growing popularity among Aboriginal people in other nearby settlements, such as the Hermannsburg mission. It has shown that the game of football played a significant part in the lives of Aboriginal people in the post-war period and argued that it most likely made the journey to missions and other settlements in the region through family ties and kinship networks.

This chapter has also uncovered the extraordinary story of how a much-maligned group of young Aboriginal men from the mixed descent community in Alice Springs built their own football team despite the significant racial and social divide in town. Embraced by the Aboriginal people throughout the region, their team, the Pioneers Football Club, represented not only a foundation club in the Central Australian Football League (CAFL) but also one of the first organised Aboriginal football teams

in the nation. As such, the Pioneers represent an important chapter in both the Northern Territory's and Australia's sporting history

Finally, this chapter acknowledges and celebrates the sporting achievements of the Pioneers and other groups of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples against decades of oppressive institutional racism and social sanctions including the Aboriginals Ordinance, policies of protectionism and assimilation, the removal of children from their parents, and ongoing racial vilification, which persists today. In this context the success of Aboriginal people in the field of football in Central Australia, particularly the Pioneers or 'Bungalow Boys' from Alice Springs, is truly extraordinary.

6 The rise of inter-community football 1960 - 1974

Introduction

Building on from the early football that was played at the mission in the 1950s, this chapter shall focus on the development of football during the final years of the mission from 1960 to 1974. This period brought considerable social and cultural change to Anangu. It encompassed the establishment of the Musgrave Park and Fregon outstations in 1961, Indulkana in 1968 and Mimili in 1973 and most significantly, culminated in the transfer of administrative control of the mission to the Pukatja (Ernabella) Community Council in 1974 under the principles of self-determination. It shall be seen that the way Anangu played and understood Australian football also changed during this period.

This chapter begins by exploring the beginnings of inter-community football between Ernabella, Fregon and Amata. It will focus on a series of games played between Ernabella and Amata to explore the nature of game played at this time and discuss the mission's use of inter-community football to promote its interests at the newly established settlements. It will examine the shift from mission of football to Anangu control of the game and highlight changing patterns of mobility in the early 1970s, in order to highlight how inter-community football provided Anangu with the opportunity to come together and reproduce their culture and society. It will conclude by focusing on the ways in which Anangu took on and transformed the game for their own sociocultural purposes.

Setting the scene

Australian football at Ernabella mission and other nearby settlements grew at a time of significant change in Aboriginal affairs. Throughout the 1960s, Aboriginal groups and Aboriginal advancement associations such as the Federal Council for the Advancement of Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders (FCAATSI) vigorously campaigned for civil rights for Aboriginal people and for cultural difference to be valued and respected (Curthoys, 2002; Broome, 2010). A referendum held in 1967 to amend discriminatory clauses in the Australian constitution resulted in a remarkable 90 per cent of all Australians voting ‘yes’ (Attwood, 2007). In South Australia there were significant shifts in government policies for Aboriginal people. The *Aboriginal Affairs Act, 1962* which replaced the *Aborigines Act, 1934-1939* was introduced to remove many of the restrictions and restraints placed on Aboriginal people. Marking an end of the eras of control and protection, the Act provided for the creation of the Aboriginal Affairs Board, abolished the South Australian Aboriginal Protection Board (APB) and the role of the Protector, and appointed a Minister of Aboriginal Affairs to administer the Act (Rowse, 2012: 66). Changes were also occurring at the federal level. By the 1960s the Federal government had lifted restrictions on eligibility for normal industrial awards and benefits, such as social security payments, and in 1962 all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples were granted the right to vote in federal elections under the *Commonwealth Electoral Act 1962* (Rowse, 2012).

The election of a Federal Labour government, under Prime Minister Gough Whitlam, in 1972, led to a fundamental policy shift in Aboriginal affairs away from assimilation towards ‘self-determination’. In 1973, Whitlam stated that the ‘basic object’ of his government’s Aboriginal policy was ‘to restore to the Aboriginal people of Australia their lost power of self-determination in economic, social and political affairs’

(Whitlam, 1973). The policy led to the administration of the Ernabella Mission being transferred to the Pukatja and Fregon to the Aparawatatja Community Councils from 1 January 1974 (Edwards, 1992). Both councils had been established in 1973 under the SA *Community Welfare Act 1972*. By the end of 1974, Anangu Community Councils were incorporated in areas previously controlled by the government at Amata, Indulkana and Pipalyatjara. Community councils in Mimili and Kenmore Park (Yungarinyi) were incorporated in 1976. The eventual decentralisation of Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara from settlements throughout the region to smaller communities, known as homelands or outstations (Figure 6.1), marked the beginning of the homelands movement of the 1970s (Edwards, 2016).

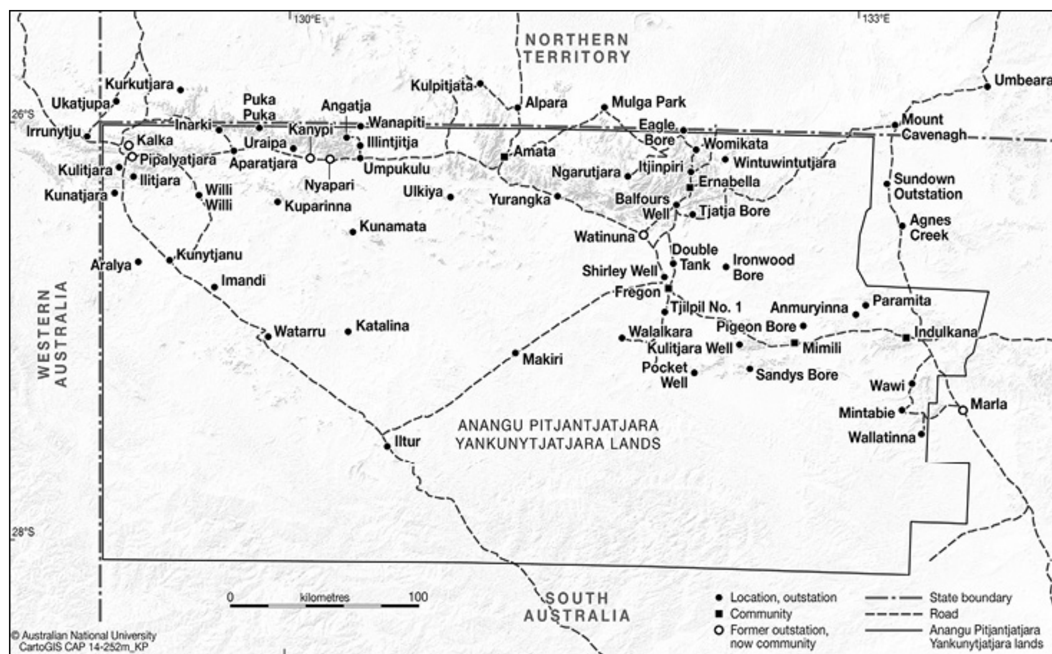


Figure 6. 1 Ernabella and its Pitjantjatjara outstations. Adapted from *Experiments in Self-determination: Histories of the Outstation Movement in Australia,* Peterson, N. & Myers, F. (Eds.), 2016, ANU Press. Copyright 2016 by Karina Pelling, CartoGIS, ANU College of Asia and the Pacific. Note Fregon to the south of Ernabella and Amata to the west of Ernabella. Aparatjara, where Kunmanara Ingkatji was born, is west of Amata.

Inter-community football

The development of Anangu football at Ernabella and across the region was a complex process but the establishment of two small, decentralised outstations away from the mission in 1961, provided a significant boost to the fledgling game of football in the region. The first, an outstation originally called Musgrave Park Station, now known as Amata, was opened by the South Australian Government's Aborigines Protection Board about 140 kilometres west of Ernabella at the western end of Musgrave Ranges. A few months later, the Australian Presbyterian Board of Missions (APBM) established Fregon (Kaltjiti) as a mission outstation about 70 kilometres in the sandhill country to the southwest of Ernabella (See Edwards, 2016 for discussion about establishment of further outstations and homeland communities including Indulkana settlement, now known as Iwantja, in 1968, Mimili in 1973 and Pipalyatjara in 1975). Both Musgrave Park and Fregon outstations represented an early step towards decentralisation (Edwards, 2016) and involved several Anangu families moving from Ernabella to develop pastoral enterprises and to be closer to their *ngura* that is, the Country or land that had social, cultural, or economic links to them (Edwards, 2011: 19; See Edwards, 2016 for other reasons for decentralisation). Many of the young men who had grown up at Ernabella took their interest in the game of Australian football to the new settlements, and within a few years, as relatives from other settlements such as the Warburton mission to the west of Musgrave Park arrived with knowledge of the game (Lister, 2016) and populations increased, the Musgrave Park, Ernabella and Fregon football teams emerged. The first recorded inter-settlement football match in the region took place in 1964 during the annual Christmas Day Sports at Ernabella, when John Fletcher, the Fregon station manager, arrived at the mission with 'the Fregon people on the big truck and the men

had a game of football', which for the record, Fregon won (Edwards Letters, 29 December 1964). The match heralded the beginning of inter-community football for the Pitjantjatjara and Yankunytjatjara people in the region. In July of the following year, Ernabella missionary staff, teacher Ian Tilley and tradesman Bruce Cormack, took about forty-five players and supporters on the mission truck to the government settlement of Musgrave Park Station for a Saturday afternoon football match between Ernabella and Amata (Edwards Letters, 29 July 1965). Margaret Bain, in a letter to her family, described the departure of the Ernabella team for this much anticipated football match:

> Everyone was excited and in a hurry to get ready for the match. Practice had been going on for some weeks and the team, and those supporters who could, were to go over in the 7-ton truck. Suddenly, the store cleared, and we were able to get away and to wave to the departing truck. When everyone was asked to sit down I frankly don't know how they managed it, however off they went in high spirits (Bain letters, 29 July 1965).

Anangu excitement for the football match at Musgrave Park was not just about the football. Anangu continued to be part of a wide social network of 'relatedness' (Myers, 1986), but interaction between *walytja*, many of whom had moved more or less permanently to Amata and Fregon from Ernabella or other settlements and pastoral stations, was difficult since only a handful of Anangu had independent access to transport (Edwards, 1994: 148; Peterson, 2000: 210). Their tradition of wide-ranging travel by foot and later donkey and camel was, for the most part, being transformed into a dependence on the mission and other colonial authorities for transport. It was a common practice at this time for large parties of Anangu to travel in the open bed of the mission truck (Figure 6.2). Anangu often travelled this way for the purposes of station work, rabbiting, collecting firewood, and when the

superintendent, Bill Edwards could be persuaded, occasionally for rituals and ceremonies.

Figure 6. 2 Loaded on back of red Bedford truck, 06/1969. Source: Ara Irititja, Phyl & Noel Wallace Collection. AI-0043315.

The arrival of the Ernabella football team at Musgrave Park led to a match that was played on an 'enormous field, covering a vast distance, which included a tree or two' (Bain Letters, 1965-91478-002; Edwards 1958-1972, July 29, 1965). Ernabella, led by captain Alec Minutjukur, had planned to field the regulation eighteen players but finding the oval oversized and the Amata team with twenty-five players on the ground, decided to increase the numbers on their team (See Figure 6.3 for Ernabella team). Thus, fifty men assembled on the rough, dirt oval for the first recorded meeting of the Ernabella and Amata football teams. The match was described as 'fast and free moving' with the 'marking' a feature of the play (Bain letters, 29 July 1965). Musgrave Park won the game by seven points but both teams agreed to play on until

sunset and the result was reversed, and Ernabella won. According to Bain, this was 'most satisfactory for all could claim to have won and were happy' (Bain letters, 29 July 1965).

Figure 6. 3 Ernabella football team, 1965. Source: Ara Irititja, Ian and Isobel Tilley Collection. AI-00034776. Ernabella wore white singlets while Amata wore blue. Sometime later, in the 1970s, Ernabella adopted the black and white colours of the Collingwood Football Club and became known as the Pukatja Magpies; Amata adopted the Essendon Football Club colours and became the Amata Bombers; and Fregon adopted the red, white and blue of the Footscray Football Club (Western Bulldogs) and became the Fregon Bulldogs.

A few months after the 1965 match in Musgrave Park, seventy-three people from Musgrave Park arrived in the back of the seven-ton truck for the return match at Ernabella on a hot Saturday afternoon (*Bain letters*, 3 November 1965). The match was most likely played '*karungka munkara'* on the other side of the creek from the mission compound, on open ground between the shearing shed and the horse yard

(Kunmanara, 2015). Bill Edward's photo of a game played between Ernabella and Amata in 1971 (Figure 6.4) shows that the ground was an oval shape with roughly hewn river red gum goal posts and a distinct boundary line marked in the sand before each match. In a few places the rocky outcrops and the horse yards came close to the playing area. Craig Cameron, the first government appointed Principal at Ernabella School in 1971, recalled that there 'was kind of an oval over there' but 'the road went through the middle of it so if you had a game going and a car came along you stopped and let the car go through. You waited until the dust cleared and off you went again' (Cameron, 2015).

Figure 6. 4 Football match on first football oval, 1971. Source: Ara Irititja, Bill Edwards Collection. AI-0013721.

Despite its ragged appearance, football in the region was developing. While previously, games of football were unbounded, untimed and included unlimited players, inter-community football matches were played on an oval with specific

boundaries, time-limits, and equal number of participants. Old ways of playing were in decline and newer forms of the game were beginning to replace them.
Despite the temperature being '104 in the shade' the 1965 game between Ernabella and visiting Amata team was described as 'vigorous all the time' and in the end an inaccurate Ernabella was left to rue missed opportunities: 'We should have won, but did not, for the score was Musgrave Park, 8 goals, 4 behinds, to Ernabella 4 goals, 14 behinds' (Bain letters, 3 November 1965). As was the case in the previous match at Musgrave Park, the men 'played an extra quarter at the end for by then it was getting cooler, and they wanted to go on' (Bain letters, 3 November 1965). Providing a team, particularly the home team, with the opportunity to reverse the result by playing an extra quarter became a regular feature of A<u>n</u>angu football. When discussing games between Amata and Ernabella in the early 1970s, Amata schoolteacher, Ron Lister (1971-1973), recalled games often went for an extra quarter. In jest, he suggested that 'a couple of the senior Ernabella spectators would "bend the rules" to ensure an Ernabella victory: '"Bending the rules" meant extending the game to a "fifth quarter" if Ernabella was not leading at the end of the fourth!' (Lister, 2016).

'Bending the rules' appears to have been an expectation in competitive inter-community football, not just on the Pitjantjatjara and Yankunytjatjara Lands, but across Aboriginal communities in Central Australia. Mackinnon and Campbell (2012) noted in their examination of Australian football in the Warlpiri community of Yuendumu that it was a common practice for the home side of community sports carnivals to 'bend the rules' when it came to receiving a favourable draw, reaching the final and calculating the final scores (2012: 968). Bill Edwards recalled being on a 'disputes committee' that presided over a weekend sports carnival at Amata:

> In 1976 Amata arranged a football weekend or carnival. It involved Pipalyatjara, Kanpi and Ernabella. I was part of the Disputes Committee. One time we had to play an extra quarter because of a dispute. The home side were behind but after the extra quarter they had won. Both teams left saying they had won (Edwards, 2015).

It can be speculated that ‘bending the rules’ may have had something to do with the pressure on individuals or groups to maintain smooth running, cooperative relations that recognised shared identity with others. Edwards’ position on the disputes committee as an outsider, that is, as someone who was not bound to the kinship system and not obligated to look after others, supports this idea as it appears he was recognised as someone who could refuse a request to ‘bend the rules’.

Adam – a man from Areyonga

Playing a role in the understanding of football rules was the umpire for the match, Adam, an Aboriginal Minister from Amoonguna, a government settlement located just outside Alice Springs (for a discussion on the establishment of Amoonguna in relation to the NT government’s ‘policy of segregation as a preliminary stage in the assimilation process’ see Heppell and Wigley, 1981: 22-24). Having worked with Pastor F.W. Albrecht in Alice Springs, Adam appears to have been sent to evangelise in settlements and stations outside the Lutheran mission’s reach. He preached in both Arrernte and Pitjantjatjara and resided in Ernabella for a period between 1965 and 1966. Having spent time in Alice Springs where competitive football had been played since 1947, Adam most likely had a strong grounding in Australian football. According to Bain, he was a good choice to umpire since he ‘knew more of the rules than anyone else’ and in reference to his umpiring of the 1965 match between Ernabella and Amata, Bain wrote: ‘…he laid down the law during the game and was

cheerfully obeyed. Apparently, he did not stop running all afternoon and where the ball was, there he was too' (Bain letters, 25 March 1965).

When Kunmanara Ingkatji spoke about the influence of the 'man from Areyonga' on football at Ernabella he may well have been thinking about Adam. Described by Bain as a 'blood brother' to Kunmanara, Adam came to Ernabella following an extended residence at Areyonga (Bain letters, 25 March 1965) and appears to fit Kunmanara's description. 'The man from Areyonga', Kunmanara stated, 'he coming to Ernabella, and he umpire and he putting goals and teaching young people and he talking, talking, talking and they starting and playing' (Kunmanara Ingkatji, 2015). A classic photograph of the Areyonga Tigers football team taken in the years between 1963-65 (**Figure 6.5**), the same period the photograph of the Ernabella football team was taken (**Figure 6.3**), suggests that football at Areyonga was comparatively more aligned to how the game was played elsewhere in Australia or at least better resourced than the one at Ernabella.

Figure 6. 5 Areyonga football team, 1963-65. Source: Ara Irititja, Utju Community (Glynn Beaton) Collection. AI-0037934. In comments accompanying the image, an Anangu Elder stated: 'This is the old Areyonga football team. The old Areyonga Desert Tigers, wearing new uniforms. They started this uniform for us, these guernseys. We were just young fellas then. This is the first Areyonga football team. These players are either old Desert Tigers or old tjilpis passed away now'.

Whether Adam was the 'man from Areyonga' is unknown, however he was one of the many Aboriginal people who travelled widely and shared their understandings and ways of playing the game with Anangu at Ernabella. Another image of the Areyonga football team sitting in the shade of a river red gum in the middle of a dry creek bed and a 'whitefella' standing (in the sun) beside a chalkboard marked with a football oval and positions (**Figure 6.6**) is emblematic of engagements between people around football at this time and the transformative affects these engagements had on the way the game was understood and played.

Figure 6. 6 'Football Class', 1963-65. Source: Ara Irititja, Utju (Areyonga) Community (Glynn Beaton) Collection. AI-0037932. Note some players are wearing Areyonga football colours of yellow

and black. The presence of several pairs of discarded shoes suggests football boots were being worn and that they were about to train or play a match.

As will be discussed further in detail, inter-community football offered a means for Aṉangu to come together and sustain and demonstrate ‘shared identity with other others’ (Myers, 1986). Bain’s account of the 1965 matches between Musgrave Park and Ernabella shows that a gathering for football also offered a means or platform to demonstrate or resolve any grievances or quarrels that existed between individuals or families from each community.

> The last football match at Musgrave Park concluded with a big fight, not over the match at all but over an old unhappiness, but the fight spread to many people and the spears were out. No one seriously hurt (Bain, 1965 3 November).

A few months later, when the Musgrave Park team were due to travel to Ernabella for a return match, there were fears that the matter remained unresolved. With the aim to reduce any conflict, the leading Christians at Musgrave Park had a meeting to address the matter:

> Just before this match on Saturday, at Musgrave Park, at their Friday prayer meeting, the leading Christians over there, (aboriginal) stressed the point that they were going to Ernabella to play football and that there was to be no fight over anything (Bain, 1965 3 November).

To what extent the meeting constrained any assertions of relatedness the following day at the football in Ernabella is unknown. However, the Friday night prayer meeting indicates that Christianity had caught on with many Aṉangu at Musgrave Park. Drawing on Fred Myers’ analysis of Pintupi political relations, it may be surmised that the Christian community at Musgrave Park represented an authority outside the individual subject or family on which could be based an acceptable refusal to be

involved in a particular action such as fighting at the football over an ‘old unhappiness’ (Myers, 1986).

A gathering for football and church

The advent of inter-settlement football further strengthened the ties between sport and Christian activities in the region. As discussed in chapter two, these ties were established in the early years of the mission when sport and games were first introduced to Anangu. However, one important shift in this relationship was that by the mid-1960s the Christian faith resonated with a number of Anangu individuals and families at Ernabella and had begun to ‘take root’ in the new settlements at Musgrave Park and Fregon. According to Hilliard, the ‘Christian people of Ernabella’, many of whom had moved to these new settlements, played a significant role in the spread of Christianity:

> The sphere of influence of the Christian people of Ernabella has gradually widened, starting first at Ernabella, and then to their people when away on holiday; from this to the work at Fregon and Musgrave Park (Hilliard, 1968: 191).

As the populations in Musgrave Park and Fregon increased, Pitjantjatjara church members emerged as a new authority among Anangu. They emphasised frequent, regular congregation and took responsibility for much of the worship and instruction of candidates for baptism, often without any direct supervision by the missionaries (Edwards, 2005: 137; Hilliard, 1968: 190; *Ernabella Newsletter* March 1953 and February 1956). With church services often including choral singing, the churches at Ernabella, Amata and Fregon began to grow in attendance. This had always been the missions’ central aim (Hilliard, 1968: 190) and was even more significant in the 1960s era, when the Presbyterian Board of Missions (PBM) moved to encourage

Aboriginal self-management, particularly those who had embraced the Christian faith (Edwards, 1973). Inter-community sport appears to have played a part in this growth. Essentially, this involved missionaries and leading Anangu Christians using the popularity of the game and people's dependence on the mission for transport as a way of bringing people together to attract a congregation for worship services, particularly in the newly established settlements of Fregon and Amata. The link between a gathering for football and a gathering for church is apparent in the following account from Superintendent Edwards:

> We had a big truckload of men over from Musgrave Park again on Saturday and despite the heat they had a game of football which Ernabella won. They turned up for church and gave us another big congregation (Edwards 1958-1972, October 30, 1967).

The Mission's promotion of its evangelical interests through inter-community sport is clear in another letter from Edwards where he discusses the first baptisms at the Indulkana Reserve (Iwantja), a government settlement established in 1968 approximately 200 kilometres south-east of Ernabella (Edwards, 2016: 32).

> Saturday morning one of the men left with the big truck and a load of people for Indulkana. We had choir, football team and basketball team. They played football against a combined Indulkana-Fregon team late Saturday and the women played basketball… On Sunday morning we had a service under the gum trees in the creek bed at Indulkana and we had a very good attendance. I baptised twelve adults, the first baptisms at Indulkana. The choir sang at the service. The men had another game of football in the afternoon before returning here (Edwards 1958-72, October 28, 1971).

Edwards' description of a weekend of sport and church services at Indulkana could be seen as a prototype for the community sports weekends that exploded in popularity across the emerging APY lands in the mid-1970s. During the daylight hours there was

a variety of sports for men, women and children, and on Friday and Saturday nights and Sunday morning there was *inma* church services and singing. This link between sport and church attendance was apparent during the Christmas Day sports in the early days of the mission and continues to resonate with inter-community sporting carnivals across the APY Lands today.

Shift from mission to community control of football

Up until the early 1970s, the Aṉangu community at Ernabella had been dependent on the mission for the organisation of inter-community football and the use of the mission truck for transport. This situation began to change following the arrival of government teaching staff to the mission in 1971. In preparation for the administration of Ernabella being transferred to incorporated community councils in 1974, the South Australian Department of Education had assumed control of the schools at Ernabella and Fregon, three years after the opening of a government school at Amata in 1968 (Kunmaṉara Ingkatji, 2015; Edwards & Underwood, 2006: 109). Most likely representing new and different ways of seeing and doing things, the new teaching staff at Ernabella, which included Aṉangu teacher assistants, almost immediately collaborated with teaching staff at Amata and Fregon to organise inter-school sports, a common event amongst schools in mainstream settings (Cameron, 2015; Lister, 2016). Communication between the remote schools, which were up to 140 kilometres apart, was facilitated through a network of school principals who had a weekly meeting or 'sched' over the radio telephone (Lister, 2016). According to Ernabella school principal, Craig Cameron, Aṉangu schools across the region embraced the idea of inter-school sports:

> I organised some games from school and organised games for others, and then we started going to other communities and that all started in that one year but that was fairly rapid, and that degree of acceleration continued without me being there (Cameron, 2015).

In light of large numbers of community members accompanying students to other communities, inter-school sports, according to Amata schoolteacher, Ron Lister (1971-1973), ‘snowballed to involve not only the school children but adults as well’ (Lister, 2016). One of the first such inter-school sporting events took place at Ernabella in 1971 when a truck arrived from Amata bringing men’s and boys’ football teams and women’s’ and girls’ basketball teams. Edwards recorded the occasion in a letter to his parents:

> The schoolboys played a game Ernabella v Musgrave Park for an hour while the girls played basketball…The boys won the footy, but the girls lost. Then the men played football and the women basketball. We won the football 11.18 to 10.10 but lost the basketball 10-8. The football was quite good and some of them showed promise if they can get more coaching and experience. The teachers had organised the games and the people are keen for more (Edwards, April 2, 1971 - 598).

Photographs of the football matches played that day record the growing popularity of inter-community sport amongst Anangu (**Figures 6.4, 6.7 and 6.8**). The images show family groups of Anangu gathered tightly together by the shearing sheds, watching matches between the Ernabella and Musgrave Park boys and men’s football teams. Much like the matches played on the APY Lands today, along the boundary young children can be seen playing in the sand, while separate groups of men and women, standing in front of the cars, keenly observe their relatives play. When reflecting on the opportunities for social interaction offered by inter-community football at that time, Lister stated:

Football matches were a sideline to the all-important socialising. Post-game was the opportunity for all sorts of discussions about Church events, ceremonies, individuals, travel etc. Most visitors to Ernabella would stay overnight on the Saturday and attend Church Sunday morning (Lister, 2016).

Figure 6. 7 Boy's football match, 1971. Source: Ara Irititja, Bill Edwards Collection. AI-0013716.

Such was the social appeal of football on and off the playing field that everyone wanted to travel to other settlements and gather at the game with family and relatives. Utilising the mission truck, an old Commer diesel or "common Knocker" as it was known, former principal Craig Cameron recalled the travel arrangements for a football match in Amata:

Well, you couldn't just take the football team. You had to take everyone else who claimed they had a right to go to Amata, so the truck was full in no time flat with heaps of people who weren't necessarily playing football! I don't know who drove the truck because we had to take my car and trailer and fill the car and the trailer with people as well. They just put a tarp in the trailer and wrapped it over the tops of themselves (Cameron, 2015).

Figure 6. 8 Football match on first football oval, shearing sheds in background, 1971. Source: Ara Irititja, Bill Edwards Collection. AI-0013719. Note teacher Ron Lister umpiring to the right of image and Kunmanara Ingkatji in yellow shirt standing between goal posts.

Up to this point, the mission had a monopoly on transport. The mission owned several motor vehicles, and while Superintendent Edwards was said to have been 'very good at making them available' (Cameron, 2015), the mission exercised a degree of control over who was allowed to drive them (Cameron, 2015). As previously discussed, interaction with *walytja* families in other communities was difficult for many Anangu since they relied on the mission and government authorities for transport, but by the end of the 1960s this situation began to change as Anangu gained greater independent access to motor vehicles (Edwards, 1994: 148; Peterson, 2000: 209). Increased access to transport was essential to the growth of inter-community football in the early 1970s.

Changing patterns of Anangu mobility

As already noted, inter-community football grew at a time when the social and political landscape for many Aboriginal people was changing dramatically. The election of a federal labour government in 1972, led to a fundamental policy shift in Aboriginal Affairs away from assimilation towards 'self-determination'. Recognising that Australian Indigenous cultural life remained vital, and that Australian legal and administrative structures should accommodate decision-making by Indigenous communities themselves (Coombs, 1994), the policy led to the administration of the Ernabella mission being transferred to the local incorporated community council in 1974 and to the eventual decentralisation of Anangu from settlements throughout the region to smaller communities, known as homelands. The sheep industry, which had been central to mission's economy and employment closed in 1972 and in subsequent years, the wells and bores, which had been sheep camps surrounding Ernabella, became centres for homeland communities (Edwards, 2016). Anangu at Ernabella remember this period, as a time of change:

> 'New things come on and country changes – more houses. The wool shed is gone. The yard is gone. All the sheeps have disappear in the dust (Kunmanara Adamson, 2015).

It was at the same time of this fundamental shift in government policy that Aboriginal people's transition from a rations to a cash economy reached its peak (Rowse, 1998: 204). In 1972, the newly elected federal government declared that 'all Aborigines should be paid award wages when in employment and should otherwise be eligible for the full range of social security payments, including UB [Unemployment Benefits]' (Sanders, 1986: 285). As a result of the phasing out of rationing, Anangu at Ernabella were eligible for normal industrial awards and the full

range of Commonwealth social security benefits (Edwards, 2011: 18; See O'Connor, 2012: 107-09 for a discussion about Anangu involvement in employment during and after the mission years at Ernabella). Historians have noted that the payment of allowances directly to Aboriginal people instead of the superintendent of the settlement in which they lived led to a greater involvement with motor vehicles and increased opportunities for journeys between communities (Peterson, 2000: 210; Edwards, 2011: 17).

Less than a decade after the first purchase of a motor vehicle by a Pitjantjatjara man at Ernabella in 1961, the number of privately owned motor vehicles at the community had 'proliferated' (Edwards, 1994: 148). Among these purchases were community trucks for community business. In 1971, a group of men at Ernabella that included members of the football team, combined their financial resources to buy an old red Austin tip truck (Cameron, 2015). Utilising the Austin tipper and a 'little International tray top' they made trips to Warburton and other communities such as Docker River (Kaltukatjara) for ritual and ceremonial activities and sporting carnivals (Cameron, 2015; Kunmanara Ingkatji, 2015). Cameron suggested that 'old truck provided a bit of mobility' and recalled that Anangu at Ernabella would move the whole community in stages:

> To get to Warburton they drove in stages, the whole community just about went, they would drive maybe 80-100 miles, off load and come back to Ernabella, and get another load. They would move a mass of community, dogs and blankets in stages like that in four or five days (Cameron, 2015).

Other communities followed suit. At Amata, the community formed the Amata Sports Club and in 1972 successfully applied to the Aboriginal Sports Foundation for a

community truck to transport the entire football team to football venues (Lister, 2015). Lister recalled:

> We used that red truck for maybe a year before it died. Then an Elder named [name withheld] bought a big white truck which replaced the red one. His daughter [name withheld] drove the truck. I believe she was the first female Anangu to drive significant distances (Lister, 2016).

According to Lister, Anangu at Amata always had a 'strong desire to have a community truck' and until that was achieved, 'it was a mass exit to the venue in whatever private vehicle was capable of turning a wheel. Of course, not all of those vehicles actually made it to their intended destination' (Lister, 2016). While cars were becoming more common in Ernabella during the mid-1970s, very few of them could be considered 'reliable' (Wilson, 2015). Wilson suggested that one of the main reasons he was in the football team was that he drove his car:

> The few whitefellas who played footy were 'a car' and a means for some people to get over. I had a Holden Ute, which was bench seat in the front, so you had three or four people there, driver included, and then anything up to ten or fifteen people in the back (Wilson, 2015).

The rise of community football carnivals

Inter-community football grew rapidly in the 1970s. No longer reliant on the mission to organise football matches and transport, Anangu began to assume an increasing amount of organisational control over inter-community sport. This change is noted by Cameron, who recalled: 'Within a short period of time, Anangu began to organise inter-community football games for themselves' (Cameron, 2015). Following the lead of other community sports initiatives, such as the Yuendumu Sports Weekend, a wide ranging inter-community sports carnival held in August that had grown rapidly through the 1970s, inter-community football in the region began to be organised and

run by Anangu, and regular matches commenced between Pukatja and the neighbouring communities of Amata, Fregon, Indulkana, Mimili (established in 1973) and Pipalyatjara (1976).

By the mid-1970s, football had become a high mobility event and Pukatja, and other community football teams across the APY Lands, began to take their football talent to the road. Like many other football teams from remote Aboriginal communities in Central Australia, they travelled to Alice Springs for the annual Ngurratjuta Country Cup, a three-day sports festival that attracted teams from all over the NT, WA and SA. Outside of Alice Springs, they travelled across the central desert region to participate in a range of sporting carnivals in the northern communities of Yuendumu, Papunya and Hermannsburg, and further west to Ngaanyatjarra communities in WA. These road trips entailed travelling, sometimes several hundred kilometres, for a long weekend of playing football and other sports. A former Mimili coach recalled:

> I played in football carnivals… APY Lands-ngka [on] and we used to go more further, Blackstone ranges, Ngaanyatjarra Lands, all that area. All around we used to travel around, and we used to go up to Alice Springs for Alice Springs lightning Carnival, Santa Theresa and we went to Yuendumu once (Former-Mimili coach, 2015).

One major sports carnival that was emblematic of this era was held in the community of Amata in July 1976. Considered to be the first 'Pan-Pitjantjatjara Sports day', the weekend was a significant success and brought people and communities together to celebrate community life through modern sports such as football, softball and athletics and 'traditional' sports day activities, such as spear-throwing and billy-can races. Significantly, the carnival also represented a pivotal moment in the unification of the Pitjantjatjara people with the formation of the Pitjantjatjara Council

immediately following the event (Edwards, 1983). The 'Pit Council', as it was known, lobbied for land rights for the Pitjantjatjara people and would ultimately shape the political and social landscape of Aboriginal affairs with the signing of the Pitjantjatjara Land Rights Act in 1981 (Edwards, 1983; Peterson, 2000: 211).

Road trips

As previously discussed, a significant feature of Anangu football was the enjoyment men received from being in the company of other men. For many men, the experience of being and travelling together for inter-community football only amplified the appeal of the game. Former Amata player, Yawirki Adamson, reminisced about the great enjoyment he received from travelling with his teammates in the back of an old Chevrolet "Blitz" truck (Figure 6.9):

> We used to travel in that old Blitz truck. *Wirunya* (great) being in the back of that truck full of young fellas, *yungupula tjuta*, *pulangkita tjuta* (blankets), *mai* (food), a couple of *mai tjuku* (some snacks), *mai tjinguru kuka* (food and maybe game meat), tin meat… enough for the road and then we stay half-way and get there and play football and have the *mai* (food) and *kuka* (game meat) and then we come back (Yawirki Adamson, 2015).

Figure 6. 9 Old Blitz truck, 1961. Source: Aṟa Irititja, Bill & Allison Elliott Collection. AI-0017916.

These road trips often enabled men to express the social ties that existed between them at that moment through a variety of social practices. An example of this can be found in Egan's (2008) description of the long-distance road trips he made with the Yuendumu football team when travelling between Areyonga, Papunya, Haasts Bluff, Hermannsburg and other desert communities in the 1960s. According to Egan, the Yuendumu team was composed of a large group of men from 'different camps' that is, men who not only lived in different locations but also had different social considerations to each other. Under the guidance of older men, cultural practices such as the shooting of a couple of kangaroos along the way allowed for the men to be organized around ritual and ceremony when camped together by the side of the road (2008:12).

> There were things to do. There were songs to sing. And people had to sit in the right place as the, as the 'roo' was prepared for cooking. And then as it was shared out… you knew who was who in the pecking order… because all sorts of relationships exposed themselves' (2008:11).

Social practices such as singing, sitting according to social categories such as generational moiety affiliation (See for example Goddard, 1996), and distributing meat to not only men who shared in its production, but also as gifts to satisfy obligations between men (for example, to one's in-laws or father) reflected cooperation and sociability among large groups of men (Myers, 1986). As discussed by McCoy (2008) such times provide an opportunity for older men to 'hold' or look after younger men. Yawirki Adamson recalled the ways some of the older men supported young men's football at Ernabella in the early 1970s:

> Tjimpuna's father, [name withheld], and [name withheld] was there supporting that area… *Petrol-ku*, *tjuku tjuku mai-ku* (petrol and a little bit of food) and he used to have a Ute, Ute *kanyilpai* (always had), and maybe one time they go out to Fregon, we used to go out through the Possum Well Road, back road *panya* (you know the one), go through Shirley Well, that way and play footy and come back and then Mimili-nga *wiya* but Indulkana-nga. And then Mimili started a bit late. *Uwa*.

Since young men like Yawirki had had essentially 'grown-up' at the mission in the 1950s and 1960s, it can be speculated that travelling together for inter-community football in the late 1960s and early 1970s represented an increasingly important means for them and their families to maintain social networks and engage in systems of reciprocity and exchange with relatives and potential in-laws. This, in turn, represented a way of ensuring that Pitjantjatjara society would be reproduced across generations.

Anangu football

By the mid-1970s, not only were Anangu playing more inter-community football they were also playing a more modern form of the game. According to Greg Wilson, who

played with the Pukatja team in the 1970s, the football was 'like bare feet, hard grounds, competitively played, fun and fast' (Wilson, 2015). It bore traces of early football in the 1950s by being 'quick, hard and intense' (Wilson, 2015), but as a result of increased exposure to how the game was played elsewhere, the players' skills (kicking, marking, bouncing, handballing, playing positions etc.) and knowledge of how to play the game had rapidly developed. Matches of inter-community football also began to be subjected to more rigorous and formal regulation. They were regularly umpired, and the rules became more widely understood. Games were also trending towards a growing competitiveness fostered by a growing sense of community identity. An emphasis on winning and competition between communities signalled a separation from past values and cultural processes. However, that was not necessarily the case. Despite taking on the appearance of looking like the game as it was played elsewhere the logic of Aṉangu society persisted. Aṉangu communities retained strong identities and cultural knowledge. Accordingly, the game of football continued to recognise and confirm certain Western Desert cultural values and relationships.

Allegiances to the local football team and community were put to the test when players lined up against opposition players and communities who they were closely related to by family or kinship ties. Indeed, since the communities of Fregon and Amata were, for a large part, populated by families that had most likely lived in Ernabella for a period of time, there were numerous obvious and close relations within and between football teams and their communities. Furthermore, looking at these connections in a more expansive way, most if not all Aṉangu in the region, across missions and stations, could be considered 'one family' who had wide-ranging relatedness or shared identity with others (Myers, 1986). Of course, the coming

together of *walytja* families and kin, represented the immense attraction of inter-community football to Aṉangu. Inter-community football matches enabled players and spectators, to come together and express the social ties that existed at that moment through a variety of ways both on and off the football field. However, the problem for Aṉangu was how to manage their relatedness on the football field, particularly in light of the competitive nature of inter-community football. According to Yawirki Adamson, players addressed the issue by agreeing to compete for the community they were playing for regardless of any family or kinship connections that existed in another community or to another country:

> When you play for *ngura* Pukatja you gotta play for Pukatja. When you go to Amata and play for Pukatja you can't play for Amata family there, you know? (Yawirki Adamson, 2015).

Having said that, as noted by Myers, an 'individual's social identity is not entirely subsumed by such a group' (1986: 165), or in this case, by being part of a local football team. All members of the Amata, Ernabella and Fregon football teams had relatives in other teams that had claims on them that needed to be satisfied. The negotiation of these cultural values on the football field can be clearly seen in those particular relationships where great respect needed to be demonstrated to another player (McCoy, 2002, 2008: 158), such as one's *waputju* initiator and father-in-law or potential father-in-law/son-in-law by initiation. This relationship is constituted in ceremonies relating to men's initiation. The *waputju* relationship required restraint or formal avoidance when the father-in-law and son-in-law were in each other's company, and it was expected that the son-in-law should always defer to his father-in-law (cf. Myers, 1986:174). Yawirki Adamson pointed out that on the football field this meant that a son-in-law couldn't tackle or touch his *waputju*, even if he was about to score a goal.

> Cousins all right, you can play with cousins, but when you play with your son-in-law there, you can't run and grab him, you know? *Wiya*. And *tjinguru waputju*, maybe father-in-law there playing, you can't touch him, you know. *Wiya*. He can get the ball and keep running and kick a goal. That is Anangu way – Law. It must be from Law (Yawirki Adamson, 2015).

Henry made a similar point:

> …the *waputju* was the strongest relationship and if you had a guy who was a rover for example, he'd be racing through and …. you know he's got open field, almost, you guys can't tackle a *waputju* they have to run away in the other direction! (Henry, 2015).

Obviously, negotiating these and other such relationships on the playing field was difficult, especially when teams were striving to win, and players and spectators were caught up in the heat of the moment and 'really excited' (Yawirki Adamson, 2015). Tackling and bumping a player in possession of the ball could be heavily fraught. These physical acts, combined with the hard dirt surface of the grounds, could easily be interpreted as being excessive or overly violent and lead to displays of anger. How men responded to these encounters varied but transgressions, perceived or otherwise, could provoke serious conflict, or at the very least, the powerful sociocultural disposition of *kunta* shame. Particularly in the public domain of a football match, where one's behaviour was on display to families and community:

> *Uwa*, *kutjupa*, they sometime make you laugh too. When somebody really fast and trying to grab my nephew, 'Hey you, *waputju-tjara* you can't grab him!' *Kunta*, you know? (Yawirki Adamson, 2015).

McCoy (2002, 2008) discussed the connection between football and aspects of kinship and suggests that, over the years, players adapted to these social codes by

playing a hard and fast game that is not ‘too hard’ or ‘too rough’. That is, players learned to avoid physical encounters or excessive body contact by optimising evasion skills and ways of pressuring an opponent that also offer him respect and compassion (2002:33). This is demonstrated in a former Pukatja player’s recollection of an on-field encounter with an opposition player that concluded with the use of a kinship term to show respect and ‘soften the blow’:

> People give you a tackle and stuff and give you a pat on the back and lift you up and say, ‘Hey *ukaṟi*’ (nephew)’ (Pukatja player, 2015).

The use of the kinship term *ukaṟi*, which in this case most likely refers to the Pukatja player being the nephew of the opponent’s sister, stresses the closeness of their relationship and lessens the existence of any conflict or ‘differentiation’ (Myers, 1986) that may have existed between the two because of the on-field contest. Sometimes Aṉangu employed ingenuity and flexibility when negotiating these cultural values. Henry provided an example of a deliberate strategy he employed when his team was faced with the *waputju* problem:

> So, we had a backman… and he had a *waputju* in one game and his opponent was a full-forward. So, (he) was one of the best full backs we’ve ever seen on the Lands and his *waputju* went and stood at that place, full forward, and like (he) couldn’t stand there so he had to go up the other end of the field…

Not only was Henry unable to play his team’s full-back on the opposition’s full-forward for the first half of the game but he was also forced to play him in an unfamiliar position at the other end of ground. Henry went on to explain how he creatively dealt with the *waputju* problem after half-time:

> …so, I said to him, you know, ‘When the half time comes you stay where you are, don’t move!’ So, I’ll be swapping them over, that other bloke he’s got to go full back, instead of full forward! (Henry, 2015).

Based on the success of this creative adaptation Henry began to employ a strategy that was aimed at the *waputju* relationship to win games:

> We used to know who the other teams were, so I used to say, ’Before we go out, I want you to run out to your position, get out there real quick!’ And off they’d go, you know, so we’d be the only team standing on the oval, we’d all be sort of lined up, so of course when everybody wakes up to it they’d turn around, and that bloke he’s already there, our blokes already there and there’s nothing they can do about it, and our full back like he’s really good, he can stop a lot of goals, but you take him out and it’s terribly hard. It was a real strategy that I’d employ, it was aimed at the *waputju* relationship, father-in-law, son-in-law relationship, yeah, to win games (Henry, 2015).

Nyuntu ngayuku maḻpa, ngaḻtutjara!

One way which players were able to show respect and maintain social order without interfering with the game of football was to ‘pair’ or ‘match-up’ with players from opposing teams who were *maḻpa* friends or companions. Wilson’s recollections of his first game of inter-community football for Pukatja against Fregon demonstrates there was more to the notion of *maḻpa* than just friendship:

> I remember my first game and I wasn’t told where to go or where to play. You didn’t go to a position. It wasn’t like that. You went to your *maḻpa* and who the hell was my *maḻpa* in my first game? I wasn’t asked whether I was a defender or on-ball player or whether I had played much football. I was just this whitefella with a pair of sand shoes on. Everyone else just knew where to go. They knew who they could and couldn’t play with, but I just found an empty space. When the game started I guess I just started playing and then eventually I was picked up by someone and it just got a bit clearer as the game went on (Wilson, 2015).

As already discussed, Aṉangu participation in football was always underpinned by certain values around how men should relate with one another. Being 'matched-up' at the start of a competitive game with someone who is a *malpa* rather than being 'matched-up' with an opponent who they may have prescribed responsibilities towards allowed players a degree of freedom to move and behave in certain un-prescribed ways. When referring to the links that existed among players on the football field, Yawirki Adamson pointed out that when he played for Amata in the 1970s all of the players knew what social relations existed among teammates and opposition players, 'everybody know, everybody know each other, everybody know' (Yawirki, 2015). Indeed, Aṉangu were 'socialised' to know who and how they were related to one another and what role they needed to perform in relation to one another from an early age (for example see Eickelkamp, 2011). Wilson recognised that it was clear to Aṉangu who they could line up against and how they could play their role as a forward, midfielder or defender:

> …it could have been that people just knew where to go to. Like [name withheld], he was about forty-odd, and he would always go to the forward's area. So obviously, he would go on the opposition's full-back. He was a classic goal sneak… So obviously someone like that knew their role and whom they could and couldn't play with. For someone like me it was quite confusing and not transparent but obviously there was a transparency under it (Wilson, 2015).

When Pukatja played Fregon, Wilson matched-up with [name withheld], who is now a respected Pitjantjatjara Elder on the APY Lands. Being 'partners in football' established a 'strong personal bond' between the two of them:

> [Name withheld] became my *malpa* who I then knowingly ran to when we played Fregon. Whenever I see him in Adelaide it's always, '*Hey! Nyuntu ngayuku malpa ngaltutjara!*' (Hey! You are my friend, poor thing!) (Wilson, 2015).

Building on the findings of McCoy (2002) there is a 'culture of pairings' in Western Desert societies. Unlike Western societies, which place an emphasis on individualism and value independence, Anangu often move or travel around with a *malpa* who is usually the same gender (McCoy, 2002: 31). Many *Tjukurpa* narratives and associated songs and ceremonies feature the actions of two actors who journey across country together such as *Wati Kutjara (The Two Men)*, *Minyma Kutjara (The Two Women)* and *Tjitji Kutjara (The Two Children)*. Furthermore, in the neighbouring dialects of Pitjantjatjara and Yankunytjatjara there is a special set of pronouns called 'dual' pronouns which are reserved for talking about groups of two people for example, *ngali* 'we two', *nyupali* 'you two' and *pula* 'they two' (Goddard, 1996: xi). Being 'paired' for competition can be seen to reflect the significance of being 'paired' in these other cultural contexts (McCoy, 2002: 31). At the very least, it would seem that pairing with players from opposing teams who were *malpa* allowed Anangu to show respect to men's kinship and Law without interfering with the integrity of game. However, looking at these relations in a more expansive way, pairing with an *malpa* was yet another remarkable example of Australian football being creatively adapted to maintain Anangu identity and cultural processes in a rapidly changing world.

Conclusion

This chapter has focused on the development of football during the final years of the mission from 1960 to 1974. This period brought considerable social and cultural change to Anangu. It saw establishment of new communities across the emerging APY Lands and most significantly, saw a fundamental policy shift in Aboriginal Affairs towards 'self-determination' that culminated in the transfer of administrative

control of the mission to the Pukatja (Ernabella) Community Council in 1974. This chapter has examined the emergence of inter-community football matches in the 1960s and the explosion in popularity of community sporting carnivals across the Pitjantjatjara Lands and beyond in the 1970s. Moreover, it has highlighted the pre-eminence of changing patterns of mobility in the early 1970s which provided Anangu with the further opportunity to come together and reproduce their culture and society.

The way Anangu played and understood Australian football also changed during this period. Through participation in inter-community football, Anangu skills and knowledge of the game increased, and they began to play football 'straight way', that is in a relatively recognizable form as it was played elsewhere. However, this chapter has shown that the game was also 'straight' according to Western desert culture. This less transparent aspect of Anangu football, involved not only engaging with Australian football as a new cultural form but also transforming it in ways that were suggestive of underpinning cultural values and processes of Anangu society.

This chapter has emphasised the ways in which Anangu took on and transformed the game for their own sociocultural purposes. For example, all football players were expected to regularly demonstrate core values in the framework of social relatedness on the football field through some form of interaction, reciprocity or exchange of favours such as sharing the football among cousins or closely related teammates or by limiting or avoiding physical contact with certain opposition players. This is shown to have played an important part in maintaining Anangu identity and cultural processes and, in turn, represented a way of ensuring that Pitjantjatjara society would be reproduced across generations. By focusing on Anangu cultural values on the football

field – this chapter has shown that football in this region was quite sophisticated and distinctively A<u>n</u>angu.

One of the more illuminating aspects of this chapter has been to show that A<u>n</u>angu participation in Australian football should not be understood for evidence of assimilation into an 'imagined community' of the Australian nation. Rather, A<u>n</u>angu football can be seen as evidence for creative engagement with a rapidly changing world. Indeed, A<u>n</u>angu football represents a unique contribution to Australian football.

Conclusion

This thesis contributes to the growing field of First Nations peoples experiences of sport on missions and government settlements in Australia, and on comparable missions in other settler colonial societies. It does so by examining the origins and significance of Australian Rules football to the people of the Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara (APY) Lands in the far northwest of South Australia. In particular, it offers insights into their historical engagement with the game at the Ernabella mission during the years of its operation from 1937 to 1974. Applying decolonising methodologies and approaches that privilege First Nations peoples' voices, histories and knowledge (McGrath and Russell, 2022; Smith, 2021), this thesis relies on the memories and voices of former members of the Ernabella mission and a careful examination of local historical sources, to reveal a remarkable story of Anangu adoption and adaptation of Australian football during a period of profound change for Anangu.

Historical sources have shown that by the early 1950s, an informal brand of Australian football was being played at the remote desert mission. It was based on Australian Rules but was something quite different to the game played elsewhere in the country. It had the distinctive features of Australian football, but it was a little bit 'kali-kali' (wrong or crooked). There was no bouncing of the ball, no umpire, no scores and on most occasions Anangu would play with little or no reference to the standard rules of the game. It is difficult to say with any certainty exactly when and how Anangu at Ernabella came to be playing football at this time. There is no one person or event that stands out in the historical record. Archival references to Australian football at Ernabella start in the early 1950s, firstly in written accounts,

and secondly in the photographic record from the mission. The written record, in the form of letters written by Anangu teacher Tjuwilya Windlass, contained the earliest traces of football being played at the mission. Windlass wrote that the boys played football '*tjintu kutjupa tjintu kutjupa'* (day after day) at the mission in 1951 (Windlass, 1951a). The visual record has been remarkably revealing with several photographs shedding light on the developing game at Ernabella. The earliest photographic evidence of Anangu playing football at the mission, a film stock image of a match played at the opening of the church in 1952, demonstrated that the mission played an active role in promoting Anangu participation in football**.**

Sports days, particularly the Christmas Day sports, have been shown to be a key component in the promotion of Christianity and European ways of being. Experienced missionaries at Ernabella strategically advanced the missionary project by grounding sports days within the traditional norms of reciprocity and exchange. Accordingly, Anangu attendance and participation in Church services was an expected exchange or return for the mission's organisation of sports and games. It has been shown that this expectation was established in the earliest days of the mission sport and continued throughout the mission years. The advent of inter-community football in the mid-1960s provided further opportunities for missionaries, to take advantage of the popularity of the game of football and people's dependence on the mission for transport as a way of attracting a large congregation for worship services, particularly in the then newly established settlements of Fregon, Amata and Indulkana. Based on Anangu participation in mission activities during sports days, it may be surmised that Anangu comprehended the missionaries' actions as being grounded within the social norm of reciprocated exchange. Historians and scholars such as Harris and Broome have expounded upon how the Ernabella mission hoped to achieve its 'civilising'

aims though non-coercive measures rather than through enforcing colonial rule and authority, this thesis has added another layer to this understanding through the lens of sport.

While the mission had a history of using sport as an instrument of civilisation and assimilation, this thesis does not emphasise the mission's role in the introduction and development of football. Instead, this paper adds to growing academic research on First Nations people's use of sport while under the control of settler-colonial authorities (Broome, 1996; Bamblett, 2013; Norman, 2006; Osmond and Phillips, 2018) by focusing on the agency of Anangu at Ernabella, and in neighbouring settlements, to explain football at the Ernabella mission. In particular, it has shown that games of football played among Anangu in the camp, that is the social space outside the mission, and wide-ranging travel and engagements between Anangu at Ernabella and nearby settlements where football was played, had transformative effects on the way the game was understood and played throughout the mission years.

One of the key historical findings drawn from Anangu oral histories has been that Pitjantjatjara countrymen from the Areyonga Native Settlement, and other Aboriginal people who were living and working on nearby settlements, made significant contributions to the way football was played and understood at the Ernabella mission. Up until the late 1950s and early 1960s, Anangu had played an informal 'anyway' brand of football at Ernabella, but interactions with relatives, involving the sharing knowledge and the guiding of young men's participation in the practices of their regions and competitions, led to the evolving game at Ernabella being played 'straight way', that is, in a form that was relatively recognizable to how it was played elsewhere in Australia. Interactions between Anangu from communities across the

region increased with the emergence of inter-community football in the mid-1960s and 1970s and led to further developments of the game. Ernabella Rules football appears to have been shaped by many people and influences throughout the mission era. Much like Blainey's (2003) description of Australian Rules football, Ernabella Rules football represents a 'long chain of inventions and adaptations that still continue' (Blainey, 2003: 202).

This thesis has explored the understanding that football in Central Australia originated in the town of Alice Springs during the Second World War and spread outward into the hinterland where most Aboriginal people lived. Drawing on archival materials from the Australian War Memorial, oral histories from the National Library of Australia Oral History Collection, Indigenous autobiography and a range of primary and secondary sources, it has shown that between 1942 and 1945 sports of all kinds flourished among Australian troops in the NT and that Australian Rules football was the most popular. Many of the participants were well-known league players from towns and cities in South-eastern Australia while thousands more were unknown but more than proficient at the nation's most popular sport. As a result, football games in Alice Springs were often of high quality and drew spectators in the thousands. Some of the players were Indigenous servicemen and labourers who had the opportunity to represent their unit and play football just like everyone else. Indeed, football was part of the cultural exchange that took place between non-Indigenous servicemen from the southern states and Indigenous servicemen, labourers and their families who were often working and living side-by-side in Army camps across the NT (Hall, 1980; 1997). Significantly, so popular had the game of football become in Alice Springs that when the Australian military forces departed town in late 1945, local townsfolk,

including Aboriginal people from the Gap Cottages, formed their own football teams and competition, the CAFL.

Another achievement of this thesis has been the discussion about the development of Aboriginal football in post-war Alice Springs and the establishment of the Pioneers football club - one of first Aboriginal teams in Australia. This remarkable story has received very little attention from historians. In line with the broader findings of this thesis, members of the Pioneers football club, whose lives were significantly impacted by the interventions of the state and subject to racism and discrimination, were able to maintain family connections and a sense of autonomy and agency over their own lives, in part, through participation in Australian football. More research is urgently needed in the field of documenting Aboriginal experiences and memories of the Pioneers football club, particularly from the perspectives of members of the Gap Cottages community in Alice Springs, as this would not only complement the multi-layered findings of this study further but also reveal a great Australian story.

Most significantly, this paper has shown that Aṉangu not only engaged with football as a new cultural form but also transformed it in ways that were redolent of underpinning core values and cultural processes. This adaptation of football allowed Aṉangu to negotiate and affirm the social ties of relatedness that existed at that moment through some form of interaction, such as looking after reciprocal relations or by avoiding physical contact with certain opposition players (cf. McCoy, 2008: 158). By sustaining relatedness between family groupings in the new social space of the mission, Ernabella Rules football promoted cooperation and order within the camp and, in turn, represented a way of ensuring that Aṉangu identity and society would be sustained and reproduced across generations.

Further to this point, this thesis has shown that football provided considerable benefits by sustaining relatedness within and between Anangu communities. This has been demonstrated through an examination of inter-community football that began in the mid 1960s and exploded in popularity during the 1970s. This perspective has been critical in illuminating the process by which people, whose experiences were shaped by colonialism, used sport to sustain and extend their identity and culture at the Ernabella mission, and in other nearby missions and settlements. Importantly, the gradual and comparatively benign nature of the missionary encounter at Ernabella allowed Anangu to adapt to settler society on their terms and at their own pace. So, to a certain extent, there was an environment in which Anangu were encouraged to invent and adapt Australian football but retain their own culture and identity while doing so.

This research barely scratches the surface in exploring Anangu experiences of sport in former missions and government settlements in Central Australia. In regard to Australian football on the APY Lands, it has not been within the parameters of this research to examine football in the post-mission period, but on appearances it would seem this is a rich area for further research that would tell us more about the growth of the game, how the game has been shaped by changing economic, cultural and political circumstances, and the subsequent use of football as a vehicle for engagement in a range of educational, health and employment programs. This research has obliquely referred to Anangu women's participation in sports and games such as sprints and billy-can races in the early years of the mission and in modern sports such as netball and basketball during the last few decades of the mission era at Ernabella. Given the male dominated nature of sport has resulted in women's experiences of sport being absent or at best marginalised (Osborne and Skillen, 2010),

foundational research, which includes the voice of Aṉangu women, is required into Aṉangu women's sporting experiences historically, as well as in the present, to better understand their participation in community sport, barriers to participation, and an understanding of the place of sport in their lives (Stronach et al. 2016).

Today, Pukatja, Amata, Fregon, and Indulkana form part of the newly named South Australian National Football League SANFL APY League. It is a football and softball competition that spans 200,000 square kilometres in South Australia and the Northern Territory and is described as 'the most remote Australian Rules football competition in the nation' (SANFL, 2021). Such has been the growth and popularity of Aṉangu football across the APY Lands over the last seventy years, that in 2018, approximately 400 players – more than 80 per cent of the male population of the APY Lands aged 17-35 participated in the Aboriginal football competition (SANFL, 2021). The documentation of early Australian football in Ernabella and other settlements in the region during the mission era is critical for an understanding and appreciation of Aṉangu football that is played today in the SANFL APY League. Furthermore, many Aṉangu were deeply interested in their families or community's association with football played in the mission era. The construction of a history of Aṉangu football during the mission years would be an invaluable tool for advancing Aṉangu led research, including at a primary and secondary education level. Accordingly, an abbreviated version of this thesis is needed to share with Aṉangu at Pukatja and across other APY Lands communities.

Lastly, while it is well-known that colonialism has had a significant impact on Aṉangu and their societies, this thesis reveals the significant influence that Aṉangu have had on Australian football. The recognition of Aṉangu history and identity in

Australian football contributes to the existing literature on how and why First Nations peoples in Australia and world-wide have strategically engaged with sport while under the control of settler-colonial authorities. In the spirit of the Anangu cultural value of *ngapartji-ngapartji*, that is, reciprocity and exchange, this research, which is largely the result of collaboration with Anangu participants, will not only contribute to academic knowledge but will also, in turn, contribute to the Ara Irititja archive and Anangu management of Anangu narratives, histories and knowledge.

Glossary

The following glossary of Pitjantjatjara and Yankunytjatjara words and definitions is based on the *Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara to English Dictionary* (1996), compiled by Cliff Goddard. In some cases, alternative spellings, additional words and contemporary meanings are offered.

Anangu people or person

Anangu tjutaku ngura Anangu/people's camp

ampaya umpire

inma church services and singing

kali crooked

kantulpai always kick

kantuni kick

karungka creek at

kanyala the euro, or hills kangaroo (*Macropus robustus*)

kanyininpa carrying, holding, looking after, caring for

ku- possessive case ending

kuka edible game

kungkawara young woman

kungkawara tjutaku ngura young women's camp

Kunmanara substitute name for someone recently deceased

kunta shame

kutjara two

kutjupa another

lipula level

mai food

mai tjukutjuku little bit of food

malpa friend, companion

munu and, so, and then

munkara beyond

minyma woman

nampa number

ngaltu compassion, pity

ngaltutjara having compassion, poor thing

ngapartji reciprocity

ngayuku my, mine

-ngka locative case ending, corresponds to English ‘at, on, in’

-ngku the main form of the ergative case ending

Ngintaka large perentie lizard, important totemic animal

ngura camp, home or country

nyiinka a boy in the stage of seclusion, that precedes the ceremony that will make him a wati

nyuntu you

panya that

Piranpa white, white person

pulangkita tjuta blankets

punu growing tree or bush

putupula a football

puturu headband made of wool

-pai verb ending that identifies an action as typically done by the subject

-tjara relator suffix that means having

tjaputjapu a child's small ball or Australian Rules football

tjaputjapuni playing football

tjina foot

tjintu sun

tjintu kutjupa tjintu kutjupa every day, each day

tjuta many

tjilpi old man, Elder

tjinguru maybe, perhaps

tjitji child

Tjukurpa Dreaming or Ancestral Law

tjukutjuku little

ukari nephew

uwa yes

walytja family, kin

wara long

waru fire

waputju father-in-law

wati initiated man, adult male

wati wanngu young man

wati wanngu tjutaku ngura young men's camp

wirunya great

wiltja shelter

wiya no

yungupula young fella

yungupula tjuta young fellas

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