

# (un)making Angas Downs

A spatial history of a Central Australian pastoral station 1930 – 1980

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A thesis submitted for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy of the Australian National University

December 2016



## DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this thesis is entirely my own work and that to the best of my knowledge it contains no material published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the text. This thesis has not been submitted in whole or in part for a degree at this or any other university.

Shannyn Palmer

Date



## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The School of History at the Australian National University has been a wonderfully supportive environment throughout this intellectual journey. When you take as long as I have there are too many colleagues to name individually, but needless to say I have benefited from the wisdom within the Coombs building immensely. Over the course of my candidature I have been blessed with a wonderful supervisory panel that allowed me to lose myself in the desert for many years and then engaged with me rigorously and generously when I needed it. Ann McGrath's enthusiasm for innovative approaches to history research and writing helped to shape my methodology and approach to writing a history in place. Richard Baker encouraged me to read Fred Myers, which made for a 'pivotal' moment in the development of my understanding the (un)making of Angas Downs. Martin Thomas, a gifted historian and writer, inspired me to work harder at honing my craft. Luke Taylor's close reading of my early draft and thoughtful feedback made for another of those pivotal PhD moments. I am deeply grateful for his generosity and expertise.

I am at a loss for words to convey the depth of gratitude I feel for my Primary Supervisor Maria Nugent. With Maria as my guide, my intellectual journey has been shaped in ways that have left lasting impressions of what it means to be a historian and how to write history with precision and purpose. I have thrived on being challenged by her rigour, which has encouraged me to take my thinking deeper and further. I treasure the lessons I have learned through her and carry them with me into all of my future projects.

Whilst wandering the desert for many years in order to learn the place, this thesis has benefited immeasurably from the knowledge and expertise of a number of professional practitioners and experts in the 'field'. Patrick Hookey's grasp of the Pitjantjatjara language and intimate knowledge of people and place was nothing short of intimidating when I first started out. Over the years I have been fortunate enough to draw on this knowledge – the kind I could never glean from a book – and I am forever grateful for his generosity in engaging with my research and writing. Sam Osborne, who was on his own PhD journey at the time, was a constant source of knowledge and inspiration with his unwavering dedication to ethical and meaningful research. The team at Ara Irititja – John Dallwitz, Dora Dallwitz and the wonderful Julia Burke – this thesis owes so much to their support. I feel privileged to have been a part of a team dedicated to a significant and meaningful project that, in Julia's words, grew out of 'Anangu turning history on its head'.

Particular thanks go to Linda Rive at Ara Irititja. For four years we travelled the desert, recording stories with Tjuki Tjukanku Pumpjack and in doing so shared something special. Without her I would not have been able to hear the places and histories of which I write in the Pitjantjatjara language, which has been such an important aspect of this undertaking.

My time in the desert, and these significant relationships, kept me and my research grounded. No place has ever made my heart sing and hurt as much as Alice Springs. My time in Alice was characterised by an acute sense of being both in and out of place — an experience that has not only changed and shaped me, but is also inflected in the texture of this thesis.

To Felix Meyer thanks for the love, the laughter and the maps – you were right; all our moments were Ouroboros. To Sammy Irvine, Olivia Whitty, Dave Williams and Kelly Lee Hickey, I am full of gratitude for the love, faith and good times that have brought me joy and carried me through the last six years. To Tilla, a sweet surprise at the end of this epic journey. Your support, through a deep respect for the creative process, has been so encouraging in the final, difficult months and has made the possibilities of the unknown that lay in wait that much more exciting.

To Rosemary Dobson and the Bolton family for the marvellous love and light-filled house that held me throughout the final year and which now, along with all that poetry, also holds this story.

To Jeanette, Geoff and Dallas your unconditional love and support is a blessing to me. I love you all so very much.

Finally, I feel a deep sense of gratitude and pay my respects to Anangu of the southwest of Central Australia – past, present and future – because it is from their places that I write this history.

I am grateful beyond words to Tjuki Tjukanku Pumpjack for sharing his life, knowledge and Country with me. In doing so he has enriched my life in profound ways. Although I was fortunate enough to share in his incredible gift for storytelling, he taught me many things without having to say anything at all. Above all, he showed me what it means to *love* a place, in the deepest sense of that word. Sandra Armstrong too, shared her life and her place with me. She showed me what tenacious love for a place looks like. Most importantly, she taught me, and continues to remind me, to *never* stop fighting for what I believe in and for that, and so much more, I am so very thankful.

## ABSTRACT

Angas Downs is a pastoral station situated in the arid Central Australian rangelands, 300 kilometres southwest of Alice Springs. Yet, as pastoral station, it does not articulate easily with the established historiography of Aboriginal people's participation in the northern pastoral industry. Nor does it conform to the image of the outback cattle station popularised in myths of pioneers and pastoralists which dominate Central Australian history. Located in the marginal lands of the desert interior, Angas Downs was a largely defective capitalist enterprise, and one which actually 'employed' very few Aboriginal people. Nevertheless, significant numbers of Anangu lived on Angas Downs, or used it as a base between 1930 and 1980.

By approaching the station as moments in time *and* space, this thesis examines the ways in which this desert pastoral station was made – and unmade – by Anangu and others in their encounters with each other over fifty years across the middle of the twentieth century. It asks: What kind of place was Angas Downs? And how should we see it and understand it as *place*? It shows that pastoralism is but a fraction of the story. Taking a spatial approach to history and memory, and drawing insights from anthropology, ethnography and cultural geography, the thesis traces the ways in which Anangu drew upon existing social practices to make sense of the new places that emerged when whitefellas came to the desert.

The thesis traces travels, itineraries, and networks of movement. In doing so, it grapples with the question of how people, dislocated by historical and spatial shifts, made a place for themselves. Oral histories are a key resource. More than recollections of the past, Anangu historical remembrance is conceptualised in this thesis as an 'inscriptive practice' that brings places into being, and endows them with meaning that is both learned, shared and sustained through particular narrative modes and techniques. Focusing upon extended oral histories of lives that spanned five decades of change, the thesis presents a detailed analysis of the complex and creative social processes involved in place-making at Angas Downs.

Rather than a single site produced through colonial structures, relations and processes, Angas Downs emerges in this study as a deeply complex place of dynamic interaction and social life. The spatial approach and analysis draws out the multiple and layered meanings of Angas Downs, which were created in and through intersecting travels, encounters and exchanges. The thesis explores themes of Anangu knowledge and historical change; the

production of locality and place-making as social practice; mobility as productive of social relations and of place; and the interplay between environmental and social ecologies and the ways in which this shaped the making and unmaking of Angas Downs. At a time when the politics of place continues to be keenly felt in Australia, this thesis contributes to understandings of place-making that reflect the complex legacies of colonialism, while holding out Angas Downs as a symbol of hope for more responsive and creative formulations of relationships to place.



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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AI	Ara Irititja
AIATSIS	Australian Institute for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies
APY	Aṅangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara
DAA	Department of Aboriginal Affairs
IPA	Indigenous Protected Area
NAA	National Archives of Australia
NPY	Ngaanyatjarra Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara Women's Council
NTAS	Northern Territory Archives Service
NTRS	Northern Territory Record Series
SAM	South Australian Museum
SLNSW	State Library of New South Wales (Mitchell Library)
SLSA	State Library of South Australia





## INTRODUCTION

### ENCOUNTERS IN PLACE

Situated on the edge of the Western Desert, in the Central Australian ranges, Angas Downs was the name that William ‘Bill’ Liddle gave to the sheep run that he established at a place called Walara around 1928-29. Anangu man Tjuki Tjukanku Pumpjack arrived at Walara sometime in the late 1930s. A young boy at the time, he and his family walked out of the Western Desert and embarked upon a journey, which led them to Liddle’s Angas Downs station, situated several hundreds of kilometres to the north of their homelands in the Musgrave Ranges.<sup>1</sup>



Image 1 – Walara, 2012. Source: Photograph by author.

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<sup>1</sup> People with present-day connections to Angas Downs speak a number of dialects of a mutually recognisable Western Desert language; Pitjantjatjara, Yankunytjatjara and Ngaanyatjarra are but a few of the names that were given when whitefellas began asking desert people to define who they were in relation to others. Anangu is the term they use to refer to themselves, which is their word for person or people. There is some spelling and pronunciation variation across the different language groups. The same word is Yarnangu in Ngaanyatjarra. Language is powerful and naming and categorisation in histories of colonialism and cultural encounter is inherently political. My use of the term Anangu throughout this thesis is deliberate, and wherever possible I avoid using the term ‘Aboriginal’ as a generalising category. The term did not exist in Australia before the arrival of Europeans and as historian Bain Attwood has argued is an ideological artefact that emerged within the context of colonisation. As Attwood suggests, as a category it reflects the asymmetrical power relations that enabled Europeans to construct the peoples they encountered as a homogenous group that they called ‘Aboriginal’. The intent behind my privileging the term Anangu, and my avoidance of the category ‘Aboriginal’, is to emphasise the diversity of peoples and experiences of colonialism across Australia and the implications of this variability for the writing of history. See Bain Attwood, *The Making of the Aborigines* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1989), x. See also Bob Reece, “Inventing Aborigines,” *Aboriginal History* 11 (1987): 14–23.



**Map 1 – Map of the southwest region including various sites on Angas Downs and places connected to it in the broader spatial and social network.** ‘Southwest’ in this thesis describes the system of people and places to the southwest of Alice Springs. It is not confined within state boundaries and encompasses part of Western Australia and northern South Australia.

Tjuki Pumpjack and I travelled to Walara together for the first time in August 2012. To reach the place we drove west from Imanpa along the Lassiter Highway, turning off onto the Luritja road in the direction of Watarrka (**Map 1**). After bitumen for approximately 30 kilometres, we turned off the highway onto a rough red dirt track. Not too far down the track Tjuki pointed west toward a hill that rose up out of the mulga scrub, and motioning with his hand across the country that lay before us, told me that in the *Tjukurpa*, which is commonly referred to as the Dreaming, *Wati Niru* (a man called Niru) had chased *Kungkarangkulpa* (the Seven Sisters) right through that country. A little way further down the road the landscape changed; the red earth turned white because of hundreds of little rocks that mark the presence of a limestone plain. Tjuki told me that this was the place where the Angas Downs airstrip used to be.

The dirt track we were travelling along was narrow and rough. Water had worn large crevices and dips into the surface and the absence of any visible tyre tracks made it appear as though very few people, if any, had driven along that road in recent times. As we wound our way deeper and deeper into the desert it seemed strange to me that a pastoral station would be located in such densely vegetated, desert country. Bits of stone, an old stove,

some timber posts and rusted pieces of scattered machinery are among the material traces of Angas Downs that remain in the landscape. As we came to a stop, Tjuki motioned out across the site and said to me, ‘that’s my Country, we bin grow up here from kids, me and my brother’.<sup>2</sup> He then grabbed his beard, and running his hands along it, over and over again, he told me that this place was his Country because it was where his beard had grown. In Aboriginal English, Country is not only a common noun, it is also a proper noun, and as Deborah Bird Rose describes it:

People talk about country in the same way they would talk about a person: they speak to country, sing to country, visit country, worry about country, feel sorry for country and long for country. People say that country knows, hears, smells, takes notice, takes care, is sorry or happy. Country is not a generalised or undifferentiated type of place... Rather, country is a living entity with a yesterday, today and tomorrow, with a consciousness, and a will toward life.<sup>3</sup>

Motioning out across the landscape again, Tjuki looked at me and told me to look at the place. He told me that the place was sad. Moving his hand up to his forehead, he proceeded to run it in a downward motion over his face, from his forehead to his chin, closing his eyes as his hand passed over them. With his eyes still closed, he told me that the country was dying because he was the last one left, and there was no one living on or ‘holding’ this place anymore.<sup>4</sup> This first encounter at Walara seeded some of the central problems and questions that inform this thesis. How was I to make sense of this place — its history as a pastoral station evidenced by the scant remains of Liddle’s homestead and its contemporary evocation as Country? What kind of place is Angas Downs? And how should we *see* it and understand it as a *place*?

My PhD scholarship was awarded as part of an Australian Research Council Linkage Project called *Deepening Histories of Place: Indigenous Landscapes of National and International*

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<sup>2</sup> As this introduction will go on to explain, Country - *ngura* in Pitjantjatjara - is one of the key Anangu concepts guiding my interpretation in this thesis. Given that the conceptualisation and creation of place is a primary concern in my analysis, and that the Anangu use of the term Country is not generalised, but rather relates to a specific relationship to places, I capitalise the term throughout this thesis to differentiate this particular way of understanding and making place, in contrast the standard English use of the term.

<sup>3</sup> Deborah Bird Rose, *Nourishing Terrains: Australian Aboriginal Views of Landscape and Wilderness* (Canberra: Australian Heritage Commission, 1996), 7.

<sup>4</sup> Author field notes, 29 August, 2012.

*Significance.*<sup>5</sup> Three field sites across Australia were selected as intensive case studies to investigate landscape based histories that could potentially facilitate a deeper engagement with Aboriginal understandings of Country and the relationships between people, places and stories. The project acknowledged that while the Sydney Basin and the Blue Mountains in New South Wales and the Top End and Central Australia in the Northern Territory are regions recognised nationally and internationally for their environmental and ecological significance, their cultural significance and diverse human histories are not widely understood. These significant ‘national landscapes’<sup>6</sup> became the focal points for the project’s key research questions: How are histories of natural and cultural landscapes meaningful? What follows when Aboriginal histories are conceived of as journeys, rather than static histories of place? In what ways have Aboriginal people maintained, narrated and interpreted histories of connection? How have these relationships been transformed by settler economies and new travel modes? How has geological specificity shaped human encounters?

In scoping for ‘sites’ that could serve as the basis for the Central Australian case study, Angas Downs presented itself as a potentially productive site to begin thinking through these questions. Declared an Indigenous Protected Area (IPA) in 2009, an information leaflet about Angas Downs notes that as well as being located in an area of rich biodiversity, it is also ‘of great historical and cultural value’ and that the Yankunytjatjara and Pitjantjatjara [people] have maintained a continued connection to the property, including its *past life* as a sheep and cattle property.<sup>7</sup> This place in southern Luritja country<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Project partners were Director of National Parks (DNP), Department of Environment and Climate Change (DECC), The National Film and Sound Archive (NFSA), The Australian Institute for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS) and Ronin Films. Chief Investigators were Professor Ann McGrath (ANU), Professor Peter Read (Sydney University), Dr Shino Konishi (ANU) and Partner Investigators were Denis Byrne (DECC) and Luke Taylor (AIATSIS).

<sup>6</sup> The three case studies chosen are among 16 places identified in the Australia’s National Landscapes Program, developed in partnership between Tourism Australia and Parks Australia to promote Australia’s ‘most spectacular regions offering uniquely Australian experiences’. *Deepening Histories of Place* aimed to enrich this program by addressing the significant ‘gaps’ in historical knowledge about these designated ‘National Landscapes’.

<sup>7</sup> “Indigenous Protected Areas – Angas Downs,” Department of Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts, accessed 12 September, 2016, PDF factsheet available at <https://www.environment.gov.au/indigenous/ipa/declared/angasdowns.html>. Emphasis added. According to the Federal Government, IPA’s are designated areas of Aboriginal-owned land where traditional owners enter into agreements with the state to promote conservation and biodiversity, as well as develop programs that deliver cultural, social and economic benefits to people and communities. See “Indigenous Protected Areas”, Department of the Environment and Energy, accessed 12 September, 2016, <http://www.environment.gov.au/land/indigenous-protected-areas>.

<sup>8</sup> Luritja is another dialect of the Western Desert language family, which prior to European contact is thought to have bordered the lands of Pitjantjatjara speaking communities in the west and Yankunytjatjara and Antikarinya speaking communities in the south. See “AIATSIS map of Indigenous Australia”,

had gone from desert pastoral property to reluctantly abandoned settlement to reclaimed protected Aboriginal land in less than a century and as such promised to deliver much for an in-depth historical study. As I came to increasingly know this place through recording and listening to stories and memories of Anangu, by researching the archival record, and by travelling across it and visiting various sites, my interest in trying to understand what kind of place Angas Downs was evolved into wanting to know what the various historical and social processes were that made – and unmade – this place.

In conceptualising this history as the (un)making of Angas Downs, this thesis approaches it as moments in time *and* space and gives particular emphasis to the dynamic processes of place-making by Anangu and others in their encounters over fifty years. At one level, this thesis traces the rise and demise of a sheep and later cattle enterprise between about 1930 and 1980. At another, it analyses the complex and creative social processes that were mobilised by Anangu to make sense of the new places that emerged when whitefellas<sup>9</sup> came to the desert. Rather than consider these two facets of the history of Angas Downs as disparate, I attend to the ways in which they articulate and work simultaneously to make Angas Downs into *more* than merely a pastoral station. In tracing the various cultures of economy, dwelling and travelling that intersected at this desert locale, the thesis grapples with the question of how people experience historical and spatial shifts and come to make

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AIATSIS, accessed 12 September, 2016, [aiatsis.gov.au/explore/articles/aiatsis-map-indigenous-australia](http://aiatsis.gov.au/explore/articles/aiatsis-map-indigenous-australia). Angas Downs is cited in the IPA information leaflet as being situated on Matutjara country. However, there is considerable ambiguity around the distinctions between Western Desert dialects and Matutjara is widely accepted by linguists as a northern variety of Yankunytjatjara (in contrast with Mulatjara, which is a southern speech variety). And yet, both Matutjara and Mulatjara have also been described as Antikarinya, which is thought to have bordered Yankunytjatjara country to the east. As linguist Paul Monaghan has observed this ambiguity is perhaps indicative of the overlap of the labels Yankunytjatjara and Antikarinya. See Paul Monaghan, “Laying Down the Country: Norman B. Tindale and the Linguistic Construction of the North-West of South Australia” (PhD Thesis, University of Adelaide, 2003), 227-8. Needless to say, there would have been considerable movement between people of different speech communities in this area and highly probable that people from areas defined as southern Luritja and northern Pitjantjatjara and Yankunytjatjara moved through and used the area that became known as Angas Downs.

<sup>9</sup> While the decision to use the term Anangu was relatively easy, settling on an appropriate term for ‘settlers’ was less straightforward. Throughout the drafting process of this thesis it has shifted, somewhat uncomfortably, between ‘white people’, ‘newcomers’, ‘Europeans’, ‘settlers’ and ‘colonists’, to name a few. As the writing progressed and I substituted one term for another each felt loaded and laden with historical baggage. I could not escape the implications of terms such as ‘settler’ or ‘colonist’, particularly in regards to the implications of each for conveying unavoidable value judgements on colonial processes and the characterisation of colonialism as a monolithic process. In the end I came to realise that Anangu never used any of the terms I was using for the people they refer to overwhelming as ‘whitefellas’. *Piranpa* is the Anangu word for white people, however, in my experience working with Anangu they rarely used the term and spoke of ‘whitefellas’ instead. I have chosen to use the term ‘whitefellas’ throughout the thesis as a reflection of how Anangu describe the cultural encounter and relationships that resulted from colonialism.

a place for themselves in new locations. Putting particular emphasis on mobility, the study conceives of Angas Downs as an important hub in a broader constellation of places referred to in the thesis as the ‘southwest’ (**Map 1**). Understanding it in relation to other places within a regional spatial and social network, and interpreting the ways in which travel between places is productive of those relations, reveals histories and meanings that are obscured when Angas Downs is considered as a single, bounded location. Tracing its history over a period spanning fifty years, and drawing extensively on the perspectives of Anangu, the thesis examines a series of related themes, including Anangu knowledge and historical change, the production of locality and place-making as social practice, mobility as productive of social relations and of place, and the interplay between environmental and social ecologies in shaping Angas Downs. What emerges from this approach is an understanding of this place as lived, multiplicitous and socially produced — made and inhabited by Anangu, even though at first glance, Angas Downs appears to be the product of whitefella intervention.

## A history for Angas Downs

While seeking to understand Angas Downs as ‘place’ necessarily situates this history geographically, it is less clear as to where to situate this place historiographically. Central Australia has been the subject of a significant body of writing that, when considered together, constitutes what historian Tom Griffiths has referred to a ‘grand tradition of desert literature’.<sup>10</sup> The central deserts have long been a source of fascination of, and so fodder for, a travel writing tradition that began with explorer Ernest Giles and carried well into the twentieth century with the writings of C.T. Madigan, H.H. Finlayson, Arthur Groom and more recently Barry Hill, to name just a few.<sup>11</sup> Central Australia has also been the focus for a tradition of desert anthropology that first emerged around the turn of the twentieth century with the early fieldwork of Baldwin Spencer and Frank Gillen and continued with the likes of T.G.H. Strehlow and Charles Mountford right through until the well-known contemporary desert ethnographies of anthropologists such as Fred Myers and

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<sup>10</sup> Tom Griffiths, “A Landmark Work of Australian History,” *Inside Story*, 6 May, 2013, accessed 23 September, 2016, <http://insidestory.org.au/a-landmark-work-of-australian-history>.

<sup>11</sup> Ernest Giles, *Geographic Travels in Central Australia, from 1872 to 1874* (Melbourne: M’Carron, Bird & Co., 1875); Ernest Giles, *Australia Twice Traversed: The Romance of Exploration Being A Narrative Compiled from the Journals of Five Exploring Expeditions Into and Through Central South Australia and Western Australia, From 1872 to 1876*, 2 vols. (London: Sampson Low, Marston, Searle & Rivington, 1889); Arthur Groom, *I Saw a Strange Land* (Sydney: Angus & Robertson, 1952); Finlayson, *The Red Centre*; Barry Hill, *The Rock: Travelling to Uluru* (St. Leonards, N.S.W: Allen & Unwin, 1994); C. T. Madigan, *Central Australia* (London: Oxford University Press, 1936).

Diane Austin-Broos.<sup>12</sup> However, despite this rich literary and ethnographic tradition, Central Australia has received comparatively little attention from academic historians.

In the introduction to his 1991 analysis of the material evidence of European culture and settlement in Central Australia, historian David Carment noted that few professional historians had written about Central Australia and that at the time he was writing ‘none had published a comprehensive study of the region’.<sup>13</sup> At the time of Carment’s work, he noted that more had been done in the sphere of ‘specialist studies’, particularly ‘race relations’, the most accomplished of which he believed to be Mervyn Hartwig’s unpublished 1965 PhD thesis studying the impact of white settlement on Aboriginal people in the Alice Springs area between 1860 and 1894.<sup>14</sup> That a history of cultural encounter in Central Australia could be considered a ‘specialist study’, particularly one that covers a period where Aboriginal people would have significantly outnumbered whitefellas, reflects a rather limiting perspective on what constitutes ‘comprehensive’ historical research and writing. Carment’s own history focuses on the story of white settlement, and although he does acknowledge that this can not be understood without ‘awareness of the first inhabitants’, Aboriginal people do not appear as agents or producers of the places he documents in the Central Australian landscape. Aboriginal relationships to place are dealt with in a paragraph about ritual and spiritual affiliations to land in the introduction and a chapter titled ‘Before the Europeans’. His approach to studying the ‘relationship between the settlement process and the contemporary cultural landscape’<sup>15</sup> in Central Australia, through an examination of material evidence such as buildings and homesteads, effectively separates Aboriginal and

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<sup>12</sup> Diane Austin-Broos, *Arrernte Present, Arrernte Past: Invasion, Violence, and Imagination in Indigenous Central Australia* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2009); Charles P. Mountford, *Brown Men and Red Sand: Wanderings in Wild Australia* (Melbourne: Robertson & Mullens, 1948); Charles P. Mountford, *Ayers Rock, Its People, Their Beliefs and Their Art* (Sydney: Angus & Robertson, 1965); Fred R. Myers, *Pintupi Country, Pintupi Self: Sentiment, Place, and Politics among Western Desert Aborigines* (Canberra: Washington and London: Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies; Smithsonian Institution Press, 1986); Baldwin Spencer and Frank Gillen, *The Arunta: A Study of a Stone Age People*, 2 vols. (London: Macmillan & Co., 1927); T. G. H. Strehlow, *Songs of Central Australia* (Sydney: Angus & Robertson, 1971). This is not meant to be an exhaustive list. Rather, it is intended to be illustrative. Desert ethnography constitutes a considerable body of scholarship, much of which is discussed further in chapter one.

<sup>13</sup> David Carment, *History and the Landscape in Central Australia* (Darwin: North Australia Research Unit, 1991), x. Carment observed that histories focused on the Northern Territory, most notably that of Peter Donovan, had a heavy Top End focus, a summation of historiography of the Northern Territory that has changed little in the three decades since. See P. F. Donovan, *A Land Full of Possibilities: A History of South Australia’s Northern Territory* (St. Lucia, Qld: University of Queensland Press, 1981); P. F. Donovan, *At the Other End of Australia: The Commonwealth and the Northern Territory, 1911-1978* (St. Lucia, Qld: University of Queensland Press, 1984).

<sup>14</sup> M. C. Hartwig, “The Progress of White Settlement in the Alice Springs District and Its Effects upon the Aboriginal Inhabitants, 1860-1894” (PhD Thesis, University of Adelaide, 1965).

<sup>15</sup> Carment, *History and the Landscape in Central Australia*, viii.

whitefella place-worlds and represents the contemporary Central Australian cultural landscape as largely the product of whitefella settlement processes. While it is still fair to say that comparatively few academic historians have written about Central Australia, there have been notable developments in historical research since the publication of Carment's work. However, as I will canvass below, there was a shift in the focus of history writing that followed, and in this sense, this history of Angas Downs is a return to an emphasis on place.

If Central Australia has largely been overlooked by academic historians, then the same is true for Angas Downs itself. It does not have much of a historiography of its own. A 2005 Plan of Management Report, which was prepared as part of the IPA application process, is a case in point. It included a one-page document titled 'History of Pastoral Development' written by Central Australian Dick Kimber that, as the title suggests, sketches a brief history of Angas Downs as pastoral station. It makes no mention of Anangu at all. Rather, it focuses on the history of Angas Downs as a story of the Liddle family, who established, owned and operated it as a pastoral station.<sup>16</sup> Yet, as this thesis will demonstrate, throughout its life as a pastoral station Angas Downs was home to significant numbers of Anangu. Kimber's description of the history of Angas Downs as a narrative of pastoral development excludes the perspectives and experiences of the people who constituted a majority of the population there, while also obscuring other kinds of processes that shaped the place.

While it has not been the subject of a scholarly history before now, Angas Downs has featured in other academic accounts, notably Tim Rowse's history of rationing, *White Flour, White Power*. In a significant contribution not only Central Australian history, but also to the historiography of colonial governance of indigenous people, Rowse applied a Foucauldian theoretical framework to illustrate rationing as a pervasive technique that was mobilized to great effect in Central Australia during the assimilation era, as a means to exert control and manage behaviour. Highlighting that rationing was transferrable across a range of institutions such as the pastoral station, the mission and the government settlement, Rowse argued that it was a tool that enabled the colonists to generate knowledge of those they

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<sup>16</sup> R.G. Kimber, 'History of Pastoral Development' in "Angas Downs Indigenous Protected Area: Plan of Management: A Report to Lisanote Pty. Ltd. on Conservation of Biodiversity, Sustainable Production and Training Opportunities" (Canberra: Australian Wildlife Services, 2005).



colonised, which in turn informed how they governed them.<sup>17</sup> Within this study, Angas Downs is but one of many pastoral stations and mission settlements considered, and it plays a relatively small part in this regionally-focused history. Nevertheless, Rowse's focus on the rationing relationship, and the regional scope of the study, is significant for signaling another way of seeing Angas Downs as more than just a pastoral station. It is listed as one of several 'quasi-settlements', which Rowse described as places that sustained large camps of Aboriginal people, which were made possible by government subsidy.<sup>18</sup> Rations at Angas Downs were not just being exchanged for labour in the cattle enterprise, but were also being distributed on behalf of the government and as such Angas Downs, like other pastoral stations in the region, was also a vehicle through which the state could operate.

The relationship between missions and settlements and the apparatus of the state, particularly in the form of assimilation policy, has been the focus of other historical research focused on the region. Both David Trudinger and Rani Kerin, for instance, have studied the Presbyterian mission at Pukatja, which was called Ernabella, providing important insights into the interplay between assimilation policies and Christianity.<sup>19</sup> Ernabella was established in the Musgrave Ranges in northwestern South Australia. This place was an important site in early Anangu migrations out of the Western Desert, and as such was as an important hub in the broader network of places connected to Angas Downs (see chapter one). Within this regional system, it is the place that has attracted the most scholarly attention, which is probably due in large part to the unique attitude toward the preservation and incorporation of Anangu cultural practices and languages within the mission's own objectives. Both Kerin and Trudinger have each sought to understand the kinds of colonial relations that developed at Ernabella, focusing particularly on the biographies of key white figures involved with running the mission.<sup>20</sup> While each study provides a view onto the intellectual, political and discursive construction of Ernabella as a mission 'site', neither work draws upon Anangu oral histories and memory, and thus represent a limited perspective on the history of the place.

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<sup>17</sup> Tim Rowse, *White Flour, White Power: From Rations to Citizenship in Central Australia* (Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 3–5.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 118–19.

<sup>19</sup> Rani Kerin, *Doctor Do-Good: Charles Duguid and Aboriginal Advancement, 1930s-1970s* (North Melbourne, Vic: Australian Scholarly Publishing, 2011); Rani Kerin, "'Doctor Do-Good?': Charles Duguid and Aboriginal Politics, 1930-1970s" (PhD Thesis, Australian National University, 2004); David Trudinger, "Converting Salvation: Protestant Missionaries in Central Australia, 1930s-40s" (PhD Thesis, Australian National University, 2004).

<sup>20</sup> See also David Trudinger, "The Language(s) of Love: JRB Love and Contesting Tongues at Ernabella Mission Station, 1940-46," *Aboriginal History* 31 (2007): 27-44.

The historical works by Rowse, Trudinger and Kerin provide crucial insights into the Anangu engagement with the constantly changing landscape of government policy in Central Australia, particularly in regard to the mission settlements at Ernabella and Areyonga, both of which exerted influence on Angas Downs. Established some five or six years after Ernabella in 1943, and located approximately 250 kilometres to the north in the Western MacDonnell Ranges, Areyonga mission, also known as Utju, was established as an outpost of the Lutheran Hermannsburg mission, specifically to cater for Pitjantjatjara people migrating out of the Western Desert. It too became a significant place in Anangu itineraries (see chapter four especially). However, while this scholarship is invaluable for illuminating historical relations on Angas Downs, their histories remain fairly fixed on analysing the work of the state and its ‘agents’.<sup>21</sup> By contrast, focusing on Angas Downs station as *location*, and as co-produced by Anangu and others in their encounters, relations and exchanges with each other, my research reveals geographies, processes and experiences in which the influence of the state is less pronounced.

### Frederick Rose and *The Wind of Change in Central Australia*

While Angas Downs has hitherto not been the subject of a substantial historical study, it was the “site” of a well-known, if initially overlooked, ethnography. In 2017 it will be 55 years since anthropologist Frederick Rose carried out fieldwork on Angas Downs. Rose lived at Bloodwood Bore, the site of the second Angas Downs homestead, for four months between July and October 1962. The resulting ethnography, *The Wind of Change in Central Australia: The Aborigines at Angas Downs, 1962*, was published in Rose’s adopted home of East Germany in 1965.<sup>22</sup> Set on a cattle station and concerned with the changes in Aboriginal social life brought about the encounter with a cash economy, his research was something of an anomaly within the field of anthropology at the time. As historian Klaus Neumann has observed, in the 1960s ‘most Australian anthropologists would have been baffled’ by Rose’s interest in the influences that Aboriginal people and settlers were having on each other.<sup>23</sup> Only incidentally interested in what he called the ‘cult life’ of Anangu, Rose’s explicitly Marxist interpretation of change on Angas Downs resulted in *The Wind of Change* remaining largely overlooked in the canon of desert ethnography. Of late, though,

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<sup>21</sup> See also Ralph Folds, *Crossed Purposes: The Pintupi and Australia’s Indigenous Policy* (Sydney: UNSW Press, 2001).

<sup>22</sup> Frederick G.G. Rose, *The Wind of Change in Central Australia: The Aborigines at Angas Downs, 1962* (Berlin: Akademie - Verlag, 1965).

<sup>23</sup> Klaus Neumann, “Fred Rose: Communist, Scientist, Lover, Spy,” *Inside Story*, October 3, 2015, accessed 14 January, 2016, <http://insidestory.org.au/fred-rose-communist-scientist-lover-spy>.

Rose has generated renewed interest and revision. A recent historical biography of Rose, *The Red Professor*, written by historians Peter Monteath and Valerie Munt, has brought him back into view.<sup>24</sup> As Monteath and Munt's title alludes to, Rose was a Marxist and committed member of the Communist Party of Australia. Prior to the recent resurgence in interest in his life, it is arguable that Rose was most well known for his appearance before the Petrov Royal Commission into Espionage in 1954, due to his suspected involvement in a Soviet Spy Ring.<sup>25</sup>

Described by his biographers as an 'implacable advocate of orthodox Marxism',<sup>26</sup> his ethnographic study of change on Angas Downs is filtered through a materialist interpretation of history, and thus it represents yet another way of approaching and apprehending Angas Downs. At the time of Rose's visit in 1962, the tourist season was in full-swing. In Kimber's very abridged history of pastoral development, he noted that throughout the 1950s and into the early 1960s Angas Downs was also a 'service station and stop on one of the roads to Uluru'. However, Kimber notes that this was 'incidental' to then owner Arthur Liddle's interest in cattle, and that the nearby roadhouses at Mt Ebenezer, Curtin Springs and Erldunda 'catered for most tourist needs'.<sup>27</sup> Despite Kimber's claim that the tourism industry was 'incidental' to the Liddle family's interest in cattle, Rose's ethnography demonstrates that the thriving artefact trade and catering enterprise that developed on the station were central to the daily lives of both Anangu and the Liddles. Rose adhered to the theory that it is the mode of production, as the economic basis of society that determined a society's nature and development. Rose analysed the so-called 'acculturation' he witnessed on Angas Downs within the Marxist materialist theory of historical change. History for Rose had an internal logic, and Anangu at Angas Downs were seen to be moving along an inevitable sequence of economic structures and discrete modes of production. As Rose saw it, the 'traditional' way of life for Anangu had virtually disappeared. He argued that the process of 'detrribalisation' that was taking place on the station had been accelerated by the commodification of material culture and the encounter

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<sup>24</sup> Peter Monteath and Valerie Munt, *Red Professor: The Cold War Life of Fred Rose* (Mile End, South Australia: Wakefield Press, 2015). See also Valerie Munt, "Australian Anthropology, Ideology and Political Repression: The Cold War Experience of Frederick G.G. Rose," *Anthropological Forum* 21, no. 2 (2011): 109–29. *The Red Professor* was nominated for the 2016 Prime Minister's Prize for History.

<sup>25</sup> Rose had been working since 1946 as a public servant, first in the Department of Territories, followed by the Department of Post-war Reconstruction. He resigned from the public service in 1954, only to be summoned later that year. His career in tatters, he emigrated to the German Democratic Republic in 1956. See "The Petrov Commission" in Monteath and Munt, *Red Professor*, 142–153.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 88.

<sup>27</sup> Kimber, 'History of Pastoral Development'.

with a cash economy that resulted from the encounter with tourism. In his work, Angas Downs emerges not just as a pastoral station and “quasi-settlement”. It is, as well, a fortuitously-located tourist attraction – a theme which I will explore in most detail in chapter three.

While undertaking his fieldwork, Rose was particularly attentive to the comings and goings of Anangu at Angas Downs. His fieldwork diaries, which he published as an accompaniment to his analysis of the Anangu engagement with the capitalist economic order, document in remarkable detail the daily happenings on the station over a few months. Particularly useful for my study, he observed that most Anangu had ancestral homelands located far away to the west, and that movement was thus a central part of life. Rose’s diaries provide a rich picture of Angas Downs as a significant stopping off point in Anangu itineraries of travel, and are an important source for situating the station in a wider regional network of mobility and meaning, which I explore at length in chapter four. In this sense I have drawn on Rose’s work both as critical study and an archive of primary material, both of which have been influential in building a picture of Angas Downs as more than pastoral station. As Rose described it, there were three ‘component activities’ at Angas Downs: the cattle industry, the tourist trade and ‘the Aborigines’.<sup>28</sup> However, Angas Downs was in truly marginal country. Rose noted in 1962, that while ‘about two thirds of all Aborigines in the Northern Territory gainfully employed, work[ed] in the pastoral industry’ there was only two employed by Arthur Liddle while he was there,<sup>29</sup> which led him to conclude that at Angas Downs the numbers of Anangu ‘dependent on the pastoral industry was clearly limited’.<sup>30</sup>

### Rethinking pastoralism and its historiography

Rose’s work serves as a reminder of the layered quality of Angas Downs. While ostensibly a pastoral station, in many ways Angas Downs does not conform to the style of pastoral station and enterprise that has been the primary focus for the extensive scholarship produced over the last four or so decades examining Aboriginal people’s participation in the pastoral industry. Historical research that has focused on the relationship between pastoralism and Aboriginal people emerged in the 1960s in the midst of the increasing mobilisation of Aboriginal people that brought issues of equal wages and civil, political and

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<sup>28</sup> Rose, *The Wind of Change*, 55.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, 56.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 65.

land rights to the fore. This scholarship was significant in foregrounding the central role that Aboriginal people played in the pastoral industry.<sup>31</sup> However, while drawing attention to important issues and questions concerning industrial relations in the cattle industry, the strong economic focus of much of this early work failed to engage in any real depth with Aboriginal perspectives on the relationship.

Reflecting broader shifts in the disciplines of history and anthropology in the 1970s and 1980s toward more inclusive lines of inquiry, ethnographic fieldwork and oral history research contributed to a later body of work exploring the relationship between Aboriginal people and pastoralism in the Northern Territory incorporating Aboriginal workers' own perspectives.<sup>32</sup> Ann McGrath's 1987 book *Born in the Cattle* drew at length upon Aboriginal oral history, which complicated the prevailing narrative of the ruthless exploitation of Aboriginal people within the pastoral industry.<sup>33</sup> McGrath's fieldwork in the northern half of the Northern Territory and the East Kimberley resulted in a work that revealed the ways in which pastoralism had been incorporated into the Aboriginal lifeworld, and adapted to become something that was culturally meaningful to Aboriginal people. McGrath concluded that because Aboriginal people had incorporated pastoralism and whitefellas into their own cultural frameworks, it could therefore be said that Aboriginal people 'were never truly colonised'.<sup>34</sup>

While his was a conclusion not without criticism, nevertheless McGrath's work, including her oral history approach, was influential in the next phase of pastoral historiography. The

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<sup>31</sup> C.D. Rowley, *The Remote Aborigines* (Canberra: Australian National University Press, 1971); Ian G. Sharp and Colin Tatz, *Aborigines in the Economy: Employment, Wages and Training* (Brisbane: Jacaranda in association with Centre for Research into Aboriginal Affairs, Monash University, 1966); F. S. Stevens, *Aborigines in the Northern Territory Cattle Industry* (Canberra: Australian National University Press, 1974). Stevens' study was the first scholarly work dedicated solely to examining the relationship between Aboriginal people and the pastoral industry in the north and also to frame the relationship as one characterised by decades of exploitation. Although it emerged some twenty years after Stevens' work, Dawn May's research on Aboriginal participation in the Queensland cattle industry had a similar focus on labour and industrial relations. Dawn May, *Aboriginal Labour and the Cattle Industry: Queensland from White Settlement to the Present* (Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 1994).

<sup>32</sup> A 1978 edition of the *Aboriginal History* journal dedicated to examining the impact of the pastoral industry on Aboriginal people featured ethnographic and oral history research, and highlighted how pastoralism had been experienced and remembered by Aboriginal people. See Diane Bell, "For Our Families: The Kurundi Walk-off and the Ngurrantji Venture," *Aboriginal History* 2 (1978): 32-62; Francesca Merlan, "'Making People Quiet' in the Pastoral North: Reminiscences of Elsey Station," *Aboriginal History* 2 (1978): 70-106; Peter Read and Engineer Jack Japaljarri, "The Price of Tobacco: The Journey of the Warlmala to Wave Hill, 1928," *Aboriginal History* 2, no. 2 (1978): 141-48; Bruce Shaw and Sandy McDonald, "They Did It Themselves: Reminiscences of Seventy Years," *Aboriginal History* 2 (1978): 122-39.

<sup>33</sup> Ann McGrath, *Born in the Cattle* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1987).

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, 175.

work of Deborah Bird Rose, Tim Rowse, Gillian Cowlishaw and Mary Anne Jebb, for instance, highlighted pastoral occupation as a form of colonialism, and focused on the pastoral domain as a complex site where issues of race, gender, labour and power were negotiated, situating pastoral relations in the broader economic and political contexts that shaped them.<sup>35</sup> Themes of exploitation, violence and coercion have emerged across these works. In contrast, there was a notable lack of reference to, or evidence of, violence in the sources relating to Angas Downs, particularly within the oral histories recorded and analysed in this thesis. While this does not mean that violence, in its various forms, did not play a part in the history of pastoral settlement at Angas Downs (see chapter two in particular), it does serve to flag that making generalisations about the Aboriginal relationship with the pastoral industry should be treated with caution.<sup>36</sup>

There is a tendency in historical research focused on the Aboriginal relationship with the pastoral industry toward homogenising the Northern Territory cattle industry, and generalising experience under the categories of ‘Aborigines’ and ‘white bosses’. With the exception of Rowse, the pastoral historiography discussed so far has focused almost exclusively on the far north of the continent where pastoralism was dominated by large, foreign-owned companies, and dictated by the rhythms of the alternating ‘wet’ and ‘dry’ seasons of the tropics. The stations in the far north covered vast tracts of land, carried many thousands of heads of cattle, and employees, black and white, numbered in the hundreds. And yet, the marginal pastoral lands of Central Australia where Angas Downs was located were markedly different. Comprised of small-scale, individual or family-owned enterprises, the pastoral frontier in this part of the country met with the environmental challenges and limitations of the desert. Furthermore, Angas Downs, like many other stations in the arid lands of the southwest of the Northern Territory, was a largely defective capitalist enterprise that actually ‘employed’ comparatively few Anangu. As such, as a pastoral station, Angas Downs does not articulate easily with the established historiography of people’s participation in the northern pastoral industry and its emphasis on themes of labour relations and the exchange of wages, rations and other material goods. Taking a

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<sup>35</sup> Deborah Bird Rose, *Hidden Histories: Black Stories from Victoria River Downs, Humbert River and Wave Hill Stations* (Canberra: Aboriginal Studies Press, 1991); Gillian Cowlishaw, *Rednecks, Eggheads and Blackfellas: A Study of Racial Power and Intimacy in Australia* (St Leonards, N.S.W: Allen & Unwin, 1999); Mary Anne Jebb, *Blood, Sweat and Welfare: A History of White Bosses and Aboriginal Pastoral Workers* (Nedlands, W.A: University of Western Australia Press, 2002); Rowse, *White Flour, White Power*.

<sup>36</sup> Rose, *Hidden Histories*, xxiii.

spatial approach to the station presented a different way of seeing and understanding Angas Downs.

More recently, the pastoral industry and pastoral stations have again provided the grounds for important methodological innovations in the writing of cross-cultural, or ‘shared’ histories. Research from within the spatial fields of archaeology, geography and heritage studies has been instrumental in revealing pastoral landscapes and geographies that challenge dominant assumptions of the pastoral domain. Archaeologist Alistair Paterson and geographer Nicholas Gill argue that pastoral heritage in Australia and the history of Aboriginal people’s participation in the industry is still imagined and represented as being separate. By attending to artefacts in the landscape, in conjunction with Aboriginal memory and ‘diverse empirical sources’, they argue that it is possible to reveal the mutual production of the pastoral and Aboriginal domains and at the same time produce detailed histories of particular *places*.<sup>37</sup> Paterson’s archaeological and historical research on Strangways Springs Station in the arid lands of South Australia took a ‘regional, multi-site approach’ to reveal this place as more ‘pastoral system’ than ‘pastoral station’, leading him to argue that both black and white people made the network of related sites at Strangways Springs.<sup>38</sup>

The work of archaeologist Rodney Harrison was particularly significant in foregrounding the importance of Aboriginal memory in revealing pastoral heritage as a ‘shared landscape’. Harrison developed the term ‘woodsheds and homesteads’ to represent heritage’s preoccupation with the prominent built structures associated with pastoralism, arguing that this stems from the early technological and economic models of pastoral history.<sup>39</sup> Taking a ‘landscape biography’ approach, Harrison mapped the routes that emerged in the oral histories of pastoral workers from the Kunderang Gorges in NSW, which taken together with material evidence in the landscape, and archival sources, revealed how Aboriginal land use patterns shaped pastoralism in the region.<sup>40</sup> In *History and the Landscape in Central*

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<sup>37</sup> Nicholas Gill and Alistair Paterson, “A Work in Progress: Aboriginal People and Pastoral Cultural Heritage in Australia,” in *Geographies of Australian Heritages: Loving a Sunburnt Country?* ed. R. Jones and B. Shaw (Aldershot, UK: Ashgate, 2007), 114. Emphasis added.

<sup>38</sup> Alistair Paterson, “The Texture of Agency: An Example of Culture-Contact in Central Australia,” *Archaeology in Oceania* 38, no. 2 (2003): 61. See also Alistair Paterson, “Early Pastoral Landscapes and Culture Contact in Central Australia,” *Historical Archaeology* 39, no. 3 (January 1, 2005): 28–48; Alistair Paterson, *Lost Legions: Culture Contact in Central Australia* (Lanham, MD: Altamira Press, 2008).

<sup>39</sup> Rodney Harrison, *Shared Landscapes: Archaeologies of Attachment and the Pastoral Industry in New South Wales* (Sydney: UNSW Press, 2004), 7.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, 114–5.

*Australia*, Carment claimed that ‘one of the most significant influences which the white pastoralists had on the Central Australian landscape was the development of a network of stock routes’.<sup>41</sup> In applying Harrison’s approach, and being led by the spatial dimensions of Anangu oral histories to look for particular traces of pastoral history, in both the landscape and the archives, this thesis reveals the ways in which pastoral routes in the southwest were articulations of already existing social and ecological itineraries of travel (see chapter two). In this sense, pastoralism in this thesis is not assumed to have transformed the Central Australian landscape in a one-way process. Rather, the study illuminates the ways in which the desert, and existing modes of land use, shaped pastoral processes at Angas Downs.

### Producing locality and making place

Although Angas Downs does not fit comfortably with the existing pastoral scholarship, the fact that significant numbers of Anangu lived on Angas Downs, or used it as a base between 1930 and 1980, raises another question relating to the interpretation of this place: If relations of exchange within the economic and colonial context of pastoralism cannot adequately explain Angas Downs, what other kinds of attachments and relations did this place produce?

In seeking to answer this question this project benefits from the insights of scholarship that emerged in the 1980s and 1990s to transform approaches to, and writing of, ‘Aboriginal History’. Following the revisionist history movement of the 1970s and 80s, that rewrote the history of the Australian frontier using ‘traditional’ archival methods, the work of scholars such as Stephen Muecke, Deborah Bird Rose, Tony Swain, Heather Goodall and Richard Baker foregrounded the significant relationship between people and place in an Aboriginal worldview, which in turn raised questions about the implications of this for historical research and writing.<sup>42</sup> Drawing upon fieldwork and oral history research, this body of work emphasised the intimate relationship between people and place, but also highlighted the importance of place as a prism for interpreting the world. The central argument in Swain’s analysis of how Aboriginal ontologies came to make a ‘place for strangers’ was that

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<sup>41</sup> Carment, *History and the Landscape in Central Australia*, 35.

<sup>42</sup> Richard Baker, *Land Is Life: From Bush to Town, The Story of the Yanyuwa People* (St Leonards: Allen & Unwin, 1999); Deborah Bird Rose, *Dingo Makes Us Human: Life and Land in an Aboriginal Australian Culture* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1992); Deborah Bird Rose, *Nourishing Terrains*; Heather Goodall, *Invasion to Embassy: Land in Aboriginal Politics in New South Wales, 1770-1972* (Sydney, N.S.W: Sydney University Press, 1996); Stephen Muecke, Paddy Roe, and Krim Benterrak, *Reading the Country: Introduction to Nomadology* (Fremantle: Fremantle Arts Centre Press, 1984); Tony Swain, *A Place for Strangers: Towards a History of Australian Aboriginal Being* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1993).



Aboriginal people do not understand their being-in-the-world in terms of time, but rather of place and space.<sup>43</sup> While Swain's argument tends toward essentialising a divide between an Aboriginal place-based consciousness, and a Western time focused consciousness, it did make the important observation that an insistence on 'the vantage of time and history, undermines, or at best ignores, the Aboriginal notion of being-in-the-world'.<sup>44</sup>

This turn towards 'place' in the Australian context was occurring amidst the broader 'spatial turn' in the humanities during the 1990s. Philosopher Edward Casey wrote in 1993 that getting back 'into place' was necessary in order to undo the long-term undermining of place in Western theory and social science.<sup>45</sup> What had been a primarily philosophical interest in place and space, exemplified in the work of phenomenologists Martin Heidegger, Maurice Merleau-Ponty and Gaston Bachelard, and French theorists Michel Foucault and Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari,<sup>46</sup> filtered through into other disciplines such as geography, anthropology and history, to create what Arturo Escobar has referred to as an emergent philosophy and politics of place.<sup>47</sup> A common thread among this emerging scholarship of place was the recognition that, more than spatial location, or simple stage for social action, places are complex, and multiple, social and cultural constructions.<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> Swain, *A Place for Strangers*, 2.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

<sup>45</sup> Edward Casey, *Getting Back into Place: Toward a Renewed Understanding of the Place-World* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993).

<sup>46</sup> Gaston Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space*, trans. Maria Jolas (Boston: Beacon Press, 1994); Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987); Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson (London: SCM Press, 1962); Michel Foucault, *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings, 1972-1977*, trans. Colin Gordon (Brighton: Harvester Press, 1980); Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, trans. Colin Smith (London: Routledge, 1962).

<sup>47</sup> Arturo Escobar, "Culture Sits in Places: Reflections on Globalism and Subaltern Strategies of Localization," *Political Geography* 20 (2001): 147. This turn to place was influenced by earlier concerns that emerged in the late 1980s to challenge ideas of culture as bounded and rooted in a stable, territorialised existence. These intellectual shifts worked to destabilise ideas of place as the privileged site of culture and identity. See Arjun Appadurai, "Putting Hierarchy In Its Place," *Cultural Anthropology* 3, no. 1 (1988): 36–49. James Clifford, *The Predicament of Culture: Twentieth Century Ethnography, Literature and Art* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1988); Liisa Malkki, "National Geographic: The Rooting of Peoples and the Territorialisation of National Identity among Scholars and Refugees," *Cultural Anthropology* 7, no. 1 (February 1992): 24–44.

<sup>48</sup> Coinciding with the 'globalisation craze' that took hold across the social sciences in the 1990s, as Escobar has observed, thinking around place and place-making that developed at this time can be seen as taking shape in two schools of thought: the political-economy approach that emphasised place as a production of capital and global forces; and the 'senses of place' approach, which viewed place as being endowed with meaning, and constitutive of identity and difference through social action. Escobar, "Culture Sits in Places."

A number of scholars have argued for the privileging of place as an analytic framework in the Australian context. Deborah Bird Rose suggests that in taking a place-centred approach to research and writing authors destabilise ‘many of the conventional concepts of twentieth-century western knowledge’.<sup>49</sup> She notes that Aboriginal people have figured only marginally in scholarship for long periods and that this is largely because histories of nations and communities can be represented as bounded social groups without having to consider other people who occupy the same time and place. By way of contrast, Rose argues that ‘a place-centred study will not let you ignore the people who are there’.<sup>50</sup> One of the most significant attempts at privileging a place-oriented perspective in the Australian context is the 1984 work *Reading the Country: Introduction to Nomadology*, a collaborative book that sought to evoke the place Roebuck Plains, as revealed in story and experience by Nyigina man Paddy Roe. Stephen Muecke wrote that the talking, writing and painting that created the book was a response to a ‘politics of place’.<sup>51</sup> In seeking a unifying theme for the book that emphasised place he drew upon the concept of nomadology, as articulated by Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari.<sup>52</sup> In *A Thousand Plateaus*, Deleuze and Guattari contrast sedentary, state-based forms of knowledge, which they conceptualise as ‘aborescent’, or ‘the tree’, with ‘nomadic’ forms of knowledge, that they articulate in the notion of the ‘rhizome’.<sup>53</sup> While the ‘tree’ is representative of centred, and hierarchical forms of knowledge, the ‘rhizome’ represents a root system of multiple points and connections, with no discernible centre.<sup>54</sup> Despite assumptions about the term ‘nomadology’ relating to nomadic peoples and cultures, Deleuze and Guattari devised the notion to argue for a way of thinking that, rather than root itself into one place or perspective, pursues movement and difference.<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> Deborah Bird Rose, “Writing Place,” in *Writing Histories: Imagination and Narration*, ed. Ann Curthoys and Ann McGrath (Melbourne: Monash University ePress, 2009), pp.8.1–8.13.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>51</sup> Muecke, Roe and Benterrak, *Reading the Country*, 16.

<sup>52</sup> The concept of nomadology has been similarly employed by other Australian scholars writing in this space. See Deborah Bird Rose, “To Dance with Time: A Victoria River Aboriginal Study,” *The Australian Journal of Anthropology* 11, no. 3 (2000): 287–96; Alan Rumsey, “Tracks, Traces, and Links to Land in Aboriginal Australia, New Guinea, and Beyond,” in *Emplaced Myth: Space, Narrative, and Knowledge in Aboriginal Australia and Papua New Guinea*, ed. Alan Rumsey and James Weiner (Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 1999), 19–42.

<sup>53</sup> Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 18.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, 21.

<sup>55</sup> However, there are notable limitations to the theory of nomadology, and as Ken Gelder has observed, its emphasis on movement and travel can, and has, resulted in a romanticisation and appropriation of the theory as ‘cosmopolitan’ and these tendencies run the risk of divorcing the relationship between dwelling and travelling from broader structures of politics and power. Ken Gelder, “Thirty Years On: Reading the Country and Indigenous Homeliness,” *Australian Humanities Review* 58 (2015): 20. Furthermore, as linguistic anthropologist Alan Rumsey has highlighted, Deleuze and Guattari’s abstractions of ‘East’ and

For Muecke, nomadology represented an anti-methodology, or ‘counter-ideology’, that was also a political stance ‘constantly in flight’ from ideas of sedentarism and hierarchy that had worked to silence or ignore Aboriginal knowledges.<sup>56</sup> That *Reading the Country* was reprinted in 2014, thirty years after its initial publication, is a timely reminder of the importance and contemporary relevance of its original project.<sup>57</sup> In its foregrounding of movement, tracking, tracing and travel, and the importance of place in an Aboriginal orientation to the world, it represents a significant inspiration for this research. The analysis presented here recognises the central role of movement in the making of Angas Downs. Furthermore, as with place, it also argues for mobility as an important tool for understanding historical processes and experience. Despite the enthusiasm for the ‘new’ in what some hailed as the ‘new mobilities paradigm’,<sup>58</sup> as Jane Carey and Jane Lydon have highlighted in a recent edited collection on indigenous networks, Aboriginal people were already mobile before their encounter with whitefellas. Therefore, Carey and Lydon argue that the networks that emerged in response to colonialism and cultural encounter ‘should thus be understood as an extension of pre-existing mobility and exchanges’.<sup>59</sup> Attending to the ways in which earlier forms of travel and exchange were articulated at Angas Downs has destabilised dominant narratives such as ‘exodus’ and ‘dependence’ and challenges historical assumptions about rationing and reciprocity (see chapters one and two). Furthermore, as

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‘West’, ‘rhizome’ and ‘tree’ tend toward an essentialising binary opposition that amounts to a reification of knowledge. Nevertheless, he goes on to argue for the usefulness of nomadology for illuminating how ‘places and countries are interconnected in multiple, crosscutting, non-hierarchical ways’. Rumsey, “Tracks, Traces, and Links to Land,” 22, 40.

<sup>56</sup> Muecke, Roe, and Benterrak, *Reading the Country*, 20.

<sup>57</sup> Gelder, “Thirty Years On: Reading the Country and Indigenous Homeliness.”

<sup>58</sup> See Mimi Sheller and John Urry, “The New Mobilities Paradigm,” *Environment and Planning A* 38, no. 2 (2006): 207–26. This turn to mobility was evidenced in the launch of the journal *Mobilities*, and more recently *Transfers: Interdisciplinary Journal of Mobility Studies*, as well as a proliferation of texts and edited collections dedicated to mobilities of various kinds. For example see Timothy Cresswell, *On the Move: Mobility in the Modern Western World* (New York: Routledge, 2006); T. Cresswell and P. Merriman, eds., *Geographies of Mobility: Practices, Spaces, Subjects* (Aldershot, UK: Ashgate, 2008); V. Kaufmann, *Re-Thinking Mobility: Contemporary Sociology* (Aldershot, UK: Ashgate, 2002); J. Urry, *Sociology Beyond Societies: Mobilities for the Twenty-First Century* (London: Routledge, 2000); J. Urry, *Mobilities* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2007). This ‘mobility turn’ is also evidenced in the Australian context in a growing body of scholarship focused upon the intersection of travel cultures and settler colonialism. For example see Georgine Wilhelmina Clarsen, “Automobiles and Australian Modernisation: The Redex Around-Australia Trials of the 1950s,” *Australian Historical Studies* 41, no. 3 (September 2010): 352–68; Georgine Clarsen, “Tracing the Outline of Nation: Circling Australia by Car,” *Continuum* 13, no. 3 (November 1999): 359–69; Georgine Clarsen and Lorenzo Veracini, “Settler Colonial Automobilities: A Distinct Constellation of Automobile Cultures?,” *History Compass* 10, no. 12 (December 2012): 889–900.

<sup>59</sup> Jane Carey and Jane Lydon, “Indigenous Networks: Historical Trajectories and Contemporary Connections,” in *Indigenous Networks: Mobility, Connections and Exchange*, ed. Jane Carey and Jane Lydon (New York: Routledge, 2014), 2.

Rumsey has observed, the theory of nomadology, and I would add the application of it in *Reading the Country*, does the important work of highlighting a formulation of place that represents a ‘profoundly different form of socio-spatial organisation than that which underwrites the state’.<sup>60</sup> In attending to these different formulations of place, this thesis exposes the deeply contradictory and unstable architecture of colonial power, and attendant policies such as assimilation (see chapter four especially).

The early 1990s witnessed a proliferation of metaphors such as the ‘contact zone’, ‘middle ground’, ‘hybridity’ and ‘entanglement’, which have since been widely utilised by scholars across a range of disciplines to describe spaces of cross-cultural encounter.<sup>61</sup> In writing about Bulman pastoral station in the Northern Territory, anthropologist Gillian Cowlshaw rightly argues for the need to approach metaphors such as the postcolonial notion of ‘hybridity’, and I would add the ‘contact-zone’ and ‘middle ground’, with caution.<sup>62</sup> Cowlshaw notes that while life at Bulman could be described as ‘thoroughly hybrid’, the metaphor ‘too easily bypasses the varied experiences of those who remain hidden on the margins’.<sup>63</sup> Cowlshaw posits the palimpsest as a more apt metaphor for the cultural processes that took place on Bulman.<sup>64</sup> A palimpsest is where a text has been overwritten, or erased to make way for another text. However, as Cowlshaw conceptualises it, the pastoral station as palimpsest is not about texts but rather:

[E]ntails the lives of disparate people engaged in shaping their own worlds. Those being overwritten find that their images and texts, their relationships with their place, begin to merge with the imported ones and can no longer be expressed unchanged. The new surfaces are moulded to what was already there and one form of meaning can graft itself onto another, using the contours of an earlier text to

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<sup>60</sup> Rumsey, “Tracks, Traces, and Links to Land,” 40.

<sup>61</sup> Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London: Routledge, 1994); Mary Louise Pratt, “Arts of the Contact Zone,” *Profession*, 1991, 33–40; Nicholas Thomas, *Entangled Objects: Exchange, Material Culture and Colonialism in the Pacific* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1991); Richard White, *The Middle Ground: Indians, Empires, and Republics in the Great Lakes Region, 1650-1815* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991).

<sup>62</sup> Cowlshaw, *Rednecks, Eggheads and Blackfellas*, 32. For a discussion of the misuse and ‘watering down’ of the ‘middle ground’ concept see Richard White, “Creative Misunderstandings and New Understandings,” *The William and Mary Quarterly* 63, no. 1 (2006): 9-14; Philip J. Deloria, “What Is the Middle Ground, Anyway?,” *The William and Mary Quarterly* 63, no. 1 (2006): 15-22.

<sup>63</sup> Cowlshaw, *Rednecks, Eggheads and Blackfellas*, 32.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, 14.

establish its own shape. If shaken together they might combine, only to separate again when left alone. In some places the new surface will never ‘take’.<sup>65</sup>

The notion of the palimpsest is useful in seeking to understand how disparate people and processes interacted at Angas Downs and allows for the different ways of seeing, making sense of, and living in this place that have at times overlapped, and at others resulted in separate social and spatial spheres (see chapters three and five especially). Furthermore, it provides the scope to see colonialism as a two-way process, illuminating the ways in which pastoral colonialism was shaped by local processes, relations and modes of land use. Thinking of these processes in terms of layers or surfaces, which can merge, submerge or split, underpins the conceptualisation of the making and unmaking of Angas Downs in this thesis.

In grappling with Angas Downs’ layers of history and meaning it is necessary to acknowledge that places are not culturally neutral.<sup>66</sup> Insights from anthropology have been integral to understanding the socio-spatial organisation that underwrites an Anangu formulation of place, particularly the translation of key concepts. Thinking back to the opening anecdote of this introduction, Tjuki Pumpjack evoked Angas Downs as *ngura* and cited his family and the growth of his beard as the reasons for his relating to this place as his Country. *Ngura* is the Anangu word for ‘camp’ and despite much focus on the *Tjukurpa*, there is perhaps no finer example of the difficulties of translating the textured, shifting and layered meanings of Anangu concepts into English. Put simply, *ngura* can refer to both the place where people live, *and* named and enduring ancestral Country created in the *Tjukurpa*. Fred Myers has argued that in the Western Desert the relationship between these two uses of the word is dialectical and that the dual meanings of *ngura* are parts of the same ongoing social process.<sup>67</sup> Land use and regular residence gives one a claim to identification with Country through a process of:

[T]ransformation of residence into ownership, of everyday experience into identification, and objectification of ‘camp’ into ‘country’.<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>65</sup> Ibid., 15.

<sup>66</sup> Escobar, “Culture Sits in Places,” 165. See also Margaret C. Rodman, “Empowering Place: Multilocality and Multivocality,” *American Anthropologist* 94 (1992); 640-56.

<sup>67</sup> Myers, *Pintupi Country, Pintupi Self*, 128.

<sup>68</sup> Fred R. Myers, “Ways of Placemaking,” in *Culture, Landscape, and the Environment: The Linacre Lectures, 1997*, ed. Kate Flint and Howard Morphy (Oxford University Press, 2000), 87.

Or put another way:

One's country is a projection - in a sense - of one's movements and social relations, of kinship, converted to identity with place.<sup>69</sup>

While the origins of *ngura* lay in the *Tjukurpa*, recent desert ethnography by the likes of Yasmine Musharbash and Melinda Hinkson, which has focused upon Warlpiri living practices, has followed on from Myers to highlight the elasticity of the concept and its flexibility in response to the changing circumstances of a post-settlement era.<sup>70</sup> This pivotal Anangu concept is inextricably bound with the concept of *walytja*, which refers to the complex network of relatedness that ties Anangu together in a web of responsibility and obligation among kin. Kinship and Country are 'interchangeable indices of a single reality', and as such, as Myers describes it, family and country are the same thing.<sup>71</sup> From here it is possible to begin to understand how the changing landscape of a sheep-turned-cattle station could simultaneously be made Country.

Anthropological representations of Aboriginal social organisation that emerged in the early twentieth century, and the subsequent popular understandings and legislative forms of recognition in land rights and native title of the late twentieth century, have tended toward viewing Aboriginal relationships to place as being fixed in ritual knowledge and rooted in particular places. However, as Myers has observed, this view divorces relationships to place from the social practices - residing, sharing, loving, fighting and dying - in which they are constituted.<sup>72</sup> The work of anthropologists such as Myers, Francesca Merlan, Sylvie Poirier, Elizabeth Povinelli, and Melinda Hinkson and historian Heather Goodall, has been instrumental in illustrating that, rather than the standards of 'authenticity' and 'tradition', to which many Aboriginal people are held accountable, it is the social practices which link people and place that are central in continuing 'ways of place-making'.<sup>73</sup> Hinkson's recent

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<sup>69</sup> Ibid., 95.

<sup>70</sup> Like that of the Pintupi, the Warlpiri term is rendered *ngurra*. See 'The Superintendent's window' in Melinda Hinkson, *Remembering the Future: Warlpiri Life through the Prism of Drawing* (Canberra: Aboriginal Studies Press, 2014), 67–87; Yasmine Musharbash, *Yuendumu Everyday: Contemporary Life in Remote Aboriginal Australia* (Canberra: Aboriginal Studies Press, 2008).

<sup>71</sup> Myers, *Pintupi Country, Pintupi Self*, 92–3.

<sup>72</sup> Myers, "Ways of Placemaking," 79–80.

<sup>73</sup> Heather Goodall, "Riding the Tide: Indigenous Knowledge, History and Water in a Changing Australia," *Environment and History* 14, no. 3 (August 2008): 355–84; Heather Goodall and Allison Cadzow, *Rivers and Resilience: Aboriginal People on Sydney's Georges River* (Sydney: UNSW Press, 2009); Hinkson, *Remembering the Future*; Francesca Merlan, "The Regimentation of Customary Practice: From Northern Territory Land Claims to Mabo," *The Australian Journal of Anthropology* 6, no. 1 (1995): 64–82; Francesca Merlan, "Fighting over Country: Four Commonplaces," in *Fighting over Country: Anthropological Perspectives*, ed. D. Smith and J. Finlayson, Research Monograph 12

study of Warlpiri life, approached through the prism of a series of crayon drawings collected by anthropologist Mervyn Meggitt in the 1950s, represents an innovative approach to understanding the dynamic and creative adjustments that Warlpiri people made after being transported to the settlement at Hooker Creek. Reading the drawings in conjunction with Warlpiri memory, Meggitt's descriptions and interpretations, archival documents and writings, Hinkson explores a set of concerns that she notes is less frequently written about in comparison to Central Australian Aboriginal people's drawings of their ancestral country — namely how people saw, pictured and made sense of their 'new surroundings, new architecture, new regimes of work and daily life, [and] the new world order that settlement life brought into being'.<sup>74</sup> Similarly, Heather Goodall and Allison Cadzow's history of the George's River in Sydney demonstrates how insights from anthropology can be productively utilised to describe historical processes of cultural encounter and changing relationships to place.<sup>75</sup> Drawing upon Arjun Appadurai's conceptualisation of the 'production of locality', Goodall and Cadzow posit this as a starting point to understanding how people who were dislocated due to historical processes can still 'make locality' in a place to which they have only recently arrived.<sup>76</sup>

Angas Downs was a marginal pastoral enterprise, and yet it attracted significant numbers of Anangu around the middle of the twentieth century. These migrations brought people to the place with connections that spanned hundreds of kilometres to the south and west into the Musgrave and Mann Ranges in South Australia, the Tomkinson and Petermann Ranges in the Northern Territory and the Warburton Ranges in Western Australia. The half century analysed in this thesis saw Anangu migrate to Angas Downs, set up camp there, and begin to translate existing social practices into the new pastoral context in which they found themselves. As the spatial dimensions of Anangu relationships to place were

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(Canberra: CAEPR, Australian National University, 1997), 1–13; Francesca Merlan, *Caging the Rainbow: Places, Politics, and Aborigines in a North Australian Town* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1998); Myers, *Pintupi Country, Pintupi Self*; Myers, "Ways of Placemaking"; Sylvie Poirier, *A World of Relationships: Itineraries, Dreams, and Events in the Australian Western Desert* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2005); Elizabeth A. Povinelli, *Labor's Lot: The Power, History, and Culture of Aboriginal Action* (Chicago: University Of Chicago Press, 1993).

<sup>74</sup> Hinkson, *Remembering the Future*, 3.

<sup>75</sup> Goodall and Cadzow, *Rivers and Resilience*.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*, 16. See also Arjun Appadurai, "The Production of Locality," in *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalisation* (Minneapolis: University of Minneapolis Press, 1996), 178–99. Margaret Rodman discusses this aspect of place making as a dimension of what she conceptualises as multilocality, which she refers to as reflexive relationships with places' and the ways in which 'people often see a new landscape in terms of familiar ones'. Rodman, "Empowering Place: Multilocality and Multivocality," 647.

reorganised through the act of migration and the encounter with rations, work, tourists and camels, Anangu were simultaneously ‘producing locality’ and making a place for themselves. In focusing upon the dynamic and creative social processes at the heart of place-making, this thesis builds upon the insights of Goodall and Cadzow and Hinkson in particular to contribute to still unfolding understandings of Aboriginal productions of place in response to colonialism and cultural encounter.

Appadurai defines ‘locality’ as a ‘complex phenomenological quality’ that is primarily relational and contextual, rather than scalar or spatial.<sup>77</sup> However, in focusing upon the social and cultural production of locality it is important to acknowledge that the practices that are central to place-making – albeit mobile, creative, adaptive and transformative – are also emplaced. Following on from Appadurai, anthropologist Hugh Raffles defines place as the site of the production of local subjects, while locality ‘encompasses the embeddedness and locatedness of place’.<sup>78</sup> Raffles’ notion of ‘local theory’ is helpful for thinking about how to understand Angas Downs. By local theory, Raffles argues for analysis that is generated from the particularities of a place, as a means to understanding ‘locality’ and the manifold processes by which places are brought into being. Influenced by Raffles, I describe the ‘clusters’ of relations that have emerged to guide my interpretation of Angas Downs as follows: the socio-economic relationships of exchange that are central to the Anangu concept of *walytja*; a marked mobility of people that connects Angas Downs to a broader regional network of places; and the interplay between the physical environment and social and ecological itineraries.<sup>79</sup> Reading the various cultures of economy and travel, through the desert locale in which they intersected, underpins the theory of place-making that is central to this thesis.

One cannot understand a place like Angas Downs without the stories of the people who have an attachment to that place. Places are brought into being by telling stories about them and as a consequence, as Raffles points out, locality is also often highly mobile.<sup>80</sup> As Hinkson describes it, ‘as people move from place to place they carry their ways of dwelling with them’.<sup>81</sup> Travelling, naming, and telling stories about a place inscribe them with meaning and thus constitute an important repertoire of place-making for Anangu. The

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<sup>77</sup> Appadurai, *Modernity at Large*, 178.

<sup>78</sup> Hugh Raffles, “‘Local Theory’: Nature and the Making of an Amazonian Place,” *Cultural Anthropology* 14, no. 3 (August 1999): 329.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*, 324.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>81</sup> Hinkson, *Remembering the Future*, 76.



social and ecological itineraries of daily life are a significant theme in Anangu historical remembrances — a peripatetic way of being-in-the-world that is articulated in Pitjantjatjara as alternating between *ananyi* (travelling) and *nyinanyi* (camping). This mode of travel, and its representation in oral narratives, has been well documented across a range of disciplines, and is often articulated in a language of routes, beats, intervals and rhythms.<sup>82</sup> Tracing the inscriptive practices of Anangu oral history and memory across the historical landscape is a defining feature of the approach adopted in this study.

### The Angas Downs archive and approaches

Accounting for agency, creativity, plurality, and asymmetries of power, has been one of the greatest challenges for the writing of cross-cultural history, as evidenced in the recent debate in *Australian Historical Studies* about settler colonial studies and Indigenous agency.<sup>83</sup> In the last three decades, there has been a good deal of methodological innovation that has sought to incorporate Aboriginal people's own experience and perspectives into historical research and writing.<sup>84</sup> Drawing on this theoretical, empirical and methodological innovation, this thesis has relied on the development of an original methodology designed

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<sup>82</sup> Jeremy Beckett, "George Dutton's Country," in *Encounters with Indigeneity: Writing about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples* (Canberra: Aboriginal Studies Press, 2014), 1–27; Jeremy Beckett, "Walter Newton's History of the World - or Australia," in *Encounters with Indigeneity*, 28–58; Minoru Hokari, "Gurindji Mode of Historical Practice," in *The Power of Knowledge, The Resonance of Tradition*, ed. Luke Taylor et. al. (Canberra: Aboriginal Studies Press, 2005), 214–22; Minoru Hokari, *Gurindji Journey: A Japanese Historian in the Outback* (Sydney: UNSW Press, 2011); Anne Marie Monchamp, *Autobiographical Memory in an Aboriginal Australian Community: Culture, Place and Narrative* (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014); Myers, *Pintupi Country, Pintupi Self*; Poirier, *A World of Relationships*.

<sup>83</sup> Tim Rowse argued that the increasing influence of the 'settler colonial paradigm', in particular Patrick Wolfe's conceptualisation of the singular logic of 'elimination' and his notion of 'repressive authenticity' or 'state-conceded Aboriginalities', poses particular problems for historians seeking to grapple with the Australian experience of colonialism and cross-cultural encounter. Rowse argues that the settler colonial paradigm is 'empirically exhaustive' - evidence of erasure/elimination/repressive authentication can always be found - and as such closes down scholarly engagement with indigenous agency. Tim Rowse, "Indigenous Heterogeneity," *Australian Historical Studies* 45, no. 3 (September 2014): 297–310. Rowse cites Lorenzo Veracini as a leading figure in the settler colonial studies approach. Veracini responds to Rowse in the same edition of the journal, arguing that Rowse's critique represents a fundamental misreading and misrepresentation of the 'logic of elimination' and that settler colonial studies is more flexible than Rowse allows. Veracini argues that, in its diversity, settler colonial studies represents an *interpretive* heuristic tool. However, Rowse's critique of settler colonial studies and Indigenous agency remains largely unanswered in Veracini's response. Veracini argues that it is 'not the job of settler colonial studies as an intellectual endeavor to provide that specificity'. According to Veracini, Indigenous people can 'provide it themselves', noting that settler colonial studies 'refuses to "ventriloquise"'. Lorenzo Veracini, "Defending Settler Colonial Studies," *Australian Historical Studies* 45, no. 3 (2014): 312–13.

<sup>84</sup> For a discussion of recent innovations and advances see Miranda Johnson in the same edition of the journal in which the above-mentioned debate took place. Miranda Johnson, "Writing Indigenous Histories Now," *Australian Historical Studies* 45, no. 3 (2014): 317–30.

to critically engage with challenges posed by colonialism and cultural encounter, and the implications of these processes for historical research and writing.

In seeking to answer the question ‘what is Angas Downs?’ and ‘how do we understand it?’ I have adopted a multi-modal methodology. My approach to the station as location was inspired by Mike Smith’s *Peopling the Cleland Hills*.<sup>85</sup> Using Puritjarra rock shelter, which is situated in desert country that lay to north of Angas Downs, as a place from which to view the social exchange, change and dislocation experienced by the Kukatja people, Smith’s relatively short, but significant work, provides a rich historical picture of a recent desert frontier. As an archaeologist with an intimate understanding of the deep time of this place, Smith’s initial intention for this project was to examine the historical and ethnographic context for the most recent phase of occupation at Puritjarra. However, drawing upon multiple sources of documentation, memory and conversations-in-place, Smith notes, the research developed into a ‘history in a locale’ rather than an ‘ethnography or an archaeology of contact’.<sup>86</sup> Furthermore, in his research Smith ‘peopled’ the Cleland Hills, which not only grounded his history in place, but also in the experiences of the Kukatja families who lived there.

The Angas Downs archive is patchy and best understood in temporal ‘phases’. Given its remote location, and relative isolation from the late 1920s through until the end of the Second World War, the archive from this period is slight and somewhat scattered, which has undoubtedly contributed to the robust and persistent mythologising of this era of pastoral settlement in Central Australia. The patrol reports of T.G.H. Strehlow and correspondence files relating to the ‘Southwest Reserve’, held in the National Archives of Australia in Darwin, constitute the official records from this time. The diaries of H.H. Finlayson and the published accounts of Arthur Groom, both of who stayed on Angas Downs in the interwar period, provide further written accounts from the time. Oral accounts of pastoralists held in the Northern Territory Archives, as well as published and unpublished biographical and autobiographical memoirs, adds a perspective on this period as remembered by the ‘pioneering generation’ of pastoralists. This recording of pastoralist

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<sup>85</sup> M.A. Smith, *Peopling the Cleland Hills: Aboriginal History in Western Central Australia 1850–1980*, Aboriginal History Monograph 12 (Canberra: Aboriginal History, 2005).

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.

memory largely emerged in the wake of land rights, and as geographer Nicholas Gill has argued, speaks to the contested claims of pastoralist belonging at a particular time.<sup>87</sup>

The shift to assimilation policy in the post-war period witnessed a marked increase in the material volume of the Angas Downs archive, largely generated by the Northern Territory Welfare Branch. These records are held in the National Archives. Extensive census reports from the station, patrol reports and correspondence files reflect the significant changes taking place during this period. I have read these documents with a particular focus on the bureaucratic construction of Anangu. The papers and photographs of anthropologist Frederick Rose, held in the Mitchell Library at the State Library of New South Wales, as well as his published ethnography and fieldwork diaries from Angas Downs, have provided particularly rich detail for the otherwise unexamined tourism industries that operated on Angas Downs in the same period.

In seeking to be guided by Anangu perspectives of Angas Downs in this historical study, oral histories are a key resource. While I do draw from a number of Anangu oral histories throughout the thesis, I have focused upon the extended oral histories of two Anangu, Tjuki Tjukanku Pumpjack and Sandra Armstrong.<sup>88</sup> A focus on Indigenous biography as a means to provide Aboriginal historical perspectives is a well-established method in historical and ethnographic research and writing, which has a strong emphasis on the life histories of Aboriginal men.<sup>89</sup> In drawing heavily upon extended life histories of two

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<sup>87</sup> Nicholas Gill, “Transcending Nostalgia: Pastoralist Memory and Staking a Claim in the Land” in *Dislocating the Frontier: Essaying the Mystique of the Outback*, ed. Deborah Bird Rose et. al. (Canberra: ANU E Press, 2005), 69–70.

<sup>88</sup> Anangu oral histories other than Tjuki Pumpjack’s and Sandra Armstrong’s that feature in the thesis are held in the Ara Irititja archive. These are from Niningka Lewis, Nyanu Watson and Tjukupati James. I also quote from transcripts of oral histories recorded for the Central Land Council and published in the book *Every Hill Got a Story*, which includes stories from Tjukupati James, Sandy Willie and Bruce Breaden. See Marg Bowman, ed., *Every Hill Got a Story: We Grew up in Country; Men and Women of Central Australia and the Central Land Council* (Richmond, Victoria: Hardie Grant Books, 2015).

<sup>89</sup> Bain Attwood, “Tarra Bobby, A Brataualung Man,” *Aboriginal History* 11 (1987): 41-57; Beckett, “George Dutton’s Country”; Jeremy Beckett, “Autobiography and Testimonial Discourse in Myles Lalor’s ‘Oral History,’” in *Encounters with Indigeneity: Writing about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples* (Canberra: Aboriginal Studies Press, 2014); Monchamp, *Autobiographical Memory in an Aboriginal Australian Community*; Peter Read, Frances Peters-Little and Anna Haebich eds. *Indigenous Biography and Autobiography* (Canberra: ANU E Press, 2008); Tim Rowse, “Indigenous Autobiography in Australia and the United States”. *Australian Humanities Review* 33 (2004), accessed 12 September, 2016. [www.australianhumanitiesreview.org/archive/Issue-August-2004/rowse.html](http://www.australianhumanitiesreview.org/archive/Issue-August-2004/rowse.html); Basil Sansom, “In the Absence of Vita as Genre: The Making of the Roy Kelly Story,” in *Telling Stories: Indigenous History and Memory in Australia and New Zealand*, ed. Bain Attwood and Fiona Magowan (Sydney, 2001), 99–122; Bruce Shaw, *My Country of the Pelican Dreaming: The Life of an Australian Aborigine of the Gadjerong, Grant Ngabidj, 1904-1977* (Canberra: Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies, 1981); Bruce Shaw, *Banggaiyerri: The Story of Jack Sullivan* (Canberra: Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies, 1983); Bruce Shaw, *Countrymen: The Life Histories of Four Aboriginal Men*

people, it is important to note that this thesis is not a study of Anangu collective memory. However, in acknowledging the limitations of intensive biographical studies for generalising experience, the approach taken in this thesis nevertheless recognises that both Tjuki's and Sandra's experiences of migration are representative of the experiences of many Anangu in Central Australia. Focusing upon extended life histories provides a valuable perspective for understanding this kind of change and the transformations that followed. I first met Tjuki and Sandra in Imanpa community in 2012. After my first visit to Imanpa, Rose's ethnography in hand, I was told by numerous people that if I was interested in learning more about Angas Downs I should seek out and speak to these two people, who had the longest depth of association with this place. Through them, over the following four years, I would come to understand the making and unmaking of Angas Downs. The relationship that I developed with each of these people, and the nature of their oral histories as source material, evolved quite differently over the course of the research.

Tjuki Pumpjack was born around 1926-28. His life history began before whitefellas had really begun to penetrate the desert, and as such the breadth of his experience and memory is very rare in the region. Over a period of four years we travelled together and recorded his life history over approximately twelve recording sessions, amounting to approximately thirteen hours. In addition, we had many conversations that went unrecorded and we also went on many trips 'out bush' together.<sup>90</sup> It was important, both for my methodology and his legacy to future generations of his family, that his oral histories were shared with me in his language, Pitjantjatjara. Tjuki was a gifted raconteur and many of his stories were long and detailed. My grasp of Pitjantjatjara was rudimentary at the time we started recording, so we worked together with Pitjantjatjara speaker Linda Rive, who travelled with us, interpreting Tjuki's oral histories in place, and later translating and transcribing all of the recordings made with Tjuki into English.<sup>91</sup>

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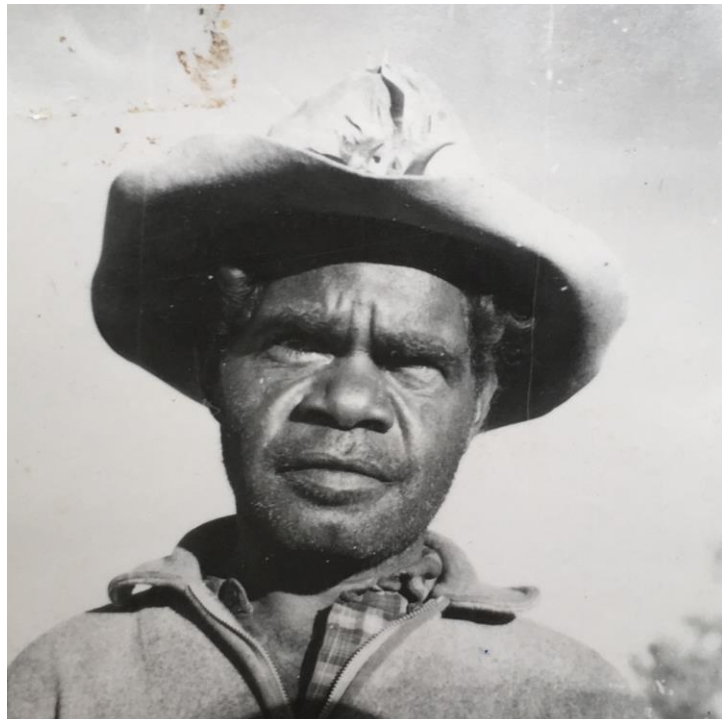
(Canberra: Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies, 1986); W.E.H. Stanner, "Durmugam: A Nangiomeri," in *The Dreaming and Other Essays* (Melbourne: Black Inc., 2009), 19–56. Stanner first published in 1959.

<sup>90</sup> 'Out bush' is a term commonly used in Central Australia, by both Anangu and whitefellas. It is often used by whitefellas to refer to travel from Alice Springs to remote communities. It is also used by Anangu and whitefellas to refer to travel from community, out into surrounding landscape, often for the purpose of visiting Country.

<sup>91</sup> Linda Rive is oral historian, language specialist and digital archivist at the Aṛa Irititja archive project.



**Image 2 – Tjuki Tjukanku Pumpjack, Imanpa, 2013.**  
Source: Photograph taken and supplied by Rhett Hammerton



**Image 3 – Tjuki Tjukanku Pumpjack, Angas Downs, 1962.**  
Source: SLNSW Frederick Rose Papers Box 8



**Image 4 – Sandra Armstrong, Mitchell Library SLNSW, 2013.**  
Source: Photograph by author.



**Image 5 – Sandra Armstrong, Angas Downs, 1962.**  
Source: SLNSW Frederick Rose Papers Box 8

Over the same period I also worked closely with Sandra Armstrong with whom I adopted quite a different approach. Sandra was born in 1942, nearly a generation after Tjuki. When I first met her at Bloodwood Bore, the site of the second Angas Downs homestead, and explained my interest in the station and learning about her experiences there, she told me that she had recently recorded her oral history with a man called Sam Osborne and that I should see him to get ‘that big story’.<sup>92</sup> Sam Osborne recorded Sandra’s life history over three sessions in 2012-13 as source material for his own PhD research investigating Anangu perspectives on education.<sup>93</sup> The interviews were recorded in Pitjantjatjara and translated and transcribed into English by Sam, who is a fluent Pitjantjatjara speaker. While Sam recorded the interviews for his PhD research, Sandra is the owner of the transcripts and granted me permission to use them for this research.<sup>94</sup> Over the time that we have known each other we have travelled widely together, and much of what I have learned from her has evolved from many hours spent driving, sitting and talking.

This ‘travelling’ methodology is a major crux of the thesis. The landscape itself became an archive and source of knowledge. Physically travelling to, and experiencing, the places that are the focus of this thesis was critical in my developing an understanding of Angas Downs grounded in its physical reality. Visiting ruins, rock art sites, water sources and learning place names informed my reading of Angas Downs as a place that encapsulates the *Tjukurpa*, deep time and historical time. Furthermore, this method of recording oral histories on the move shaped my consideration of the influence of the physical environment on historical processes and sharpened my appreciation of the importance of mobility in practices of place-making.<sup>95</sup>

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<sup>92</sup> Author field notes, June 11, 2012.

<sup>93</sup> Sam Osborne, “Staging Standpoint Dialogue in Tristate Education: Privileging Anangu Voices” (PhD Thesis, Victoria University, Melbourne, 2016). I was present at the last of these recording sessions on 5 October, 2013 at Stuart Lodge in Alice Springs.

<sup>94</sup> Sam Osborne provided me with copies of the interview transcripts as per Sandra’s request.

<sup>95</sup> While undertaking the research for this thesis I was employed as the Northern Territory Field Officer with the Aṛa Irititja Project between 2013-15. Meaning ‘stories from a long time ago’ in Pitjantjatjara, Aṛa Irititja was initiated by the Pitjantjatjara Council in 1994 to return inaccessible archival sources and historical materials to Anangu in an accessible and culturally appropriate way. In my capacity as researcher I was granted access to the archive, and in my role as Field Officer I was required to travel to seven different communities in the southwest of the Northern Territory to work with Anangu, training them how to use the archive, assisting in the annotation of historical materials, sourcing collections and recording oral histories. Four of these communities are places with strong connections to Angas Downs: Imanpa, Mutitjulu, Docker River, and Areyonga. Working in these communities, getting to know Anangu, sharing in stories and learning how widespread geographically people with a connection to Angas Downs were, complemented the travelling method and enhanced my understanding of Angas Downs as a node in a broader regional network.

In a move away from seeing history as *collection*, toward seeing history as *process*,<sup>96</sup> I took an inductive approach to this travelling fieldwork method, particularly in relation to the recordings made with Tjuki Pumpjack. In describing an ‘inductive’ approach, oral historian Alessandro Portelli writes that the fieldworker must keep the dialogic nature of the process in mind — we are talking to people, not studying ‘sources’.<sup>97</sup> An important part of this relationship, as Portelli sees it, is that the agenda of the interviewee be given equal time and respect, arguing that there is ‘a lot to be learned by leaving ourselves open to the unexpected than by a repetition of our own conceptualisations’.<sup>98</sup> I found asking Anangu leading questions to be counter-productive, so following historian Maria Nugent’s observation that interviewing styles need to be adjusted to make the encounter more meaningful for participants,<sup>99</sup> I took a life-history-in-place approach. Where possible Tjuki chose the locations in which the recordings took place and who was present. He also decided upon the stories that we recorded once we got to a location, and these were inevitably shaped by the place in which we found ourselves. Linda Rive and I were also present, and we too are as much a part of the recordings as Tjuki Pumpjack.

There is a significant body of scholarship that discusses the dialogical, or co-produced, nature of oral history recording.<sup>100</sup> Goodall has argued that the knowledge produced in such settings ‘should be read in terms of the political and cultural context of both the teller and the questioner’.<sup>101</sup> Susannah Radstone’s concept of mediation and articulation has been useful in grappling with the dialogical nature of the oral histories. Memory is not the past, but rather, as Radstone highlights, is a subjective mediation of the past that is articulated in

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<sup>96</sup> Heather Goodall, “Too Early Yet or Not Soon Enough: Reflections on Sharing Histories as a Process,” *Australian Historical Studies* 118 (2002): 17–20. See also Shannyn Palmer, “Making Histories ‘Ngapartji-Ngapartji Way’: Exploring Collaboration, Exchange and Intercultural Histories in a Colonised Settler Nation,” *History Compass* 11, no. 2 (2013): 117–32.

<sup>97</sup> Alessandro Portelli, *The Death of Luigi Trastulli, and Other Stories: Form and Meaning in Oral History* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1991), x–xi.

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>99</sup> Maria Nugent, “Mapping Memories: Oral History for Aboriginal Cultural Heritage in New South Wales, Australia,” in *Oral History and Public Memories*, ed. Paula Hamilton and Linda Shopes (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2008), 52–3.

<sup>100</sup> For example see Jeremy Beckett, “Autobiography and Testimonial Discourse”; M. Frisch, *A Shared Authority: Essays on the Craft and Meaning of Oral History and the Public* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1991); M. Frisch, “Sharing Authority: Oral History and the Collaborative Process,” *The Oral History Review* 30, no. 1 (2003): 111–13; Heather Goodall, “‘The Whole Truth and Nothing But...’: Some Intersections of Western Law, Aboriginal History and Community Memory,” in *Power, Knowledge and Aborigines*, ed. Bain Attwood and John Arnold (Bundoora: Latrobe University Press, 1992), 104–19; R.J. Grele, et. al. *Envelopes of Sound: The Art of Oral History*. (Chicago: Precedent, 1985); Portelli, *The Death of Luigi Trastulli, and Other Stories*; Sansom, “In the Absence of Vita as Genre.”

<sup>101</sup> Goodall, “‘The Whole Truth and Nothing But...’,” 111.



relation to the present and ‘the institutions of the wider public sphere’.<sup>102</sup> Despite the different circumstances under which they were recorded, Tjuki’s and Sandra’s life histories have a certain politics in common. Although their experiences varied, their oral narratives amplify a central statement about their identification with Angas Downs as *ngura*. Even though the time period covered spans a half a century, their oral histories are very much about a ‘very present dilemma’<sup>103</sup> that speaks to a fraught politics of place, recognition and ownership. Angas Downs, as it is evoked in their oral histories, reflects the complexities of contemporary circumstances and ways in which projections of self and Country are inflected with self-conscious concerns about the implications of history.

The projection of place and Country takes a particular form in Tjuki’s oral histories in particular. Radstone has pointed out that memory is always located and specific to its site of production *and* practices.<sup>104</sup> Researchers working with ‘memory cultures’ different to their own, according to Radstone, need to acknowledge their own locatedness and that of the memory they are working with.<sup>105</sup> As such, Anangu historical remembrance is conceptualised in this thesis as an ‘inscriptive practice’. Early in my relationship with Tjuki Pumpjack I came to see that his way of remembering the past and narrating his life history was through a series of itineraries; narratives spatially anchored to the desert landscape, punctuated by an inventory of places encountered along a lifetime of travelling.<sup>106</sup> While this style of inscriptive practice is commonly associated with the exploits of the ancestors as they travelled and created the known physical world – human, plant, animal and environment – out of themselves in the *Tjukurpa*, as Rumsey has observed, “‘history’ - the

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<sup>102</sup> Susannah Radstone, “Reconceiving Binaries: The Limits of Memory,” *History Workshop Journal*, no. 59 (2005): 134.

<sup>103</sup> Portelli, *The Death of Luigi Trastulli*, 66.

<sup>104</sup> Susannah Radstone, “What Place Is This? Transcultural Memory and the Locations of Memory Studies,” *Parallax* 17, no. 4 (2011): 114. For a sustained analysis of the cultural production of memory in relation to Aboriginal autobiography see Monchamp, *Autobiographical Memory in an Aboriginal Australian Community*. See also Beckett, “George Dutton’s Country”; Beckett, “Walter Newton’s History of the World - or Australia.”

<sup>105</sup> Radstone, “What Place Is This?”, 117.

<sup>106</sup> In a textual analysis of Pitjantjatjara and Yankunytjatjara storytelling, linguistic anthropologist Danièle Klapproth makes the observation that the ‘journey is the crucial organising principle in Western Desert storytelling and that it is this rhythmic pattern of movement from camp to camp [that] forms the structural spine of the narrative’. Danièle M. Klapproth, *Narrative as Social Practice: Anglo-Western and Australian Aboriginal Oral Traditions* (Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter, 2004), 253. This narrative mode is not unique to Aboriginal Australia and has been observed amongst Indigenous cultures elsewhere. Anthropologist Keith Basso observed that all Western Apache narratives he encountered were ‘spatially anchored’ to points in the land and that the primary spatial anchors ‘almost always turn out to be placenames’. Basso noted that the Western Apache call this practice ‘speaking with names’. See Keith H. Basso, “‘Speaking with Names’: Language and Landscape among the Western Apache,” *Cultural Anthropology* 3, no. 2 (1988): 110. See also Keith H. Basso, *Wisdom Sits in Places: Landscape and Language among the Western Apache* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1996).

past actions of known human beings – are also inscribed in the landscape'.<sup>107</sup> Building upon anthropologist Nancy Munn's elaboration of the Dreaming, not as mythical consciousness, but rather as a 'mode of orientation to the world', Rumsey argues that for some Aboriginal people both mythical consciousness and historical consciousness are realised in 'a particular form of inscription - in the *places* through which one moves in the course of social life'.<sup>108</sup> Rumsey suggests that the term 'inscriptive practice' is a productive way to approach different forms of social memory, as opposed to binary oppositions between myth and history, orality and literacy.<sup>109</sup> While not all forms of Anangu memory, or Aboriginal oral history generally, take the form discussed here, this particular narrative technique does constitute a significant thread that has been influential in shaping the interpretive mode of this thesis. Following Rumsey, I understand the oral histories drawn upon in the thesis, to be more than simple oral sources, the 'nature of which is predetermined by the absence of "writing" in the strict sense'. Rather, as Rumsey describes it, 'alternative modes of inscription figure in combination with speech to comprise culturally specific forms of social memory which are not the simple inverse of "literacy"'.<sup>110</sup>

This conceptualisation of oral sources as 'inscriptive practice' is also a move toward 'critical proximity'. In seeking to answer the question of how to sustain a critical relation to identity politics from a position 'that cannot exist outside the sphere of influence of such politics and the global academic networks (and markets) in which they circulate', cultural theorist Meaghan Morris argues that the situation requires 'critical proximity' to our objects of study.<sup>111</sup> Morris defines 'proximity' as not just establishing a position of nearness to a problem or object, but also in the sense of '*translatively* trying to touch a mixed audience'.<sup>112</sup> In arguing for translation as cultural practice that can move between different 'speech situations' and institutions, while also acknowledging the inadequacies and failures of

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<sup>107</sup> Alan Rumsey, "The Dreaming, Human Agency and Inscriptive Practice," *Oceania* 65, no. 2 (December 1994): 116, 121. Rumsey posits another way of describing this as history being assimilated into an existing social system where the main locus of social memory is in place.

<sup>108</sup> *Ibid.*, 127–28. See also Nancy Munn, "The Transformation of Subjects into Objects in Walbiri and Pitjantjatjara Myth," in *Australian Aboriginal Anthropology* (Nedlands, W.A: University of Western Australia Press, 1970), 141–63. Munn's significant essay informed Myers' ethnography of the Pintupi and his elaboration of their formulation of place. Myers observed of the Pintupi that it was impossible to listen to any narrative, be it historical, mythological or contemporary, without constant references to the places where events happened. Myers writes that 'the landscape becomes a history of significant social events' and as such it is geography, not time, that is the great punctuator of desert storytelling. See Myers, *Pintupi Country, Pintupi Self*, 54, 68.

<sup>109</sup> Rumsey, "The Dreaming, Human Agency and Inscriptive Practice," 127–28.

<sup>110</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>111</sup> Meaghan Morris, *Identity Anecdotes: Translation and Media Culture* (London: Sage Publications, 2006), 5.

<sup>112</sup> *Ibid.* Emphasis added.

translation, Morris nevertheless leans towards translation as an ‘indispensible’ and ‘pressing condition of practice’.<sup>113</sup> In elaborating an inscriptive practice, this thesis seeks to embrace Morris’ notion of proximity. Rather than mine their oral histories for information to be assimilated into historical analysis, the approach adopted here seeks to translate Tjuki’s and Sandra’s oral histories, not just from Pitjantjatjara to English, but as a particular mode of historical practice that is its own ‘speech situation’ with its own conceptual framework.

A number of scholars have written about the relationship between history and memory and pursued questions of how to use memory as a historical source.<sup>114</sup> It is a significant characteristic of this thesis that Anangu inscriptive practices began, over time, to change the way in which I read and interpreted the written archives. The more ‘traditional’ archival sources that form part of my source material do not perform the function of providing background or context for the oral histories. Rather, they are understood as another form of inscriptive practice that I use in conjunction with the oral histories in a dialectical interpretive framework. As Bain Attwood has argued, focusing solely on oral sources can have the unfortunate effect of exaggerating Aboriginal autonomy and agency, while overlooking the larger structures of colonialism and the power relations in which people’s lives are necessarily entangled.<sup>115</sup> Favouring one over the other loses sight of the ways in which these two groups of people shaped each other, ‘thereby losing a crucial dynamic and dialectic’.<sup>116</sup> Danièle Klapproth’s description of her ‘cross-cultural’ approach to interpretation has guided my own dialogical interpretive framework. In a discussion of her comparison of Anglo-Western and Anangu oral traditions, Klapproth defines her use of the term cross-cultural as an encounter ‘that takes place in the head of the investigator’.<sup>117</sup> Klapproth writes that this approach aims to make us familiar with ‘the Other’, while

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<sup>113</sup> Ibid., 6.

<sup>114</sup> Bain Attwood and Fiona Magowan, eds., *Telling Stories: Indigenous History and Memory in Australia and New Zealand* (Crows Nest: Allen & Unwin, 2001); Bain Attwood, *Telling the Truth About Aboriginal History* (Crows Nest: Allen & Unwin, 2005); Deborah Bird Rose, “Oral Histories and Knowledge,” in *Frontier Conflict: The Australian Experience*, ed. Bain Attwood and S.G. Foster (Canberra: National Museum of Australia, 2003), 120–32; Kelly Jean Butler, *Witnessing Australian Stories: History, Testimony, and Memory in Contemporary Culture* (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Transaction Publishers, 2013); Kate Darian-Smith and Paula Hamilton, eds., *Memory and History in Twentieth-Century Australia* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1994); M. Frisch, “The Memory of History,” in *Presenting the Past: Essays on History and the Public*, ed. R. Rosenzweig and S. Benson (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1986), 5–17; Goodall, “‘The Whole Truth and Nothing But...’”; L. Passerini, ed., *Memory and Totalitarianism: International Yearbook of Oral History and Life Stories*, vol. 1 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992); Radstone, “Reconceiving Binaries.”

<sup>115</sup> Attwood, *The Making of the Aborigines*, 147.

<sup>116</sup> Ibid.

<sup>117</sup> Klapproth, *Narrative as Social Practice*, 4.

simultaneously defamiliarising the familiar, and opening up the researcher's analytical 'perception by freeing it from some of the cultural constraints that tethered it'.<sup>118</sup> Reading Anangu inscriptive practices alongside the archival documents, the traditional source base became increasingly 'othered', but also helped me to see things I would have otherwise missed. Influenced by the insights of Ann Laura Stoler, I approached the archival sources ethnographically, reading them not just for their content, but for the ways in which they constructed Anangu and their place-making practices of mobility and exchange.<sup>119</sup> Not always commensurable, there are tensions and, at times, explicit contradictions between the two sets of sources from Angas Downs, a place where the different groups of people who encountered each other there did not always understand one another. However, I view this as productive and read both archival sources and oral histories for what they reveal about what people thought they were doing, what actually happened and how people experienced and make meaning out of the past.

There are a number of reasons for concentrating on just two extended oral histories. Tjuki Pumpjack passed away in September 2015, and the recordings that we made together represent possibly the last documentation of living memory that reached back as far as the 1930s in Central Australia. This breadth of memory and experience underpins the central role his oral histories play in the thesis. Many people with attachments to Angas Downs have long since passed away, while many more are in their old age and suffering from a variety of illnesses that are, sadly, common among remote Aboriginal people today.<sup>120</sup> The contemporary remote context presents particular challenges for a researcher wanting to gather stories —people are under incredible pressure in their day-to-day lives, the kind that, even after five years in Central Australia, I could not fully comprehend. Furthermore, a focus on place destabilises the notion of a 'community history'. Contemporary remote communities are the product of the 'self-determination' era and people with attachments to Angas Downs are spread out among the communities of Imanpa, Mutitjulu, Docker River, Areyonga and Ernabella. Imanpa, the community that owns the Angas Downs lease, is divided along several fault lines. Both Tjuki and Sandra's families were some of the earliest to arrive at Angas Downs, and they considered themselves, and are thought of by many Anangu, as those who had the most knowledge, and therefore carried the authority, to

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<sup>118</sup> Ibid. Klapproth distinguishes this from 'intercultural', which she sees as the interactive processes between members of the two cultures being discussed.

<sup>119</sup> Ann Laura Stoler, *Along the Archival Grain: Epistemic Anxieties and Colonial Common Sense* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2010).

<sup>120</sup> I am referring here to type two Diabetes and early onset Dementia, although there are many more illnesses that plague Anangu in the communities I have worked in in the southwest.

speak on behalf of Angas Downs. In this sense, the totality of the archive I have to work from reflects what Hinkson described as a ‘tapestry with significant sections cut out and the contributions of several makers missing’.<sup>121</sup> However, like Hinkson I do not approach the archive as a puzzle with pieces that are missing. Rather, focusing on two people with a deep connection to Angas Downs, provided the scope for a detailed illustration of how people came to make a place for themselves in a period of momentous change. I do not consider this to be a definitive history of Angas Downs. Rather, drawing upon Tjuki’s and Sandra’s memories and teachings in conjunction with the traces that remain in the archives, this thesis reveals the ways in which people were engaged in shaping the world at Angas Downs.

### Chapter outline

This thesis begins with Anangu migrations out of the Western Desert in the late 1920s and early 1930s and runs through until the relative demise of the pastoral paradigm in Central Australia around 1980. The structure of the thesis, while chronological, has also sought to emulate Anangu rhythms of peripatetic movement and modes of inscriptive practice. The temporal and spatial combine throughout to reflect movement between places and also how places pulse in and out of use over time.

Chapter One begins in the Western Desert and reinterprets the dominant narrative of ‘exodus’ from this region that has emerged in existing historiography and ethnography. This chapter traces some of these journeys to Walara, the site that William Liddle chose to establish the sheep run he called Angas Downs, which is the location of Chapter Two. Focusing on the spatial knowledge encoded in oral histories and the few letters, diaries and patrol reports that emanated from the period, this chapter reveals the ways in which the desert ecology shaped the pastoral enterprise and relations between Anangu and pastoralists, revealing a history of pastoralism quite different from that evoked in the pastoral mythology of the north.

The sheep turned Walara into a dusty sand drift. Coinciding with post-war improvements in roads, technology and infrastructure in the north, the Liddle family sank a sub-artesian bore, relocated the station, and made the transition from sheep to cattle. Bloodwood Bore was the name of the new site and the location of Chapter Three. By tracing the different

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<sup>121</sup> Hinkson, *Remembering the Future*, 7.

regimes of value through which rations, artefacts made for sale to tourists, and money, circulated, this chapter reveals how these “things” were mobilised to create and reproduce social relations and make home at Bloodwood Bore. Chapter Four zooms out and broadens the perspective on Angas Downs to encompass the wider socio-economic network in which it was situated. By juxtaposing Anangu itineraries, with the discursive construction of them by the Welfare Branch as ‘the itinerants’, this chapter highlights the deeply contradictory architecture of assimilation policy.

The final chapter grapples with the multiple factors, and complex processes, of transformation that took place in the 1960s and 1970s, and resulted in the eventual demise of Angas Downs. Drawing upon the oral histories of Sandra Armstrong and Tjuki Pumpjack, along with government correspondence files, the chapter is structured around two very different ways of remembering the demise of Angas Downs. While Sandra’s memories of the multiple forces of the ‘return to Country’, ‘sit-down money’ and aspirations for autonomy allows for the construction of this period into a somewhat linear historical narrative, Tjuki’s story of Arthur Liddle’s death raises the problem of how to explain the ‘end’ of Angas Downs and beckons an alternative interpretation. Ruminating on the shifting meanings of *ngura* over half a century of change, the chapter traces how a cattle station was made Country and the ways in which the unmaking of Angas Downs provides important insights into contemporary politics of place, recognition and ownership.

### **(un)making Angas Downs**

Places accrue people and stories, in multiple layers, over time. Some of these stories come to dominate how we see and interpret a place, while others are marginalised and obscured from view. While Angas Downs is ostensibly a pastoral station, pastoralism is but a fraction of the story of this place. We cannot understand Angas Downs without the stories and memories of the people who lived there. Listening to them, a very different kind of place emerges from that conjured in myths and histories of pioneers and pastoralism that have dominated historical understanding in the Northern Territory. As geographer Doreen Massey has argued, a genuine and thorough spatialisation of social theory and thinking ‘can

force into the imagination a fuller recognition of the simultaneous coexistence of others with their own stories to tell'.<sup>122</sup>

Rather than a single site produced through colonial structures, relations and processes, Angas Downs emerges in this study as a deeply complex place of dynamic interaction and social life. Focusing on the spatial aspects of history and memory reveals the creative and mobile social processes that were harnessed by Anangu to respond to the dislocation and change that came with the arrival of whitefellas in the desert. Angas Downs has emerged in this study as not only lived in, but also simultaneously *made* by, Anangu.

There is much at stake in stories we tell about places. Massey suggests that thinking about place in particular ways can also 'shake-up' the questions that are formulated and make valuable contributions to political arguments already underway.<sup>123</sup> The spatial approach and analysis pursued in this thesis draws out the multiple and layered meanings of Angas Downs and opens up a view onto different ways of seeing, apprehending, creating and connecting to a place. At a time when the politics of place and of recognition is keenly felt in Australia, the (un)making of Angas Downs illuminates relationships to place that reflect the complexities and messy legacies of "settlement" processes, while simultaneously serving as a symbol of hope for more creative and responsive understandings of these relationships.

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<sup>122</sup> Doreen Massey, *For Space* (London: Sage Publications, 2005), 11.

<sup>123</sup> *Ibid.*





## CHAPTER ONE

### EXODUS? MOVEMENT AND MIGRATION FROM THE WESTERN DESERT

Sweeping west from the edge of the Central Australian Ranges is a group of desert dunefields that form a ring around this continental heart. The Great Sandy Desert, Little Sandy Desert and Gibson Desert are known collectively as the Western Desert.<sup>1</sup>

Anthropologist Ronald Berndt estimated the population of the Western Desert before the British colonised the continent as between 10,000 and 18,000, while archaeologist Mike Smith estimates that for Central Australia a figure between 10,000 and 12,000 people ‘seems probable’.<sup>2</sup> Archaeological research over the last 30 years has painted a scientific picture of the first known migrations of people into Australia’s deserts sometime before 45,000 years ago. According to Smith, by 30,000 years ago ‘small groups of highly mobile hunter-gatherers were using pockets of country across the interior of the continent’.<sup>3</sup> Mobility was a fundamental fact of desert life and the arid environment imposed a particular pattern on the rhythms of movement; these ecological itineraries of travel punctuated by the soaks, wells and springs that provided the necessary means to move through the country.

The physical ecologies of the Central Australian ranges and Western Desert coalesce in places to form the human ecology that Berndt called the ‘Western Desert cultural bloc’,<sup>4</sup> which encompassed parts of Western Australia, the Northern Territory and northern South Australia. The similarities between the hundreds of groups who lived there has led to anthropologists speaking of a ‘Western Desert culture’, understood as being culturally distinct from groups outside of the arid zone.<sup>5</sup> The unreliability of rainfall and scarcity of

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<sup>1</sup> Smith, *The Archaeology of Australia’s Deserts*, 6–7. Smith defines the Central Australian ranges as the large block of desert uplands in the centre of continent, bordered in the north by the MacDonnell Ranges and the Mann-Musgrave ranges in the south.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid, 10. See also Ronald M. Berndt, “The Concept of ‘the Tribe’ in the Western Desert of Australia,” *Oceania* 30 (January 1959): 86.

<sup>3</sup> Smith, *The Archaeology of Australia’s Deserts*, 70.

<sup>4</sup> Berndt, “The Concept of ‘the Tribe’,” 86.

<sup>5</sup> Drawing upon the work of anthropologists Nicolas Peterson, Peter Sutton and Ian Keen, Smith notes that although the Western Desert groups do not constitute a single culture, there is a ‘sharp cultural divide’ between Western Desert groups and Arandic-speakers who occupied the Central Australian Ranges such as the *Arrernte*, *Alyawarr* and *Anmatyerre*. The *Diyari* and *Yandruwantha* to the east and the *Wangkangurru* in the Simpson desert were different again. Smith, *The Archaeology of Australia’s Deserts*, 10.

resources meant that social isolation in the arid interior was ‘ecologically impossible’.<sup>6</sup> In respect to pre-contact social organisation in the region, anthropologist Fred Myers posits that while desert people lived day-to-day life in smaller groups of 20-30, collectively they formed a larger regional network that emphasised inclusion and interconnectedness.<sup>7</sup> The people of the Western Desert speak a number of dialects of a mutually recognisable language; Pitjantjatjara, Yankunytjatjara, Ngaanyatjarra, Pintupi, Luritja are a few of the names that were given when whitefellas began asking desert people what ‘tribe’ they belonged to and to define who they were in relation to others.

Much has been assumed and written about Anangu migrations out of the Western Desert toward emerging mission settlements and pastoral stations in the 1930s. Referred to overwhelmingly in historical and anthropological literature as the ‘exodus’ from the Western Desert, it is one of the most important historical processes to have played out in the arid interior. The seemingly ubiquitous use of the term ‘exodus’ to describe Anangu mobility in the early twentieth century suggests a mass, one-way movement away from ancestral country toward new settlements. Periods of drought, coinciding with a gradually encroaching white society, characterise the idea of ‘exodus’ in cause-and-effect driven narratives that have converged over time to shape conceptualisations and understandings of the migration of desert peoples as helpless drift, or as Patrol Officer T.G.H. Strehlow claimed in 1937, more of a ‘flight or rout’.<sup>8</sup>

In this chapter I question this dominant narrative by paying close attention to Anangu remembrance. Anangu oral histories are itineraries. They are narratives spatially anchored to the desert landscape and punctuated by an inventory of places. By being guided by the narrative rhythms of the stories, tracing the places that people went to, and exploring the various motivations for their travels, what emerges are accounts of movement and migration that work to destabilise the idea of ‘exodus’. Moreover, in contrast to much scholarship on the matter, drought is rarely mentioned as a motivating factor in the stories of leaving the desert that I analyse here.

While there is no one story that can explain why Anangu walked out of the Western Desert in large numbers in the 1930s and 1940s, the oral histories I have recorded, as well as

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<sup>6</sup> Myers, *Pintupi Country, Pintupi Self*, 27.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>8</sup> “Why Aboriginals are Leaving it: Conditions in the South-West Reserve Described,” *Examiner* (Launceston, Tas: 1900- 1954), 23 July, 1938, accessed 20 May, 2014, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article52217470>

others I have listened to, overwhelmingly characterise this period as a time of constant movement between the new mission settlements at Ernabella and Areyonga and pastoral stations such as Angas Downs. Initially to procure food, the journeys that followed were made to join family who had earlier walked out of the desert. This chapter draws primarily upon the oral histories of Tjuki Pumpjack, which provide a sustained account of this period. Supplementing them, I also make reference to excerpts from a number of other Anangu life histories, in order to tease out further the strategic pursuit of food as a significant factor in Anangu migrations during this period. Focusing on food, followed by the importance of finding family who had earlier left the desert in search of food, raises questions about the protectionist rhetoric that understood Aboriginal reserves and mission settlements as ‘buffers’. Furthermore, this approach destabilises the predominance of drought as a primary motivating factor and explanatory frame.

#### RETHINKING MOVEMENT AND MIGRATION FROM AN ANANGU PERSPECTIVE

The year 1872 is significant in the history of colonialism and cultural encounter in the arid interior. The Overland Telegraph Line was completed in that year. Three thousand two hundred kilometres of telecommunications cable had been laid along the length of the continent from Port August in the south to Port Darwin in the north, collapsing time and space by linking the Australian colonies with Java in Indonesia and ultimately, Great Britain. The twelve repeater stations that punctuated ‘The Line’ further enabled European exploration of the Australian continent, and ushered in an ethnographic tradition that commenced with the fieldwork of Baldwin Spencer and Frank Gillen.<sup>9</sup> The year of its completion is also remembered in colonial history as marking the moment of ‘first exploration’ into the arid interior. That year, Ernest Giles penetrated the country to the west of the Telegraph Line, and in doing so ventured into territory where, in his own words, ‘for a thousand miles in a straight line, no white man’s foot had ever wandered’.<sup>10</sup> Commencing nearly a century after the British first established colonial settlements in the

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<sup>9</sup> For an overview of the history of the Overland Telegraph Line see P. F. Donovan, *A Land Full of Possibilities: A History of South Australia’s Northern Territory* (St. Lucia, Qld: University of Queensland Press, 1981), 80–93. Baldwin Spencer and Frank Gillen travelled along the OTL in 1901, recording Aboriginal ceremonies in what archaeologist John Mulvaney has referred to as a ‘landmark in global ethnographic fieldwork’. See John Mulvaney, “... These Aboriginal Lines of Travel,” *Historic Environment* 16, no. 2 (2002): 6.

<sup>10</sup> Giles, *Australia Twice Traversed*, vol. 1, iv.

southeast of the continent, the early encounters between Anangu and whitefellas set in train movements of people that would come to significantly change the social ecology, and cultural and physical landscapes, of the Western Desert and Central Australia over the next eighty or more years.

Appearing as though mimicking the spatio-temporal arrangement of available resources in the arid interior, the process of colonisation in the desert was sparse, patchy and highly variable. Established between 1870 and 1885, Henbury, Tempe Downs, Erldunda and Glen Helen were the earliest pastoral stations established in the region west of the Overland Telegraph Line. Clustered around the northern edge of the Central Australian ranges, this early pastoral development did not greatly increase the number of whitefellas living in the region, but it did contribute to an increase in their movements throughout it.<sup>11</sup> Incidents of Anangu spearing cattle commenced on Tempe downs in the 1870s. From the archival evidence available, historian Mervyn Hartwig claimed that it appeared that people were moving in from ‘the deserts beyond the frontier’ to participate in cattle spearing, and also to seek rations and safety from reprisals at the nearby Hermannsburg mission, which had been established in 1877.<sup>12</sup> However, for nearly half a century after these early stations emerged, pastoral settlement failed to penetrate any deeper into the Central Australian ranges or the Western Desert, and as anthropologist Robert Layton has observed, Anangu social and ecological itineraries continued relatively undisturbed between the 1870s and 1930s.<sup>13</sup>

The 1930s and 40s witnessed rapid pastoral expansion in Central Australia. The establishment of Angas Downs, Lyndavale, Curtin Springs and Mount Connor stations in the southwestern corner of the Northern Territory during this period coincided with the establishment of Ernabella mission in 1937 and Areyonga mission in 1943. The rapid expansion of new settlements greatly intensified contact between Anangu and whitefellas, and began to significantly impact upon Anangu itineraries of travel. Anangu migrations toward the emergent pastoral stations and mission settlements took place amid the increasingly contested domain of Aboriginal politics in Australia. In the mid-1930s professional ‘white experts’ had begun to intervene in Aboriginal Affairs.<sup>14</sup> Ernabella

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<sup>11</sup> Donovan, *A Land Full of Possibilities*, 182.

<sup>12</sup> Hartwig, “The Progress of White Settlement”, 404–06.

<sup>13</sup> Layton, *Uluru: An Aboriginal History of Ayers Rock* (Canberra: Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies, 1986), 53.

<sup>14</sup> Heather Goodall, “An Intelligent Parasite: A.P. Elkin and White Perceptions of the History of Aboriginal People in New South Wales” (Australian Historical Association, Sydney, 1982), 1.

Mission was located in the Musgrave Ranges, on the eastern edge of the Western Desert and the southern border of the Central Australian ranges. Historian Rani Kerin's analysis of the intellectual origins of Ernabella mission illustrates how founder Charles Duguid's vision for the mission was formed in a climate of contradictory and conflicting ideas about 'the future of the Aborigines'.<sup>15</sup> Social anthropologists such as A.P. Elkin, Donald Thomson and W.E.H. Stanner, and medical scientists specialising in physical anthropology, such as Frederic Wood Jones and J.B. Cleland, as well as Duguid himself, all sought to influence the administration of Aboriginal affairs at the time. Kerin notes that, although in decline, the paradigm of inevitable extinction still held sway with many missionaries, anthropologists and administrators at the time.<sup>16</sup> Even though the appointment of Elkin to the Chair of Anthropology at Sydney University in 1932 bolstered the influence of social anthropologists in Aboriginal affairs, throughout the 1930s competing ideas of protection, segregation, preservation and assimilation converged. Historian Geoffrey Gray has argued blood and culture were conflated as terms such as 'full-blood', 'half-caste', 'traditional' and 'non-traditional' became entangled in administrative and anthropological discourses that sought to categorise Aboriginal people, and influence policy in Aboriginal Affairs.<sup>17</sup>

The 'white experts' interpreted Anangu migrations as a 'passive drift' toward the resources and material goods on offer at pastoral stations and mission settlements. Furthermore, they believed that these movements, and the resulting cultural encounter, would inevitably result in Anangu racial and/or cultural decline. In a 1938 paper called 'The Aborigines',

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<sup>15</sup> Kerin, "“Doctor Do-Good”?" (PhD Thesis), 33.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid. For a detailed discussion of theories of Aboriginal extinction see: Russell McGregor, *Imagined Destinies: Aboriginal Australians and the Doomed Race Theory, 1880-1939* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1997); Warwick Anderson, *The Cultivation of Whiteness: Science, Health and Racial Destiny in Australia* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 2002).

<sup>17</sup> Geoffrey Gray, "[The Sydney School] Seem[s] to View the Aborigines as Forever Unchanging': Southeastern Australia and Australian Anthropology," *Aboriginal History* 24 (2000): 176–79. Gillian Cowlshaw has argued that anthropologists in Australia employed the concept of 'traditional Aborigines' in a way that has not changed since the study of race became the study of culture, which has resulted in 'conceptual confusion'. She notes that the widespread rejection of the notion of biological race mid-century led social anthropology, rather than physical anthropology, to assume responsibility for describing Aboriginal people. Despite this, Cowlshaw argues that social anthropology was based on the 'submerged or implied definition of Aborigines as a race, the identification of that race with an unsullied tradition'. Cowlshaw notes that social anthropologists such as Elkin commonly used terms of 'caste' and 'blood', particularly when describing Aboriginal people living in the densely settled southeast who were commonly referred to as 'half-castes' or 'part-Aborigines'. Gillian Cowlshaw, "Colour, Culture and the Aboriginalists," *Man* 22, no. 2 (1987): 222–24.

anthropologist W.E.H. Stanner wrote of these migrations in the tropical and arid regions of the north:

The blacks are ceasing, or have ceased, to make their ancient stone tools. They smoke tobacco. Some of them wear whites' clothes. They are eager for tea and sugar and white flour, and do everything they can...to obtain manufactured European articles...They are tending to drift away from their traditional tribal lands to live near white settlements where they can secure more readily the tobacco, tea, sugar, new foods, clothing and manufactured articles they have learned to value and crave. This tribal drift is threatening to dissolve so-called uncivilised tribes into small floating segments, each of which is likely to leave the main tribe and attach itself in parasitic fashion to a cattle station, mission, farm, or settlement. Once this stage has been reached the tribes will never return to the old nomadic life in the bush. Once a tribe is parasitic it is in the half-way house to extinction.<sup>18</sup>

The use of words 'parasitic' and 'parasitism' to describe Aboriginal relationships with white society was common in the language of 'white experts' throughout much of the twentieth century. Although it is commonly associated with Elkin following his coining of the phrase 'intelligent parasitism' in his 1951 paper 'Reaction and Interaction: A Food Gathering People and European Settlement in Australia', as Stanner's quote demonstrates, the term was in use by anthropologists and administrators before then.<sup>19</sup>

Stanner's claim that 'tribal drift' was resulting in 'parasitism' and placing Aboriginal people in the 'the half-way house to extinction' has unmistakable racial connotations. This sentiment is echoed by patrol officer T.G.H. Strehlow who concluded in 1939 that the government's 'leave 'em alone' policy had done its worst. He lamented that the younger people who had migrated from the Western Desert toward the township of Alice Springs

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<sup>18</sup> W.E.H. Stanner, *The Dreaming & Other Essays* (Melbourne: Black Inc. Agenda, 2009), 134.

<sup>19</sup> Parasitism is a biological term and refers to a non-mutual symbiotic relationship whereby one species attaches itself to a host and lives at the expense of the other species. While the likes of Stanner and Elkin almost certainly did not intend the term to be a disparagement, the term is 'grossly insulting' to Aboriginal people and needs to be recognised as such as Heather Goodall has argued. Furthermore, Goodall has highlighted in regard to Elkin, but which is equally applicable to a number of 'white experts' at the time, it was actually their relationship with Aboriginal people that was 'parasitic', which they used to gain prestige, power and funding, while Aboriginal people received nothing. Goodall, "An Intelligent Parasite," 16-20. See A. P. Elkin, "Reaction and Interaction: A Food Gathering People and European Settlement in Australia," *American Anthropologist* 53, no. 2 (1951): 164-86.

were already ‘degenerating into a race of useless wasters’.<sup>20</sup> According to Strehlow, it was urgent that the government act to ‘save the Aboriginals from extinction’ while there was still time.<sup>21</sup> Stanner’s and Strehlow’s statements reveal an underlying sentiment that Aboriginal people needed to be saved, not just from extinction, but also from themselves. The terms ‘parasitic’ and ‘wasters’ are closely related to the notion of ‘pauperism’, another popular descriptive term for Aboriginal behaviour at the time. These ideas illuminate anxieties that Aboriginal migrations in the 1930s were a result of abject desire and would inevitably lead to racial and/or cultural decline and the subsequent development of dependency upon the state.<sup>22</sup> In an article examining a number of different attempts at characterising Anangu mobility in Central Australia in the early twentieth century, Tim Rowse has argued that historians need to question the convergence of lay and scientifically qualified opinion that emerged in the 1930s, which cast movements out of the desert as passive ‘drift’ and a symptom of rapid and inexorable social disintegration. These assumptions work to deny, he suggests, Anangu agency and initiative in their encounter with whitefellas.<sup>23</sup>

Contemplating the complexity of writing histories of the colonial frontier, Rowse suggests that historians must make an effort at understanding the past ‘from an imagined Aboriginal point of view’ and ask ‘what problems and what opportunities for action were brought by white settlement?’<sup>24</sup> Oral history provides some of the material for drawing the Aboriginal point of view into historical interpretations. In their oral histories, Anangu provide their own interpretations for the journeys they made out of the Western Desert. However, the way in which oral histories are approached as sources has implications for historical interpretation, and this is of particular importance when seeking to understand Anangu motivations for migrations toward pastoral stations and mission settlements in the first half of the twentieth century. History as an academic discourse pursues questions of ‘why’ by

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<sup>20</sup> T.G.H. Strehlow, Report on Trip to the Petermann Ranges, August 1939, NAA F1 1938/418, Aboriginal Reserve South West Corner (includes Report on a Reconnaissance in the Mount Doreen Mineral Area Central Australia by C.T. Madigan) 1932-1941.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> For a detailed discussion of the notions of ‘pauperism’ and ‘parasitism’ and the changing official and anthropological discourses of Aboriginal agency throughout protection and assimilation policy regimes see ‘Rationed Actors’ in Tim Rowse, *White Flour, White Power*, 25-46.

<sup>23</sup> Tim Rowse, “Aborigines as Historical Actors: Evidence and Inference,” *Historical Studies* 22, no. 87 (October 1986): 189.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 176.

looking for causal relationships that can be explained according to western logic and chronology. However, I have found pursuing issues of causation and asking ‘why?’ questions in this context to be problematic. In my experience questions of why Anangu walked to pastoral stations and mission settlements have often been met with one of two common responses: people were ‘following the rations’, or had been ‘rounded up’ by welfare and the missionaries. Tjuki Pumpjack said on many occasions during our recording sessions that large numbers of Anangu went to Angas Downs ‘looking for rations’. The lure of rations is similarly reflected in anthropologist Robert Tonkinson’s observations made during his fieldwork with Martu in Western Australia, leading him to claim that their increasing dependence on the mission and station economies resulted from the rapid development of ‘a strong desire for tea, flour, twist tobacco and sugar’, and that several Martu described the process as being ‘captured by flour and sugar’.<sup>25</sup> When I asked Sandra Armstrong why Anangu went to Angas Downs she told me:

God sent a pastor out to the desert to find people living on bush tucker and he took flour, and sugar and tea and clothes and all that. The pastor would give the people cool drinks and lollies and say to people to take it and some people would say no, because the pastor was a Mamu (evil spirit) and they would run away. It was Pastor Albrecht and he was giving them flour, tea and sugar and blankets and people were thinking ‘ah this is good tucker’. They sat down a little while and then travelled to Areyonga.<sup>26</sup>

I have heard various iterations of this story. Taken together with narratives of being ‘captured’ by rations, at first glance these oral histories can appear to corroborate some of the formulations of ‘passive drift’ put forward at the time these migrations were taking place. However, like Sandra Armstrong, many of the people who told me these stories had not been ‘rounded up’ or ‘brought in’ themselves.<sup>27</sup>

Geographer Richard Baker reported a similar experience during his work with Yanyuwa people at Borroloola in the Northern Territory. When he directly asked people how they

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<sup>25</sup> Robert Tonkinson, *The Mardu Aborigines: Living the Dream in Australia’s Desert* (Fort Worth: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1991), 162.

<sup>26</sup> Sandra Armstrong, interviewed by author, 7th October, 2013, Mitchell Library SLNSW. Sandra and I spent a week at the Mitchell Library carrying out research in the Frederick Rose collection. The trip was funded by a Northern Territory History Grant program and was part of an ongoing project to have the Rose photographs digitised and repatriated to the Aṛa Irititja archive.

<sup>27</sup> These observations were made while carrying out fieldwork for Aṛa Irititja, as well as the research for this thesis. In my role as Field Officer I spent time with many Anangu who had so-called ‘coming in’ stories, particularly those people who had experience with Ernabella and Areyonga missions.



came to be living in town, they would invariably answer that they were ‘rounded up’ or brought in by welfare, although he found it was ‘almost impossible’ to find anyone who had been ‘brought in’.<sup>28</sup> Baker observed that while individuals had not been brought in, Yanyuwa collective memory had come to retrospectively remember this process as one of being ‘rounded up’. It is important to contextualise this observation by noting that Baker was carrying out his fieldwork in the 1980s, a time when the outstation movement, Aboriginal land rights, and articulations of ‘traditional ownership’ were significantly impacting upon the ways in which movements out of the desert were remembered. Oral history and memory are particularly powerful for what they tell about the relationship between the past and present moments of remembering.<sup>29</sup> The politics of ‘return’ that emerged with the collapse of assimilation ideology, and the rise of ‘self-determination’ rhetoric, meant that the political claims of Aboriginal people at this time often rested upon their having to protest the perception of ‘exodus’ from their homelands as ‘helpless drift’. This often resulted in what Rowse calls the ‘coercion thesis’, which emphasised coercive colonial policies designed to herd people onto mission settlements.<sup>30</sup>

In his history of the Pitjantjatjara homelands movement, Reverend Jim Downing noted that the controversies that arose with land rights in the Northern Territory led to assertions that Aboriginal people in some areas ‘left their homelands and showed no further interest in them’.<sup>31</sup> Downing argued that it was necessary to balance those assertions with an examination of:

[T]he pressures which forced people from their land in many areas and, coupled with the availability of the White man’s food and work, encouraged them to stay away for long periods when they could have returned to live there.<sup>32</sup>

Narratives of people being *forced* or *pushed* out of their homelands is consistent with a political climate where Aboriginal people, often with the help of anthropologists, had to

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<sup>28</sup> Baker, “Coming In?: The Yanyuwa as a Case Study in the Geography of Contact History,” *Aboriginal History* 14, no. 1–2 (1990): 31–2. See also Baker, *Land Is Life*.

<sup>29</sup> See Portelli, *The Death of Luigi Trastulli*.

<sup>30</sup> Rowse, “Aborigines as Historical Actors,” 189. The ‘politics of return’ at this policy threshold will be explored in greater detail in chapter five.

<sup>31</sup> Jim Downing, *Ngurra Walytja, Country of My Spirit* (Darwin: Australian National University. North Australia Research Unit, 1988), 2.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*

protest earlier assumptions that their movements were passive and a symptom of social disintegration.<sup>33</sup> However, while there is substantial archival and oral history evidence that supports the ‘coercion thesis’, these sources overwhelmingly indicate that these movements largely took place during the 1950s and 60s.<sup>34</sup> Historical evidence and Anangu oral histories attest that people were moving out of the desert well before this period of increased intervention in Anangu lives, and by contrast these earlier phases of movement were actively discouraged by the Northern Territory administration.<sup>35</sup>

It seems that Anangu memory of the move to mission settlements and pastoral stations condenses over four decades of encounter and migration into a single coherent narrative, which most likely took shape during the post-assimilation period, when the rationale for Anangu migrations assumed critical political significance. Echoing Baker’s experience with Yanyuwa, I found that by looking at life history narratives of Anangu, and individual people’s movements and the network of places to which they travelled in the so-called process of ‘coming in’, a more nuanced picture of this experience and history began to emerge.

## FOOD

Food, and its acquisition, is a prominent theme in Anangu oral histories. In her analysis of Anangu narratives, linguistic anthropologist Danièle Klapproth observed that:

Hunting and food gathering, food preparation and food distribution feature very highly, both in terms of constituting thematic concerns for stories, as well as being given special textual prominence through the narrators’ detailed attention to such

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<sup>33</sup> For example, Jim Downing’s *Ngurra Walytja* and Daniel Vachon and Philip Toyne’s *Growing Up The Country* are two works that explicitly seek to contextualise Pitjantjatjara movements away from homelands within the changing political landscape brought by the ‘homelands movement’ and land rights. Phillip Toyne and Daniel Vachon, *Growing up the Country: The Pitjantjatjara Struggle for Their Land* (Melbourne: Mcphee Gribble, 1984).

<sup>34</sup> The coercive policies of the Welfare Branch in the southwest during this period will be explored in greater depth in chapter four. Both Tim Rowse and Jeremy Long have made similar observations, noting that despite claims of people being ‘rounded up’ as a sole explanation for movements out of the Western Desert, Welfare Branch patrols into Pintupi country, west of the Ehrenberg Ranges, took place in 1957 and again in 1963 and 1964. Evidence suggests Pintupi were on the move well before then. The recent Central Land Council publication of Central Australian oral histories confirms this. Jeremy Long, who was a research officer with the Welfare Branch at the time is a central figure in many of the oral histories featured in the section ‘Oh! Where you mob come from?’ – Leaving Country’ and is referred to as Jerry Long by Anangu who recall the patrols in the 1950s and 60s. See Marg Bowman, ed., *Every Hill Got a Story: We Grew up in Country; Men and Women of Central Australia and the Central Land Council* (Richmond, Victoria: Hardie Grant Books, 2015); Rowse, “Aborigines as Historical Actors”; Jeremy Long, “Leaving the Desert: Actors and Sufferers in the Aboriginal Exodus from the Western Desert,” *Aboriginal History* 13, no. 1–2 (1989): 9–43.

<sup>35</sup> Rowse, “Aborigines as Historical Actors”; Long, “Leaving the Desert.”

ordinary matters of daily life as the provision, preparation, distribution and consumption of food.<sup>36</sup>

A focus on food as defining colonial encounter and exchange has been reflected throughout the desert in the experiences of the Pintupi, Martu, Kukatja and Walmajarri.<sup>37</sup> Fred Myers, for instance, observed in relation to the Pintupi that the newly available resources came to constitute the basis of black-white relations and that stories of early contact ‘lay heavy emphasis on the quantities of food they saw’.<sup>38</sup> Similarly, John Carty’s oral history research revealed that early memories of Balgo mission in Western Australia were primarily articulated in terms of food and that Balgo people ‘almost without fail’ emphasised that Fr Alphonse Bleischwitz offered food to the people.<sup>39</sup> While the flour, sugar and tea that were the basis of these exchanges are commonly referred to as ‘rations’, the use of the word ‘food’ here is deliberate. Across the body of Anangu oral histories I have heard, recorded and/or read, a distinct difference emerged between early encounters with ‘whitefella food’ and ‘ration times’ in the 1950s and 60s. I therefore differentiate here between ‘food’ and the colonial policy of rationing.<sup>40</sup> The oral histories of early movement

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<sup>36</sup> Klapproth, *Narrative as Social Practice*, 331. Mary Anne Jebb noted in the Kimberley that in talking about food Ngarinyin people used certain standard terms and phrases almost to the point of being clichéd, reflecting the ritualised nature of food production and consumption. Jebb, *Blood, Sweat and Welfare*, 195.

<sup>37</sup> Myers, *Pintupi Country, Pintupi Self*; Tonkinson, *The Mardu Aborigines*; John Carty, “Creating Country: Abstraction, Economics and the Social Life of Style in Balgo Art” (PhD Thesis, The Australian National University, 2011).

<sup>38</sup> Myers, *Pintupi Country, Pintupi Self*, 35.

<sup>39</sup> Carty, “Creating Country,” 31.

<sup>40</sup> I will explore ‘ration times’ in Anangu memory in chapter three and look at rationing as a tool of assimilation policy across chapters three and four. Tobacco emerges alongside food as a key theme in oral history narratives of migration and colonial encounter in other parts of the north, yet it is conspicuously absent in the oral histories I have listened to from Central Australia. Warlmala Walbiri man Engineer Jack Japaljarri told historian Peter Read that it was tobacco, not food, that motivated Warlmala migrations to Wave Hill station around 1930. In the Kimberley, Mary Anne Jebb noted that tobacco was ‘a key factor in the transition from bush to station work’ and that the ‘government recognised the power of tobacco to keep people quiet and attract them to settle at a rationing point’. Anangu I have spoken with rarely mention tobacco in their stories, and overwhelmingly emphasise food as the central focus in the colonial encounter. Why was tobacco such a powerful motivating force in some regions of the north and not Central Australia? *Mingkulpa*, or *Nicotiana gossei* or *suaveolens*, also known as ‘bush tobacco’, is a close relation of *pituri* or *Dubiosa hopwoodii*, the native species of nicotine. *Mingkulpa* was, and remains a highly sought after and widely traded commodity among Anangu. Originally thought by early botanists to be a narcotic, *mingkulpa* is mixed with an alkaline white ash, *tjunpa*, which releases the nicotine. In Central Australia whitefella tobacco did not wield the kind of power that Jebb described in the Kimberley. See Nicholas Rothwell, “Bush Tobacco Culture Revealed by Western Desert Aborigines,” *The Australian*, November 28, 2015, accessed 12 January, 2016, [www.theaustralian.com.au/arts/review/bush-tobacco-culture-revealed-by-western-desert-aborigines/news-story](http://www.theaustralian.com.au/arts/review/bush-tobacco-culture-revealed-by-western-desert-aborigines/news-story). See also Peter Read and Engineer Jack Japaljarri, “The Price of Tobacco”; Jebb, *Blood, Sweat and Welfare*, 237–38.

analysed in this chapter are largely recalling journeys that took place during the 1930s and 40s, before rationing had been fully implemented as a technique of assimilation policy. Food was undoubtedly at the centre of relationships between Anangu and whitefellas at this time, however, exchanges were taking place in a number of different spheres and were on a relatively small scale.

Not just confined to the deserts of the Australian interior, the centrality of food in the colonial encounter has been noted widely. For instance, the production, distribution and consumption of food is a key theme in Coll Thrush's work on encounters between the British and the Nuu-chah-nulth and Coast Salish peoples on the Northwest coast of Vancouver during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Contextualising his focus upon theme, Thrush writes that:

Food is fundamental... We are what we eat, both materially and discursively, both in terms of the ecological networks that provide us with sustenance and the identities that define who we are as social, cultural, and historical beings.<sup>41</sup>

Thrush's observation illuminates an aspect of food that is often overlooked, yet significant for understanding its role as an object of exchange in colonial encounters. Food is more than material sustenance. It is also a fundamental object of exchange in the Anangu social universe; the sharing of which is an integral part of social processes that create relatedness, and reproduce individuals as *walytja*, or kin.<sup>42</sup>

***'These whitefellas have got a lot of food stored up, so we are going to go there and get some'***

Tjuki Tjukanku Pumpjack was born around 1926-28.<sup>43</sup> He did not know the exact date. One of the first oral history recordings we made together in 2012 took place on the veranda of his house in Imanpa. In the time that I knew him, he rarely told stories about his life in Imanpa. We only recorded stories in community on two occasions, and during those times Tjuki's memories always travelled elsewhere. On this particular day, when we

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<sup>41</sup> Coll Thrush, "Vancouver the Cannibal: Cuisine, Encounter, and the Dilemma of Difference on the Northwest Coast, 1774-1808," *Ethnohistory* 58, no. 1 (December 21, 2011): 2.

<sup>42</sup> For a sustained discussion of relationships of exchange as a means of producing relatedness in relation to the Pintupi see Myers, *Pintupi Country, Pintupi Self*.

<sup>43</sup> Tjuki Tjukanku Pumpjack is Tjuki's full name. He said that Bill Liddle gave him the name Tjuki. He always went by the name Tjuki in the time that I knew him, so I refer to him as Tjuki Pumpjack throughout the thesis text. However, I attribute his oral histories to his full name in footnotes.

were just getting to know each other, over a period of about two hours, speaking in Pitjantjatjara, he shared his life story with Linda Rive and me. This is where it began:

*My grandmother's country, where she was born, was Ulkiya. She was born there, half-way between there and Yaluriti. I am from Aparara. The olden time name of my place is Aparara. That's the proper traditional name of the place. Today, everyone calls that place Amata. But when we were tiny children, we called that area Aparara. My grandmother was born at Aparara, Ulkiya. My father's mother and my grandmother's mother were born there... They lived there and that is where I lived the first few months and years of my life - old enough to be running around on my own two feet anyway - and I remember seeing my father's father — my grandfather — there. My father's father is ngayuku tjamu (my grandfather). He died where the buildings stand in Amata today. He died in that same spot, where the houses are now. The exact spot where he died has a name, which is Apunkintama. My grandfather died when I was a little boy, running around on my own two feet. But I do remember seeing him. When he died, when he went to his eternal sleep, my father and grandmother and mother did not want to stay around that area anymore. So they decided to walk to Ernabella.*

*Later, houses were built at Amata, but when we were living there, there were no house or buildings at all. Just the water source. Father was a hunter and he would always be going out hunting kanyala (emu) and bringing the kuka (meat) back to us. On our journey across to Ernabella we would stop in the afternoons to make camp and sleep the night. One of our camps was a place called Ulayapa. There is water at Ulayapa, and so we stopped there for a while to drink the water. Another camp we stopped at was Kuli. At Kuli my younger brother was born, Johnny Mulla... After that, my father decided that we would go and have a look at this flour that we'd heard about. Flour. Whitefellas had met my father before and told him about it and he used to tell us "These whitefellas have got a lot of food stored up, so we are going to go there and get some of it". So from Kuli we changed direction and came around through Fregon way and headed over to Ernabella. The day came when we arrived in Ernabella. We arrived and we sat down there for a while.<sup>44</sup>*

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<sup>44</sup> Tjuki Tjukanku Pumpjack, oral history recorded by author, transcribed and translated by Linda Rive, 20 September, 2012, Imanpa, Northern Territory. I have italicised Anangu oral histories throughout the thesis to distinguish them as sources that were originally recorded in a language other than English. These sources have been both translated and transcribed from Pitjantjatjara into English, which is an act of interpretation in itself. It is important to note that most of the oral histories used throughout the thesis

As this extract from Tjuki's oral history demonstrates, Anangu prefer to mark time, and the significant events in their lives, in places. His life story begins in the Musgrave Ranges in South Australia, a place far away from Angas Downs, which is the place he came to think of as his *ngura*, or Country. He says that Aparā, meaning River Red gum in Yankunytjatjara, is where he was born (Map 2).<sup>45</sup> He tells that where the houses are today in Amata is where his grandfather died, and that his little brother was born at Kuḷi while the family was on 'sorry business' grieving the death of his grandfather.<sup>46</sup> Tjuki's family were one of many who walked out of their desert homelands and headed northeast from the Musgrave, Mann and Petermann Ranges in the early decades of the twentieth century.



**Map 2 - The southwest region featuring places mentioned in Anangu oral histories recounting journeys out of the Western Desert.**

have been translated and interpreted by Linda Rive and Sam Osborne, which provides a consistency throughout the thesis.

<sup>45</sup> Aparā is in the Musgrave Ranges. As a reliable source of water it was visited by many explorers and scientists during expeditions into the interior. Travellers such as H.H. Finlayson and Charles Mountford have rendered it Oparrina and Oparinna respectively, however, this is a phonetic impression of how they heard the name Aparanya, the 'nya' being a locative ending in Pitjantjatjara and Yankunytjatjara.

<sup>46</sup> It is customary for Anangu to leave the place where a deceased person lived for an extended period of time while grieving that person.

When he was really little, his family hardly knew about whitefella food:

*Yes, we were living at Amata. We are the traditional owners of that area and this is where my father lived his whole life, from the early days when everybody was naked. My father was a naked man living in the Amata area, living in the traditional way, before he had ever seen or tasted flour. Later he came to know what flour was because he learnt about dingo scalping and how it could be exchanged for flour...after that we walked around the southern area of what is now Amata and walked to Ernabella.<sup>47</sup>*

With the expansion of pastoralism came the perceived threat to stock from the dingo. The South Australian government responded by implementing a bounty on dingo scalps in 1912, with Western Australia and the Northern Territory following suit in the 1920s.<sup>48</sup> The bounty encouraged lone whitefellas, commonly referred to as ‘doggers’, into the Petermann and Musgrave Ranges, both areas known for plentiful populations of dingo. The incursion of doggers in the desert presented the earliest instances of regular contact between Anangu and whitefellas in the Western Desert, and as Tjuki’s oral history demonstrates, for many Anangu it was also the catalyst for their first encounters with flour, tea and sugar. Anangu superior hunting skills, and their sophisticated knowledge of the desert landscapes, meant that they were of great benefit to doggers. Their value as hunters ensured continued contact between them, as Anangu sought out the flour, tea and sugar that they could get from doggers in exchange for dingo scalps.

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<sup>47</sup> Tjuki Tjukanku Pumpjack, oral history recorded by author, transcribed and translated by Linda Rive, 26 October, 2012, Imanpa, Northern Territory.

<sup>48</sup> Diana Young, “Dingo Scalping and the Frontier Economy in the North-West of South Australia,” in *Indigenous Participation in Australian Economies: Historical and Anthropological Perspectives*, ed. Ian Keen, vol. 1 (Canberra: ANU E Press, 2010), 92, accessed September 24, 2012, [http://epress.anu.edu.au/titles/ip\\_citation](http://epress.anu.edu.au/titles/ip_citation).



**Image 6 - Doggers camp in the Musgrave Ranges, circa 1928-1930.** Source: Aḡa Irititja, Ramon Brown Collection AI-0035182.

The early 1930s saw increased numbers of whites enter the Southwest and Central Reserves for the purposes of dogging or prospecting. In an analysis of dingo scalping in the frontier economy, anthropologist Diana Young observed that in the northwest of South Australia ‘individual doggers often returned to the same base camp year after year, aiming to establish good relations with local Anangu’ and noted that Norman Tindale’s 1933 field journal recorded Anangu travelling and camping in large numbers with individual doggers.<sup>49</sup> After a trip to the Musgrave Ranges in 1935, missionary Charles Duguid made a submission to the South Australian Government to extend the Central Aboriginal Reserve and make it inviolate. Duguid’s motivation, according to Kerin, was wanting to rid the reserve of ‘undesirables’ and ensure that early contact was with the ‘best type of white man’, such as himself.<sup>50</sup>

In 1920 the Commonwealth Government gazetted a large tract of desert country in the southwest of the Northern Territory as the Southwest Reserve. By the 1930s the justification for inviolable Aboriginal reserves had begun to shift from earlier ideas of protection and segregation to assimilation and civilisation.<sup>51</sup> The catalyst for this change

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<sup>49</sup> Ibid., 93.

<sup>50</sup> Kerin, “‘Doctor Do-Good’?,” 42. See also Rani Kerin, “Dogging for a Living: Aborigines and ‘Undesirables’ in South Australia,” in *Frontier, Race, Nation: Henry Reynolds and Australian History*, ed. Bain Attwood and Tom Griffiths (North Melbourne, Vic: Australian Scholarly Publishing, 2009), 136–58.

<sup>51</sup> Kerin, “‘Doctor Do-Good’?,” 62–68.



was the increasing influence of Elkin and his advocacy for assimilation. Elkin viewed Aboriginal ‘reserves’ as training grounds:

If there were established on each large reserve an institution, practical, educational and religious in nature, which would give the Aborigines a new interest in life, they would not be so readily lured away to white settlements off the Reserve, but rather would themselves be the cause of other natives being attracted to it.<sup>52</sup>

Despite Elkin’s increasing influence, in the 1930s there was little consensus among anthropologists and the administration as to the purpose of reserves. Historian Russell McGregor has characterised the conflicting ideas at the time as the approach of ‘elevation by reservation’, advocated by the likes of Elkin and Chief Protector of Aborigines in the Northern Territory Cecil Cook, who believed that reserves should regulate the Aboriginal socio-economic transformation. In contrast, McGregor aligned anthropologists Frederic Wood Jones and Donald Thomson under the heading ‘preservation by reservation’, referring to their support of segregation and inviolability as a means to preserve racial purity and halt ‘detrribalisation’.<sup>53</sup> In reality, regardless of the debate around their intended purpose, reserves were an administrative imaginary, the borders of which were meaningless to both Anangu, and the whitefellas who roamed as they pleased in country that Kerin has described as both ‘unpatrolled and unpatrollable’.<sup>54</sup> The system of exchange that developed between Anangu and white doggers was significant in early responses to colonialism and cultural encounter in and around the Musgrave and Petermann Ranges.

Tjuki explains that his father learnt about flour through the exchange of dingo scalps, but he also shares that his father had heard that there were whitefellas giving away free food in a place called Ernabella:

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<sup>52</sup> A. P. Elkin, “The Aborigines, Our National Responsibility,” *The Australian Quarterly* 6, no. 23 (1934): 56.

<sup>53</sup> McGregor, *Imagined Destinies*, 235.

<sup>54</sup> Kerin, “Dogging for a Living” 139.

*“Oh we might go to Ernabella to have a look at this whitefella food”. Whitefellas were giving it out and whitefellas were living in Ernabella. Everybody was thinking about the whitefellas living in Ernabella.<sup>55</sup>*

Hearing stories of white people giving away food no doubt stirred Anangu curiosity. In his discussion of reasons that motivated Anangu migrations out of their homelands, Jim Downing noted a recording he made with an Anangu woman called Ngayintja who told him that her father and uncle walked more than 250 kilometres to Ernabella to ‘bring back some of the white man’s food’. Ngayintja told Downing that they returned two weeks later with a bag of flour, tea and jam.<sup>56</sup> In an oral history recorded for the Tjanpi Desert Weavers *Kuru Alala* exhibition catalogue, Anangu woman Niningka Lewis, who lives in Ernabella, recalled how her parents came to hear about the whitefellas giving away food at the mission:

*Some people that walked to Ernabella and walked huge distances to get there. They walked from many distant places, and my mother and father were amongst the first people that walked into Ernabella for the first time. They arrived at Ernabella and they stayed for quite a while... They were people connected to Ulpa or Ulpanyali. They’d walk from the Docker River area to there to gather karku (red ochre) from Ulpanyali. People from all over the country would go to Ulpanyali to dig out karku. They would get their karku supplies and then carry it all the way back to their country again. My mother and father would often go to Ulpanyali, and it was there, on a previous visit that they heard about the white people living at Ernabella. They and their relatives had been getting karku and they heard the news, “There are white people living in houses that they’ve built, and they are giving away free food. They’ve built this place and have food sent in, and you can go there and get some”. So my parents went there to see for themselves and when they go there they decided to stay.<sup>57</sup>*

Niningka’s parents heard about the whitefellas at Ernabella and their food while getting *karku* (red ochre) in Ulpanyali, situated hundreds of kilometres to the northwest in Watarrka, the place that Ernest Giles called Kings Canyon. When passing through the area in 1932, H.H. Finlayson recorded seeing this red ochre mine, which he noted was ‘of great

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<sup>55</sup> Tjuki Tjukanku Pumpjack, “Walking from Ernabella to Walara”, interviewed, translated and transcribed by Linda Rive, June 2011, AI-0108954-003.

<sup>56</sup> Downing, *Ngurra Walytja*, 28.

<sup>57</sup> Niningka Lewis, “I was born near Areyonga”, oral history recorded, translated and transcribed by Linda Rive, October 2009, AI-0156069-002. This oral history was recorded for the Tjanpi Desert Weavers *Kuru Alala* exhibition catalogue and has since been archived with Ara Iritija. It is reproduced here with the permission of Niningka Lewis, Tjanpi Desert Weavers and NPY Women’s Council.

fame with the blacks’, and that the *karku* was a highly sought after item ‘traded far and wide by the Luritjas’.<sup>58</sup> Niningka says that people travelled from all over the country to Ulpanyali to get *karku* and that her own mother and father travelled there regularly from Docker River, several hundreds of kilometres to the south in the Petermann Ranges (**Map 1**). As anthropologist Nicolas Peterson has described it, in the Western Desert ‘sociality is stretched to its uttermost and the emphasis is on inclusion’.<sup>59</sup> As such there is little doubt that word of the whitefellas, and their abundant supplies of food, would have spread rapidly throughout the Musgrave, Mann and Peterman Ranges.

While this process of migration has often been referred to as ‘coming in’, it is important to note that Anangu were not the only people on the move at the time. Missions and pastoral stations may have been novel, but the places where they were established were not new. Richard Baker has argued that the degree to which the contact between local peoples and whitefellas was the result of Aboriginal people ‘coming in’, or whitefellas ‘going out’ into country, is a fundamental issue in colonial history.<sup>60</sup> Baker highlights that the Yanyuwa did not originally come in, but rather whitefellas were going out to ‘big places’. He describes these ‘big places’ as important sites, generally located near water, that were linked by well defined tracks that traced favoured routes between these places.<sup>61</sup> The need to believe that the land into which they ventured, and the places in which they eventually settled, were both unknown and uninhabited, gave rise to the perception among whitefellas that local people were simply drifting in toward pastoral stations and mission settlements. Baker found that by looking at individual people’s movements, and the places they travelled to, in the narratives of the ‘coming in’ process, ‘big places’ emerged as important ‘stepping stones’.<sup>62</sup> Furthermore, there were well-trodden footpaths that linked these ‘big places’ to one another and archaeological evidence affirms the importance of these places before whitefellas arrived.

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<sup>58</sup> Don Tonkin, *A Truly Remarkable Man: The Life of H.H. Finlayson, and His Adventures in Central Australia* (South Australia: Seaview Press, 2001), 59. Finlayson was being guided by then Tempe Downs station manager Bryan Bowman so it is probable that it was Bowman who provided Finlayson with this information.

<sup>59</sup> Nicolas Peterson, *Australian Territorial Organisation*, Oceania Monographs 30 (Sydney: Sydney University Press, 1986), 151–52.

<sup>60</sup> Baker, “Coming In?,” 29.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, 41.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*

This observation has echoes in my research with Anangu. In interviews recorded for this thesis, and others recorded as part of my work as Field Officer for the Ara Irititja project, Ernabella Mission emerged in memories of early migrations as the most significant site in the first sustained encounters between Anangu, whitefellas and their food. Despite being understood as a ‘new’ place, and the earliest settlement of its kind in the region, the mission was established in a place that was well known to Anangu and as such demands a shift in perspective in narratives of early contact in Central Australia.<sup>63</sup>

***‘Everybody was thinking about the whitefellas living in Ernabella!’***

Ernabella mission was established in a place Anangu knew as Pukatja. Built on the site of the old Ernabella pastoral station, Winifred Hilliard wrote of the mission’s location:

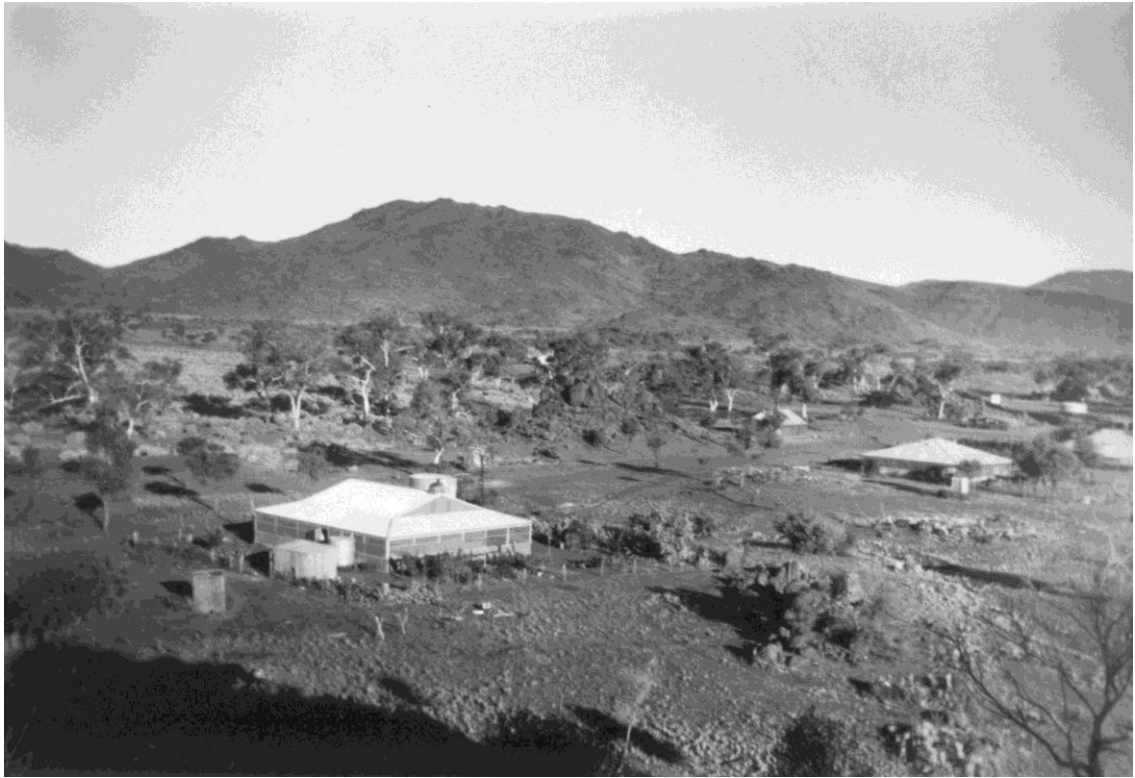
Ernabella, the place which had won so many hearts because of its beauty, was at the end of the mail-run from Oodnadatta. It was thus a regular meeting place for lonely bushmen coming in on mail day each month. The local Aborigines came there to barter their dog scalps, and because it was one of their best permanent waters. It was the obvious centre for this great new venture. All roads led to it.<sup>64</sup>

While Ernabella is known for being the earliest settlement of its kind in the region, it was established at a place that was already significant for Anangu. As Winifred Hilliard observed ‘*all roads led to it*’, and the newcomers were drawn to the area for the same reason Anangu had always been travelling to the area — water. Despite the ways in which prevailing narratives have cast Anangu mobility at this time, they were not ‘coming in’. Rather, they were returning to Pukatja because it was already there.

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<sup>63</sup> Ibid., 29. See also Alistair Paterson, “Early Pastoral Landscapes”, 29.

<sup>64</sup> Winifred M. Hilliard, *The People in Between: The Pitjantjatjara People of Ernabella* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1968), 96.



**Image 7 – ‘All roads led to it’. Ernabella mission, circa 1946-48.** Source: Aṛa Irititja, Barbara Bills Collection AI-0004822.

Dr Charles Duguid was the driving force behind the establishment of Ernabella in late 1937. Medical practitioner, Moderator of the South Australian Assembly of the Presbyterian Church, and self-appointed advocate for the Pitjantjatjara people, in light of the relative success of the mission he is a man who has largely been remembered as a ‘visionary’ as Kerin has illustrated.<sup>65</sup> Proposing the mission as a ‘gesture of the Presbyterian Church to the Aborigines’,<sup>66</sup> at the time Duguid wrote of his motivation for making such a gesture:

I had seen the Pitjantjatjara people of the Musgrave Ranges were so far uncontaminated by contact with the White man and I was determined that they should be given a chance to survive in their own country. It seemed that the best way to do this would be to establish a Christian mission at the eastern edge of the

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<sup>65</sup> Kerin, “‘Doctor Do-Good’?,” 25.

<sup>66</sup> Hilliard, *The People in Between*, 95.

Ranges...and that this mission should act as a *buffer* between the Aborigines and the encroaching White man.<sup>67</sup>

Kerin notes that the 'buffer' concept was the central and defining characteristic of Ernabella, Duguid claiming in 1938 that:

First and foremost Ernabella has been called into being to act as a buffer between the white settlers east of it and the Native Reserve west of it.<sup>68</sup>

The notion of missions and reserves as 'buffers' was not new and had been used by anthropologists and administrators prior to the establishment of Ernabella. Kerin argues that Duguid 'was nothing if not pragmatic'.<sup>69</sup> Aware of the currency of the term at the time, Kerin notes his use of the 'buffer' concept was calculated and closely followed Donald Thomson's use of the term in his 1937, 'Recommendations of Policy in Native Affairs in the NT', which suggested mission settlements should be established at the edge of inviolable reserves 'to act as buffers' between Aboriginal people and outside influences.<sup>70</sup>

It is important to note that the importance of the 'buffer' concept among 'white experts' in the mid-1930s was about more than altruistic concern for the 'future of the Aborigines'. Reputations were riding on it. Elkin and Thomson were rivals for influence with government at the time. The Commonwealth Government released its policy for Northern Territory Aborigines in 1939, which, despite being largely influenced by Elkin, adopted Thomson's argument for the establishment of mission stations on the boundaries of reserves as 'buffers'. Kerin notes that Duguid seized the opportunity to show that Minister for the Interior John McEwen's policy, known as the 'New Deal' for Aborigines, 'was not only the same as his, it was his'.<sup>71</sup> Kerin argues that by calling Ernabella a 'buffer mission' Duguid could 'expeditiously imply that government was following his lead', and that this kind of 'self-promotion' was key in building his image as a 'leading figure' in Aboriginal affairs.<sup>72</sup>

Like many ideas circulated by administrators, anthropologists and advocates at the time, talk of the 'buffer' concept was not overly concerned with how Aboriginal people

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<sup>67</sup> Charles Duguid, *Doctor and the Aborigines* (Adelaide: Rigby, 1972), 115.

<sup>68</sup> Duguid to Minister, 26 June, 1938 quoted in Kerin, "'Doctor Do-Good?'," 46.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, 47.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, 48.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*

approached the missions and stations that were emerging and altering their itineraries. Duguid's idea of Ernabella as a 'buffer' works to obscure Anangu interpretations of the mission and their initiative in their early encounters with new settlements and stations. As Tjuki's and Niningka's memories attest, word of the mission spread and Anangu began to travel significant distances, largely motivated by the objective of seeking out the whitefellas who had abundant supplies of food. Ernabella was hardly a buffer for Anangu. Rather, it was a new and curious resource, to be explored and then exploited, much like any spring, rockhole or soak in existing ecological itineraries.

Despite ideas of inviolability and buffering, by the mid-1930s it was apparent that the establishment of reserves was not having the desired effect. In 1939 Patrol Officer T.G.H. Strehlow, accompanied by Duguid and Lutheran Missionary at Hermannsburg Reverend Albrecht, journeyed into the Petermann Ranges to report on conditions within the Southwest Reserve, and also to investigate why so many people were migrating out of it. Strehlow drew the conclusion that it was drought conditions that had contributed to the 'alarming depletion' of game and bush foods in the reserve, forcing Anangu to leave their homelands. Strehlow reported that the 'desolation' he encountered had resulted from a series of 'bad seasons' that had created a serious problem. He advocated that assuring the food supply in the west would work to 'correct the migration' of desert people to the east. He recommended that a ration depot be established to encourage Anangu to stay within the designated borders of the reserve.<sup>73</sup> Duguid, too, reported that it was drought that had forced people to migrate in search of food and water, claiming that many people had died of starvation, writing of the patrol:

We in the South with a glut of food had left the natives in the Petermanns alone – left them to die of starvation. No one of that 1939 patrol advocates that the natives are best left entirely alone.<sup>74</sup>

Kerin notes that the witnessed devastation brought by drought in the desert was a key factor in Duguid's argument that the 'leave-them-alone' policy was not 'practical politics' and that the 'unwisdom of segregation' had been made painfully obvious on his trip to the

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<sup>73</sup> T.G.H. Strehlow, Report on Trip to the Petermanns, NAA F1 1938/418.

<sup>74</sup> Duguid, 1941 quoted in Kerin, "'Doctor Do-Good?'," 66.

Petermann Ranges.<sup>75</sup> Strehlow too concluded his report by saying that the ‘leave ‘em alone’ policy had done its worst, and it would seem that this environmental concern was a critical influence on their respective arguments for increased intervention in Anangu lives, via ‘buffer’ missions and ration depots.

## DROUGHT?

Drought is, in many ways, a matter of perception and in the arid interior its overuse can be misleading. The Bureau of Meteorology states that drought is not simply a matter of low rainfall, and that if it were ‘much of inland Australia would be in almost perpetual drought’.<sup>76</sup> Interesting then that much of what has been written about Central Australia and the Western Desert in the last 150 years in journals, reports, newspaper articles, letters and books combines to tell the story of a physical environment in an almost enduring state of ‘drought’. Here, in the heart of the continent, rainfall is highly variable, and for prolonged periods, perhaps several years, there might be no rainfall at all. As historian Libby Robin has argued, in the desert average estimates are ‘meaningless’ and you take the rain when you can get it.<sup>77</sup> The arid rangelands are places of extremes and as such ‘all who live there must find ways of dealing with, or avoiding, these extremes’.<sup>78</sup>

The word desert in the popular imagination conjures images of endless sand dunes, dryness and relative desolation. However, as recent focus on desert ecological research attests, deserts are marked not only by highly variable climatic conditions, but also environmental diversity.<sup>79</sup> Much of the Central Australian rangelands and the Western Desert are classified arid, which the United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) defines as regions characterised by perennial vegetation that is woody succulent, thorny or leafless shrubs, and with an annual rainfall between 80mm to as much as 350mm, and interannual rainfall variable of 50-100%.<sup>80</sup> The dynamics of deserts such as those of the Australian interior are largely determined by the highly intermittent availability of water. Big

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<sup>75</sup> Ibid.

<sup>76</sup> “Living with Drought”, The Bureau of Meteorology, accessed March 23, 2014, [www.bom.gov.au/climate/drought/livedrought.html](http://www.bom.gov.au/climate/drought/livedrought.html).

<sup>77</sup> Libby Robin, “Seasons and Nomads: Reflections on Bioregionalism in Australia,” in *The Bioregional Imagination: Literature Ecology and Place*, ed. Tom Lynch et. al. (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2012), 281.

<sup>78</sup> Ingereth Macfarlane, “Entangled Places: Interactive Histories in the Western Simpson Desert, Central Australia” (PhD Thesis, Australian National University, 2010), 77.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid., 81. For a discussion of desert diversity see W. G. Whitford, *Ecology of Desert Systems* (San Diego: Academic Press, 2002).

<sup>80</sup> Whitford, *Ecology of Desert Systems*, 12.



rains are rare and yet they structure the characteristics of the arid environment.<sup>81</sup> This variability has been described as a ‘pulse-reserve’ model, whereby desert ecosystems are largely controlled by infrequent and unpredictable rainfall. Ecologist Walter G. Whitford describes ‘pulse-reserve’ as:

A rain event triggers a pulse of activity, like the growth of vegetation, a variable portion of which is ‘lost’ to mortality and/or consumption but some part is put into a reserve such as seeds or reserve energy stores in roots and stems. The magnitude of the ‘pulse’ varies as a function of the trigger event and season of the year as well as the magnitude and duration of the event.<sup>82</sup>

A familiarity with the fertile soils and reliable rainfall of the British Isles gave Europeans very poor tools, both conceptually and physically, for making sense of, or managing, the Australian environment.<sup>83</sup> Despite attempts to make sense of the Australian interior with vocabularies of British landscapes, the arid rangelands at the heart of the continent confounded the colonists. This unpredictability, and indeed indecipherability of Australia’s desert interior, led to it being seen as the continent’s ‘dead heart’.<sup>84</sup> This idea of dryness and desolation came to dominate popular ideas of the Australia’s deserts from the very earliest European exploration in this region in the latter half of the nineteenth century.

Coll Thrush writes that the inability of the British to read the physical reality they found themselves in on the Northwest coast of Vancouver meant that the newcomers ‘fundamentally misapprehended the nature of indigenous ecologies’ and meant that ‘hunger was an everyday challenge’.<sup>85</sup> The same could be said for the European experience in Central Australia, except that the everyday challenge in the desert was to not perish from thirst. Ernest Giles noted that during explorer Charles Sturt’s failed attempt to find the fabled inland sea, he seemed to be haunted by the notion that he had got into, and was surrounded by, a ‘wilderness the like of which no human being had ever seen or heard of

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<sup>81</sup> Macfarlane, “Entangled Places,” 77.

<sup>82</sup> Whitford, *Ecology of Desert Systems*, 12–13.

<sup>83</sup> George Seddon, *Landprints: Reflections on Place and Landscape* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 226.

<sup>84</sup> Gregory, *The Dead Heart of Australia: A Journey around Lake Eyre in the Summer of 1901-02, with some account of the Lake Eyre Basin and the Flowing Wells of Central Australia* (London: J. Murray, 1906).

<sup>85</sup> Thrush, “Vancouver the Cannibal,” 7.

before'.<sup>86</sup> Echoing Thrush's observations of British perceptions of Vancouver, Giles' invocation of extreme wilderness highlighted the difference between 'cultivated' Britain and the 'primitive' Australian interior that tempered 'the optimism of...[British] anticipatory geographies with the very real fear that the region might be too wild and alien for European settlement'.<sup>87</sup> It was the lack of water in particular, and the inability of whitefellas to decipher the patterns that this scarcity imposed on travel, that threatened to thwart British imperial visions in Central Australia. Giles lamented during his 1872 expedition that he only wished he could:

Catch a native, or a dozen, or a thousand; [for] it would be better to die or conquer in a pitched battle for water, than be forever fighting these direful scrubs and getting none.<sup>88</sup>

Following soon after Giles, explorer William Gosse described the interior he encountered in 1873 as the driest country he had ever seen. He wrote that the defining characteristic of the region was that there was 'scarcely a water to be depended upon'.<sup>89</sup> It is a telling fact that the first word from a Central Australian language was recorded by Gosse, which was *kapi*, the Pitjantjatjara and Yankunytjatjara word for water.

Drought as a motivating factor for the migration of desert people became a popular assumption among white administrators in the Northern Territory in the early twentieth century. Peter Read and Engineer Jack Japaljarri's analysis of the journey of the Warlmala people to Wave Hill station noted that European commentators had assumed that the 1924-29 drought must have been of critical importance to the movements of desert peoples and they quote then Protector J.W. Bleakley as attributing the arrival of a large group of Warlmala people at Wave Hill to the lack of water in the desert.<sup>90</sup> Stanner wrote of the 'drought-stricken blacks' descending upon Wave Hill and observed that in 'native Australia' drought conditions occur again and again and the 'food problem of even the nomadic and uncivilised natives may well be almost as serious as it is for the semi-civilised camps dotted throughout the settled areas'.<sup>91</sup>

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<sup>86</sup> Giles, *Australia Twice Traversed*, v. 1, xxv.

<sup>87</sup> Thrush, "Vancouver the Cannibal," 8.

<sup>88</sup> Giles, *Australia Twice Traversed*, v.1, 83.

<sup>89</sup> W.C. Gosse, "South Australia. W.C Gosse's Explorations, 1873: Report and Diary of Mr. W.C. Gosse's Central and Western Exploring Expedition, 1873" (Adelaide: House of Assembly, 1874), 1.

<sup>90</sup> Read and Japaljarri, "The Price of Tobacco," 145.

<sup>91</sup> Stanner, *The Dreaming & Other Essays*, 131.

In a response to Strehlow's report following his investigation of the Petermann Ranges as part of the McKinnon Inquiry in 1936, Chief Protector of Aboriginal people in the Northern Territory, Cecil Cook, noted that Strehlow attributed migrations at the time as being motivated by 'the greater facility of life in contact with the white man', and that life within the reserve was becoming very arduous due to 'failure' of waters and shortage of game, and that both factors may have been due to a 'temporary failure of the seasons'.<sup>92</sup> The Commonwealth Meteorologist was unable to provide Cook with rainfall data for the country west of Hermannsburg, however, he assured Cook that the Hermannsburg data would suffice. Cook's report stated that the 'average' rainfall for the years previous to 1926 was 1200 points and for the years following:

1926	747	Points
1927	478	Points
1928	262	Points
1929	364	Points
1930	1300	Points
1931	602	Points
1932	873	Points
1933	777	Points
1934	697	Points
1935	583	Points

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<sup>92</sup> Cecil Cook, Chief Protector of Aboriginals Northern Territory, 9 March 1937, NAA F1 1938/481.

There is no indication as to how the ‘average’ figure of 1200 points for years preceding 1926 was derived, or what this proposed ‘average’ was based on. Nevertheless, Cook takes it as a benchmark and observes that in the ten years between 1926 and 1936, the ‘average’ had only been reached once. He goes on to establish these years as ‘rain failures’, unable to appreciate the variability of the arid lands in which he found himself and see that the so-called ‘average’ in 1930 was most likely an example of a trigger rain event in the ‘pulse-reserve’ cycle. The failure at the time was not the rainfall in the years either side of that trigger event, but rather the inability to appreciate that these dry years were in fact the norm in the Australian interior.

The idea of drought as precipitating migrations toward mission settlements and pastoral stations has come to characterise much of the scholarship that has contributed to the prevailing historical account of the ‘exodus’ from the Western Desert. For instance, Mike Smith writes that the eastward migration of the Kukatja was precipitated by regional drought in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and goes on to attribute many phases of Pintupi and Kukatja migration as having been provoked by periods of long drought.<sup>93</sup> Smith, along with others, highlights 1930 as a critical point of culture contact in western Central Australia, and attributed this to a prolonged drought from 1924–29. While based upon meteorological records, Smith also draws upon claims made by Norman Tindale, T.G.H. Strehlow and missionaries, which refer to the Kukatja and Pintupi as ‘refugees’ seeking relief in the mission to support his assertion that it was drought that drove these migrations.<sup>94</sup> Similarly, Mervyn Meggitt described the 1924–29 drought as ‘the most severe’ in Central Australian history and wrote that many of the Warlpiri perished, while the rest were ‘forced to disperse and seek food from the white men they had hitherto avoided’.<sup>95</sup> Fred Myers also attributes a series of Pintupi migrations east to the settlement at Papunya as coinciding with extended periods of drought in the early forties, during the

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<sup>93</sup> Smith, *Peopling the Cleland Hills*, 29.

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.*, 51–2. Emphasis added.

<sup>95</sup> Mervyn John Meggitt, *Desert People: A Study of the Walbiri Aborigines of Central Australia* (London: Angus and Robertson, 1975), 25. Emphasis added.

years 1953-56 and again throughout 1960-66, arguing that these periodic droughts contributed heavily to the increasing migrations of the Pintupi.<sup>96</sup>

There is also ample scholarship that discusses the impact of drought on Pitjantjatjara movements. Norman Tindale's 1972 essay 'The Pitjandjara' frames a particular phase of Pitjantjatjara movement out of homelands in the Mann and Petermann Ranges as an 'invasion' of neighbouring Yankunytjatjara lands caused by '*desperation*' resulting from the 1914-15 drought.<sup>97</sup> Robert Layton later argued that the 1930s were 'fateful for the people of the Petermann Ranges' due to severe drought *pushing* people out of their homelands and bringing them into contact with white settlement advancing from the opposite direction.<sup>98</sup> Reverend Jim Downing argued that it was most likely the severe drought in the early 1930s that '*forced* people to go to Ernabella prior to the establishment of the mission'.<sup>99</sup> Similarly, Philip Toyne and Daniel Vachon's history of the Pitjantjatjara posits that migrations may have been prompted by the attraction of whitefella food, which would have been made more appealing 'by the drought during the twenties and thirties'.<sup>100</sup> As all of these examples demonstrate, the drought thesis is ever-present in historical and ethnographic interpretations of migrations out of the Western Desert and when read together these works cast the shadow of drought over Central Australia for almost the entire first half of the twentieth century.

Strehlow's 1939 report following his second journey to the Petermann Ranges was particularly influential in shaping the drought thesis that prevailed. Both Robert Layton and Mike Smith drew upon Strehlow's report to support the observation that the 1930s were 'fateful' for people of the Western Desert. Layton wrote that a severe drought provoked movement out of the Petermann Ranges toward stations and missions, citing that Strehlow and Duguid met only 26 people, 'all of whom were forced by lack of food or water to travel in small groups' and that they themselves saw no kangaroo, euro, wallaby or emu

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<sup>96</sup> Myers, *Pintupi Country, Pintupi Self*, 35.

<sup>97</sup> Norman B. Tindale, "The Pitjandjara," in *Hunters and Gatherers Today; a Socioeconomic Study of Eleven Such Cultures in the Twentieth Century*, ed. M. G. Bicchieri (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1972), 217-68. Emphasis added. I have retained the spelling used by Tindale in the body of the text here due to it being the title of his chapter.

<sup>98</sup> Layton, *Uluru*, 59. Emphasis added.

<sup>99</sup> Downing, *Ngurra Walytja*, 28. Emphasis added.

<sup>100</sup> Toyne and Vachon, *Growing up the Country*, 26.

during their journey.<sup>101</sup> However, despite the conclusion of drought conditions that Strehlow draws in his report, his report also notes that these drought years could not have been totally rainless for ‘everywhere was in quite good condition’.<sup>102</sup> Strehlow documents encountering ‘fair country’ in several parts of the reserve and in the Western Petermann Ranges, reported seeing ‘many fresh tracks of kangaroo and turkeys, also some of emus’ and ‘many fresh footprints of human beings leading east, north and west’. There were several waters that enabled them to make the trip, one large enough to bathe in. Upon encountering the Docker River, Strehlow wrote:

Then came the green - oh so beautifully green! - Gums of the Docker River. It burst through a very range here, and its amazingly broad river bed was a mass of lovely gums, full branched, white trunked and full of vitality and beauty.<sup>103</sup>

Despite this, his concluding remarks were that the reserve was desolate and ‘virtually empty’, providing no other explanation for the migration out of the Petermann Ranges than drought conditions depleting the reserve of game.



**Image 8 – ‘Then came the green – oh so beautifully green – Gums of the Docker River’. Docker River, 2012.** Source: Photograph by author.

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<sup>101</sup> Layton, *Uluru*, 60.

<sup>102</sup> T.G.H. Strehlow, Report on Trip to the Petermanns, F1 1938/418.

<sup>103</sup> *Ibid.*

In contrast to this story of drought as being a major influence on movement out of the desert, very few Anangu oral histories I have recorded or listened to make any reference to hunger or drought. This phenomenon is similarly reflected in Peter Read's analysis of Engineer Jack's oral history of the move of the Warlmala people to Wave Hill station. Read points out that despite J.W. Bleakley's conclusion that the search for food and water was the sole reason for the arrival of the Warlmala at Wave Hill, Engineer Jack denied that a shortage of food and water was a factor in their decision. Rather, Engineer Jack claimed that it was tobacco that was a primary motivating factor in the movement, a claim that Read argued had support in other parts of the Northern Territory.<sup>104</sup> Despite claims of drought-induced starvation being responsible for the 'depredations' of Aboriginal people into pastoral territory in Central Australia, the thirty sworn statements from pastoralists, missionaries and other interested parties in the 1929 Board of Inquiry into the circumstances surrounding the Coniston Massacre, unanimously denied any evidence of hunger or starvation of Aboriginal people migrating toward pastoral stations at the time.<sup>105</sup> Similarly, John Carty's oral history work with people who had migrated from the Western Desert to the mission settlement at Balgo in Western Australia illuminated the partiality of the drought thesis when he was unable to find any references to hunger or drought in the 'exhaustive collection' of stories from people living in and around the region.<sup>106</sup>

The very few Anangu oral histories I have heard that mention conditions we have come to think of as 'drought', speak of *ailuru* or 'hard times'. Anangu observe three seasons: *kuli*, which describes the hot weather we think of as summer time; *piriyakutu*, the time of the warm spring winds that blow from the north and west; and *nyinnga*, the frost season or cold time. *Ailuru* is the Anangu word for a period of little or no rains, resulting in conditions dry enough to make bush food and game scarce. The reliance on pulses of rainfall to provide the opportunity to procure food around the more ephemeral waters means that in prolonged periods of little to no rainfall *ailuru* occurs. In a place of extremes where average rainfall measurements are meaningless, Anangu speak of 'good times' and 'hard times'.

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<sup>104</sup> Read and Japaljarri, "The Price of Tobacco," 146.

<sup>105</sup> 'Attacks on white men by natives – Killing of natives – Central Australia [Attachment titled "Finding of Board of Enquiry with exhibits 1-13"]', NAA A431 1950/2768 Part 2.

<sup>106</sup> Carty, "Creating Country," 27.

Tjukupati James from Docker River recorded an oral history about her life growing up in the Petermann Ranges, before going to Areyonga Mission, and says that there was always abundant food there. She recalls an instance of *ailuru* when life became very hard due to the lack of water, bush foods and game:

*The country was green and figs, bush onions and desert raisins were everywhere. There were also small ground animals like bandicoots and plenty of water. My mother was always going out to forage for these abundant foods for us. They were great times. But then ailuru came, there was no rain and waterholes dried up. Some small animals survived, and our mother would dig them from the banks of the creek for us to eat. They used to dig for water too, but later even these soaks dried up and life became very hard for us. However, rain eventually came and the creeks flowed and grass appeared and we were able to enjoy desert raisins, bush tomatoes and figs again. Our mothers and all the others were happy...it was marvellous; we had been crying with hunger for so long and now we had as much as we could eat.*<sup>107</sup>

Tjukupati's family did not leave Docker River during this time of hardship. Rather Tjukupati talks about making the 'mistake' of going to Areyonga after meeting the pastor while travelling and being taken to Areyonga for food.<sup>108</sup> *Ailuru* was a fact of life for Anangu. Efficient land use, detailed knowledge of country and fluid and inclusive social relationships were crucial in enabling Anangu to survive 'hard times'. Deborah Bird Rose describes this relationship between people, mobility and place in Victoria River as:

Not usually a matter of being pushed from place to place as resources become scarce, but rather of being called from place to place as food comes into plenty (and in land claims across the Northern Territory from desert to islands people speak of nomadic travels as joyful engagements with plenty). Victoria River people, like others, have stories of the hardships of drought and flood, and there are sites of refuge as well as stories of people who did not survive, but people speak of these events as exceptions.<sup>109</sup>

In another oral history recorded for Tjanpi Desert Weavers, Nyanu Watson from Kalka reflects Rose's observations of traveling as joyful engagement with plenty:

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<sup>107</sup> Tjukupati James, interviewed by John Tregenza, translated by Nancy Sheppard, 13 September 1997, Kaltukatjara (Docker River), Northern Territory, AI-0001577-001.

<sup>108</sup> Ibid.

<sup>109</sup> Bird Rose, "To Dance with Time", 290.



*We would travel around with a mob of donkeys and camels, who would carry our gear. After traveling for the day we would set up camp and everybody would go hunting for meat... They'd come back at the end of the day with meat, and we'd all be really happy because we knew we'd be having plenty of meat for dinner... We always had plenty of food, and we got flour from the stations. We were very happy with our way of life and had no need for anything else... We had lovely fresh water to drink, everywhere we went, and our donkeys had a good drink too.<sup>110</sup>*

Nyanu also recalls how her grandfather, an Amata man, died young during *ailuru*. She noted that this particular *ailuru* happened a long time ago and was fatal for many people at the time. However, this was a one-off event in Nyanu's life story.<sup>111</sup>

Over the four-year period we recorded his life history, Tjuki Pumpjack recounted a single instance of *ailuru*. In keeping with Rose's observation of 'hard times' as exceptional, Tjuki's memory of the experience was evocative in its description of the weather event as being both out of the ordinary and extreme:

*A very long time we walked to Areyonga during a great heat. It was terribly hot. We started out walking from Ulanga [near Walara on Angas Downs]. We started walking from there because the water had run out. We had been living there but the water had run out. One old man left first, carrying a very large piti [digging dish] on his head, to get water, but couldn't find any! So he turned around and came back. We called out to him 'Old man! Bring the water here to us!' But he called back to us, 'Nothing! I couldn't find any my son! It is empty!' and he showed us the empty piti. 'Empty!!' So there we all were, sitting beside the trunk of a tree, while birds fell out of the sky and died all around us. Even the Kanyala [emu] were dying beside Irawa spring [near Ulanga]. Everything was dying from the heatwave, even the birds. Crows died, falling out of the sky dead. We, too, were there, with no water at all. We too, nearly died. We were this side of Tempe. This side of Tempe we nearly died. This side of Kings Canyon. We were barely surviving. We hung on... We decided to leave that night to find some [water]. We walked all night. We came to a rockhole [hidden up high in a rock face] and my brother picked up a small rock and he threw it. 'Hey! It has bit water!' Splash! Without hesitation we climbed up and left into the*

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<sup>110</sup> Nyanu Watson, interviewed by Thisbe Purich for Tjanpi Desert Weavers, July 2008, Mantamaru (Jamieson), Western Australia, AI-0123837. This transcript is reproduced here with the permission of Nyanu Watson, Tjanpi Desert Weavers and the NPY Women's Council.

<sup>111</sup> Ibid.

*water, fully clothed, in our trousers and boots, and we drank and drank until we were able to lift ourselves up again. We then got out and lit a fire and slept for the rest of the night. Three of us, my number one brother and our old man. We were heading for Tempe but we nearly died halfway in that terrible, terrible heat, which killed all the birds. We were so lucky to get away with our lives on that occasion.*<sup>112</sup>

Despite the severity of the conditions during ‘hard times’, Tjuki never recounted an instance of Anangu succumbing to these conditions. As in the other instances of *ailuru* cited here, it is recalled as an extreme event that caused significant hardship due to lack of food and water. None of the oral histories I have consulted in my research attribute these events as being an influence on migrations out of the desert.

Charles Duguid wrote of his journey into the Petermann Ranges with Strehlow:

We could not help wondering what would happen to the little families who were so much at the mercy of their surroundings, but there seemed to be very little we could do for them at the time.<sup>113</sup>

Despite Duguid’s claims after his trip into the Petermann Ranges that Anangu were dying of starvation, in this research, memories recounting episodes where Anangu are at the mercy of their environment are rare. Whitefella perceptions of difficult and challenging desert lands, and their inevitable misconceptions about the people who lived in them, prevented them from appreciating the sophistication of the desert lifeworld, instead projecting the ‘otherness’ of their own experience onto people and places they knew little about. Whitefella environmental sensibilities in the deserts of the interior resulted in the imposition of an idea not suited to Central Australia and yet drought has persisted in shaping historical narratives of one of the most important processes to have taken place in the region.

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<sup>112</sup> Tjuki Tjukanku Pumpjack, 26 October 2012. Although Tjuki’s descriptions of birds falling to their death from the sky might sound fantastical, H.H. Finlayson described a similar experience during his 1932 visit to Central Australia, recording in his diary at the time that he encountered dead or incapacitated birds everywhere and that the extreme heatwave of 1931-22 prevailed over a very large area, resulting in what he referred to as the ‘bird holocaust’. H.H. Finlayson, diary entry dated 22 March 1932, quoted in Tonkin, *A Truly Remarkable Man*, 47.

<sup>113</sup> Duguid, *Doctor and the Aborigines*, 136.

## FINDING FAMILY

As Anangu walked north and east from the Western Desert, and whitefellas moved further to the south and west from Alice Springs and the Overland Telegraph Line, the food that was available at mission settlements and pastoral stations meant that social groupings began to change. The availability of flour, sugar and tea meant that Anangu began to subsist on customary ‘bush foods’ supplemented by the new foods that had been brought by whitefellas. This situation resulted in what Rowse calls a ‘variation in the ecology of survival’, which was particularly novel in terms of the larger numbers of people that could be sustained at any one time.<sup>114</sup> As migrations out of the desert intensified, and the periods of time spent exploring and exploiting the new and curious resource bases lengthened, the social ecology of the desert altered. In the inclusive and interconnected social world of the Western Desert, the departure of kin must have been keenly felt for those who remained. Carty has observed, as increasing numbers of Anangu travelled to mission settlements and stations a ‘human drought’ began to occur in the desert.<sup>115</sup>

Family, as well as food, punctuate the journey narratives of Anangu life histories. Many speak of movements out of homelands as being motivated by the search for family who had earlier left the desert. Anangu were always travelling, not just to procure food, but also to share that food among kin. They also travelled and gathered to share knowledge, conduct ceremonies, and carry out ritual practices ordained in the *Tjukurpa*, which were necessary for producing and maintaining *ngura* (Country) and *walytja* (kin). The changing nature of food resources presented new opportunities for social life. Not only could larger numbers of people be sustained in any one place. It also meant that extended family, which would previously only have been seen intermittently, could now socialise for prolonged periods of time.

Tjuki Pumpjack says that while his family were visiting Ernabella his father decided that he wanted to keep travelling and see his older sister:

*He wanted to see his older sister. He had been asking around, “What’s the name of the place where she is living now? My older sister, where is she living now?” The people told him, “Wilpiya.*

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<sup>114</sup> Rowse, “Aborigines as Historical Actors,” 183.

<sup>115</sup> Carty, “Creating Country,” 28.

*She's living at Wilpiya, your older sister". So my father took us to go and search for her. We set off, heading towards Atila. We arrived at Atila and asked the people there, "Does anybody know where my sister is living?"*

*"She's living up that way! Up around Wilpiya! There is a big hill at Wilpiya - go there!"*

*There is indeed a big hill at Wilpiya, so that is where we headed. At last we arrived in the district and we could see hundreds of sheep footprints everywhere. We followed them and we finally arrived at the camp. "There's my auntie! Over there!" And indeed, there was my auntie, sitting in her camp with her husband, my uncle. That man who had married my auntie was from Docker River. He was a Docker River man. They had married at Docker River and then as a married couple had come to this place.<sup>116</sup>*

There at Wilpiya, a place not far from Walara, on Angas Downs station, Tjuki's father found his older sister.



**Image 9 – ‘There is indeed a big hill at Wilpiya, so that is where we headed’. Wilpiya Range, 2012.**  
Source: Photograph by author.

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<sup>116</sup> Tjuki Tjukanku Pumpjack, 20 September 2012.

*'We combined our camps and we settled in to live there with them'*

Like many of the white pastoralists in Central Australia, there is a robust mythology around William Liddle and the establishment of Angas Downs station. Born to Scottish to parents in Angaston South Australia in 1882, Liddle had been in Central Australia working in various occupations since 1907.<sup>117</sup> Described by well-known Central Australian tourism proprietor Jim Cotterill as a 'genuine pioneer settler of Central Australia', local lore has it that in 1922, after running cattle at a place called King's Creek near Watarrka (King's Canyon), Liddle sold his 500 head of cattle and set out with camels 'to look for greener pastures'.<sup>118</sup>

Whilst going southwards amongst spinifex and sandhills Bill saw hostile natives fighting over a soak, so he went around the natives and found water in a forked desert oak tree. He claimed that this tree saved his life. Going further south Bill found another soak, which he later called Angas Downs. He then travelled south and found another soak later called Wilbia [sic] and then west to another, later called Curtin Springs. He arrived at Ayers Rock in approximately 1922. There was no water in Maggie Springs or any of the rock holes around the base of Ayers Rock so he climbed into a shelf several hundred feet above the ground and found water. Bill then went north to Lake Amadeus and then west to Western Australia. Then he returned by a similar route.<sup>119</sup>

The story above is part of a local legend well known in the region.<sup>120</sup> After purchasing 2000 head of sheep in South Australia, Liddle returned to the second soak he had 'found' on his

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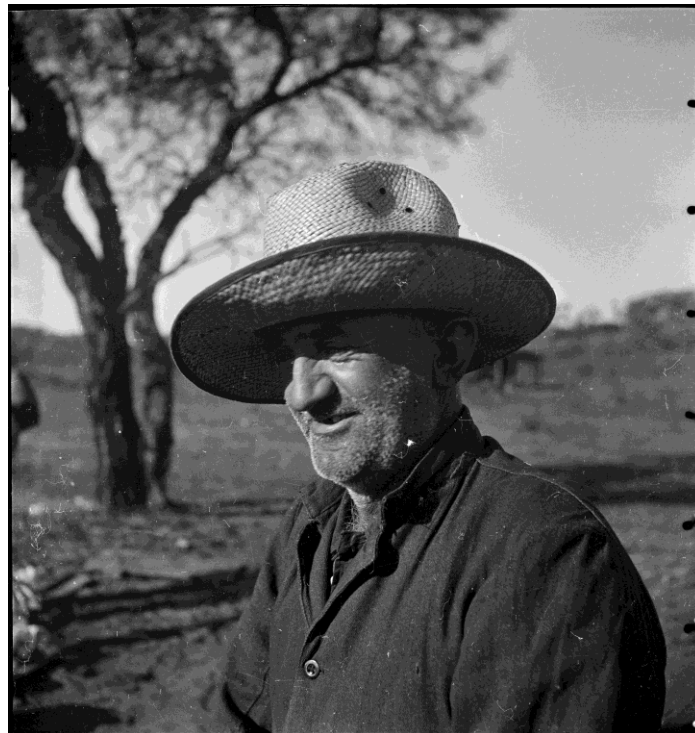
<sup>117</sup> Liddle worked at the post office in Oodnadatta before arriving in Alice Springs. He worked in the Alice Springs Post Office, built the original police station at Arltunga goldfields, built the homestead at Deep Well station and the built the stone hut for William McNamara at Bowson's Hole on Tempe Downs, the remains of which still exist. He also worked on Hamilton Downs station. Bill Liddle had passed away two years before Frederick Rose arrived on Angas Downs. In seeking the historical background of the station, Rose sought out Jim Cotterill. Cotterill and his father Jack had a close relationship with the Liddle family. With the Liddles' help they had established a tourism venture called Walara Ranch, which was situated on the edge of Angas Downs at a place they called Yowa Bore (the place is commonly referred to as Yowa Bore by whitefellas, however Yowa is a the result of mispronouncing the Anangu name *Irawa*, which sounds like *Iyawa*. It is located in the vicinity of *Irawa* rockhole). Rose interviewed Jim Cotterill in 1962 and in 1963 he wrote to Cotterill requesting more information. Jim Cotterill to Frederick Rose, 11 June 1963, SLNSW Frederick Rose Papers Box 36

<sup>118</sup> Jim Cotterill to Frederick Rose, 11 June 1963.

<sup>119</sup> Ibid.

<sup>120</sup> Similar versions of the story appear in H.H. Finlayson's diaries, in Arthur Groom's book *I Saw a Strange Land* and Bill Harney's book *To Ayers Rock and Beyond*. Tjuki Pumpjack and Sandra Armstrong

travels out west and called it Angas Downs (the Anangu name for this place is Walara). This was sometime around 1928-29, approximately six years after he had first set out from Watarrka.<sup>121</sup> In 1930 the first camel train carrying wool left Walara for Rumbalara railway siding, which lay to the south of Alice Springs.



**Image 10 – William ‘Old Bill’ Liddle, 1935.** Source: Charles Mountford Collection, SLSA PRG 1218/34/124.

H.H. Finlayson stayed with Bill Liddle at Walara during his 1932 visit to Central Australia, during which time he observed that there were approximately 6 to 8 men, 10 women and ‘many children’ that were ‘attached to Liddle’s show’.<sup>122</sup> While the primary purpose of his expedition was to study indigenous mammals, Finlayson also took many photographs of Aboriginal people during his travels. The collection from his stay at Walara contains 22 prints, accompanied by handwritten notes, that include each person’s name, approximate age and family information, and is titled ‘Petermann Range Natives at Moment Domiciled in Basedow Range’.<sup>123</sup> The information in Finlayson’s diary places the Anangu he

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have both told versions of Bill Liddle’s founding story as part of their oral histories of Angas Downs station. For a discussion of this kind of legend-making and ‘founding’ figures see Bain Attwood’s analysis of legend-making about Batman as a founding figure in Melbourne. Bain Attwood, *Possession: Batman’s Treaty and the Matter of History* (Melbourne: Miegunyah Press, 2009).

<sup>121</sup> Jim Cotterill to Frederick Rose, 11 June 1963.

<sup>122</sup> Finlayson in Tonkin, *A Truly Remarkable Man*, 80.

<sup>123</sup> H.H. Finlayson, Photographs relating to the ‘Petermann Range Natives At Moment Domiciled in Basedow Range’ 1932, SAM AA93/1/6-27.

encountered at Angas Downs as having left the Petermann Ranges around 1920-22, the word ‘domiciled’ in the title of his collection inferring that ten years later these families were living, somewhat permanently, on the station.

Tjuki’s father’s older sister, Mimiya, is named ‘Mimi’ on the back of Finlayson’s photograph of her. His own sisters Tjintjiwara, Awutjari and Imbidi are also subjects in Finlayson’s photographs. Tjuki says that his aunty and uncle had one son and three daughters, which according to the Anangu system of relatedness are his siblings. Finlayson also photographed Tjuki’s uncle Tjutjapayi, the Docker River Man, and recorded his name as Kurraton. When asked why his aunty went to Angas Downs, Tjuki replied:

*She went there because a Wintalyka man - a Mulga Seed man - from Docker River called her to join him in marriage. That man was originally from Docker River. He called her to join him in marriage. He had already been living there (Angas Downs) and so the two of them went straight back there. They travelled in a straight line from Docker River via Uluru. Wati Wintalyka (Mulga Seed Man).<sup>124</sup>*

Tjuki explains that Tjutjapayi had already been living at Angas Downs when he travelled to call Mimiya in marriage. It was customary for men from that area of the Western Desert around the Petermann Ranges to seek marriage partners to the east in the region of the Mann and Musgrave Ranges. After calling Tjuki’s aunty in marriage, they then travelled from Docker River back to Angas Downs.

To say that an area in the Petermann Ranges is *Wintalyka* Country, and that the men connected to it are *Wati Wintalyka*, is to say that Anangu, and the Mulga Seed of that place, are inextricably intertwined in a mutual relationship that has its beginnings in the *Tjukurpa*. When the ancestors, or the Dreamings, as Deborah Bird Rose describes them, ‘changed over’ after their creative travels, they became the animal or plant relatives of the people with whom they share intimate relationship.<sup>125</sup> Liddle’s ‘daybook’ records Harry Brumby, also a *Wintalyka* Man from the Kikingura area in the Petermann Ranges, as being employed by him in the early years at Walara around 1939. Anthropologist Fred Rose’s fieldwork

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<sup>124</sup> Tjuki Tjukanku Pumpjack, interviewed by author, transcribed and translated by Linda Rive, 17 July 2014, Kulata Well, Eralunda station, Northern Territory.

<sup>125</sup> Bird Rose, *Dingo Makes Us Human*, 53.

diaries, produced some two decades later, also reveal strong connections between Angas Downs and Kikingura, which is Mulga Seed Country, in the Petermann Ranges. Exactly what happened during Liddle's journey, or how the Anangu that Finlayson encountered at Walara came to be living at Angas Downs, we do not know. But what does seem likely is that the first group of people Liddle established relations with had strong ritual ties, through those *Wati Wintalyka*, to the area around Kikingura in the Petermann Ranges.

According to Finlayson, Liddle spoke fluent Pitjantjatjara in 1932, which would indicate that by the time he returned to Walara to establish his sheep run he already had considerable contact with Anangu. A lone white man and his camels wandering for years over vast distances and through deserts would surely have encountered many Anangu on his travels. He more than likely relied on them to show him the string of water sources that enabled him to make that journey. It is possible that Liddle met with these *Wati Wintalyka* while they were travelling on ceremonial business somewhere around Watarrka, or perhaps while collecting *karku*, and established a relationship with them, most likely structured around the provision of food. He may also have met with *Wati Wintalyka* while in the Petermann Ranges, possibly engaging some of them to hunt dingos on his behalf. T.G.H. Strehlow noted after visiting Liddle in 1937 that Liddle actively encouraged Anangu to come into the homestead for the purpose of bartering dingo scalps. Furthermore, during a visit to Piltati waterhole in the Petermann Ranges the previous year, he encountered two Anangu males and one woman who had 'arrived with camels in order to collect dingo scalps for Liddle from the natives living in the Western Petermanns'.<sup>126</sup> Strehlow's observations confirm that the exchange of dingo scalps and food was well established between Liddle and Anangu from the Petermann Ranges by the mid-1930s.

The tracks people traced across vast distances in the desert were anything but 'helpless' or 'passive drift'. Despite ideas that were circulating at the time that contributed to claims that drought was driving Anangu out of the desert toward mission settlements and pastoral stations, and bolstered arguments for the need to 'buffer' Anangu from the perceived racial and cultural decline that would result from these encounters, Anangu oral histories illuminate the interplay between agency and opportunism. Furthermore, they shed light on the circumstances of a changing world that were imposed and were beyond their control. As Rowse has argued, it is not at all surprising that desert people would grasp the opportunity to get good food by little effort from far away places, doing so 'with no sense

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<sup>126</sup> T.G.H. Strehlow, Letter, 30 April 1937, NAA F3 32/1 Patrol Officer Strehlow General 1936-1941.



of disaffiliation from their homelands'.<sup>127</sup> Access to new foods and resource bases began to change Anangu itineraries. Anangu memories of this period demonstrate that their engagement with these places was characterised by strategic economic and socio-culturally motivated movements between mission settlements, pastoral stations and 'the bush'.



**Image 11** – ‘*Happily we combined our camps and we settled in there to live with them*’. Walara, 2012. Source: Photograph by author

Tjuki Pumpjack says that when he and his family arrived at Walara:

*Happily, we combined our camps and we settled in to live there with them, and that is where I grew up.*<sup>128</sup>

At Walara, Tjuki and his family and the extended network of *walytja* began to translate existing socio economic relationships into the new context in which they found themselves. Anthropologist Diane Austin-Broos observed in relation to the Arrernte people in Central Australia that an important part of making camp was the spatialisation of

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<sup>127</sup>Rowse, “Aborigines as Historical Actors,” 184.

<sup>128</sup>Tjuki Tjukanku Pumpjack, 20 September 2012.

social relations in a particular place.<sup>129</sup> Although they could not have anticipated the impact of the process at the time, Angas Downs began to reorganise (not replace) the temporal and spatial dimensions of Anangu relationships to place, thus beginning a process of accommodation and spatial reorientation throughout the twentieth century that the following chapters map.

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<sup>129</sup> Diane Austin-Broos, “‘Working for’ and ‘Working’ among Western Arrernte in Central Australia,” *Oceania* 76, no. 1 (March 2006): 6.

## CHAPTER TWO

## WALARA: ISOLATION, ACCOMMODATION AND THE RHYTHM OF DESERT PASTORALISM

Narratives of Anangu ‘coming in’ from the desert have in time become entangled with ‘founding’ myths of pastoralists ‘going out’ into unknown lands. The 1930s witnessed significant pastoral expansion into the ‘marginal’ arid lands that lay to the south of Alice Springs and west of the Overland Telegraph Line. The few white men (and even fewer white women) who ventured into this region to establish new lives for themselves became a presence in the landscape around which Anangu began to coalesce and move between. These were sites of new and curious resources to be explored and exploited. As Anangu began to incorporate new people and places into existing itineraries, a regional system began to emerge in the southwest that developed along both socio-cultural and ecological lines.

Deserts were difficult for most whitefellas to travel through and although tracks carved into the ground by camel drays and carts had marked the landscape of the interior, roads linking these marginal pastoral enterprises with ‘town’ did not yet exist. Administrative patrols were intermittent at best and thus the station’s ‘early days’ at Walara took shape in relative isolation, necessitating the formation of networks among the stations and bringing whitefellas and Anangu into close and complex relationships with one another. What developed was a process of accommodation that has characterised the colonial encounter in various times and places in Australia. Bill Liddle came to rely upon Anangu for their intimate knowledge of the land, and for their labour. In return for knowledge, labour and intimacy he provided rations of food and clothing, which were distributed among all who camped at Walara, complementing the subsistence way of life carried out in the continued alternating desert rhythm of *nyinanyi* (camping) and *ananyi* (travelling). Thus Walara came to fulfil a structural role in the emergent regional economy.

The nature of this relationship of exchange between white pastoralists and Aboriginal workers has been the focus of much of the scholarship on the pastoral industry in Australia. Spanning more than a century of Australian pastoralism from the mid-nineteenth century, covering the continent from New South Wales to the Pilbara and Arnhem Land in

the north, and emerging from a range of academic disciplines such as history, economics, anthropology, political science and archaeology, the work of Frank Stevens, Ann McGrath, Ronald and Catherine Berndt, Tim Rowse, Deborah Bird Rose, Heather Goodall, Gillian Cowlshaw, Mary Anne Jebb, Alistair Paterson and Rodney Harrison, among others, has grappled with the complexities involved in analysing histories of cross cultural encounter and the different ways in which colonial relationships on stations have been experienced, remembered and understood.<sup>1</sup> The shapes that pastoralism in Australia has taken have varied significantly across time and place. While there are resonances and themes that emerge within the scholarship, there are also significant divergences.

The process of accommodation that occurred between pastoralists and Aboriginal people has been described in similar ways and yet given different names: 'intelligent parasitism', 'internal colonialism', 'dual economy' and 'dual occupation' are some of the terms given to the general process of adaptation that took place. However, while there were common changes that Aboriginal people were compelled to make as a result of the colonial encounter, the nature of these encounters were also subject to and influenced by human vicissitudes. Mediated as they were through the pastoralist, missionary or official who became the point of contact, the ways in which pastoral relationships developed were idiosyncratic and dependent upon the attitudes, strengths and weaknesses of individual people. Furthermore, this process of accommodation was not only determined by relationships between people, but also shaped by the particular environments in which they were located.

Aged approximately 85 years when I first met him, Tjuki Pumpjack's memories of Walara stretched back further in time than anyone still living with a connection to the place. Tjuki refers to Walara as the 'early days' of the station, a period spanning from the 1930s through until the end of WWII. But it is not dates that dominate the narratives he tells. In excess of fifty different named places feature in his oral histories, punctuating his memories and orienting this historical period in the desert world in which it took place. Sites of water, working and camping anchor his narratives in the physical environment, structuring the remembered encounter with pastoralism according to pre-existing oral traditions and ways of moving through the world. Recorded in the Pitjantjatjara language, his historical

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<sup>1</sup> Ronald M. Berndt and Catherine H. Berndt, *End of an Era: Aboriginal Labour in the Northern Territory* (Canberra: Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies, 1987); Bird Rose, *Hidden Histories*; Cowlshaw, *Rednecks, Eggheads and Blackfellas*; Harrison, *Shared Landscapes*; Goodall, *Invasion to Embassy*; Jebb, *Blood, Sweat and Welfare*; McGrath, *Born in the Cattle*; Paterson, *Lost Legions*; Rowse, *White Flour, White Power*; Stevens, *Aborigines in the Northern Territory Cattle Industry*.

remembrances also illuminate the conceptual framework within which he sought to make sense of the changes, both general and particular, that resulted from colonialism.

This chapter draws on the oral histories of Tjuki Pumpjack, the oral histories and unpublished memoirs of white pastoralists, and the few letters, diaries and patrol reports that were written at the time, to examine the economic interdependence and social entanglements that developed during this foundational period of place and relationship-making. The spatial knowledge and socio-cultural concepts encoded in Tjuki's memories combine with the other sources to reveal the ways in which the desert ecology shaped the pastoral enterprise in the arid southwest of the Northern Territory, revealing a history of pastoralism quite different from that evoked in pastoral mythology of the north.

Furthermore, they shed light on, as Heather Goodall has described it, the ways in which the 'changes caused by colonial economies and technologies intersected with indigenous peoples' continued interactions with their environments'.<sup>2</sup> These same sources also point towards the ways in which Anangu and pastoralists were being transformed through their relationship to one another in this particular place. Drawing attention toward the mutual production of people and place, this chapter seeks to demonstrate that the implications of colonialism were not only 'one way', arguing that pastoralists too were being changed and shaped by the their encounters with Anangu in the desert.

Yet, as Tjuki's oral histories also indicate, the important relationships in this context were not only human and environmental. Focusing upon the Anangu concept of *kanyini*, as articulated in Tjuki's accounts of shepherding, this chapter seeks to analyse the pastoral relationship from an Anangu perspective. Through this socio-cultural prism it illuminates the limitations of viewing the exchange of labour and food as straightforward 'reciprocity'. Furthermore, the non-human centred perspective of Tjuki's memories of shepherding draws sheep into the analysis and emphasises animals as social actors that are equally entangled in relationships of exchange.

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<sup>2</sup> Goodall, "Riding the Tide," 365.

## FOUNDING MOMENTS

The ‘outback’ is a powerful symbol in Australian national identity. Yet what, and where, it is exactly is not easy to define.<sup>3</sup> Symbols are often slippery like that. Popular ideas of the ‘outback’ refuse specificity in both time and place, reflecting what anthropologist Deborah Bird Rose calls a colonising conceptual domain that ‘signals time, space and history in their most contentious as well as most formative and vital moments’.<sup>4</sup> Evoking a sense of historian Pierre Nora’s ‘sites of memory’ as social and cultural constructions that provide ‘a maximum amount of meaning in a minimum number of signs’ (*‘Un maximum de sens dans le minimum de signes’*),<sup>5</sup> Bird Rose argues that the ‘outback’ is crucial to the cultural identity of many Australians and that the ‘social and cultural coordinates’ of this place ‘are likely to be far more explicit than the time-space coordinates’.<sup>6</sup> According to Bird Rose, it is this lack of specificity that makes the outback so powerful as a ‘formative and transformative site’ in Australian social memory.<sup>7</sup>

The story of the arrival of pastoralists in the Northern Territory is one of pioneer men ‘opening up’ the outback. Deeply embedded in Russell Ward’s notion of the ‘Australian legend’, narratives of pioneering feats in the interior have been articulated in the familiar terms of the ‘nomadic tribe’ of the pastoral industry.<sup>8</sup> The names of the white men who are remembered for ‘opening up’ Central Australia are circulated in masculine myths of discovery, sacrifice and fortitude. The stories that surround men such as Bill Liddle, Abe Andrew, Snowy Pearce, Bob Buck, Bryan Bowman and Paddy De Conlay have been passed down through descendants, and people who knew them, and reproduced in the widely read writings of travellers such as H.H. Finlayson, Arthur Groom and Bill Harney.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Nicholas Gill, “Life and Death in Australian ‘Heartlands’: Pastoralism, Ecology and Rethinking the Outback,” *Journal of Rural Studies* 21, no. 1 (January 2005): 39–53. Gill noted that 2002 was declared the ‘Year of the Outback’, which organisers defined as having a ‘quintessential spirit’ and a ‘unifying theme’ for the Australian nation.

<sup>4</sup> Deborah Bird Rose, “Australia Felix Rules OK!,” in *Race Matters*, ed. Gillian Cowlishaw and Barry Morris (Canberra: Aboriginal Studies Press, 1997), 121.

<sup>5</sup> Nora quoted in Ann Rigney, “Plenitude, Scarcity and the Circulation of Cultural Memory,” *Journal of European Studies* 35, no. 1 (2005): 18. See also Pierre Nora, ed., *Les Lieux de Mémoire*, 7 vols. (Paris: Gallimard, 1984).

<sup>6</sup> Bird Rose, “Australia Felix Rules OK!,” 122.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid. See also Nora, ed., *Les Lieux de Mémoire*. For a discussion of Nora’s ‘places of memory’ as critically detached from the past, see Peter Carrier, “Places, Politics and the Archiving of Contemporary Memory,” in *Memory and Methodology*, ed. Susannah Radstone (Oxford/New York: Berg, 2000), 39–44.

<sup>8</sup> Russell Ward, *The Australian Legend* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1958), 10.

<sup>9</sup> Finlayson, *The Red Centre*; Groom, *I Saw a Strange Land*; W. E. Harney, *To Ayers Rock and Beyond* (Adelaide: Rigby, 1969).

A 1948 *Walkabout* magazine article called ‘People of the Centre: Man and Environment in Central Australia’ captures this well. The article noted that the ‘westward frontier’ was maintained by a number of these men:

Farthest west are the Andrew family of Curtin Springs, north-west of Mt Connor and about 40 miles from Ayers Rock. It was heartening to see this family of three generations standing to the task in a land where house blacks often outnumber the whites...[and] Angas Downs impressed itself upon us through a great character W.H (Bill) Liddle...He is the first white man to have been seen by 500 or 600 blacks, and knows the country right out to the west into the sand ridge desert...Already his own name appears on official maps in the Liddle Hills, north of the Basedow Range.<sup>10</sup>

Founded in 1934, *Walkabout* magazine was integral to what Glen Ross refers to as the ‘narration of the nation’.<sup>11</sup> Charged with the ideological work of representing the cultural and racial homogeneity necessary for the nascent Australian nation to develop a sense of itself as an ‘imagined community’, *Walkabout* drew heavily upon familiar frontier tropes.<sup>12</sup>

The land, more stubbornly resistant than elsewhere to man’s control, yet takes to itself, by a natural selection which it has always applied to its black inhabitants, those who will not take No for an answer; only those with full measure of intestinal fortitude...can be chosen to be part of the Centre.<sup>13</sup>

*Walkabout* had a particular fascination with the imagined temporality of the interior and it has been noted that representations often relied upon primitivist discourses that rendered Aboriginal people as remnants of an earlier period of human history, the biological and cultural demise of which was understood as inevitable in the encounter with civilisation.<sup>14</sup> Ross argues that this was an act of ‘ideological erasure’ of Aboriginal people that allowed

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<sup>10</sup> Bertram Keith, “People of the Centre: Man and Environment in the Northern Territory,” *Walkabout*, September 1948.

<sup>11</sup> Glen Ross, “The Fantastic Face of the Continent: The Australian Geographical *Walkabout* Magazine,” *Southern Review: Communication, Politics & Culture* 32, no. 1 (1999): 28. See also Mitchell Rolls and Anna Johnson, *Travelling Home, “Walkabout Magazine” and Mid-Twentieth Century Australia* (London: Anthem Press, 2016).

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 27-8.

<sup>13</sup> Keith, “People of the Centre,” 33.

<sup>14</sup> Ross, “The Fantastic Face of the Continent,” 28–29. See also M.E. McGuire, “Whiteman’s *Walkabout*,” *Meanjin* 52, no. 3 (1993): 517–25; Lynette Russell, *Savage Imaginings: Historical and Contemporary Constructions of Australian Aboriginalities* (Melbourne: Scholarly Publishing, 2001), 23.

for representations of white men as agents of progress.<sup>15</sup> However, as historian Mitchell Rolls has observed, although Aboriginal people were ‘by and large displaced’ in the magazine, as the quote above propagates, in the image of a ‘land where house blacks often outnumber the whites’, *they were there*, both in the pages and the place, and ‘therein lies the rub’.<sup>16</sup>

In his classic study, Nora argued that there are sites of memory, or *lieux de mémoire*, because there are no longer *milieu de mémoire*, real environments of memory.<sup>17</sup> According to Nora, these cultural constructions have emerged as the result of a ‘fundamental collapse in memory’ brought about by the movement toward ‘democratisation and mass culture on a global scale’.<sup>18</sup> However, as Jay Winter has highlighted this argument ‘betrays an ingrained Eurocentrism’, noting that real environments of memory are ‘alive and well, and so are oral and written traditions of remembrance that inform them’.<sup>19</sup> Anangu, some of who would have been the ‘house blacks’ in the *Walkabout* article discussed above, also tell stories of these same ‘founding moments’ in Central Australia. Tjuki Pumpjack often told the story of how Abe Andrew and ‘Old Bill’ Liddle travelled together from Alice Springs to ‘look for country’:

*Well, it was when they started from Alice Springs and were coming out this way. Abe Andrew and Old Bill Liddle. Those two men came out here to see the country and find out what the country was like. They were both looking for a place to set up home, after leaving Alice Springs. Anyway they came out here by way of Watarrka. Andrew saw the land and got excited. “Hey, this is great country. I might settle down right here.” Abe Andrew was with his old wife, that old white woman. So they established their first place at Irawa waterhole, which is one mile from Ulanga.<sup>20</sup>*

It was some time around 1934, five or six years after Liddle returned to Walara to establish Angas Downs, that Abe Andrew set out from Port Lincoln in South Australia with his wife Bertha, their daughter Maisie Parker (formerly Arbon) and Maisie’s children, Gladys and

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<sup>15</sup> Ross, “The Fantastic Face of the Continent,” 29.

<sup>16</sup> Mitchell Rolls, “Picture Imperfect: Re-Reading Imagery of Aborigines in *Walkabout*,” *Journal of Australian Studies* 33, no. 1 (March 1, 2009): 23.

<sup>17</sup> Pierre Nora, “Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Mémoire,” *Representations* 26 (Spring 1989): 7–24.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 7.

<sup>19</sup> Jay Winter, “Sites of Memory,” in *Memory: Histories, Theories, Debates*, ed. Susannah Radstone and Bill Schwarz (New York: Fordham University Press, 2010), 315.

<sup>20</sup> Tjuki Tjukanku Pumpjack, 26th October 2012. Sandra Armstrong’s oral history also includes a story of how Bill Liddle came to be at Angas Downs. See oral history recorded and translated by Linda Rive, 18 August 2009, Alice Springs, AI-0108943.



Ray Arbon.<sup>21</sup> Abe Andrew's son Merv recalls that his father became 'bent' on going to a little well called Ulanga after hearing about it while camped at Port Augusta.<sup>22</sup> While Merv does not elaborate on who it was who told his father about Ulanga, Abe's grandson Ray Arbon noted in his recollection of that journey that his grandfather would always go and speak to 'the head man' at Aboriginal camps to find out about game, water and type of country ahead and that his grandmother always had damper, brownies or soda bread to give to the Aboriginal children.<sup>23</sup>

Knowledge of the limited water sources in the arid Central Australian environment was crucial, and as geographer Nicholas Gill has argued, many pastoralists were often dependent upon local Aboriginal people for this knowledge.<sup>24</sup> However, whereas Gill writes that this exchange of knowledge is not generally evident in pastoral histories, in the Andrew family memoirs and oral histories these exchanges are numerous and explicit.<sup>25</sup> Local history and memory performs a particular function, and as the work of historians such as Tom Griffiths, Chris Healy, Mark McKenna and Maria Nugent has demonstrated, the way in which places, and their Aboriginal inhabitants, are remembered, and forgotten, plays an important role in the process by which whitefellas established a sense of their own *place* in the land.<sup>26</sup> Healy observed that 'local dynamics mattered', not just in terms of how the past was experienced, but also in the formation of social memory.<sup>27</sup> In this sense, it is possible to read the Andrew family memoirs, and the encounters and exchanges with

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<sup>21</sup> Eric Jamieson and Heather Harvey, *Red Sand in Our Shoes: The Andrew Family* (Eric Jamieson, 2001), 3–4.

<sup>22</sup> Merv Andrew, interviewed by Paul France, 16 August 1983, Alice Springs, NTAS Northern Territory Oral History Unit, TS150.

<sup>23</sup> Ray Arbon quoted in Jamieson and Harvey, *Red Sand in Our Shoes*, 18.

<sup>24</sup> Nicholas Gill, "Transcending Nostalgia", 75.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.* In both *Red Sand in Their Shoes* and Merv Andrew's oral history there are numerous references to incidents involving the acquiring of knowledge from Anangu. Merv explains in significant detail his methods of map-making that he used with Anangu to learn the whereabouts of various water sources. The Andrew family 'discovery' of water at Tjulu, the place they called Curtin Springs, is not only a significant story in both *Red Sand in Their Shoes* and Merv's oral history, but is also recounted in Anangu oral histories. The whereabouts of Tjulu had become somewhat fabled amongst white doggers and pastoralists and Anangu were renowned for refusing to give up its location. It was only because Abe's grandson Ray had learnt to speak language and overheard Anangu talking about its location that they managed to find the sacred water source and shift their pastoral run to that location. See Gladys Baker in Jamieson and Harvey, *Red Sand in Our Shoes*, 49–50.

<sup>26</sup> Tom Griffiths, *Hunters and Collectors: The Antiquarian Imagination in Australia* (Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 1996); Chris Healy, *From the Ruins of Colonialism: History as Social Memory* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997); Mark McKenna, *Looking for Blackfellas' Point: An Australian History Of Place* (Sydney: UNSW Press, 2002); Maria Nugent, *Botany Bay: Where Histories Meet* (Crows Nest, N.S.W: Allen & Unwin, 2005).

<sup>27</sup> Chris Healy, *Forgetting Aborigines* (Sydney: University of New South Wales Press, 2008), 13–14.

Anangu that they recall, as an effort to link their origins in the landscape with local knowledge and legitimate their presence there.

Tjuki said that the world of Anangu began to change when sheep began to walk on the land and that this marked the time that he began to ‘learn the new way’.<sup>28</sup> However, Tjuki also said that Anangu knew the country — they knew where the water was and because of this they could go everywhere. But whitefellas, they would just go anywhere.<sup>29</sup> Emphasising that they did not *know*, he said that when whitefellas found water they did not think about the *wanampi*, the water snakes that are the most powerful and revered of all the ancestral beings who came out of the sky and struck the earth, creating the water sources that are their home and which sustain all life on earth. Rather, the whitefellas only thought about the location of the water:

*Only like ‘em water, white man. He want ‘em water. “Oh got ‘em plenty water here! I might put a station here, somewhere here!” That what he think about, whitefella.*<sup>30</sup>

Upon locating Ulanga, and the nearby Irawa waterhole, the Andrew family decided to stay and make a life for themselves on ‘an awkward tract of land jammed between Tempe Downs and Angas Downs’ stations that they called Andaloo.<sup>31</sup>

*‘We used to live almost invisible to the rest of the world’*<sup>32</sup>

Deserts were difficult for whitefellas to travel, which meant that the pastoral settlements in this region were challenging to reach. In a letter dated June 11th 1936, some seven years after establishing his sheep run at Walara, Bill Liddle wrote to the Lands Department stating that he:

[W]ould very much like to have some one visit...on behalf of the Board so they would know what I am doing here. I have been on this block since June 1929 and have had no one here to see if I am on the right place.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> Tjuki Tjukanku Pumpjack, 26th October 2012.

<sup>29</sup> Tjuki Tjukanku Pumpjack, oral history recorded by author, translated and transcribed by Linda Rive, 13th March 2013, Wilpiya, Angas Downs, Northern Territory.

<sup>30</sup> Tjuki Tjukanku Pumpjack, oral history recorded by author and translated and transcribed by Linda Rive, 4th October 2013, Ulanga Well, Angas Downs. Tjuki spoke in a blend of Pitjantjatjara and English on this occasion. Tjuki’s English is retained as it was spoken and the translation incorporated for the Pitjantjatjara parts of the conversation. For discussion of water and *wanampi* see Robert Layton, *Uluru*, 25–8.

<sup>31</sup> Jamieson and Harvey, *Red Sand in Our Shoes*, 6.

<sup>32</sup> Tjuki Tjukanku Pumpjack, 26 October 2012.

A chief surveyor Shepherd, from the Lands and Survey Branch, noted in a response to Liddle's request that he was located in unsurveyed country and that there was no fixed survey point anywhere near his boundaries. He observed that Liddle's block was an 'isolated one' that was 'entirely surrounded by vacant country',<sup>34</sup> and as a result there was no likelihood of it being surveyed for considerable time. There were no roads leading to Angas Downs or Andaloo. In a 1938 report on one of his patrols of the southwestern station area, T.G.H. Strehlow documented in detail the difficulties encountered by himself and Constable McKinnon in trying to reach Andaloo and Angas Downs by vehicle. Rough tracks that provided passage for camel wagons or a tip-dray were not kind to motorcars. When they could find a 'road' to attempt to drive along, Strehlow and McKinnon's vehicle was bogged continuously and received considerable knocks from the steep gutters either side of the narrow tracks. Upon entering sandhill country, Strehlow observed that the road to Andaloo was well marked, but rough and heavy going. When they finally arrived, the camp was deserted, as it had been for months according to Strehlow.

Rain had washed away all of the traces of the recent tracks to the new homestead. Remembering that Andrew had a soak to the south, Strehlow decided to follow an old wagon road, never travelled by car, that led south into heavy sandhill country. However, the sand was heavy and the track kept splitting into countless indeterminate trails. Upon encountering a huge sandhill that obstructed their passage, Strehlow and McKinnon climbed it and saw that on the other side the trail split into various sections. At this point they realised the futility of trying to find Andaloo without a guide:

It was sunset, and our fruitless trekking in this heavy going was burning up petrol by the gallon. We abandoned the quest, and turned around, glad to leave the eerie silence of the desert oak glades. The car slithered back gratefully over countless unburnt tufts of tall spinifex, and thousands of desert oak needles, beneath which the red sand gleamed mockingly at us - as though the unconquered sandhill desert was frowning upon our poor efforts to conquer it by car.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> W.H. Liddle to Deputy Administrator, NTAS NTRS 246 P/2 - PL 584, Pastoral Lease Files 1914-94.

<sup>34</sup> Chief Clerk, Lands and Surveys Branch, 22 September 1936, in NTAS NTRS 246 P/2 - PL 584.

<sup>35</sup> T.G.H. Strehlow, Report on trip to Southwestern Station area, 8th December 1938, NAA F3 32/3 Patrol Officer Strehlow Monthly Reports 1938-1942.

The next morning, accompanied by Abe Andrew himself, they travelled back to the old camp and again turned into the sandhills to the south, this time leaving the well-marked wagon tracks they had pursued the day before for a faint track that Strehlow had disregarded because of its disused appearance. After travelling for six and a half miles over heavy sandhills they arrived at a gypsum flat, fringed with desert oaks where there was a well, a small new yard and 'rude bough shed'.<sup>36</sup> Strehlow reported that they spent the day with Andrew, his wife Bertha and their grandchildren Ray and Gladys, all of whom were 'extremely pleased to have some visitors' given that no one ever strayed out into such 'wilderness'.<sup>37</sup> Bertha Andrew and her daughter Maisie Parker were the only white women in the entire southwest region in the 1930s. When Abe and Bertha's other daughter Gladys joined the rest of family at Andaloo in the early 1940s, she recalled that her mother had not seen another white woman for nine years.<sup>38</sup>

Despite their elevation in the outback imaginary as embodiments of masculine dominance over the desert, these pastoralists can just as easily be characterised as isolated, outnumbered and anxious. Liddle's neighbour and friend Snowy Pearce owned Lyndavale station, which was located at Maratjura waterhole on the edge of Erldunda station. Pearce contacted the police in Alice Springs, and patrol officer Strehlow, on several occasions between 1937-39 to complain about 'bush natives' trespassing on his station. In March 1937 Pearce reported that there were approximately 200 people from the Petermann Ranges who had turned up at his station 'travelling through his sheep in all directions', stating matter-of-factly: 'I want them removed off my country'.<sup>39</sup> At around the same time, Bill Liddle wrote to the police in Alice Springs asking if the group of people who had turned up at his station could be 'shifted from my country'.<sup>40</sup> Like Pearce, Liddle complained that the group of approximately sixty were guilty of wandering through his

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<sup>36</sup> Architectural historian Cathy Keys' research has shown how in Central Australia growing numbers of whitefellas lived in 'bough shades'. Drawing upon oral histories and published journals of travellers, Keys demonstrates a 'transfer' of 'architectural practice' between Walpiri and whitefellas in the 1930s. Keys argues that this form of shelter provides a case study for the 'cross-fertilisation' of ideas and materials between whitefellas and Anangu during the early contact period. See Cathy Keys, "Skin Fabric Iron Shade," *Proceedings of the Society of Architectural Historians, Australia and New Zealand* 31 (2014): 133–43.

<sup>37</sup> T.G.H. Strehlow, Report on trip to Southwestern Station area, NAA F3 32/3.

<sup>38</sup> Gladys Baker in Jamieson and Harvey, *Red Sand in Our Shoes*, 45.

<sup>39</sup> Snowy Pearce quoted in Constable A.P. Lynch to Constable Muldoon, 15th April 1937, NAA F3 32/1.

<sup>40</sup> W.H. Liddle to Constable Muldoon, 15 April 1937, NAA F3 32/1.

sheep. He also reported not being able to get any sleep at night due to ‘brawls among them and corroborees’.<sup>41</sup>

Pearce and Liddle’s letters are illuminating. They reveal that their perceptions of Anangu at the time were structured in the binary opposition between the ‘myall’ or ‘wild bush natives’, and their ‘boys’ or ‘station blacks’. Pearce clearly saw a difference between the ‘bush natives’ trespassing on his country and those over whom he claimed ownership, referring to them to as *his* ‘natives’. Similarly, Liddle’s letter declared that he would not mind if it were *their* country, but objected on the grounds that the ‘trespassers’ were predominantly from the Mann and Western Petermann Ranges. Liddle made no mention of the Anangu who were living with him at the time, including the fact that they too were from the Petermann Ranges. Historian Mary Anne Jebb observed about the long pastoral relationship in the Pilbara, which spanned a century from 1860, that pastoralists saw themselves as owning ‘their’ Aboriginal people and that station managers employed a system of rewards and punishments to encourage the transition from ‘bush niggers’ to station ‘boys’ and ‘gins’.<sup>42</sup> Inherited from a colonial ideology that created the mutually constitutive representations of the ‘civilising’ coloniser and the ‘wild’ colonised, as anthropologist Michael Taussig has illustrated, these distinctions were thoroughly entangled with colonists’ claims to country and often invoked in order to legitimise the contradictions of colonial violence.<sup>43</sup> The work of anthropologists Howard Morphy and Gillian Cowlishaw has demonstrated how this ideological construction of ‘wild blacks’ and ‘station blacks’ has operated in the context of remote northern frontiers and been internalised and remembered by Aboriginal people themselves.<sup>44</sup>

In an oral history recorded for the Central Land Council book *Every Hill Got a Story*, Tjuki Pumpjack, in a remembrance of frontier violence, makes a distinction between ‘naked’ people who ‘didn’t know’ and those who today are ‘almost whitefellas’:

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<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

<sup>42</sup> Mary Anne Jebb, “Pastoral Paternalism in the Pilbara,” in *Marlbatharndu Wanggagu: Once Upon a Time in West* (Perth, WA: FORM, 2014), 145. See also Mary Anne Jebb, *Blood, Sweat and Welfare*, 178–88.

<sup>43</sup> Michael T. Taussig, *Shamanism, Colonialism, and the Wild Man: A Study in Terror and Healing* (Chicago: University Of Chicago Press, 1986).

<sup>44</sup> Cowlishaw, *Rednecks, Eggheads and Blackfellas*, 53–56; Howard Morphy and Frances Morphy, “The ‘Myths’ of Ngalakan History: Ideology and Images of the Past in Northern Australia,” *Man* 19, no. 3 (September 1, 1984): 459–78.

*Out in the middle there, over on Angas Downs, in the middle, this side of Wilpiya, naked Anangu showed up at an old waterhole. You know, they didn't know about trousers, don't know clothes. Those naked Anangu they came from the west, came along when there were rations. They started getting rations, clothing, everything. Nowadays they're a bit flash, almost whitefellas. Yes, they sat and ate, naked. They speared a lot of cattle, they didn't understand properly. You know, they were spearing cattle, those naked men, long ago. And McNamara shot them. Pow! Pow! Long ago this side of Areyonga.*

*Today they say he shot many. It happened a long time ago.*<sup>45</sup>

William McNamara established a cattle run in the 1920s at a place called Bowson's Hole, near Tempe Downs, the place where Liddle built the stone hut for McNamara that Anangu refer to as 'Old Station'.<sup>46</sup> It is reported that around the same time as the Coniston Massacre in 1928, he shot somewhere between six and twenty-five people following the spearing of one his milking cows.<sup>47</sup> Anangu know the incident as the 'Old Station killings'.<sup>48</sup> Tjuki said that this 'happened a long time ago' because 'they didn't understand properly', rendering the violent encounter, as Cowlshaw described it in Rembarrnga memory, as a 'mark of ignorance'.<sup>49</sup> Taussig says that ideas and imaginings, as well as the fact, of violence, were a 'potent and political force without which the work of conquest ... could not have been accomplished'.<sup>50</sup> All frontiers in the colonial encounter have to varying

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<sup>45</sup> Tjuki Tjukanku Pumpjack, 'They didn't understand properly' in Marg Bowman, ed., *Every Hill Got a Story*, 89.

<sup>46</sup> See chapter one, 39.

<sup>47</sup> 'They didn't understand properly' in Marg Bowman, ed., *Every Hill Got a Story*, 89.

<sup>48</sup> Jim Downing, *Ngurra Walytja*, 7-9. Downing noted that he had heard this story several times over the years spent working with Anangu and that during a recorded conversation with historian Dick Kimber, he estimated that twelve men were shot during the incident, which he based upon questions asked of a number of informants over a long period. 'Old Station' appears in the 1969 ethnographic film *Camels and the Pitjantjatjara*, which follows a group of Anangu men from Areyonga as they make their way through Tempe Gap on a trip to find wild camels to break in. The group stop at 'Old Station' to camp for the night and the film's narrator notes that 'Old Station' was owned by McNamara and that even though it was raining, the men refused to go near, or stay in the stone hut. The film's narrator posits that this was probably because McNamara, who Anangu commonly refer to as Micky Mara, had passed away. The film makes no mention of the 'Old Station killings', and whether or not Anangu told the filmmakers about it, it is highly probable that this is the reason why they avoided the hut. Downing notes that he travelled to 'Old Station' with Anangu from Areyonga and that they sat with their backs to the stone building, while they recorded oral histories. I return to the film and discuss it in a different context and greater detail in chapter four.

<sup>49</sup> Cowlshaw, *Rednecks, Eggheads and Blackfellas*, 55. In oral histories that we recorded, Tjuki often associated not knowing with the term *myall*. During a remembrance of shepherding sheep and not being paid any money he said that at the time Anangu did not know about money, saying '*Uwa. Myall tjuta! Warkarippai, money wiya*' which translates as 'We were all myall! We all worked for no money', the inference being that they were 'myall' because they did not know about money. Tjuki Tjukanku Pumpjack, 4 October 2013.

<sup>50</sup> Taussig, *Shamanism, Colonialism, and the Wild Man*, 121.

degrees relied upon the creation of landscapes of fear, or what Taussig refers to as a ‘culture of terror’.<sup>51</sup> The story of McNamara’s shooting Anangu in retaliation for spearing his cattle was one probably passed on as a warning and important lesson in ‘learning the new way’.

This story is one of only three references to violence that appear in the entire body of oral histories recorded with Tjuki Pumpjack. Speaking of the time before he and his family arrived at Walara he said ‘people used to kill others for nothing back then’.<sup>52</sup> However, stories of violent encounters are not characteristic of the oral histories that we recorded together. By the 1930s and 40s when station bores and windmills punctuated the marginal pastoral country of the arid southwest, the ‘guerrilla warfare’ that had characterised the 1880s and 1890s had largely abated.<sup>53</sup> Oral histories from this period of pastoral settlement differ significantly from memories of earlier experiences of violent encounters as a result of the development of the pastoral industry between 1880 and 1930, particularly further north.<sup>54</sup>

Isolation necessitated the formation of networks among the stations and brought whitefellas and Anangu into complex relationships with one another. As the letters from Pearce and Liddle demonstrate, some of these relationships were close, while others were distant. Claiming ownership of not just the land, but also the Anangu who lived with and worked for them, was perhaps a way to establish some sense of security and familiarity in an environment that offered little. Despite finding good country and water, and claiming it as their land, the arrival of large numbers of desert people moving and looking for food,

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<sup>51</sup> Ibid. Jebb observed in the Pilbara ‘force and potential violence influenced relationships of interdependence, exchange and accommodation’. See Jebb, “Pastoral Paternalism in the Pilbara,” 146–47.

<sup>52</sup> Tjuki Tjukanku Pumpjack, 26 October 2012. The only other oral history that we recorded together that spoke of violence between Anangu and whitefellas was story of the McKinnon Inquiry and the shooting at Uluru in 1934. Although he recounted this incident in some detail, Tjuki made a point of saying that this was not an event that he witnessed himself and rather it was a story that had been passed down to him.

<sup>53</sup> Hartwig, “The Progress of White Settlement in the Alice Springs District,” 404–06. Historian Dick Kimber estimates that during what he refers to as ‘The Bad Old Days’, spanning from 1870 to approximately 1891, 500 and ‘quite possibly upwards of 1000’ Aboriginal people were shot in Central Australia. R. G. Kimber, “The End of the Bad Old Days: European Settlement in Central Australia, 1871–1894” (State Library Northern Territory, 1991), 16.

<sup>54</sup> Baker, *Land Is Life*; Bird Rose, *Hidden Histories*; Merlan, ““Making People Quiet,”” 70–106; Shaw and McDonald, “They Did It Themselves,” 122–39. This is not to suggest that violence has not shaped the experience of encounter after this period. For some people explicit acts of violence, like the Coniston Massacre in 1928, are still within living memory of many and remembered as a great injustice. See ‘Killing Times’ in Bowman, *Every Hill Got a Story*, 87–94; David Batty and Francis Jupurrula Kelly, *Coniston* (PAW Media and Rebel Films, 2013).

water and family must have been unsettling. A constant reminder that no matter what they considered their rights to be, they had taken up residency in someone else's country.

Cowlishaw wrote of the Rembarrnga in Arnhem Land that although whitefellas' 'superior weapons and unarguable physical power created a facade of acceptance of white supremacy', the local people never abandoned their claims 'to superior knowledge of country'.<sup>55</sup> In the arid lands of Central Australia that superior local knowledge of country was not only retained, but necessary to pastoral settlement. The desert ecology, the location of water in particular, imposed itself on pastoralism in a way that ensured that white pastoralists and their enterprises would become dependent upon Anangu knowledge and labour. Records and memories of the relationships that developed illuminate an emergent process of accommodation between Anangu and whitefellas, shaped by the desert, and characterised by closeness and interdependence.

## FOUNDING ENTANGLEMENTS

One of the most memorable oral history recordings I made with Tjuki Pumpjack took place in October 2013, about a year into our relationship. We were at Ulanga, one of the numerous sites that punctuate Tjuki's memories of shepherding. A friend of Tjuki's, a man named Timmy Young, accompanied us and it seemed as though his presence enlivened Tjuki's performance that day. Tjuki relished in the status of expert and as we started recording he turned to his friend and said to him '*this is how I talk Timmy*'. Interpreter Linda Rive noted in the transcript that upon saying this he changed his tone and adopted what she called his 'high pitched storytelling voice'.<sup>56</sup> Timmy interacted with Tjuki constantly throughout: laughing; nodding enthusiastically in agreement; registering shock or surprise; asking questions; and requesting more stories.<sup>57</sup> Linda also noted in the transcript the points where Timmy apparently talked too much, prompting Tjuki to raise his voice and draw out his vowels in an effort to reinforce his authority as the storyteller, and drown Timmy out. At one point Timmy asked Tjuki if he knew about the 'grumpy old *wanampi*' that lives at Ulanga. Tjuki responded by saying '*Uwa. Wanti ka nyinara mirama*', which translates as 'Yes. Just leave it and sit there and speak only if you must'. Timmy did not seem to mind this at all and proceeded to mimic the deep, grumbling sound that the *wanampi* makes. Tjuki then added that the *wanampi* was not only old and grumpy, but he

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<sup>55</sup> Cowlishaw, *Rednecks, Eggheads and Blackfellas*, 56.

<sup>56</sup> Oral history transcript, 4 October 2013.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*



was also blind. He told us that the *wanampi* could smell though, and both Tjuki and Timmy confirmed that he was present at Ulanga that day, listening to us talk and smelling us.<sup>58</sup>



**Image 12 – The well at Ulanga, 2013. The hill in the background is where the old, blind *wanampi* lives.** Source: Photograph by author.

The decaying timber remains of a sheep yard, and an old rusted tank and windmill, are the relics that remain in the landscape from the time to which Tjuki travelled in his memory that day. Sitting in the shade of a giant desert oak, Tjuki told us ‘*that old whitefella [Abe Andrew] used to camp right under this tree here, underneath this desert oak*’. I think that it was the combination of Timmy’s presence, and being in Ulanga, that stimulated the most evocative, exquisitely detailed oral histories we recorded during our time together. The transcripts I draw upon below cannot capture Tjuki’s lively and authoritative tone, the co-produced nature of the recording, or the nuance and fine-detail of a series of memories that Tjuki skilfully wove together over a period of approximately forty-five minutes. Despite this, they are a rich source for reading how Anangu inscribe history in the landscape, and also how this inscriptive practice shows us the ways in which landscape shaped the pastoral enterprise in the desert.

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<sup>58</sup> Ibid.

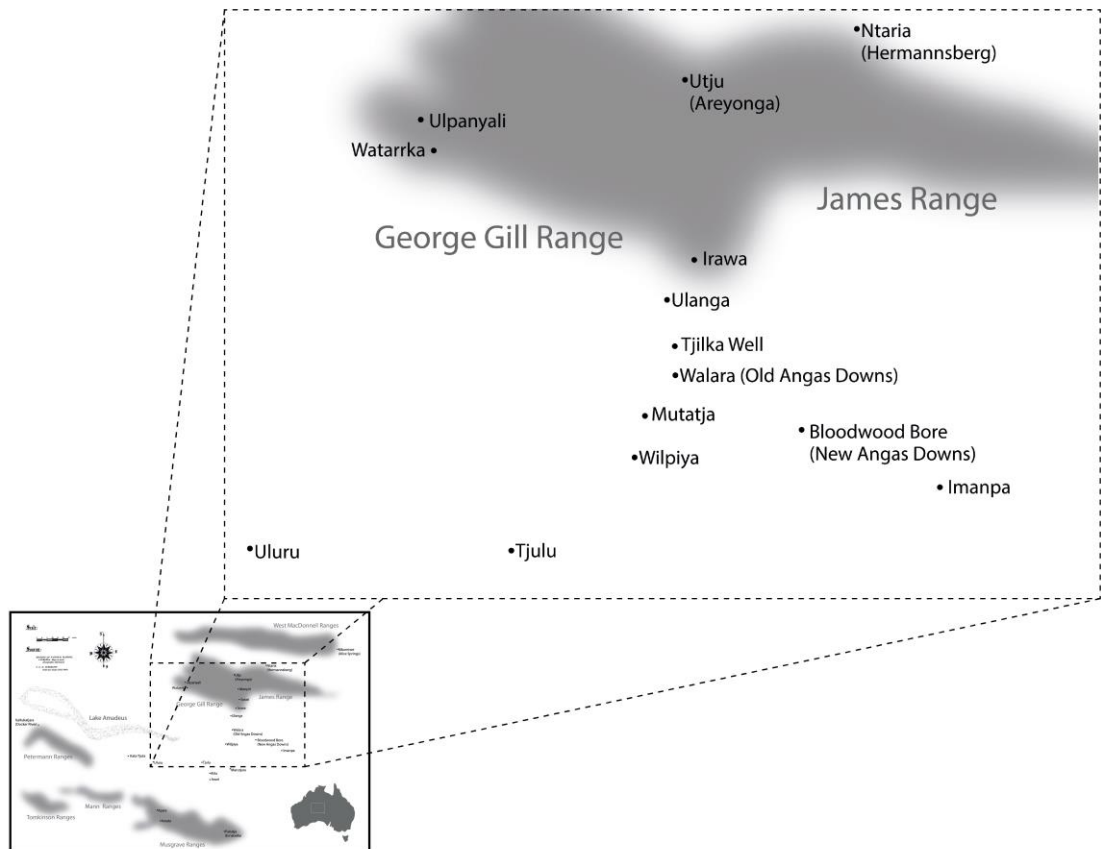
Tjuki Pumpjack's oral history transcripts are lists of points in the landscape that form a network of wells, springs and bores that Anangu moved between as they shepherded sheep. Characterised by the alternating rhythm of *ananyi* (travelling) and *nyinanyi* (sitting down/camping), the names Wilpiya, Irawa, Ulanga and Mutatja appear repeatedly, always followed by a return to Walara (**Map 3**). These named places that punctuate Tjuki's narratives are evoked as sheep camps. That day at Ulanga, Tjuki Pumpjack took us along on the desert shepherd's journey. The spatially anchored form of his memories alert the listener to the patterns that pastoralism took in the arid interior:

*I came here as a child, when I had no beard. No whiskers. We were living at **Walara**. But **Walara** became very dry... So old man Liddle said to us, 'Let's move to where there is green grass. Take the sheep! So we brought all the sheep here [**Ulanga**] from **Walara**. First, we camped at **Tjilka**. Tjilka Well. We camped there, and then we came to **Ulanga**. We arrived at **Ulanga** and we stayed here with all the sheep. It was a really good place with plenty of green feed.... Anyway, those sheep stayed here for quite a while, all around here, until another time, around two weeks later, when we started to shift them again, this time up to **Irawa**. So off we went with the sheep. A bit later we arrived at **Irawa**. And there we stayed... We took the sheep up to the waterhole, and kept them there until the grass gave out again.*

*When the grass was virtually all gone - almost gone - we said, 'Right then! Let's go back again. Let's take the sheep and move back!'. So we moved the sheep and started moving them back towards this way again [**Ulanga**]. We camped half way and stayed around there for two or three weeks. Then we would move them again. And that is how we moved the sheep, stopping and starting. Moving the sheep, keeping them on good feed, moving them again, and stopping again where there was good feed. We moved through the country like that, herding the sheep, until we came to **Tjilka Well**. We got to **Tjilka Well** and camped there for a while... after a stay there, we moved on and returned to **Walara**.*

*But **Walara** became dry again but that time, and we still had a lot of sheep to look after. We still had the sheep. So we had to move them again and this time we took them to **Mutatja**. We took them to **Mutatja** and we stayed there for a very long time with the sheep. Until one day when the boss said to us, 'Take the sheep to **Alice Springs** and sell them. Take them all in one mob and sell them there'. So we took the sheep up along this road here and then along through **Ukaka** and across this side of **Tempe [Downs]** and then, heading in a straight line, we went to **Orange Creek**, to **Doctor Stone's**. That's what it was called a long time ago, Doctor*

Stone's. Nowadays there is a camel farm there. So we took our sheep right through where the camel farm is today. We got them to **Alice Springs** and we sold them there.<sup>59</sup>



Map 3 – Close up of the wells, springs, bores and sheep camps that feature in Tjuki Pumpjack's memories of shepherding at Walara.

This form of peripatetic movement in Aboriginal oral narratives has been well documented across a range of disciplines such a history, anthropology, linguistics, geography, archaeology and cultural theory.<sup>60</sup> While much of the focus on the Aboriginal relationship to place as a site for the production of meaning has been articulated in terms of the sacred and political dimensions, as Myers observed of the Pintupi, 'history' too is 'incorporated

<sup>59</sup> Tjuki Tjukanku Pumpjack, 4th October 2013.

<sup>60</sup> See Beckett, "George Dutton's Country,"; Klapproth, *Narrative as Social Practice*; Monchamp, *Autobiographical Memory in an Aboriginal Australian Community*; Muecke, Roe, and Benterrak, *Reading the Country*; Veronica Strang, 'Mapping the Country: Representations of Landscape' in *Uncommon Ground: Cultural Landscapes and Environmental Values* (Oxford/New York: Berg, 1997); T. G. H. Strehlow, *Songs of Central Australia* (Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1971); Franca Tamisari, "Names and Naming: Speaking Forms into Place," in *The Land Is a Map: Placenames of Indigenous Origin in Australia*, ed. Louise Hercus and Flavia Hodges (Canberra: Pandanus Books, 2002); Michael Walsh, "The Land Still Speaks? Language and Landscape in Aboriginal Australia," in *Tracking Knowledge* (Canberra & Darwin: North Australian Research Unit, ANU, 1997), 105–19.

into the unchanging, ever-present features of the physical landscape'.<sup>61</sup> Drawing upon Nancy Munn's observation of the *Tjukurpa*, or Dreaming, as a 'fundamental mode of orientation to place', anthropologist Alan Rumsey has also argued that Aboriginal people inscribe places with historical experience, highlighting that mythological and historical ways of reading the country are not only similarly productive, but also make 'similar use of the trope of punctuated movement through a fixed series of named places'.<sup>62</sup> Furthermore, he adds that this narrative structure did not just relate to 'traditional' forms of engagement, but was articulated in narratives of work in the pastoral industry also.<sup>63</sup> Munn's, Myers' and Rumsey's work, among others, has been significant in illuminating what Sylvie Poirier calls the 'openness of *Tjukurpa* itineraries and networks [that] allows for spatial and temporal transformations and reinterpretations',<sup>64</sup> so that new and significant things, like the encounter with pastoralism, can be both perceived and interpreted.

Tracing the tracks of Tjuki's memory is also to take a journey into the ecology of the desert world. While sitting at Ulanga listening to Tjuki's memories of travelling and shepherding sheep, Timmy Young commented:

*Hey. I've been following your story, and I've been thinking that this place really does have a good dependable water, because it is a true water source. It is a real water source. All those horses and sheep were here using this water source.*<sup>65</sup>

Tjuki's oral histories are records of the contours and textures of the environment in which they move; in particular they delineate the location and types of water sources, and reveal how this ecological knowledge came to articulate with the colonial encounter.<sup>66</sup> The unpredictable 'pulse-reserve' model of rainfall that characterises the arid interior determined these lines and rhythms of travel. Pulses of rain meant that people could move from the more reliable water sources of base camp to the more ephemeral waters further

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<sup>61</sup> Myers, *Pintupi Country, Pintupi Self*, 54–68.

<sup>62</sup> Rumsey, "The Dreaming, Human Agency and Inscriptive Practice," 124.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid.

<sup>64</sup> Poirier, *A World of Relationships*, 86. For a discussion of 'epistemic openness' see Merlan, "Fighting over Country: Four Commonplaces," 1–13.

<sup>65</sup> Timmy Young, recorded by author, translated and transcribed by Linda Rive, 4 October 2013.

<sup>66</sup> Across the body of work that we recorded together Tjuki Pumpjack has explained each of the different types of water sources that exist in the region and also the customary mode of extraction from each source. He would often contrast this with the names that whitefellas would give these water sources and their methods of extraction. See Goodall, "Riding the Tide," 355–84; Sandy Toussaint, Patrick Sullivan, and Sarah Yu, "Water Ways in Aboriginal Australia: An Interconnected Analysis," *Anthropological Forum* 15, no. 1 (2005): 61–74.

afield and it would seem that the desert imposed itself upon pastoralism in the region in much the same way:

*And so this is how we lived, going backwards and forwards, from big water to another water, one to another. We were always focusing on the need to be around a dependable water source...and so that's what we would do. We would leave Walara and travel to Tjilka Well, camp there, and then leave Tjilka Well and come here [Ulanga] and camp right here. Then we would go Irawa waterhole and camp there. Then we would camp at Ukaka waterhole. We would go to Ukaka along the old track, to Tempe. From Tempe we would go to Ilarari Spring. That's a big spring the other side of Tempe Down. But it is a dangerous spring, because it's got a big wanampi there, a wanampi lives in the spring. You know...That's an ancient place that we've always gone to. But it is too dangerous now. That water snake is a monster. It attacks people...You'd be going along, near that place, when all of a sudden there would be a great flood of water attacking the car! So we would go around that place. That's the route we would take, right up, and go around and then work our way back here again...*

*That's what life is like for us living in this country, on all these water sources. We'd be going from Walara to Tjilka Well, then Tjilka Well back to here. After that we'd go to Waterhole. To Irawa. Yes, we'd camp in one place for a while and then we would be back on the road again. This is when we had that huge flock of sheep. The sheep were the reason we had to keep taking them from to place. It was one big huge flock we'd be taking, all along those tracks. It wasn't a proper road. There is a very old road going along here somewhere, a very old track, that goes from here, through the sandhills. And so that's how we moved from place to place.<sup>67</sup>*

In his evocation of ancestral beings, water sources and shepherding, Tjuki illustrates what Rumsey describes as the 'thorough going mix' of the mythological, historical and ecological in Aboriginal oral narratives.<sup>68</sup> Water has always been essential to pastoralism, and as Heather Goodall has argued, Aboriginal knowledge of the whereabouts of water was invaluable to the enterprise, and periods of high employment resulted in Aboriginal people learning a whole new range of uses for their water knowledge.<sup>69</sup> In the case of New South Wales, Goodall points out that Aboriginal people's knowledge of rivers has 'been acquired, and to some extent intensified because of the historical conditions of colonisation' and as such, environmental knowledge of water is also a record of 'invasion and the exercise of

<sup>67</sup> Tjuki Tjukanku Pumpjack, 4th October 2013.

<sup>68</sup> Rumsey, "The Dreaming, Human Agency and Inscriptive Practice," 124.

<sup>69</sup> Goodall, "Riding the Tide," 366.

colonial power'.<sup>70</sup> While this is undoubtedly true, in the case of Tjuki Pumpjack's oral histories of shepherding at Walara, it can also be argued that the environmental knowledge encoded in them is evidence of the ways in which the deserts of the interior shaped, and in some regard, inhibited colonialism and colonial power in this remote location.

While earlier historiography of the Aboriginal encounter with pastoralism has looked at how Aboriginal people accommodated or incorporated the pastoral industry into their life world,<sup>71</sup> less attention has been given to how pastoralists adapted their enterprises to suit their environment and the ways in which they themselves were being transformed by the places in which they found themselves. Jeremy Beckett observed that although the pastoral mode of exploiting the country differed from Aboriginal ways of living off the land, pastoralism in the arid backcountry of northwest New South Wales nevertheless 'reproduced the conditions for nomadism' and the creation of what Russell Ward described as the 'itinerant proletariat'.<sup>72</sup> Beckett wrote that during his time there, he encountered white drovers who sat in bars:

[R]ehearsing each step of a route, remembering what had happened here and there along the way, as though they were Aborigines "singing the country".<sup>73</sup>

Among the influences that shaped this white Australian 'nomad tribe', Ward cited 'the brute facts of Australian geography' as most important among them.<sup>74</sup> In the arid rangelands, pastoralism met with the ecological limitations of the desert, resulting in a patchwork of smaller, family-owned enterprises that rested upon constant movement amidst a network of sites. In adapting to the environment, pastoralists like Bill Liddle had to learn not just the physical features of the land, but a way of *knowing* it and *moving* through it that provided them a place in it that was specific to their mode of land use and occupation.<sup>75</sup>

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<sup>70</sup> Ibid., 375.

<sup>71</sup> Beckett, "George Dutton's Country". See also Goodall 'Dual Occupation' in *Invasion to Embassy*, 66-80; Jebb, *Blood, Sweat and Welfare*; McGrath, *Born in the Cattle*.

<sup>72</sup> Beckett, "George Dutton's Country," 3. See also Ward, *The Australian Legend*, 10.

<sup>73</sup> Beckett, "George Dutton's Country," 2-3.

<sup>74</sup> Ward, *The Australian Legend*, 10.

<sup>75</sup> Gill, "Transcending Nostalgia," 75.

In February 1932, H.H. Finlayson described his arrival at Walara:

Made Liddle's camp about 2 pm - if it could be called that, since the site was marked by a litter of canteens, camel saddles, gins and children; the sole shelter being a more than usually flimsy wurli... The necessity of shepherding and yarding 1200 sheep and some goats every night, and driving them to water every second day, was reducing the country to a sand drift.<sup>76</sup>

The image of Walara evoked in Finlayson's diary differs significantly from the heavily romanticised idea of outback homesteads and cattle drovers forged in the pastoral myths of the north. Constructed in the image of the large foreign-owned stations that dominated the industry in the far north, such as Victoria River Downs and Wave Hill, these stations covered huge tracts of land, and their employees, black and white, numbered in the hundreds. In *Born in the Cattle* historian Ann McGrath observed that the Vestey's company leased stations totalling over 27,000 square miles.<sup>77</sup> She noted that in these large, company-owned enterprises, the head station camps looked like small townships:

A kitchen, a meat house or butcher's shop, a blacksmith's shop and saddlery, a wagon shed, a garage and a store which stocked food and camping necessities were located at the head station.<sup>78</sup>

Finlayson's description of a sole flimsy wurli and scattered saddles and humans amidst a sand drift does not resonate with popular ideas of the outback pastoral industry with its cowboys and cattle. The patchy, highly variable deserts of the southwest produced a kind of nomadic pastoralism like that routinely practiced in other semi-arid and arid rangelands around the world, or in the southeast of Australia in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries before closer settlement.

To Finlayson, the pastoral scene he observed at Walara was more Old Testament in its imagery than outback mythology. Significant rains fell just after he arrived at Walara and he described the move that followed a few days later:

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<sup>76</sup> H.H. Finlayson quoted in Tonkin, *A Truly Remarkable Man*, 63.

<sup>77</sup> McGrath, *Born in the Cattle*, 29.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*

Liddle shifted camp to some clay pans 5 miles south of here, which were now full of water. The move was the most amusing affair, and distinctly in the style of the old Biblical patriarchs - the whole camp was pulled up by the roots as it were, tied onto the camels in remarkable ways, and then the whole personnel drifted off to the new water - sheep, goats, horses, donkeys, dogs and gins, children, camels and ourselves, all strung out over the landscape.<sup>79</sup>

The claypan that Finlayson wrote of relocating to is Mutatja, one of the many nodes in the pastoral network mapped out in Tjuki's oral histories (**Images 13 and 14**). A relatively recent body of research into pastoral histories, emerging from disciplines immersed in spatial knowledge, such as geography, archaeology and heritage studies, has made important contributions to understandings of the pastoral enterprise in Australia.<sup>80</sup> Drawing upon the material traces of Strangways Springs station in South Australia, archaeologist Alistair Paterson's fieldwork demonstrated that the pastoral enterprise was structured around the semi-arid environment. Paterson observed that the practice of moving to more remote parts of the station lease during good seasons meant that the pastoral settlement pattern correlated with the archaeological evidence for pre-contact Aboriginal settlement.<sup>81</sup> Paterson argues that research into pastoralism has often focused upon station buildings and shearing sheds, at the expense of smaller-scale, isolated features such as outstations, bores and windmills and that studies in this field can benefit from regional, multiple-site approaches.<sup>82</sup> In describing Strangways Springs as a network of related sites, Paterson notes that while these key locales were 'modified British pastoral sites in an Australian landscape', they also reflected Aboriginal knowledge and participation and thus reveal the pastoral system as one made up of places built by both black and white people.<sup>83</sup>

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<sup>79</sup> Finlayson quoted in Tonkin, *A Truly Remarkable Man*, 69.

<sup>80</sup> Nicholas Gill, "Aboriginal Pastoralism, Social Embeddedness, and Cultural Continuity in Central Australia," *Society & Natural Resources* 18, no. 8 (2005): 699–714; Gill, "Life and Death in Australian 'Heartlands'"; Harrison, *Shared Landscapes*; Paterson, *Lost Legions*; Paterson, "Early Pastoral Landscapes," 28–48; Paterson, "The Texture of Agency," 52–65; P.G. Spooner, M. Firman, and Yalmambirra, "Origins of Travelling Stock Routes: Connections to Indigenous Traditional Pathways," *The Rangeland Journal* 32, no. 3 (2010): 329–39.

<sup>81</sup> Paterson, "Early Pastoral Landscapes," 29. See also Spooner, Firman, and Yalmambirra, "Origins of Travelling Stock Routes."

<sup>82</sup> Paterson, "Early Pastoral Landscapes," 38.

<sup>83</sup> Paterson, "The Texture of Agency," 61.





**Image 13 – ‘Liddle shifted camp to some clay pans 5 miles south of here’. A clay pan at Mutatja, 2013. Source: Photograph by author.**



**Image 14 – ‘At the day’s end we would take them back to the sheep camp at Mutatja’. Remains of the sheep camp at Mutatja, 2013. Source: Photograph by author.**

Archaeological fieldwork has demonstrated that this dual mode of land use and entanglement of travel and knowledge is not unique to arid environments. Archaeologist Rodney Harrison has also argued that a focus on technological and economic models of pastoral heritage in New South Wales has led to what he refers to as a ‘woodsheds and homesteads’ approach to the pastoral past, which is preoccupied with prominent built structures of the pastoral industry.<sup>84</sup> In his field research with pastoral workers in the Kunderang Gorge, Harrison found that a major theme that emerged in the oral histories of pastoral workers was the mapping of former mustering routes and the evocation of an ‘appreciation of the landscape that people developed as a result of their passage through it’.<sup>85</sup> Harrison took what he called a ‘landscape biography’ approach and mapped the routes that people travelled, in conjunction with studies of the material evidence in the landscape, and historical evidence of the significant role Aboriginal people had played in surveying the area in the 1840s and 1850s. As a result, he was able to demonstrate that the pastoralists in the Macleay River and Kunderang Ranges were using well-established Aboriginal pathways to infiltrate the gorge country.<sup>86</sup> The use of ‘what was essentially an indigenous land-use pattern’ was reflected in Harrison’s research into the dual existence of pre-contact Aboriginal sites, and the material traces of pastoral heritage, at *all* of the pastoral hut and mustering camp sites in the study.<sup>87</sup>

*‘We looked after those sheep for nothing, watching them twenty four hours a day’*

It was not just Anangu knowledge that served the pastoral enterprise at Walara; the supply of readily available, cheap labour was also critical to any measure of success for pastoralists. While cattle is a key image in the symbolic economy of the outback imaginary, it was sheep and goats that formed the basis of the enterprise in Central Australia during the inter-war period.<sup>88</sup> Wool was still a highly valuable commodity in the early twentieth century and sheep were far more lucrative than cattle. In a pastoral economy that made almost no use of fences, constant shepherding was required to stop flocks from straying and also to protect them from dingoes.<sup>89</sup> Pastoralists came to rely upon local people to fulfil the role of

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<sup>84</sup> Harrison, *Shared Landscapes*, 7.

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*, 121.

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*, 114.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*, 115. Emphasis added.

<sup>88</sup> Rowse, *White Flour, White Power*, 61.

<sup>89</sup> Paterson, “Early Pastoral Landscapes,” 38. See also *Ibid.*

shepherds, many of who would be responsible for flocks at remote camps without supervision. This practice of relying on Aboriginal people for the labour intensive work of shepherding had been common practice from as early as the 1850s in New South Wales, after the discovery of gold in the colony led to a shortage of European labour.<sup>90</sup>

Rowse observed that in Central Australia families of shepherds ‘once trusted, could be sent out for days or even weeks at a time with rations’.<sup>91</sup> The socio-cultural aspect of this economic arrangement is similarly reflected in various times and places in Australia where sheep were the primary focus of pastoral activity and Aboriginal labour was used. Historian Heather Goodall’s research into the ‘dual occupation’ on pastoral properties in New South Wales in the second half of the nineteenth century demonstrated that employment of Aboriginal people was widespread and highly valued among pastoralists. One of the advantages of the pastoral enterprise was its being embedded in a social network attached to the land, and thus having access to extended family groups from which to draw upon for a supply of labour.<sup>92</sup> Echoing Goodall’s descriptions of both men and women participating in the work of shepherding, historian Mary Anne Jebb has noted that small groups of men, women and children would shepherd sheep for months at a time during the 1880s and 90s, following river frontages and water in the Pilbara.<sup>93</sup> This reflects a pattern observed in Paterson’s research in South Australia, which found that the ‘family unit was common at outstations and often several families shepherded together’ in the Strangways Springs pastoral system.<sup>94</sup>

The sociality of the work of shepherding is reinforced in Tjuki Pumpjack’s oral histories. In the never-ending cycle of driving sheep to water, the alternating rhythm of travelling and camping was one his entire family traced across the landscape together. His memories also emphasise the material dimensions of the entanglement that was emerging between Bill Liddle and Anangu at Walara:

*We used to keep sheep. A lot of sheep. We were shepherds and we kept sheep. We would take the sheep in the morning from the yards, after we had opened the gates to the yards and watered them, out to graze on the feed. We used to take them to where there was green feed. We would stay there and eat our dinner out there. During this time the sheep would stay under the shady trees. We*

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<sup>90</sup> Goodall, *Invasion to Embassy*, 66–78. See also Harrison, *Shared Landscapes*, 32–33.

<sup>91</sup> Rowse, *White Flour, White Power*, 61.

<sup>92</sup> Goodall, *Invasion to Embassy*, 71. See also Harrison, *Shared Landscapes*, 32–33.

<sup>93</sup> Jebb, “Pastoral Paternalism in the Pilbara,” 146.

<sup>94</sup> Paterson, “The Texture of Agency,” 56.

*would stay with the sheep all day long, watching them and looking after them. At the day's end we would take them back to the sheep camp at Mutatja. Mutatja sheep camp. We would put them back into their yards in the late afternoon. Yarded up, we would shut the gate and then we wouldn't move from that gate, but we would light a fire near the gate and camp right there. We would camp near the sheep yard gate, caring for those sheep continually. We looked after those sheep 24 hours a day. The next morning we would get up again and open up the yard gate and round them up and take them out. This continued day after day. It was a lot of work. It was hard work, continual work. No money. No pay. Even though sheep were funny buggers we never received any pay for all the work we did. We still looked after them though. However, the shepherds always received rations. So we did get rations, trousers and shirts. That's what we got. I think about it now and I realise that we never got any pay for the work. So we looked after those sheep for nothing, watching over them 24 hours a day... We did a great job caring for them. Yet we were never paid. We cared for those sheep like they were our own children. Yet we were not paid to care for them, just as parents aren't paid to look after their children.<sup>95</sup>*

Anxieties emerged among white society in the first decade of the twentieth century, fearing that the rationing relationship was turning Aboriginal people into 'paupers' or 'beggars' by failing to teach them the desired relationship between effort and reward.<sup>96</sup> However, as Tjuki's oral history attests, this fear of 'pauperism' was not supported by the reality that on stations, and in towns, Aboriginal people were earning their rations by selling their labour.<sup>97</sup>

That Aboriginal people in various times and places in Australia's history were paid rations of flour, sugar, tea, tobacco and clothing in exchange for their labour in the pastoral industry has been widely documented. The debate that emerged around equal wages in the lead-up to the 1965 Equal Wages Case, and Charles Rowley's 1972 work, *The Remote Aborigines*, brought attention to the employment conditions and wages for Aboriginal people on cattle stations in the north. Frank Stevens' 1974 work, *Aborigines in the Northern Territory Cattle Industry*, represents the first work dedicated solely to examining the relationship between Aboriginal people and the pastoral industry. Stevens' analysis understood the relationship between Aboriginal pastoral workers and cattle stations as one characterised by decades of exploitation and he argued that the pastoral industry was

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<sup>95</sup> Tjuki Tjukanku Pumpjack, 26 October 2012.

<sup>96</sup> Rowse, *White Flour, White Power*, 31–33.

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid.*

hampering Aboriginal people's development to a 'meaningful wages system'.<sup>98</sup> Similarly, anthropologists Ronald and Catherine Berndt argued in their book *End of An Era: Aboriginal labour in the Northern Territory*, that the despondency and despair of Aboriginal people was the result of decades of unchecked European exploitation, and relationships characterised by 'subservience to a white boss, feudal or paternalistic organisation on pastoral stations, and the relative inarticulateness and powerlessness of Aboriginal employees'.<sup>99</sup> While both these works drew attention to important issues and questions concerning industrial relations in the cattle industry, neither work engaged in-depth with Aboriginal perspectives on the relationship.

Anangu oral history and memory complicates the critique of exploitation put forward by Stevens and the Berndts, and problematises the idea of a 'meaningful wages system'. Senior Anangu man Bruce Breaden, who grew up on Middleton Ponds station, recalled of the time of Abe Andrew and 'old Billy Liddle mob':

I only ever worked for Bob Buck [at that time] I still never got paid but that was because they were only early settlers and they had no money. So nobody got paid, because nobody had money.<sup>100</sup>

Tjuki Pumpjack also historicises the receipt of rations and clothes in exchange for his hard work in the 'early days'. He never expressed feelings of ill-will about this arrangement and upon asking him specifically if he, and Anangu more generally, were angry or upset about not being paid for their hard work he replied:

*No! We just lived anyway! We did not know any different! We just lived anyway. We were really happy about the clothes we got. We really liked the clothes - the cowboy hats. We'd be happy to go to work...we were happy to start receiving pay when it came in. It was a new idea to us, that had*

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<sup>98</sup> Stevens, *Aborigines in the Northern Territory Cattle Industry*, 128. See also Rowley, *The Remote Aborigines*.

<sup>99</sup> Berndt and Berndt, *End of an Era*, x.

<sup>100</sup> Bruce Breaden, 'Lucky to have been educated two ways' in Bowman, *Every Hill Got a Story*, 63. I have met Mr Breaden, a very well known and highly regarded Anangu elder, on several occasions in my capacity as Field Officer for Aṛa Irititja. One of my colleagues in Central Australia, and close friend of Mr Breaden, Patrick Hookey, believed Mr Breaden was born some time around 1926-28, and that he and Tjuki Pumpjack were about the same age. At the time, this meant that both Tjuki Pumpjack and Mr Breaden were two of the oldest, if not *the* oldest Anangu men in the southwestern region.

*come from white people, and when it happened, we started to learn that new way, the way with money.*<sup>101</sup>

Nevertheless, Tjuki did concede that, later on, after learning the new way with money, some Anangu did get angry with ‘*some of those whitefellas who had only ever given us clothing as payment*’. However, he never expressed resentment himself and reiterated that at the time Anangu never thought about money as they didn’t know it existed.<sup>102</sup>

While pastoralism was undoubtedly both a capitalist and colonial enterprise, in the 1930s and 1940s in the southwest of the Northern Territory, it is also true that cash transactions were rare.<sup>103</sup> In 1933, the employment licensing sections of the 1918 *Aboriginals Ordinance* were amended to enable the Chief Protector to exempt a pastoralist from paying Aboriginal people if he was maintaining their relatives and dependents.<sup>104</sup> While such an amendment may seem overtly exploitative, as Rowse has highlighted, and Tjuki’s and Bruce Breaden’s memories of the time attest, in making such an amendment the Administration was only being realistic given that there was no place to spend money in ‘the bush’ in the inter-war period.<sup>105</sup> Pastoralists themselves were often paid in stock and for periods of time lived on fixed rations of flour, sugar and tea which they supplemented with their own meat.<sup>106</sup> Merv Andrew worked for Bill Liddle when he first arrived in the Northern Territory in the early 1940s and recalled he was paid a sheep a week and a horse a month. Andrews also said of the daily diet of rations, beef and damper that ‘you didn’t enjoy living very much’ and that it went on like that for years.<sup>107</sup>

This image of deprivation and self-denial was not solely a reflection of the absence of cash in the inter-war period, but as Cowlishaw observed of pastoralists in the Bulman region, was an intrinsic part of the ‘asceticism of bush life’.<sup>108</sup> Pastoralism in the arid interior was marginal at best, and as Rowse highlighted, was more of a ‘tactic’ for many pre-war pastoralists who ‘were content with a casual lifestyle which accompanied their minimal

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<sup>101</sup> Tjuki Tjukanku Pumpjack, 4th October 2013.

<sup>102</sup> Cowlishaw, *Rednecks, Eggheads and Blackfellas*, 72.

<sup>103</sup> Rowse, *White Flour, White Power*, 57.

<sup>104</sup> *Ibid.* In a letter dated October 1939, Angas Downs is listed as one of ten stations in the area exempt from paying wages to Aboriginal employees. T.G.H. Strehlow on behalf of Director of Native Affairs to Sergeant A.E. Kopp in Alice Springs, ‘Exemption from Payment of Wages to Aboriginals’, October 11 1939, NAA F126 8 Part 2, Northern Territory Medical Service, T.G.H. Strehlow, patrol officer, Angas Downs [also Tempe Downs station] 1937-42.

<sup>105</sup> Rowse, *White Flour, White Power*, 57.

<sup>106</sup> Merv Andrew, NTAS TS150.

<sup>107</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>108</sup> Cowlishaw, *Rednecks, Eggheads and Blackfellas*, 72.

capital investments and their relative lack of commercial orientation'.<sup>109</sup> Cowlshaw asked of the pastoralists who often stayed for many years around Bulman, becoming intimately involved with Rembarrnga (though ultimately remaining immigrants):

What do interpersonal relations mean to men who leave their families and familiars to be isolated in the outback, who live in discomfort and privation, who pride themselves on being able to defeat their own desires and overcome their pain in order to achieve a reward that seldom took any material form?<sup>110</sup>

There is a sense that emerges in the descriptions of deprivation and denial that characterise these men, of seeking out, and at the same time trying to escape, something. Of being both in and out of place. In a letter to the Chief Protector of Aboriginals in 1937, Strehlow described Snowy Pearce:

He has no car or wireless set, is in relatively poor circumstances, and is a man aged 54 years. He owns a sheep-station, financed by the Government, and still has to repay about 300 pounds on his sheep. He is slowly reducing debt by hard labour and economy. He has no desire of ever returning to the civilised life of townships.<sup>111</sup>

Why precisely these men were avoiding 'civilised life' is hard to know, and what motivated them has been obscured in the mythologies that have been built up around them. Although the deserts of the arid interior stand in stark contrast to the 'eden' of historian James Boyce's *Van Diemen's Land*, there is a commonality between these two environments.<sup>112</sup> Although nearly a century separates them, the convicts of Boyce's Van Diemen's Land and the pastoralists of the arid southwest, seem to have shared the idea of 'home-making' as being motivated by having access to only the essentials for a 'life free from the controls of subservience and servitude'.<sup>113</sup> The Andrew family, the sole exception to the lone, white male running sheep or cattle in the isolated southwest, were staunch socialists. Perhaps it was not just a new life that they sought in the desert, but also to avoid the capitalist economy and way of life. In the archival fragments that remain of pastoralists such as

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<sup>109</sup> Rowse, *White Flour, White Power*, 120.

<sup>110</sup> Cowlshaw, *Rednecks, Eggheads and Blackfellas*, 72.

<sup>111</sup> T.G.H. Strehlow to Chief Protector of Aboriginals, July 19 1937, NAA E740, P131, Lynda Vale 1937-1939.

<sup>112</sup> James Boyce, "Return to Eden: Van Diemen's Land and the Early British Settlement of Australia," *Environment and History* 14, no. 2 (2008): 303.

<sup>113</sup> *Ibid.*

Liddle, Pearce and Andrew, there is a sense of these men as ‘white blackfellas’, or the nineteenth-century ‘white nomads’, as Chris Healy has described such characters.<sup>114</sup> Drawing on upon French cultural theorist Gilles Deleuze, Healy argues that in their rejection of ‘civilisation’, material comforts and wage slavery, ‘white nomads’ were in some way attempting ‘unbecoming’ their cultural whiteness and ‘becoming minor’.<sup>115</sup> Like the convicts of Boyce’s Van Diemen’s Land, who migrated beyond the boundaries of British territory and into Aboriginal places, there is a sense of these pastoralists as moving beyond rejecting the ‘civilised life of townships’ and undertaking what Healy refers to as a ‘performance’ of becoming-minor-in-place.<sup>116</sup> Healy writes that these ‘performances’ were expressed through action, such as the gaining of knowledge of how to live in, and move through, the landscape, learning language, and becoming embedded in social networks and relationships of exchange.<sup>117</sup> Following Boyce’s lead, I would like to suggest that the commonality between these two historical moments was the role of the environment in their respective processes of place-making.<sup>118</sup> In this sense it is possible to think of these ‘white nomads’, and their tales of isolation and deprivation, as an attempt at ‘moving away from their own cultural histories’.<sup>119</sup>

In Central Australia these performances of ‘becoming minor’ led to lifestyles that undermined bureaucratic attempts to regulate relationships between black and white. This in turn often led to criticism on the grounds that pastoralists and local people were too close, too isolated and too mobile. Rowse noted that administrative attitudes at the time regarded open-range pastoralism as not only technologically backward, but also ‘humanly idiosyncratic’, and that a resistance to ‘the message of industry capitalisation’ meant that pastoralists were in danger of being ‘assimilated’ into the local scene.<sup>120</sup> Bill Liddle was one of many pastoralists who had a reputation among patrol officers, and other pastoralists, for his relations with local women. Tjuki Pumpjack described Bill Liddle as being ‘married’ to his three ‘sisters’ and said that he had children with each of them and that Liddle was his ‘brother-in-law’ for a while.<sup>121</sup> Despite the casual nature with which Tjuki relayed this information, Strehlow’s reports from the southwestern station area in the late 1930s reveal

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<sup>114</sup> Healy, *Forgetting Aborigines*, 192.

<sup>115</sup> *Ibid.*, 192-93.

<sup>116</sup> Boyce, “Return to Eden,” 303.

<sup>117</sup> Healy, *Forgetting Aborigines*, 193.

<sup>118</sup> James Boyce, *Van Diemen’s Land* (Melbourne: Black Inc., 2010), 11.

<sup>119</sup> Healy, *Forgetting Aborigines*, 193.

<sup>120</sup> Rowse, *White Flour, White Power*, 121–22. See also Hains, *The Ice and the Inland*, 121–23.

<sup>121</sup> Tjuki Pumpjack, 20 September 2012.



a preoccupation with attempts at reforming the lifestyles of men like Liddle, as well as the futile attempts to intervene in their affairs, and the impossible task of controlling them.

What developed was a process of entanglement that has been described in similar ways, but given different names, at different places throughout the history of colonial encounter in Australia. Bill Liddle had nothing to gain, but something to lose, by disrupting the ties that bound Anangu to one another in social life. Thus, pastoral camps such as that at Walara came to fulfil a structural role in the regional economy. Described by Jeremy Beckett as ‘internal colonialism’, by Heather Goodall as ‘dual occupation’ and Ann McGrath as the ‘dual economy’, the interdependent relationship that developed between Bill Liddle and Anangu reflects a regime in which it made economic sense to conserve the economic, social and cultural dimensions of Anangu daily life in order to maintain a cheap supply of labour.<sup>122</sup> This process of accommodation has been viewed differently depending on perspective, and as Beckett has argued, cultural difference obscured exploitation, while at the same time assured a degree of Aboriginal autonomy.<sup>123</sup>

Ann McGrath’s *Born in the Cattle* drew upon the oral histories of Aboriginal stock workers to foreground Aboriginal agency in the ‘dual economy’, which she understood to be based in mutually beneficial relationships between pastoralists and Aboriginal people. When it was published in 1987 McGrath’s work represented a significant challenge to prevailing critiques of the pastoral relationship as one that was solely exploitation, arguing that relationships were structured around the exchange of labour and sex for food and clothes, and that ‘kin reciprocity’ was fundamental to an Aboriginal interpretation of the work transaction.<sup>124</sup> Drawing upon anthropologist Donald Thomson’s notion of an Aboriginal ‘ethics of reciprocity’, that Thomson claimed led to feelings of ‘shame and humiliation at failure to reciprocate a gift’, McGrath posited that this ethic similarly motivated Aboriginal people in their work for Europeans.<sup>125</sup> The gift exchange, according to McGrath, was ‘not barter but purely gift with no assessed value or deliberate economic importance’.<sup>126</sup> Furthermore, she argued that the gift exchange was the response to a ‘social obligation

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<sup>122</sup> Beckett, “George Dutton’s Country.” See also Jeremy Beckett, “The Torres Strait Islanders and the Pearling Industry: A Case of Internal Colonialism,” in *Encounters with Indigeneity*, 102–27; Goodall, *Invasion to Embassy*, 66–80. McGrath, *Born in the Cattle*, 153–60.

<sup>123</sup> Ibid.

<sup>124</sup> McGrath, *Born in the Cattle*, 153–54.

<sup>125</sup> Ibid., 155.

<sup>126</sup> Ibid.

dictated by kinship ethics' and for which there was an obligation to repay.<sup>127</sup> In this sense, McGrath's understanding of 'Aboriginal reciprocity' takes on something of a structural form, locking Aboriginal people and pastoralists into relationships that followed a discrete set of rules, which in the obligation to repay, and the shame of not reciprocating, precluded material goods from having economic value.

In a discussion of the oral sources that she drew upon to conduct her analysis, McGrath wrote that Aboriginal philosophy, 'the supposedly unchanging Law laid down in Dreamtime', reinforced a 'static social model' that as historians 'we must separate ourselves from...as we do with documents'.<sup>128</sup> According to McGrath, once transcribed:

[O]ral history becomes another form of document, and discrepancies can be explored by an examination of internal consistency and comparison with other sources.<sup>129</sup>

However, oral histories once transcribed are not transformed into mere 'documents' against which discrepancies can be measured. On the surface, in its English language interpretation and transcription, Tjuki Pumpjack's oral histories can be read as reinforcing an idea of 'Aboriginal reciprocity', and the colonial relationship on pastoral stations as one based in mutually beneficial exchange. Anangu worked hard shepherding Bill Liddle's sheep and in exchange for their labour they received food and clothing. They incorporated the 'new way' into existing social and ecological itineraries and in doing so continued to reproduce themselves as kin. That much of the meaning of his shepherding memories is lost in the English language transcript speaks something of the complexities of writing histories of the colonial encounter in Australia. In a place where two different ways of being-in-the-world brought two very different systems of meaning to bear on that shared experience, memory such as that presented here requires both 'thick description' and translation, not just of language, but of the socio-cultural concepts that shape it and give it meaning.

While *Born in the Cattle* carried out the important work of introducing and incorporating Aboriginal perspectives on the pastoral relationship into historical scholarship, McGrath's analysis of the 'work transaction' in terms of a concept of 'Aboriginal reciprocity' does not adequately capture the complex and open-ended system of exchange that governed these

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<sup>127</sup> Ibid.

<sup>128</sup> Ibid., 176.

<sup>129</sup> Ibid.

relationships. The word ‘reciprocity’ obscures more than it reveals and fails to understand ‘the gift’, in Marcel Mauss’ conceptualisation, as something that does not just carry with it the obligation to reciprocate, but is part of an exchange economy made up of services that include the equally important obligations to *give* gifts and also to *receive* them.<sup>130</sup> While McGrath’s analysis offered much needed insight into the different cultural modes that underpinned the pastoral relationship, nearly four decades of ethnographic knowledge generated since she conducted her fieldwork provides rich material for an even more nuanced historical analysis of colonial relationships and exchange.

*‘We cared for those sheep as if they were our own children’*

In Pitjantjatjara, Tjuki repeatedly used the word *kanyilpai* to describe the work of shepherding at Walara. *Kanyini* in Pitjantjatjara is a verb that translates as to ‘have’ or to ‘look after’. In the form Tjuki uses it – *kanyilpai* – it refers to the action he is describing as being ‘typical’ or ‘characteristic’ to the situation he is describing.<sup>131</sup> Fred Myers glosses the corresponding Pintupi *kanyininpa* as ‘to have and to hold’ and describes it as a concept grounded in the experience of social life as essentially supportive, and one articulated with poetic force:

The metaphor of ‘holding’ as the Pintupi invoke it derives from the linguistic expression describing how a small child is held in the arms against the breast.<sup>132</sup>

Myers notes that what differentiates the Pintupi in their social organisation is ‘generational precedence’ and the model of *kanyininpa* structures ‘society as a series of successive generations, each one “holding” and “looking after” the next’.<sup>133</sup> Authority is thus derived from the responsibility of having to ‘look after’ and ‘hold’ those who come after. Or put another way, authority is derived from ‘nurturance’.<sup>134</sup>

Tjuki repeatedly refers to the act of shepherding sheep as *kanyilpai* and explicitly states that his family ‘looked after’ those sheep like a parent does their child. In doing so, he invokes a *relationship* that is rooted in kin relations and the responsibility to nurture. His family were ‘looking after’ those sheep for Bill Liddle, who they referred to as *mayatja*, meaning ‘boss’.

<sup>130</sup> Marcel Mauss, *The Gift*, trans. W.D. Halls (London: Routledge, 1990), 16–17.

<sup>131</sup> Cliff Goddard, “Kanyini,” *Pitjantjatjara/Yankunytjatjara to English Dictionary* (Alice Springs: IAD Press, 1996), 35.

<sup>132</sup> Myers, *Pintupi Country, Pintupi Self*, 212.

<sup>133</sup> *Ibid.*, 211.

<sup>134</sup> *Ibid.*, 211–12.

The notion of ‘boss’ as a reproduction of existing social relations has been well documented in ethnographies of desert people.<sup>135</sup> However, while the distinct category of ‘boss’ has been recognised in historical research focused upon labour relations between Aboriginal people and white pastoralists,<sup>136</sup> little attention has been paid to the meaning of that term in this particular articulation of colonial relations. A ‘boss’ is someone who gains authority by ‘looking after’ his or her subordinates.<sup>137</sup> Anthropologist Diane Austin-Broos observed in relation to the Western Arrernte that the power to allocate resources elevated one to a status of one who ‘looks after’, thus defining them as ‘boss’.<sup>138</sup> This particular quality to provide resources is not confined to Aboriginal people. Fred Myers observed amongst the Pintupi that this recognition of authority was regularly extended to white people, and that in his experience the Pintupi expected all white people to be ‘bosses’.<sup>139</sup>

Whereas McGrath conceived of the relationship between Aboriginal people and station owners as one whereby Aboriginal people tried to ensure they were as indebted to the abundantly wealthy Europeans as possible,<sup>140</sup> as Myers and Austin-Broos describe it, it was the seemingly abundant wealth that bestowed pastoralists with authority, and therefore the responsibility to provide. Bill Liddle’s status as ‘boss’ did not derive from his authority as the owner of Angas Downs. Rather, it stemmed from the fact that he ‘looked after’ Anangu by distributing food and clothing. In living with, and distributing resources among Anangu, Bill Liddle became necessarily enmeshed in Anangu social relations, and as Austin-Broos has observed, an important part of the ‘making’ of camp, is the spatialisation of social relations in a particular place, which are grounded in the notions of ‘working for’ and ‘looking after’.<sup>141</sup>

The relationship that generated the oral histories and knowledge discussed in this chapter was not just one that developed between Tjuki Pumpjack and myself. Interpreter Linda Rive was present from the very beginning and was a constant presence throughout. Without her knowledge, and language skills, the analysis I present would not be possible.

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<sup>135</sup> Ibid. See also Diane Austin-Broos, “Places, Practices, and Things: The Articulation of Arrernte Kinship with Welfare and Work,” *American Ethnologist* 30, no. 1 (February 2003): 118–35; Austin-Broos, “‘Working for’ and ‘Working’,” 1–15; Carty, “Creating Country”; Musharbash, *Yuendumu Everyday*.

<sup>136</sup> Jebb, *Blood, Sweat and Welfare*; McGrath, *Born in the Cattle*.

<sup>137</sup> Myers, *Pintupi Country, Pintupi Self*, 223.

<sup>138</sup> Austin-Broos, “Places, Practices, and Things,” 125.

<sup>139</sup> Myers, *Pintupi Country, Pintupi Self*, 222. The term is *mayutju* in Pintupi. Myers notes that the term *mayatju* is often used to refer to the authority parents have over their children, it does not infer formal authority or ‘traditional’ leadership like that which is derived from the *Tjukurpa*.

<sup>140</sup> McGrath, *Born in the Cattle*, 157.

<sup>141</sup> Austin-Broos, “‘Working for’ and ‘Working’,” 6.

Over the years, as the relationship between her and Tjuki developed, Linda’s knowledge of Tjuki’s particular way with language deepened. When asked to elaborate on her understanding of Tjuki’s use of the term *kanyini* in relation to shepherding Liddle’s sheep, Linda said that Tjuki was talking about more than a job. Rather, as she understood it, he was describing something more akin to an ‘abiding social contract’, bound up with a deep sense of the responsibility to ‘look after’.<sup>142</sup> Austin-Broos argues that ‘working for’ and ‘looking after’ produce and reproduce *the social group and the place of which they are a part*:

The wellsprings of this scheme are kinship and country so that the activities of sitting with, making camp, foraging, hunting and preparing for ceremony describe various practices that reproduce values of social being in place. It is only in the English of market-based sociality that components of this practice also become ‘work’.<sup>143</sup>

In this sense, Tjuki’s memories of shepherding articulate the ways in which he was translating existing socio-economic relations, made up of expectations and obligations, into the new context in which he found himself. Walara, then, was both understood and remembered through the projection of relations among kin. In certain respects, this resonates with the rationing relationship, as Rowse described it, as a manifestation of social relations that were enacted, rather than a formal structure of relatedness that was inherited.<sup>144</sup> It was precisely these processes of enactment and translation that enabled Anangu to try to make sense of the structures of colonialism that they had come into contact with since the 1930s.<sup>145</sup>

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<sup>142</sup> Personal communications with Linda Rive, July 2015.

<sup>143</sup> Austin-Broos, “‘Working for’ and ‘Working’,” 6.

<sup>144</sup> Rowse, *White Flour, White Power*, 43.

<sup>145</sup> *Ibid.*, 44.



**Image 15 – Walara, 2012.** Source: Photograph by author.



**Image 16 – Tjuki Pumpjack and the remains of Angas Downs at Walara, 2012.** Source: Photograph by author.

However, colonialism was not all that Anangu had to make sense of. Tjuki Pumpjack's oral histories also illuminate a non-human-being-centred view of the world. Sheep are as much a part of his memories as Bill Liddle, rations and travelling, and as he tells it, his family took responsibility for the sheep and 'looked after' them as if they were their children. For Anangu, every human, animal and plant that exists carries within it what Strehlow called 'an immortal spark of life', which is derived from the original ancestral beings.<sup>146</sup> Totemic is the English word used to try to describe this identification of humans with particular plants, animals and places as living manifestations of the ancestors in the present.<sup>147</sup>

Tjuki Pumpjack was a *Wati Papa*, or Dingo Man. More than just identify with the dingo, his life was defined by that animal in a mutual relationship that connected them in the *Tjukurpa*, the nature of which is impossible for me to adequately describe. His connection to the dingo was an expression of a cosmos where animals perceive and evaluate as humans do, just as they observe and interpret humans, in what Deborah Bird Rose describes as less a chain than a network-of-being, where 'relationships of care' are enacted among all species.<sup>148</sup> It is within this conceptual framework that we must seek to understand Tjuki Pumpjack's memories of 'looking after' and 'holding' Bill Liddle's sheep.

In his imagining of the impact of strange species on the local Wotjobaluk people in mid-nineteenth-century colonial Victoria, historian Robert Kenny wrote that, despite popular assumptions, it was not so much the appearance of European humans that disrupted the world view of local people, but the animals they brought with them.<sup>149</sup> Humans, even though they were white-skinned, were to some extent accountable. Sheep and cattle were not. Kenny asks his reader to imagine having lived in a world where the biggest things that moved other than humans – kangaroos and emus – were bipeds similar in size to people.<sup>150</sup> Then into this landscape enter horses, cattle, sheep and camels. When one of the primary perspectival focuses of your life is tracking – reading the world through marks made on the

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<sup>146</sup> T.G.H. Strehlow, "Geography and the Totemic Landscape in Central Australia: A Functional Study," in *Australian Aboriginal Anthropology*, ed. Ronald M. Berndt (Nedlands, W.A: University of Western Australia Press, 1970), 132.

<sup>147</sup> See *Ibid.*

<sup>148</sup> Bird Rose, *Dingo Makes Us Human*, 101.

<sup>149</sup> Robert Kenny, *The Lamb Enters the Dreaming: Nathanael Pepper & the Ruptured World* (Carlton North, Vic: Scribe, 2010), 168.

<sup>150</sup> *Ibid.*, 167.

ground – what then to make of the tracks of hard-hoofed quadrupeds and camel wagons?<sup>151</sup>

Tjuki Pumpjack recorded the story of his family's arrival at Walara on several occasions. Each version of the story prefaces the end of the long journey with the sighting of sheep tracks. Hundreds of sheep tracks. They followed them and eventually arrived at the camp to be reunited with his aunty and uncle.<sup>152</sup> Although Tjuki grew up from a young age with sheep in his world, his mother and father must surely have recalled the encounter somewhat differently. Imagine the stories they must have told. As Kenny suggested in the case of the Wotjobaluk of the Wimmera, they must have sought to understand these animals within the conceptual framework that shaped their world. Tjuki Pumpjack's father was also a Dingo Man, and his mother's origins were in the Kangaroo Dreaming. The thousands of sheep who made the tracks belonged to Bill Liddle, so surely Tjuki's family assumed that some kind of mystical connection existed between Liddle and the sheep. Yet, as Kenny explains in his study, the very nature of the relationship between sheep and humans must have been perplexing:

If you have never known animals domesticated, as are sheep, cattle and horses, what do you see from afar? Humans dedicated to the animals: leading them to feed and water, protecting them from predators, concerned at their every need. You see humans cajoled by animals. You see servants of the sheep. What hold did these animals have over their servants?<sup>153</sup>

The work of shepherding represented an entirely new relationship with animals and the strangeness of the relationship is reflected in Tjuki's repeated references to sheep as 'funny buggers' and 'difficult'.<sup>154</sup> Just as Kenny described that process as the 'lamb enters the Dreaming', so Tjuki said that his family began 'shepherding sheep and learning the new way'.<sup>155</sup>

As Kenny asked of the Wotjobaluk, I can ask of Anangu: How could they not have believed that sheep and cattle were whitefella 'totems' to which they were mystically linked?<sup>156</sup> In this light, Tjuki's invoking of *kanyini* in relation to the sheep takes on a deeper

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<sup>151</sup> Ibid.

<sup>152</sup> Tjuki Tjukanku Pumpjack, 20 September 2012.

<sup>153</sup> Kenny, *The Lamb Enters the Dreaming*, 172–73.

<sup>154</sup> Tjuki Tjukanku Pumpjack, 26 October 2012.

<sup>155</sup> Ibid.

<sup>156</sup> Kenny, *The Lamb Enters the Dreaming*, 173.



meaning than reciprocating the receiving of rations. Tjuki's oral histories of shepherding stress that he and his family cared for the sheep continuously, twenty four hours a day, and yet were not paid for this constant care, just as parents are not paid to look after their children. As Kenny suggests for an earlier context and a long way away from Central Australia, surely this must have indicated that sheep were of deep symbolic importance to whitefellas and of primary importance in the European Dreaming.<sup>157</sup> Bill Liddle 'looked after' Anangu by distributing food and clothing, and they in turn 'looked after' his sheep, and as such, the sheep too became enmeshed in the enactment of social relations that sought to incorporate strange structures and animals into the reproduction of social life at Walara.

In more recent times Tjuki experienced another kind of rupture in relation to the place of sheep in the world:

*That is how we lived, shepherding the sheep and learning the new way. It was good. But recently I noticed something new - sheep living freely without human shepherds watching over them! So all those years, we cared for those sheep night and day and yet they don't need that! Going down towards Port Augusta, I could see the sheep walking around everywhere by themselves! Just roaming freely in the open fields! Nobody looking after them. Nothing. No shepherds!*

In telling this story Tjuki sounded truly perplexed by what he had seen. In its telling, this particular memory was marked by a distinct sense of bewilderment and an air of the almost overwhelming question 'what had all that "looking after" been for?' In a world where relationships of care extend to all species, along came an animal that demanded a level of care and 'looking after' never before experienced. In Rose's description of the network-of-being, she noted that relationships of care were non-hierarchical and that every species is understood to 'have its own right to exist of and for itself'.<sup>158</sup> Surely the work of shepherding disrupted that understanding in making humans the servants of the sheep. Incorporating not only Bill Liddle, but also his thousands of sheep into a system whereby value is created in social exchange, and 'looking after' them like children, represented a human/animal relationship of significant symbolic value in which Anangu became heavily invested. The way Tjuki recalled it, to see sheep without human shepherds was truly shocking. That level of care had served no continuing purpose, so what had all that work

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<sup>157</sup> Ibid., 177-78.

<sup>158</sup> Bird Rose, *Dingo Makes Us Human*, 101.

been for? Tjuki Pumpjack's epiphany down near Port Augusta illustrates the ways in which he was still trying to make sense some sixty years later of the structures of colonialism and strange animals with which his life had become enmeshed.

Sheep did not just walk over the land; they instantly began to transform it, and not in the way that had been hoped for. A mere three to four years after establishing his sheep run at Walara, Finlayson's remark that the constant driving of sheep to water had turned the country into a sand drift, reveals the signs of the significant strain that sheep were placing upon the desert ecology. In 1943 a field officer for the Northern Territory Lands and Survey Branch, W.L. Clough, described the situation at Walara as 'precarious':

With only one water on the whole of his run, sheep running on this area for a number of years has caused the land to be eaten out. He also has 1056 sheep of Staines' plus this year's lambs boxed with his own and on the count I gave there were 3116 grown sheep and lambs.

However, you will see how impossible it would be for Liddle to carry this number on one water, and on country that I consider second-class country for sheep. I discussed this aspect with Sid Staines of Erldunda who also sees the position as hopeless and has decided to bring his sheep home together with the sheep he purchases from Liddle. This would leave Liddle with approximately 1000 sheep, 25 mixed cattle valued at 75 pounds, 70 light and medium horses at 140 pounds and 10 rams just recently purchased at 70 pounds...

...I recommend that Liddle be allowed to sell sufficient sheep to pay off the mortgage to the Primary Producer's Board and release him of his mortgage to the Crown.<sup>159</sup>

Tjuki Pumpjack associates the end of Walara with the impact of the sheep:

*When the sheep just became too numerous and the grass, when it all finished, the whitefella [Liddle] was thinking that the sheep were finishing up all the grass and so he took those sheep to Finke, and then again, a second lot were taken to Finke to actually put them on the train. And*

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<sup>159</sup> W.L. Clough, 'W.H Liddle – Angus [sic] Downs Station', 6th September 1943, NTAS NTRS 246 P/2 - PL584.

*then a different man took the whole mob into Alice Springs. And we had no sheep then. And we didn't have any sheep to look after. So we were living there, but not looking after sheep.<sup>160</sup>*

Tjuki Pumpjack said that after Bill Liddle sold the sheep he and his family moved from Walara to Mutatja sheep camp and that they lived there for a 'really long time'. After Mutatja they went to live in and around all the *ngurawinkitja* (little camps) in the 'bush'. After travelling and camping, possibly for several years, Tjuki and his family moved to Bloodwood Bore, the site of 'New Angas Downs':

*We were living at Bloodwood Bore. The name of that place is Bloodwood Bore, which is on Angas Downs. Some people refer to it as Angas Downs, and indeed it was called Angas Downs for a while, but then it got changed properly to Bloodwood Bore. So now it known as Bloodwood Bore. Anyway, there were a lot of people living there for a long time, and indeed that is where I used to live. Prior to that, I had been living in Walara. I had also lived for a long time at Mutatja. After living at Mutatja for a long while, we left and went to live in the bush for along time. We wanted to live in the bush for a while. We wanted to be bush people again and move around a lot and make many camps, see a lot of country and be mobile for a while. After that, we moved to Bloodwood Bore.<sup>161</sup>*

Despite narratives that cast Anangu migrations in uni-directional terms as 'exodus' or 'coming in', Tjuki's oral history demonstrates that during this early period Anangu were moving between sites and being agentive in their choice in determining how and when they would engage with the emergent mission settlements and pastoral stations, and when they would return to pre-existing camps in 'the bush'. Time has revealed that the move to Bloodwood Bore represents more than just the relocation of Angas Downs station. Rather, as the following chapter explores, Bloodwood Bore marks the beginning of a new era in the history of the colonial encounter and a significant transformation in the Anangu engagement with whitefellas and the settler capitalist market economy.

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<sup>160</sup> Tjuki Tjukanku Pumpjack, 20 September 2012.

<sup>161</sup> Ibid.



## CHAPTER THREE

BLOODWOOD BORE: SOCIAL LIFE AND MAKING PLACE ON  
'NEW' ANGAS DOWNS

The sheep had turned Walara into a dusty sand drift. It is difficult to pinpoint a precise moment when the station base was relocated to Bloodwood Bore, and from the records available it seems that somewhere between three to eight years passed between the sheep finishing the grass at Walara and the new homestead being established at Bloodwood Bore. Liddle's situation was described as 'precarious' and the decision to sell his sheep was made in 1943. Some three years later Bill Liddle sold the station and 227 head of cattle to his sons Milton and Arthur Liddle.<sup>1</sup> A patrol to the southern stations undertaken by patrol officer Les Penhall in 1949 recorded 33 Anangu living at Angas Downs station. However, there is nothing in the report that indicates where the station was at the time.<sup>2</sup> A later inspection report surveying drought relief bores at Angas Downs shows that 'Homestead Bore' was sunk in 1951. In the same report the well at Walara is called 'Old Station Well'.<sup>3</sup>

Bloodwood Bore did not just mark a shift in location; it really was a 'New Angas Downs', as Anangu sometimes refer to it. In the wake of World War II there were an increased number of American-owned vehicles for sale in and around Alice Springs, many of which were acquired by pastoralists. This precipitated an increase in road making and grading, which literally carved the way for a greater administrative presence in the region, which is reflected in the significant increase in the volume of archival material relating to Angas Downs generated in the post-war period.

However, Welfare Branch patrol officers were not the only outsiders making inroads into Angas Downs. Roads also opened the way for the first tourists to travel to the long mythologised 'primitive heart' of the nation. As luck would have it, the 'new' Angas Downs was located on the tourist route to what was then marketed to tourists as Ayers Rock, and thus became a stopping of point in the emerging tourist itineraries. Despite the post-war improvements in infrastructure and concerted efforts to 'develop the north', the pastoral enterprise at Angas Downs remained marginal. The arrival of tourists in the region, and the

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<sup>1</sup> Milton and Arthur were two of the four children that Bill Liddle had with his Arrernte wife Mary. Harold and Hilda were the other two.

<sup>2</sup> Report on Patrol of Southern Stations, Finke Police District and South-West Reserve, 29 August 1949, NAA F1 1952/470, South West Reserve 1940-1952.

<sup>3</sup> Drought Relief Bores - Angas Downs, 25 September 1957, NTAS NTRS 246 P/2, PL 584.

fortuitous location of the station along the tourist route, provided the Liddles and Anangu with economic opportunities.

Anthropologist Frederick Rose carried out fieldwork on Angas Downs during the peak period in its encounter with tourism. He viewed the resulting ethnography, *The Wind of Change in Central Australia: The Aborigines at Angas Downs, 1962*, as a study of a people in the process of emerging from their 'prehistoric' or 'tribal conditions'. He lived at Bloodwood Bore for four months between July and October 1962, his time there leading him to draw the conclusion that:

The traditional way of life of the Aborigines was virtually gone. Angas Downs provided sufficient evidence for this and the tempo of detribalisation and acculturation was each day becoming more rapid.<sup>4</sup>

In line with the orthodox Marxist paradigm to which he adhered, Rose argued that it was primarily economic factors that were responsible for the 'wind of change' he witnessed on Bloodwood Bore, chief among them the trade in artefacts, and the subsequent introduction of Anangu to a cash-commodity economy. A meticulous and methodical record keeper, Rose noted in the introduction to his ethnography that every effort was 'made to make as complete a picture as possible' of life on Angas Downs.<sup>5</sup>

This chapter focuses on the shifting social and spatial order that emerged as a result of the changing circumstances on Bloodwood Bore. Drawing upon the oral histories of Tjuki Pumpjack and Sandra Armstrong, along with the rich ethnographic archive of anthropologist Frederick Rose, the discussion builds a picture of the everyday practices that were instrumental in producing locality during this period of flux. By tracing the cultures of economy that emerged with roads, bores, rations and *punu*, the objects that Anangu made to sell to tourists, the chapter examines these material changes as 'moments in a general technology (and teleology) of localisation'.<sup>6</sup> By tracing the different spheres through which rations, *punu* and cash circulated at Bloodwood Bore, the social worlds that these things helped to produce and maintain becomes visible. Tracing the outlines of these largely discrete, yet intersecting spheres, at Bloodwood Bore, the chapter engages with Arjun Appadurai's conceptualisation of 'locality' as an 'inherently fragile social achievement', and

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<sup>4</sup> Conference Paper, Berlin 1965, SLNSW Frederick Rose Papers Box 36.

<sup>5</sup> Rose, *The Wind of Change*, 10.

<sup>6</sup> Appadurai, *Modernity at Large*, 180.

demonstrates the ways in which Anangu continued to carve a life, and a place, for themselves ‘against various kinds of odds’ in the post-war assimilation era.<sup>7</sup>

### ‘THE WIND OF CHANGE’

Frederick Rose was both an intellectual and political outcast. It was never his intention to study cultural encounter and change on a Central Australian cattle station. He had hoped to carry out fieldwork that would allow him to further pursue questions of kinship, particularly the marriage practices of polygyny and gerontocracy, which had emerged from his earlier fieldwork on Groote Eylandt between 1938-41.<sup>8</sup> His Marxist interpretation of social change that resulted from this fieldwork was ‘anathema to the prevailing dogma of contemporary structural-functionalist theory’.<sup>9</sup> Rose’s findings had drawn the ire of Head of Anthropology at Sydney University, A.P. Elkin, who took measures to ensure that Rose would spend the rest of his days in Australia on the very margins of anthropology.<sup>10</sup>

However, it was Rose’s politics that would see him eventually exiled from Australia. An ardent and active member of the Communist Party of Australia, Rose emigrated to the German Democratic Republic in 1956 in the midst of strident anti-communist sentiment in the Menzies Government, and in the aftermath of being summoned in the Petrov Royal Commission into Espionage under suspicion of involvement in a Soviet Spy Ring. Rose undertook a doctorate that drew upon his earlier Groote Eylandt fieldwork, which led to his appointment as Professor and Head of the Social Anthropology Department at Humboldt University in East Berlin.<sup>11</sup> Upon returning to Australia in 1962 to continue his earlier investigations into kinship, Rose found that as a ‘direct result of Government policy’

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<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 179.

<sup>8</sup> Polygyny referred to the practice of having multiple marriage partners and gerontocracy to the significant age gap between a younger woman and her older husband. See Rose, *The Wind of Change*, 3. Rose was born in England and studied the natural sciences and anthropology at Cambridge. He immigrated to Australia in 1937. He was twenty three when he arrived on Groote Eylandt in 1938 to take up a position as a meteorologist at the Flying Boat Base. He had decided to train as a meteorologist once it had become apparent that employment in anthropology was scarce. He figured that he would be stationed somewhere remote and would be able to carry out fieldwork in his spare time. See Monteath and Munt, ‘Groote Eylandt’ and ‘Island Days’ in *Red Professor*.

<sup>9</sup> Munt, “Australian Anthropology, Ideology and Political Repression,” 121. See also Monteath and Munt, ‘Groote Revisited’ in *Red Professor*.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid. Rose submitted his findings to the Commonwealth in the hope of publication. Elkin was consulted and advised that publishing the work would be a waste of money and might attract criticism from specialists in the field. He concluded his report with the words ‘I am satisfied that Mr Rose does not understand this kinship system, nor indeed Australian kinship’.

<sup>11</sup> Rose’s doctorate was published in 1960. See Frederick G.G. Rose, *Classification of Kin, Age Structure and Marriage amongst the Groote Eylandt Aborigines: A Study in Method and a Theory of Australian Kinship* (Berlin: Akademie, 1960).

Aboriginal people had been brought onto government settlements and missions and that it was perhaps 'too late' to carry out his fieldwork.<sup>12</sup> As he saw it, the 'disintegration of socio-economic relationships' of Aboriginal people had 'gone on apace' since the end of the war and as such Rose felt he was in a 'race against time' to try and study Aboriginal people 'living under their original socio-economic conditions'.<sup>13</sup> Frustrating his sense of urgency in the matter, his attempts to gain access to government settlements were blocked at every turn by the Menzies Government and the Australian Security Intelligence Organisation (ASIO). Furthermore, Elkin still wielded enough influence to weigh in and ensure Rose's research would be a non-starter.<sup>14</sup>

Rose wrote to his friend Bill Harney, then Park Ranger at Ayers Rock, to tell him of his troubles gaining access to Aboriginal settlements and Harney suggested he should go to Central Australia:

To hell with the settlements, there are quite a number of people outside these places...Quite a number are out a place called Angus [sic] Downs and some are at Ayers Rock...This is a great study place for contact so come out my friend.<sup>15</sup>

As Harney's letter indicated, Angas Downs was hardly the place for studying people 'living under original conditions'. In his letter to Rose, Harney wrote that Anangu had been 'so pestered with tourists' that they had begun to 'cut crude weapons for sale' and demanded 'two bob' each time a tourist took their photo. Harney pointed out that this would work in Rose's favour as he could give Anangu a price, take a photo and get their kinship

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<sup>12</sup> Rose, *The Wind of Change*, 4–5.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid*, 5.

<sup>14</sup> Monteath and Munt note that it was arguably only because Rose possessed a British passport that he was allowed entry to Australia in 1962. ASIO and the Menzies government had recommended that it be conveyed to the Commonwealth and state governments that any requests for research assistance made by Rose should be refused. The Secretary of the Prime Minister's Department expressed the view that Rose's application to conduct research in Australia should be 'blocked diplomatically' with no loopholes. Having applied to the Minister for Territories Paul Hasluck and hearing nothing for months, Rose sought to meet with John Crawford, then Director of the Research School of Pacific Studies at the Australian National University (ANU). On the day the meeting was due to take place Crawford called ASIO for advice. On this same day Rose was photographed by ASIO meeting with Manning Clark on Ellery Crescent at the ANU. After meeting with Rose, Crawford called ASIO to tell them that Rose was intending to apply for a grant and that he had no issue with Rose doing so as the project was 'a desirable one' and that the decision would be made by an expert panel. Rose applied to carry out fieldwork amongst the Warlpiri and Pintupi at Yuendumu. Chaired by Professor Elkin, the panel decided not to support the application. See Monteath and Munt, *Red Professor*, 189–92.

<sup>15</sup> Bill Harney to Frederick Rose, 22 June 1962, SLNSW Frederick Rose Papers Box 4.



information and then move onto the next, adding ‘when they find out what is afoot with your method, the others will come in’.<sup>16</sup>



**Image 17 – Frederick Rose in the Anangu camp at Bloodwood Bore, 1962.** Source: SLNSW Frederick Rose Papers Box 8.

Rose made the observation that although the people at Angas Downs were only two decades removed from their ‘original tribal conditions’, polygyny and gerontocracy had virtually disappeared and carrying out fieldwork on the station presented the opportunity to

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid. The most striking feature of *The Wind of Change* is the 150 black and white portraits in the final pages of the book that capture Anangu living on Angas Downs at the time. Each portrait has a corresponding page of a matrix of data that maps each person’s social relations. It also records their Anangu name, their English name, their sex, their age, their ancestral country, their totem, their immediate family members and a footnote that tells the reader every page of the ethnographic text in which they appear. As an appendix, Rose also included his fieldwork diaries in their entirety (minus personal details), which document everyday life on Angas Downs between July and October 1962 in remarkable detail. These three features were the foundational pillars of Rose’s methodological approach to fieldwork and anthropological inquiry. Around nineteen-years-old at the time, Sandra Armstrong recalled ‘working’ with Fred Rose and says that she helped him ‘with the language and families, calling like “this is my uncle, this is my aunty, father, mother”. Sandra says that she gave Rose the language names for relationships and while sitting with him and looking at the photographs he would ask her ‘what do you call this one?’ and that they worked together like this all the time. Sandra Armstrong, interviewed by author, 7 October 2013, Mitchell Library SLNSW.

investigate the factors that had made for their ‘disappearance’.<sup>17</sup> He concluded that it was primarily economic factors that were responsible for the ‘detrribalisation’ and ‘acculturation’ he had witnessed on Angas Downs. Described by his biographers as an ‘implacable advocate’ of the materialist interpretation of history,<sup>18</sup> Rose adhered to the theory that it was the mode of production, as the economic basis of society, that determined society’s nature and development. Only ‘incidentally’ interested in what he called the ‘the cult life’ of Anangu, the ‘acculturation’ he witnessed at Angas Downs was analysed explicitly within a Marxist theory of historical change. As he understood it, history had an internal logic. Anangu at Angas Downs were moving through an inevitable sequence of economic structures and discrete modes of production, and Rose believed that the change in the way of life for Anangu at Bloodwood Bore was a direct result of improvements in transport, the commodification of material culture, and the subsequent encounter with a cash economy.

## In the wake of World War II

Rose understood the ‘wind of change’ he observed at Angas Downs as having gathered momentum in the wake of World War II. Improvements in transport and communication as a result of the war set in motion a chain of events that brought significant change to the isolated southwest of the Northern Territory. The period witnessed unprecedented levels of money spent on technological advancement and infrastructure, including all weather-roads built between Alice Springs and Darwin. At war’s end, a significant number of trucks of American origin had become redundant and were offered for sale cheaply in and around Alice Springs. Many pastoralists acquired at least one for use on their stations.<sup>19</sup> Rose argued that this influx of vehicles had two significant impacts — rendering camels and donkeys redundant to pastoralists, and increasing demands for roads to be graded and improved so that the newly acquired trucks could be utilised.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Rose, *The Wind of Change*, 6.

<sup>18</sup> Monteath and Munt, *Red Professor*, 88.

<sup>19</sup> Rose, *The Wind of Change*, 24–5.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.* While a number of writers have written on the changing social and economic relations that resulted between Aboriginal people and whitefellas as a result of increased interactions and exchanges in various situations during World War II, the focus here is on the *things* that proliferated in the wake of the war. For an account of changing social and economic relations see Berndt and Berndt, *End of an Era*. For an Aboriginal account of increased interactions with whitefellas in Army camps, and the comparative experience of working for the Army and being paid wages after station life, see Alec Kruger and Gerard Waterford, *Alone on the Soaks: The Life and Times of Alec Kruger* (Alice Springs: IAD Press, 2007), 121–144.

Rose observed that with capital invested in the north at an unprecedented scale during the war:

[I]t was not the Government's intention to allow the Northern Territory to relapse into its pre-war isolation and the demands for improved roads in Central Australia and elsewhere away from the main north-south and east-west arteries were acceded to. By the early 1950s a network of passable roads regularly graded by the Government reached even the most distant cattle stations in the west.<sup>21</sup>

As this network of passable roads penetrated the desert, the isolation that defined the 'early days' came to an end. That developments in technology, and subsequent improvements in transport, have been seen as significant turning points in the history of 'progress' in Central Australia is reflected in the titles of local histories, such as Bryan Bowman's *A History of Central Australia 1930-1980: From Horse and Camel to Motor Car, from Motor Car to Helicopter and Jet*, and Max Cartwright's *From bush tracks to highway: An account of Aborigine footprints to the horse and camel tracks of the explorers, followed by the motor tracks of later years: in the south western regions of Central Australia*.<sup>22</sup> Bowman notes that while roads were virtually non-existent before the war, some vehicles did make the journey over and into the sand hills of the southwest and that they mostly belonged to scientific or prospecting parties.<sup>23</sup> As the description in chapter two of Strehlow and McKinnon's journey by car into the southwest demonstrated, it was hard work getting vehicles through that country, but as Bowman observed, it was the tracks of these old cars that became the graded roads that 'opened up' Central Australia.<sup>24</sup> The impacts of these improvements in roads and transport were manifold, a number of which will be explored throughout this chapter, as it traces how these changes played out in the everyday lives of Anangu at Bloodwood Bore.

However, it was not just an influx of vehicles that prompted increased spending on infrastructure in the Northern Territory. Anxieties about the 'empty north' had persisted

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<sup>21</sup> Frederick Rose, Summary of Lecture, 'The Aborigines of Angas Downs, Central Australia 1962', July 1964, Berlin, SLNSW Frederick Rose Papers Box 1.

<sup>22</sup> Bryan Bowman, *A History of Central Australia 1930-1980: From Horse and Camel to Motor Car, from Motor Car to Helicopter and Jet*, 2 vols. (Alice Springs: Bryan Bowman, 1989); Max Cartwright, *From Bush Tracks to Highway: An Account of Aborigine Footprints to the Horse and Camel Tracks of the Explorers, Followed by the Motor Tracks of Later Years: In the South Western Regions of Central Australia* (Alice Springs: Max Cartwright, 1994).

<sup>23</sup> Bowman, *A History of Central Australia 1930-1980*, vol. 1, 32.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*

well into the twentieth century.<sup>25</sup> A small white population, engaged in a highly mobile, domestic pastoral enterprise that was thoroughly dependent on Anangu labour, was considered evidence of the failure of settlers to adequately ‘develop the north’. After the war, Prime Minister Curtin announced that ‘developing the north’ was essential for the future security of Australia. In 1945 the Northern Australia Development Committee was established, which was charged with the role of increasing the population, improving the welfare and development of Aboriginal people, bolstering the value of production in the region and ensuring the maximum utilisation of the land and resources.<sup>26</sup> A report prepared by the committee in 1947 highlighted the previous failures of the Commonwealth and settlers to develop the Territory ‘beyond the pioneering stage’, citing the inability or unwillingness of governments to finance transport and other public services as a significant factor.<sup>27</sup> The committee recommended funding for local medical services, education, transport and highways, airline subsidies, waters, stock routes, surveys and investigations, all of which were put into effect in the following years.<sup>28</sup>

## Bloodwood Bore

Tjuki Pumpjack said that at Walara the sheep became too numerous and ate all the grass so they had to move and drill a new bore:

*When all the grass died at Walara we had to move to New Angas Downs and drilled a new bore there, near Wilpiya Range. We put a new water bore down in there. We lived at that new bore.*<sup>29</sup>

The springs and wells that punctuate Tjuki’s memories of shepherding at Walara were fed from the Amadeus basin, which stores water in the rock’s pores, deep down in the earth. Prior to the arrival of whitefellas, the water emerged naturally from the basin through faults

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<sup>25</sup> Alison Bashford, “World Population and Australian Land: Demography and Sovereignty in the Twentieth Century,” *Australian Historical Studies* 38, no. 130 (October 1, 2007): 211–27; Hains, *The Ice and the Inland*; Russell McGregor, “Develop the North: Aborigines, Environment and Australian Nationhood in the 1930s,” *Journal of Australian Studies* 28, no. 81 (January 2004): 33–45; Russell McGregor, “A Dog in the Manger: White Australia and Its Vast Empty Spaces,” *Australian Historical Studies* 43, no. 2 (June 2012): 157–73; Libby Robin, ‘The Empty North’, in *How a Continent Created a Nation* (Sydney: University of New South Wales Press, 2007), 123-151.

<sup>26</sup> Northern Australia Development Committee, ‘Development of Northern Australia, 1947’, NAA 1972/84. See also Russell McGregor, “Developing the North, Defending the Nation? The Northern Australian Development Committee, 1945-1949,” *The Australian Journal of Politics and History* 59, no. 1 (March 2013): 33-46.

<sup>27</sup> Ted Ling, ‘Development of northern Australia’ in *Commonwealth Government Records about the Northern Territory* (Canberra: National Archives of Australia, 2011), 73.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>29</sup> Tjuki Tjukanku Pumpjack, ‘Bullock Business’, recorded, translated and transcribed by Linda Rive, June 2011, AI-0108954

or vents into springs and streams on the earth's surface. Toward the end of the nineteenth century, when whitefellas figured out the nature of the basin water supply, the water began to take a shortcut to the surface.<sup>30</sup> The sinking of wells and drilling into the sandstone aquifers transformed the landscape into one pockmarked with bores, windmills and tanks. However, despite the substantial natural pressure and subsequent gushing waters of early bores, by the end of the first decade in the twentieth century, increasing numbers of bores gave rise to a decline in the natural pressure, resulting in dwindling water flows.<sup>31</sup> Despite the early enthusiasm for environmental transformation, as historian Michael Cathcart has observed, the 'deserts did not bloom' and fragile desert ecosystems were soon 'trampled into dust' by sheep and cattle.<sup>32</sup>

The degradation brought about by the introduction of sheep, cattle and camels, coupled with the declining water pressure that resulted from increasing numbers of bores, meant that desert springs were particularly vulnerable to failure. In the arid rangelands, expensive pumping technology became necessary in order to extract water from non-flowing, sub-artesian bores.<sup>33</sup> Tjuki's memory reflects the transformation in the relationship to water that was brought about by the drilling of sub-artesian bores:

*Of course we always used to simply drink water for free, from the springs we knew about. There were springs around the place that we knew about, but now they wanted to drill for bore water, for water from bores.<sup>34</sup>*

Not just marked in his experiences and memories, Tjuki's name is also a record of the impact of technology on natural water sources. A 'pumpjack' is the above ground device that mechanically raises water from underground wells. Tjuki said that Bill Liddle gave his father the name Pumpjack, and it is possible that Tjuki's father, Tjukyntji, earned the moniker by being the pumpjack operator responsible for pumping water from the well at Walara.

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<sup>30</sup> For a discussion of the drilling of Australia's first documented artesian bore in 1886 in relation to earlier technological developments in Britain in the 1820s, see 'The Great Artesian Basin' in Michael Cathcart, *The Water Dreamers: The Remarkable History of Our Dry Continent* (Melbourne: Text Publishing, 2009), 166–178.

<sup>31</sup> Carol Booth and Wendy Tubman, "Water Down Under: Understanding and Managing Australia's Great Artesian Basin" (Canberra: Commonwealth of Australia, 2011), 12.

<sup>32</sup> Cathcart, *The Water Dreamers*, 174.

<sup>33</sup> Booth and Tubman, "Water Down Under: Understanding and Managing Australia's Great Artesian Basin," 11.

<sup>34</sup> Tjuki Tjukanku Pumpjack, 20 September 2012.



**Image 18 – The Bloodwood and the bore, 1962.** Source: SLNSW Frederick Rose Papers Box 8.



**Image 19 – The Bloodwood and the bore, 2014.** Source: Photograph by author.

And so it was, in the shade of a mighty Bloodwood tree, that the new bore was drilled to a depth of 180 feet, creating a more stable water supply, a more permanent homestead and a new era in the station's history.<sup>35</sup> The homestead was a modest affair pieced together with corrugated iron. In a 1960 inspection report a patrol officer observed:

Mr Liddle has no accommodation for his employees. He noted that huts had been built some time ago for accommodation but that they had been dismantled by the natives, who used the iron from them to construct wurlies...Water is obtained from the station bore, approximately 200 yards south of the camp. The camp is situated about 180 yards north of the homestead and consists of about ten wurlies scattered over an area of about 80 yards.<sup>36</sup>

By 1962, Rose observed that much of the area around the homestead was completely void of vegetation, and that 'the Aborigines' camp itself and the immediate environment was also largely denuded of trees which had been used for firewood'.<sup>37</sup> The 'wurlies' in the patrol report are the *wiltja* of Rose's ethnography, and in 1962 he recorded 39 of them in the Anangu 'camp'. *Wiltja* is the Pitjantjatjara word for 'shade', and is also the name of the shade shelter that Anangu used as a dwelling. Rose observed that while the *wiltja* showed considerable variation, all made use of tarps or sheeting, bags and corrugated iron to varying degrees to make them weather and wind proof.<sup>38</sup> Conveying something of what Monteath and Munt refer to as the language of the dispassionate empiricist,<sup>39</sup> Rose described the *wiltja* of the "'permanent' inmates' at Bloodwood Bore as quite substantial structures that could be closed up while their owners were away. In contrast, those of the 'itinerants' made do with sheets and sometimes iron to make them weather proof.<sup>40</sup> *Wiltja* were customarily ephemeral in nature. The rhythms of the desert meant that this type of shelter, constructed from brush and branches, was only ever needed momentarily before moving on to the next camp. In contrast to the semi-nomadic existence at Walara, the changes in methods and materials for building *wiltja* described by Rose reflect the increasingly sedentary lifestyle that became a feature at Bloodwood Bore.

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<sup>35</sup> The well at Walara was 24 feet deep. Drought Relief Bores, 25 September 1957, NTAS NTRS 246 P/2.

<sup>36</sup> J. Hunter, 'Inspection Report Angas Downs', 24 August 1959, NAA F1 1955/552, Claims Payments and Employment of Aborigines Angas Downs 1955-62.

<sup>37</sup> Rose, *The Wind of Change*, 62.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, 36. Melinda Hinkson notes similar developments in the construction of 'humpies' by Warlpiri at Hooker Creek. See Melinda Hinkson, *Remembering the Future*, 71.

<sup>39</sup> Monteath and Munt, *Red Professor*, 197.

<sup>40</sup> Rose, *The Wind of Change*, 36.



**Image 20 – Wiltja in the Anangu camp at Bloodwood Bore, 1962.** Source: SLNSW Frederick Rose Papers Box 8.

### ‘Ration Times’

Tjuki Pumpjack said that after they drilled the new bore and moved there to live:

*Ration times started up then. A rations station was started by Arthur and Bessie Liddle. Those two started up the rations. Many Anangu began arriving then and many people were around in those days. Many, many people started to come there because of the rations. They were looking for those rations.<sup>41</sup>*

Despite having been receiving rations at Walara for some 10 years or more, Tjuki Pumpjack associates the move to Bloodwood Bore as the beginning of ‘ration times’. Indeed, Bill Liddle had been issuing food to Anangu workers and families from as early as

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<sup>41</sup> Tjuki Tjukanku Pumpjack, ‘Bullock Business’, AI-0108954.



1928 at Walara.<sup>42</sup> Why then, in Tjuki's memory, is it Bloodwood Bore that is characterised by the issuing of rations?

Rowse's history of rationing, *White Flour, White Power*, clearly demonstrates that food was the primary vehicle for the assimilation project in Central Australia.<sup>43</sup> In making his argument, Rowse also highlights World War II as something of a turning point. According to Rowse, the two previously concurrent strands of the colonial imagination that had differentiated between 'town' and 'hinterland' converged with maximum intensity in the wake of the war, thus setting 'the spatial mould within which the policy of assimilation would...be pursued' in Central Australia.<sup>44</sup> The increased demand for Aboriginal labour during the war, coupled with the democratic sentiments of the anti-facist struggle, had resulted, he argues, in the task of governing Aboriginal people becoming 'explicitly normative'. Consequently, policy focus was directed away from the preservation and protection of Aboriginal difference, and instead looked toward educating and training Aboriginal people for Australian citizenship.<sup>45</sup>

In 1953 the Native Affairs Branch was renamed the Welfare Branch. In the same year the *Aboriginals Ordinance* of 1911 was replaced by the *Welfare Ordinance*, which precipitated the creation of the Register of Wards. The Director of Welfare became the guardian of all 'wards' and as such Aboriginal people were committed to the care of the state simply because they were deemed 'by reason of his manner of living, his inability to manage his own affairs, his standard of social habit and behaviour, his personal associations...[to be] in need of social care'.<sup>46</sup> When Arthur and Milton Liddle began distributing rations to 'wards' on behalf of the government, Bloodwood Bore became a quasi-government settlement. In 1954 the first census reports from Angas Downs began to appear in the Welfare Branch correspondence archive. They occurred regularly from this time onwards, becoming evidence of the attempts of the Administration to monitor, and *know*, the population at Bloodwood Bore and assert some measure of control over their lives.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> Rose, *The Wind of Change*, 32. Rose had access to William Liddle's 'Daybook', which was in the possession of Jack and Jim Cotterill at the time of his fieldwork.

<sup>43</sup> Rowse, *White Flour, White Power*.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, 6.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, 8.

<sup>46</sup> The Register of Wards was published in the *Northern Territory Gazette* in 1957 and became known as the 'Stud Book'. Ling, *Commonwealth Government Records about the Northern Territory*, 139.

<sup>47</sup> Anangu names are highly inconsistent across these reports. In a 1954 report Tjuki's parents are recorded as 'Minmilla' and 'Churkinga', which is a relatively close likeness to their actual names,

In a 1954 report, patrol officer T.C. Lovegrove documented that the Anangu who were being rationed received secondhand clothing every month to six weeks, a blanket annually and weekly rations that consisted of:

- Flour 15 to 20 lbs
- Sugar 2 lbs
- Tea 4 ozs
- Jam or Syrup 1 tin
- Soap 1 cake
- Tobacco plug 2 ozs
- Beef 10 to 12 lbs

Lovegrove added that:

In addition to the above-mentioned beef, an average of 1 kangaroo per day is shot and supplied to the camp. With the exception of tobacco, children receive half of the above scale of rations. No rice, peas or their alternatives are normally supplied but excess flour, tea and sugar are issued to cover these.<sup>48</sup>

By the time Fredrick Rose arrived on Angas Downs, Milton Liddle had sold his share of Angas Downs to his brother Arthur, who ran it with his wife, a Luritja woman called Bessie Liddle.<sup>49</sup> Rose noted that for his 'board and lodging' at Bloodwood Bore, he accepted the responsibility of looking after the homestead while the Liddles were away. This duty, sometimes carried out for days at a time, entailed, 'as far as the Aborigines were

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Minmilla and Tjukyntji. His uncle Tjutjapayi is recorded as 'Chubergoola' and his Aunty Mimiya as 'Mie Meeya'. Sandra's mother Wongapai is recorded as 'Choolata' and her father Jack Panginya as 'Pungina'. Across time their names are rarely recorded the same way twice. They are all recorded as 'old and infirm natives'. Sandra may also be in this report, named as 'Chumfer'. This child is recorded as the 3rd child of Punginya and Choolata and ten years of age, which appears to correlate. Sandra was going to school at Areyonga, but was often 'absconding' to Angas Downs to see her family. 'List of "Dependents" receiving rations at Angas Downs', 1954, NAA F1 1953/488, Employment of Aboriginals Angas Downs 1952-1954. An analysis of the census records over successive years indicates it was a somewhat ineffective way of monitoring people, reflecting historian Tiffany Shellam's observations of colonial enumeration attempts in Western Australia as instances of 'state incapacity' to 'control' and 'know' the Aboriginal population. See Tiffany Shellam, "Our Natives' and 'Wild Blacks": Enumeration as a Statistical Dimension of Sovereignty in Colonial Western Australia," *Journal of Colonialism and Colonial History* 13, no. 3 (2012): [not paginated], accessed 3 May, 2016,

[http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/journal\\_of\\_colonialism\\_and\\_colonial\\_history/v013/13.3.shellam.html](http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/journal_of_colonialism_and_colonial_history/v013/13.3.shellam.html).

<sup>48</sup> T.C. Lovegrove to Acting District Superintendent, 6th December 1954, NAA F1 1953/488.

<sup>49</sup> Milton Liddle sold his share of Angas Downs to Arthur in 1956. Bessie Liddle still lives in Alice Springs. I have met with her at her house on several occasions to talk to her about my research. We have spent time together looking over the Rose photographs and she has shared some of her memories with me from life on Angas Downs. Bessie was adamant that she did not want to record her stories as part of the research.

concerned’, distributing the weekly pension and rations.<sup>50</sup> Rose observed that although it may not have been legitimate to compare quantities of rations issued by Bill Liddle with those issued by Arthur and Bessie Liddle on behalf of the government, comparisons in 1962 did show that the quantity of sugar issued by the government was ‘considerably higher’, while the proportion of tea was ‘considerably lower’.<sup>51</sup> Rose also noted that unlike before, when Bill Liddle issued tea and sugar separately, they were being mixed together before being issued to Anangu in 1962.<sup>52</sup>

Tjuki Pumpjack said that Arthur Liddle drilled a new bore and ‘started up the rations’ and then many Anangu began to arrive. In the early 1950s a population of approximately 10-12 adults and 7-10 children was recorded as living on the station.<sup>53</sup> In 1959 approximately 100 Anangu were recorded at Angas Downs,<sup>54</sup> while Arthur Liddle told Rose that the largest number that had been at Bloodwood Bore at any one time was 250 people in 1961.<sup>55</sup> Angas Downs was not the only quasi-settlement in Central Australia and Rowse has shown that while the distribution of Aboriginal people across pastoral leases was uneven, the numbers across the ten biggest station camps, Angas Downs included, all grew in population between 1949 and 1965-6.<sup>56</sup> Rowse noted that these quasi-settlements were made possible by government subsidy and that some lessees ‘kept their stations solvent by allowing large subsidised camps of “dependents” to gather’.<sup>57</sup>

Tjuki Pumpjack’s characterisation of this period as ‘ration times’ reflects what Rowse describes as the ‘ubiquity’ of rationing as a tool of assimilation policy and reinforces its centrality in the pastoral relationship at Angas Downs.<sup>58</sup> This ubiquity is reflected in Aboriginal oral history and memory across a number of regions in the Northern Territory, Western Australia and South Australia that speak of ‘ration times’ or ‘welfare times’, and in

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<sup>50</sup> Rose, *The Wind of Change*, 11.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, 33.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>53</sup> ‘List of “Dependents” receiving rations at Angas Downs’, 1954, NAA F1 1953/488.

<sup>54</sup> Pastor Albrecht, Letter to District Welfare Officer, 20 August 1959, NAA F1 1955/552 Claims Payments and Employment of Aboriginals Angas Downs 1955-1962.

<sup>55</sup> Rose, *The Wind of Change*, 61.

<sup>56</sup> Rowse, *White Flour, White Power*, 118–19. Rowse notes that in 1965-6 12% of pastoral leases accommodated 59% of the Aboriginal population in the region.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, 119. I will discuss this issue in greater detail in relation to the decline of pastoral paternalism in the late 1960s and early 1970s in chapter five.

<sup>58</sup> Rowse, *White Flour, White Power*, 3.

narratives of people being ‘captured by flour, sugar and tea’.<sup>59</sup> Historiography and ethnography has similarly characterised the changing pattern of engagement with mission settlements and stations throughout the 1950s and 60s as an intensification of Aboriginal migrations toward these places and an increased dependence on rations and the mission and station economies.<sup>60</sup> However, this periodisation in Tjuki’s memory also performs a narrative role that represents a particular way of organising historical remembrance. Tjuki marks distinctive phases in the past, or denotes temporal ruptures or shifts in experience, with different ‘times’. Temporal markers such as ‘early days’, ‘ration times’, ‘cattle times’ and ‘sit-down times’ structures his interpretation of the past as episodes and reflect what anthropologist Anne-Marie Monchamp refers to as ‘composite’ memories. Rather than describe a single moment or event, composite memories represent a *sedimentation* of events in memory over time,<sup>61</sup> and in the case of ‘ration times’ endow particular periods with meaning according to pertinent events or features. This way of remembering the past is common in Anangu historical remembrance and represents a narrative style that is reflected in Aboriginal oral history and memory more widely across a range of places.<sup>62</sup>

Such episodic ways of remembering are not necessarily chronological. ‘Times’ can and do overlap. Oral historian Alessandro Portelli describes this way of articulating memory as the projection of an image of the past. He observes that while the historian often strives for a linear, chronological sequence, speakers are more interested in ‘gathering together bundles of meaning, relationships and themes’ across the span of their lives.<sup>63</sup> Tjuki says that after they drilled the new bore, many Anangu began to arrive at Angas Downs ‘looking for rations’. Despite having been receiving rations for a decade or more, it is the issuing of rations that has come to symbolise this period in his memory, and as Heather Goodall has argued in relation to Anangu memory, these symbolic meanings are significant for what they tell us about their ‘wider position in the relationship with their colonisers’.<sup>64</sup> The

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<sup>59</sup> Tonkinson, *The Mardu Aborigines*, 162. See also “‘They gave us a tent, and tucker and sheet of iron’ – ‘Welfare’ and government settlements’ in Bowman, ed., *Every Hill Got a Story*; Carty, ‘Feeding Dependence’, in “Creating Country”, 40-1 .

<sup>60</sup> Baker, *Land Is Life*; Carty, “Creating Country”; Downing, *Ngurra Walytja*; Folds, *Crossed Purposes*; Jebb, *Blood, Sweat and Welfare*; Meggitt, *Desert People*; Myers, *Pintupi Country, Pintupi Self*; Rowse, *White Flour, White Power*; Tonkinson, *The Mardu Aborigines*.

<sup>61</sup> Monchamp, *Autobiographical Memory in an Aboriginal Australian Community*, 99. Emphasis added.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid. See also Baker, *Land Is Life*; Beckett, “Walter Newton’s History of the World”; Bird Rose, *Hidden Histories*; Bird Rose, *Dingo Makes Us Human*; Bowman, *Every Hill Got a Story*; Basil Sansom, “In the Absence of Vita as Genre: The Making of the Roy Kelly Story,” in *Telling Stories: Indigenous History and Memory in Australia and New Zealand*, ed. Bain Attwood and Fiona Magowan (Sydney, 2001), 99–122.

<sup>63</sup> Portelli, *The Death of Luigi Trastulli*, 63.

<sup>64</sup> Heather Goodall, “‘The Whole Truth and Nothing But...’”, 118.

geographic and temporal shift from Walara to Bloodwood Bore is characterised in Tjuki's oral histories by the transformation in the relationships of exchange on Angas Downs. Rations and 'ration times' in his historical remembrance can be understood as an articulation of the impact and experience of assimilation policy, in particular the systematic use of rationing as a technique of colonial governance and a tool for intervening in Anangu lives.

The dominant image of colonial relations in the Northern Territory during the assimilation era is one of rapid erosion of 'traditional' Anangu socio-economic relations as a result of the increasing dependence on rations and the mission and station economies. While Anangu oral histories of 'ration times' and 'welfare times' appear to corroborate the 'dependence' paradigm, this particular episodic form of remembrance is fragmentary and partial in nature. 'Ration times' is an example of what Portelli refers to as oral narratives that are relayed in the *collective* mode — rationing is endowed with meaning in a form of remembrance that emphasises collective participation in *institutional* episodes (the sphere of government and policy); the spatial referent for which Portelli posits is the town, community or workplace.<sup>65</sup> However, Tjuki Pumpjack and Sandra Armstrong also recall this period in what Portelli calls the *personal* mode, which focuses on the 'life cycle of births, marriages, jobs, children, and deaths' and personal involvement in both the *institutional* and *collective* spheres at the level of the home,<sup>66</sup> or in the case of Anangu, the social practices and relationships of exchange that were integral in the creation of 'camp' at Bloodwood Bore.

### A changing spatial and social order

It was not just the emergence of more permanent dwellings, the establishment of a ration depot, and a larger population that made Bloodwood Bore 'New Angas Downs'. While Tjuki Pumpjack recalled of the 'early days' at Walara that Bill Liddle and Anangu combined camps and they all lived there together,<sup>67</sup> at Bloodwood Bore a spatial order emerged that separated the Anangu camp from the homestead. Rose noted that although there was 'nothing overbearing or condescending in his attitude towards the Aborigines', Arthur

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<sup>65</sup> Portelli, *The Death of Luigi Trastulli*, 70.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>67</sup> Tjuki Tjukanku Pumpjack, 20 September 2012.

Liddle never visited the Anangu camp.<sup>68</sup> This separation is reflected in Tjuki Pumpjack's description of the living situation at Bloodwood Bore:

*Three or four little houses were built for the whitefellas, but we were told, "you lot live in wiltjas, around your fires. There are no houses for you". So we didn't get housing. We did not live in houses. We lived there always, that was our home.*<sup>69</sup>

Although he may not have used the terminology at the time, it is significant that Tjuki Pumpjack recalled the differences between the homestead and *wiltjas* in terms of a distinction between whitefellas and Anangu. Arthur Liddle's mother was an Arrernte woman, he was married to a Luritja woman, and there were no whitefellas, so to speak, living on the station at the time. And yet, Tjuki recalled the spatial order, and material conditions, on the station in these terms.

Anthropologist David Trigger used the term 'Aboriginal domain' to describe the separate spheres that emerged on the mission at Doomadgee in Queensland, which he characterised as a spatial expression of the Doomadgee people's resistance to the mission's attempts to transform their social and cultural life.<sup>70</sup> Trigger argued that the Doomadgee people were driven by the 'imperative' to 'insulate the domain of Blackfella space, thought and behaviour from the White domain', and that Doomadgee people understood the mission in terms of zones where Aboriginal social life was either exposed to, or sheltered from, outside scrutiny.<sup>71</sup> In this reading, the Aboriginal domain is not necessarily produced in direct opposition to the white domain, but rather, as Trigger conceptualises it, results from distinct social imperatives. More recently, Melinda Hinkson has noted the 'mutually sustained, separation of domains' that emerged at the Yuendumu settlement in the 1950s, which she posits was crucial to Warlpiri 'maintaining social and physical space for the meting out of their own forms of authority and modes of interaction'.<sup>72</sup> However, as well as their own social imperatives, Trigger observed that a distinct Doomadgee domain persisted as a result of the 'effective exclusion of Doomadgee Aborigines from status and

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<sup>68</sup> Rose, *The Wind of Change*, 112, 156.

<sup>69</sup> Tjuki Tjukanku Pumpjack, 'Bullock Business', AI-0108954.

<sup>70</sup> David Trigger, "Blackfellas and Whitefellas: The Concepts of Domain and Social Closure in the Analysis of Race Relations," *Mankind* 16, no. 2 (1986): 99–117.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, 114–15. See also Tim Rowse, *Remote Possibilities: The Aboriginal Domain and the Administrative Imagination* (Darwin: North Australia Research Unit, 1992). In more recent times Howard and Frances Morphy have used the idea of an Aboriginal domain within the encapsulating state to develop their theory of 'relative autonomy'. See Frances Morphy and Howard Morphy, "Anthropological Theory and Government Policy in Australia's Northern Territory: The Hegemony of the 'Mainstream,'" *American Anthropologist* 115, no. 2 (June 2013): 174–87.

<sup>72</sup> Hinkson, *Remembering the Future*, 72–3.

associated class competitions in Australian society'.<sup>73</sup> It is possible to read this sense of status and exclusion in Tjuki's statement above that while the 'whitefellas' got houses, Anangu were told 'there are no houses for you'. However, as well as resistance, and a sense of exclusion in terms of material wealth, as Nicolas Peterson has argued, separate social and spatial spheres have been as much a product of whitefella desires as of Aboriginal people's.<sup>74</sup> Although Arthur Liddle was not a 'whitefella', Tjuki did refer to him as such, and as Rose observed in 1962, given his status and socio-economic position as 'land holder and entrepreneur', he 'tended to draw away from the Aborigines'.<sup>75</sup> It would seem that perhaps ideas of race, status and class that circulated in wider Australian society at the time had also travelled along the newly graded roads and began to filter into Bloodwood Bore. Internalised in different ways by Arthur Liddle and Anangu, they nevertheless appear to have resulted in a social and spatial order markedly different from that which had existed in the relative isolation that characterised Walara (**Image 21**).

Rose's use of the term 'inmates' to describe 'permanent' residents of the camp such as Tjuki, stands in marked contrast to Tjuki's own description of Bloodwood Bore as *home*. Sandra Armstrong's oral histories used in this research largely originate from four separate recordings, made with two different people, over a four-year period spanning from 2009-2013.<sup>76</sup> Sandra granted me permission to use the transcripts from each of these recordings. Beginning when we first met in 2012 until the present, I have spent time travelling widely with Sandra, discussing the material in these recordings. During this time I have been able to ask her to elaborate on certain points and clarify others. These conversations would often result in additional information about life on Angas Downs coming to light that was not mentioned in the earlier recordings. For example, aged approximately nineteen years old at the time of Rose's fieldwork, Sandra is the only Anangu I encountered in the four years of my own fieldwork who remembers Fred Rose clearly. While carrying out research in the Rose archive together, Sandra recalled certain aspects of his fieldwork methodology in detail and said, that although she worked closely with Rose while he was at Bloodwood

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<sup>73</sup> David Trigger, "Equality and Hierarchy in Aboriginal Political Life at Doomadgee, North-West Queensland," *Anthropological Forum* 5, no. 4 (1988): 538-39.

<sup>74</sup> Nicolas Peterson, "An Expanding Aboriginal Domain: Mobility and the Initiation Journey," *Oceania* 70, no. 3 (March 2000): 206.

<sup>75</sup> Rose, *The Wind of Change*, 112.

<sup>76</sup> One of the oral histories was recorded in a single session in June 2009 by Linda Rive for inclusion in the Ara Iritija archive. Another oral history was recorded over three sessions in 2012-13 by Sam Osborne for his PhD research examining education from an Anangu perspective. See Sam Osborne, 'Staging standpoint dialogue in tristate education: privileging Anangu voices.' (PhD thesis, Victoria University, Melbourne, 2016).

Bore, she did not really know what he was going to do with all of the information she was helping him to collect. She just thought 'he might take 'em away and do something'.<sup>77</sup>

Sandra's descriptions of Bloodwood Bore also stand in contrast to Rose's use of the term 'inmates' to refer to her and her family. Despite the different circumstances in which they were recorded, the thread that connects all of Sandra's oral histories and memories is the strong sense that Bloodwood Bore is home. She says of this time:

*Anivari Mitchell's father and mother, Melinda Mitchell's father and mother, my father and mother and Tjuki Pumpjack's father and mother, we were all family together that made up the Angas Downs community and we were collecting rations from there regularly.*<sup>78</sup>

Families living together and sharing resources is a fundamental process in the reproduction of desert social life, and as such is a significant element in the production and reproduction of place. While Rose's language evokes the sense of Bloodwood Bore as being akin to a prison camp, Tjuki's and Sandra's memories reveal the ways in which the all-important nexus of food and family was creating Angas Downs according to their own sense of place.

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<sup>77</sup> Sandra Armstrong, interview recorded by author, 8 October 2013, Mitchell Library SLNSW.

<sup>78</sup> Sandra Armstrong, oral history recorded and translated by Linda Rive, 18 August 2009, AI-0108943.



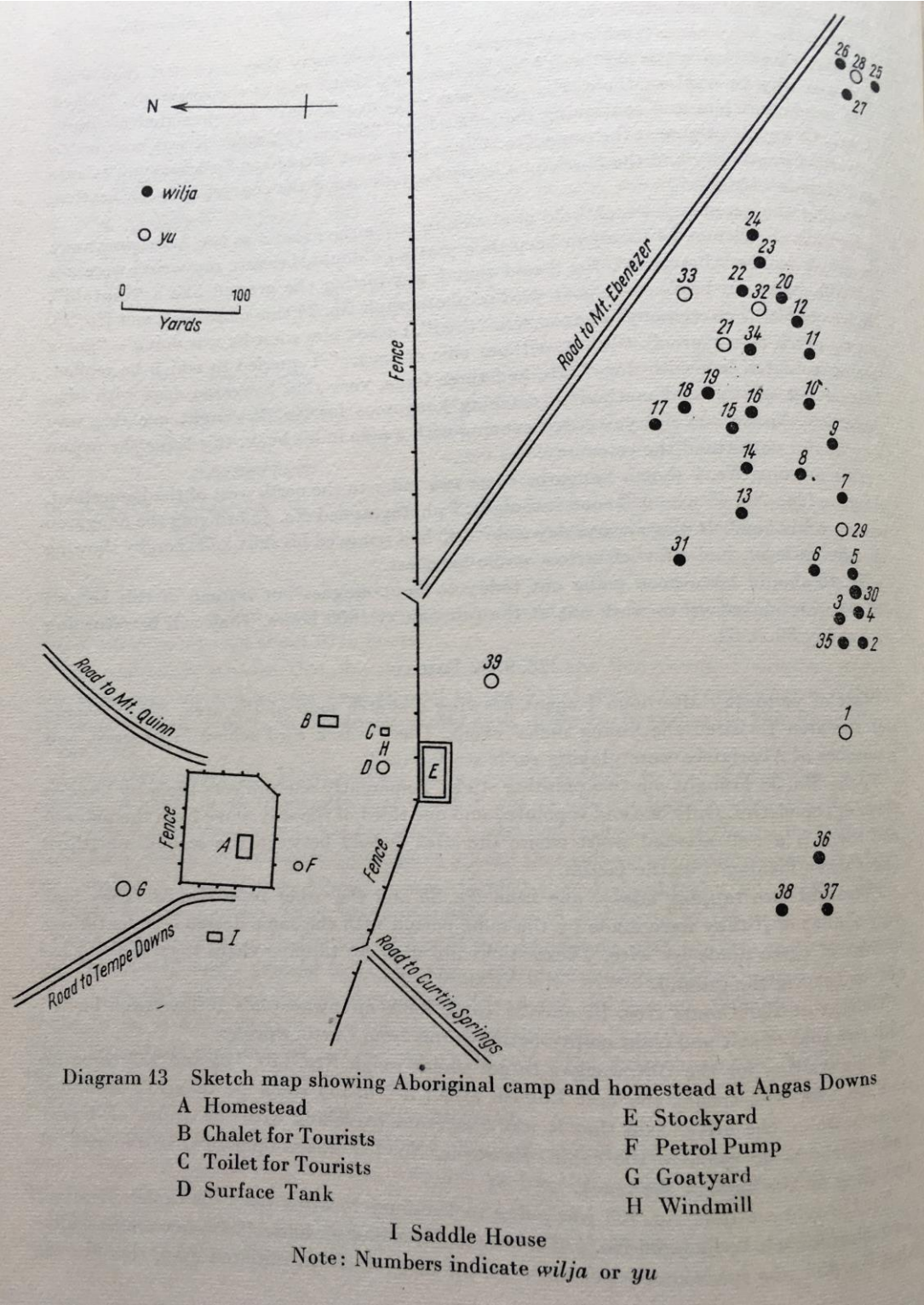
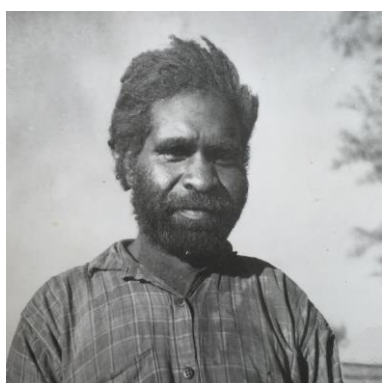
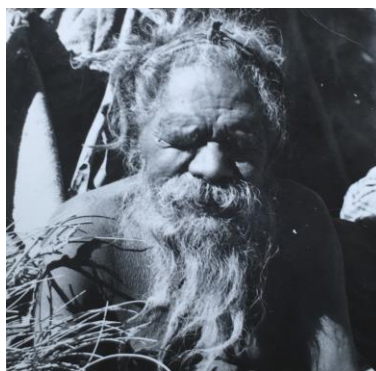


Image 21 – Frederick Rose’s sketch map of the ‘Angas Downs complex’, 1962. The numbers indicate Anganu *wiltja* and Rose also recorded which family lived in each one. Source, Frederick Rose, *The Wind of Change*, 176.



**Image 22 – Top to bottom L –R: Sandra's mother Wongapai, Sandra's father Jack Panginya, Tjuki's mother Minmilla, Tjuki's father Tjukyntji, Tjuki's younger brother Johnny Mulla, Sandra's older sister Ada (married to Johnny Mulla), Tjuki's older brother Bronson, Tjuki's first wife Dolly. Source: SLNSW Frederick Rose Papers Box 8**

By the time of Rose’s fieldwork, Tjuki Pumpjack had been shepherding sheep, riding horses and learning the way of the cattle for two decades or more:

*We were living at Bloodwood Bore. The name of that place is Bloodwood Bore, which is on Angas Downs. Some people refer to it as Angas Downs, and it was called Angas Downs for a while, but then it got changed properly to Bloodwood Bore. So it is now known as Bloodwood Bore. Anyway, there were a lot of people living there for a long time, and that is where I used to live. Prior to that I had been living at Walara. I had also lived for a long time at Mutatja. After living at Mutatja for a long while, we left and went to live in the bush for a long time. We wanted to live in the bush for a while. We wanted to be bush people again, and move around a lot and make many camps, see a lot of country and be mobile for a while. After that, we moved to Bloodwood Bore. I spent so long at Bloodwood Bore that I moved there as a man and I left as an old grey haired Tjilpi (senior man) – well almost anyway! Let’s say I was a mature, grey-haired man. I was still riding horses, though, and still working the bullocks. I was still taking the bullocks all around, and still trucking them to Finke and Rumbalara and Deep Well, and also Alice Springs. So I worked for many, many years doing that, and so my life went along.*

*I lived my life there, without leaving, in the same way that a true nguraritja would. I always thought to myself that I must be considered a nguraritja by now.<sup>79</sup>*

To be *nguraritja* is to belong to a place. Myers has described this belonging, or sense of ownership, as ‘an embedded index of processes of exchange and negotiation of identity’.<sup>80</sup> Tjuki described this index, as it developed at Angas Downs, beginning with his family’s arrival at Walara and being reunited with his aunty Mimiya, his uncle Tjutjapayi and their family:

*We combined our camps, and we settled in to live there with them, and that is where I grew up and became a big boy. Right there. Time passed and we stayed and I became a young fella, and my whiskers grew, and I grew a beard there. I was a bearded man by then. Then I became a nyiinka (pre-initiate) - a big boy - and so my mother and father took me up to Areyonga to go through Law and it was there I became a young man. I became a young fella there, and when I returned, I started work. I worked on horseback, working the bullocks, and that’s when I learnt the ropes, where I learnt how to ride horses, how to ride buckjumpers and stay in the saddle. My younger brother, Johnny Mulla, and I worked together. We started to work together and we grew up*

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<sup>79</sup> Tjuki Tjukanku Pumpjack, 20 September 2012.

<sup>80</sup> Myers, “Ways of Placemaking,” 87.

*together and I became a man there, and then a senior man, and then an old man, in that same place...I am now a nguraritja of that place.*<sup>81</sup>

Tjuki's evocation of his identification as *nguraritja* for Angas Downs is articulated in terms of his growing up there, being schooled in Law there, becoming a man there *and* learning the work of the pastoral industry. According to Myers, the transmission of knowledge among the Pintupi not only differentiates older and younger generations, it also reproduces a regional system of relatedness and shared identity that is not merely a product of individual arrangements, but 'inscribed in The Dreaming [and] objectified in the landscape from which persons come'.<sup>82</sup> While Myers observed that ritual knowledge constituted the widest 'hierarchically encompassing sphere of exchange among men within a region',<sup>83</sup> his elaboration of it as something that is both transmitted and reproductive of relatedness makes it possible to read in Tjuki's statement above that the rituals and knowledge of the pastoral industry, and the shared identity inscribed and objectified in the landscape in which this knowledge was embedded, had come to assume value in this significant social process at Angas Downs.<sup>84</sup>



Image 23 – Tjuki Pumpjack with *Kulata* (spear) and *miru* (spear thrower), Angas Downs, circa 1956-58. Source: Ara Irititja, Leo Quin Collection AI-0026034.

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<sup>81</sup> Tjuki Tjukanku Pumpjack, 20 September 2012.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid.

<sup>83</sup> Myers, *Pintupi Country, Pintupi Self*, 221.

<sup>84</sup> See Gill and Paterson, "A Work in Progress".

It was once he had returned from Law that Tjuki started working with the cattle and from that point on it would seem that the process of learning the work of the pastoral industry became thoroughly entangled with the social process of acquiring knowledge and becoming a man at Bloodwood Bore. Ann McGrath observed during her fieldwork that Aboriginal people had incorporated the ‘learning experiences offered by the station into the necessary regimen of training which made girls women and boys men’ and that links had emerged between knowledge in the cattle industry and ‘manhood’.<sup>85</sup> However, whereas McGrath speculated that this was a move that enabled Aboriginal people to ‘justify and acknowledge the validity of the move to the station, and the propriety of working for whites’, Tjuki’s oral histories articulate the knowledge of the cattle industry as embedded in a social process that, more than serve to ‘justify’ the move to the station, lay at the heart of the production of identity and place. Appadurai has argued that much of the ethnographic record can be rewritten and reread from the point of view of the ‘production of locality’ as a social process.<sup>86</sup> According to Appadurai:

[A] great deal of what has been termed *rites of passage* is concerned with the production of what we might call *local subjects*, actors who properly belong to a situated community of kin, neighbours, friends and enemies. Ceremonies of naming and tonsure, scarification and segregation, circumcision and deprivation are complex social techniques for the inscription of locality onto bodies. Looked at slightly differently, they are ways to embody locality as well as to locate bodies in socially and spatially defined communities.<sup>87</sup>

Tjuki’s memory above demonstrates that it was not just *rites of passage*, but the *rites of the pastoral industry*, that had come to assume significance in the creation of local subjects, which is to say people who belong to a place.

### A fortuitous location

Improved roads and transport also ‘opened up’ Central Australia to tourism and Bloodwood Bore just so happened to be located on the road to Ayers Rock.<sup>88</sup> Beginning in the early 1940s images of Ayers Rock, as it was then known, began to appear in *Walkabout*

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<sup>85</sup> McGrath, *Born in the Cattle*, 167.

<sup>86</sup> Appadurai, *Modernity at Large*, 179.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>88</sup> I am using the name Ayers Rock, as opposed to its proper name Uluru, to reflect what would be in common usage among the wider Australian community, tourism companies and tourists and the time.

magazine. By the late 1940s there was an increasing interest to sell the ‘outback’ experience, and as Michael Cathcart has observed, *essential* to the Rock’s potency at this time was the idea of it as a symbol of *ancient* Aboriginality in a *timeless* land.<sup>89</sup> By the early 1950s, correspondence within the Welfare Branch indicates that it was ‘common knowledge’ that truck driver Len Tuit was operating tours in the Southwest Reserve.<sup>90</sup> The correspondence from this time reflects the mounting pressure to excise Uluru and Kata Tjuta, then known as The Olgas, from the reserve and declare the area a National Park. In one 1951 letter it is noted that it was ‘becoming abundantly clear’ that Ayers Rock was attracting ‘wider national interest’ and that the ‘existence of this most unusual geological feature’ was ‘considered to be common knowledge throughout Australia’.<sup>91</sup> The Director of Native Affairs noted that although the time was not right to consider such an action, he was not opposed to the excision from the reserve ‘providing it was retained for *National interest only*’.<sup>92</sup> The area around Ayers Rock and The Olgas was declared a National Park in 1958 and thus became a stage upon which nationalist narratives were to be projected.<sup>93</sup> For the tourist, the journey to the ‘outback’ became a national rite of passage. The quintessential tourist destination in Australia, it offered visitors the opportunity to travel back in time, and simultaneously experience modern Australia’s frontier and settlement history in the ‘prehistoric’ and ‘primitive’ heart of the continent.<sup>94</sup>

The tourist route passed right through Bloodwood Bore. Tjuki Pumpjack says of the time that tourists arrived:

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<sup>89</sup> Michael Cathcart, “Uluru,” in *Words for Country: Landscape and Language in Australia*, ed. Tom Griffiths and Tim Bonyhady (Sydney: UNSW Press, 2002), 216.

<sup>90</sup> In 1950 Tuit led a group of students from Knox Grammar School in Sydney. The school group was accompanied by a group of botanists, geologists, geographers and anthropologist Charles Mountford. See ‘Knox Grammar Boys Climb to Top of Ayers Rock’, *Sydney Morning Herald*, 13 September 1950. School groups were the earliest organised tour groups to visit Central Australia. In 1946 Bill Liddle had acted as a tour guide for a group of Geelong College students who attempted to travel to what was then referred to as Ayers Rock. Travelling in ex-army Blitzwagons, their attempt was thwarted when they became bogged in weather-damaged roads that forced them to turn back. A year later Sidney Staines from Eridunda Station successfully led the Geelong College Group to Uluru. In the same year Bill Liddle wrote to the Department of Works and housing regarding ‘the development of this part of the Northern Territory’ urging that the ‘geological wonders’ of Uluru and Kata Tjuta be opened to the public. William Liddle, letter to Department of Works and Housing, 14 September 1947, NAA F1 1952/470.

<sup>91</sup> W. McCoy to Director of Native Affairs, 17 April 1951, NAA F1 1952/470.

<sup>92</sup> F.H. Moy to Acting District Superintendent, ‘Ayers Rock’, NAA F1 1952/470. Emphasis added.

<sup>93</sup> Hannah Hueneke & Richard Baker, “Tourist Behaviour, Local Values, and Interpretation at Uluru: ‘The Sacred Deed at Australia’s Mighty Heart’,” *GeoJournal* 74 (2009): 479.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid. See also Gill, “Life and Death in Australian ‘Heartlands’,” 39–53; Julie Marcus, “The Journey out to the Centre,” in *Race Matters*, 29–52. Ann McGrath, “Travels to a Distant Past: The Mythology of the Outback,” *Australian Cultural History*, 1991: 113-24.

*Old Arthur Liddle started the rations. And tourists make road to Ayers Rock. First time makem road. Anangu made the road to Ayers Rock... The tourists came in on the old road via Mount Quinn. This side of Ukaka there used to be a road. The road is still there... There was a different road that went from Bloodwood Bore to Ayers Rock. It used to come right through Bloodwood Bore. When the bitumen road was built, it was made into a very straight road, and now goes via a completely different route. But in the old days it was a winding little road that went right through Bloodwood Bore and right past the homes of many Anangu.<sup>95</sup>*

The tourist season ran from April to September and Rose noted that somewhere between 4000 and 5000 tourists passed through Angas Downs on their way to Ayers Rock in 1962.<sup>96</sup> He recorded that the road that carried the tourist traffic to Ayers Rock had bypassed Mount Quinn and Angas Downs since 1961, passing through Erldunda and Mount Ebenezer instead, which left Angas Downs sitting on a loop about five kilometres from the main road.<sup>97</sup> Tour groups detoured onto the loop, specifically to visit Angas Downs. Sandra Armstrong recalls of the time:

*We were living there together when the tourists first started to come through. They'd come from Alice Springs. They'd come through Henbury, from that turnoff, the turnoff to Kings Canyon. That's the same turnoff today, the same one, that one. So that's the way tourists would come, through Mount Quinn and through Angas Downs. I was working there at the time cleaning dishes, as well as working with the stockmen on Angas Downs. I'd help with the bullocks. Bake bread and cook food. Serve the tourists. When the tourists came through we'd be very busy, me, Elsie and Melinda...*

*So anyway there we were, all us young women working away in the kitchen, for the tourists. We would work for the tourists. We would start work, I would set everything, fork and knife, as I'd learnt to. I'd bake bread, then after baking it I'd cut it up and serve it up. I'd work in the kitchen. I'd look after the stove, make coals and get everything set up for the tourists' dinner. They'd come in from the bus for their dinner with the driver and we'd sit and eat dinner together.*

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<sup>95</sup> Tjuki Tjukanku Pumpjack, 20 September 2012.

<sup>96</sup> Rose, *The Wind of Change*, 60.

<sup>97</sup> The route that Tjuki describes via Erldunda and Mount Ebenezer is the current route taken by tourists to Uluru.

*The Pioneer Bus and the TAA bus and the Sundown Coach and Bill Hann from Melbourne. Cobb and Co. All those different tour bus companies.*<sup>98</sup>

Sandra and Tjuki tell the story of tourists arriving in Central Australia the same way, which is to tell the listener how the tourists got to where they were going. They also orient the journey that tourists took in relation to current journeys and tracks. In my experience with Anangu I have found this is a common way for many stories to begin. The tourist buses would stop to have a meal at Angas Downs in the ‘chalet’, described in detail by Rose:

The Chalet was a new building erected at the beginning of 1962, consisting of a fly-proofed dining room with adjoining kitchen. Metal on the outside, it was lined with hardboard. With many louvered windows it was well adapted to the climactic conditions. Thirty yards to the south of the Chalet were toilets and showers for the tourists, but also used by the Liddles, but not by the Aborigines. It was in the Chalet, tastefully furnished with colourful plastic topped tables and appropriate chairs, that the tourists partook of their meals. Up to 40 people could be seated at any one time, so when two CATA buses arrived on one day, two sessions were necessary. The meals served to the tourists were substantial. They were always of the same pattern, with three courses –soup, meat and sweets.<sup>99</sup>

Rose noted that Arthur and Bessie Liddle cooked all the meals, and that the kitchen chores, preparation of vegetables and washing up was done by ‘the house girls Nos. 90, 91 and 107’, who were Sandra Armstrong, Melinda Mitchell and Elsie Wanatjura respectively.<sup>100</sup> Rose also observed that Sandra, Melinda and Elsie would clean up after the tourists had finished eating and would collect the leftover food in empty fruit or milk tins to take to the Anangu camp, most of which, according to Rose, went to ‘Nos. 77, 78 and 79’, who were Sandra’s mother and father and her younger sister Rosie.<sup>101</sup> In the time I have known her, Sandra spoke most often about the working and learning she did on Angas Downs, particularly that which involved what she calls ‘working for the tourists’.

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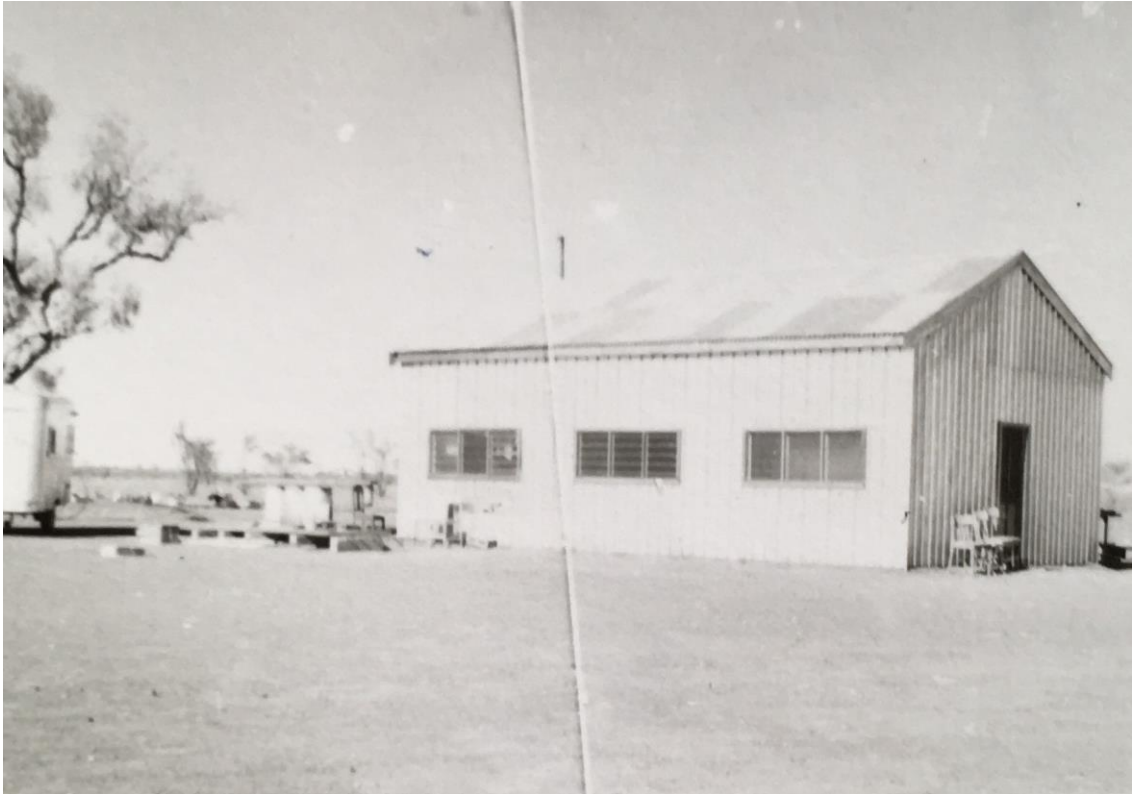
<sup>98</sup> Sandra Armstrong, AI-0108943. The women that Sandra worked with are Elsie Wanatjura from Mutitjulu and Melinda Mitchell from Docker River. Both women were unwell and in aged care facilities when I was carrying out fieldwork and I was not able to record their experiences of tourism at Angas Downs.

<sup>99</sup> Rose, *The Wind of Change*, 59. Rose goes into further detail and describes what sort of vegetables were served with the meal. He also notes that the gravy was made from gravy powder, what the desert course consisted of, and observed that bread and butter, and tea and coffee served with powdered milk were also served with the meal.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid.





**Image 24 – ‘The Chalet’, 1962.** Source: SLNSW Frederick Rose Papers Box 8.

However, tourist buses were not just stopping off at Angas Downs for a meal. Anangu were intrinsic to the tourist experience in the ‘heart of the nation’ and like other sites of ‘Aboriginal tourism’ in Australia, Bloodwood Bore presented an opportunity for a close encounter for tourists with the ‘Aborigines’ who lived there. Tourism focused on Aboriginal people and their culture originated in the nineteenth century in the southeast of Australia. From as early as the 1860s, day-trippers from Melbourne would visit Coranderrk Aboriginal Reserve and buy souvenirs made by the Aboriginal residents. In the 1880s La Perouse near Sydney emerged as a desirable destination for tourists seeking to experience both the ‘birthplace’ and the ‘native essence’ of the new nation, while visitors to Lakes Entrance in eastern Victoria in the early twentieth century would travel by boat to the nearby Lake Tyers mission to buy souvenirs and take photographs of Aboriginal people who were residents there. In the more remote parts of the country, it was the extension of the north-south and trans-continental railways in the late 1920s that facilitated the early commodification of the ‘primitive’ world of the ‘outback’ for modern, urban-dwelling Australians. However, it was not until vehicles could travel along roads and penetrate deep

into the desert heart of the continent that the *essential* tourist destination in Australia emerged.<sup>102</sup>

However, it would appear that Anangu at Angas Downs did not always satisfy the tourist desire for the ‘authentic Aborigine’. Like the urban Aboriginal people of La Perouse in Maria Nugent’s history *Botany Bay*, the cattle station-dwelling people at Bloodwood Bore were considered by some tourists to be ‘not sufficiently native’ in appearance.<sup>103</sup> In a memoir of early tourism to Uluru, Edna Bradley describes getting of the bus at Angas Downs on the first ‘official’ guided tour to ‘the Rock’ in 1957:<sup>104</sup>

As soon as we got off the bus the Aborigines crowded around and we got a good look at each other... This was the first time I had been close to Aborigines and I was amazed at how dark and skinny they were, and their hair was matted. You could never put a comb through it I thought. I’d always imagined they would have been like the Aborigines I saw in my ‘Dreamtime’ books. Of course they were only photos or drawings and not the real thing, but these Aborigines were unkempt and their strong body odour was overpowering my senses. Their clothes were tatty and some women had layers of dresses on. Their appearance made me realise how different their lifestyle was to mine...

Even the station itself was a disappointment, the description of the buildings mirroring the ‘unkempt’ appearance of ‘the natives’:

I have to say the homestead left a lot to be desired. I didn’t know what the inside looked like, but from the outside, the flywire on the veranda was damaged in

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<sup>102</sup> Gaye Sculthorpe, “When Whitefellas Go Walkabout,” in *The Oxford Companion to Aboriginal Art and Culture*, ed. Sylvia Kleinert and Margot Neale (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 2000), 391. See also Nugent, ‘Boomerangs for Sale’, *Botany Bay*, 63-90; Fiona Paisley, “No Back Streets in the Bush: 1920s and 1930s pro-Aboriginal White Women’s Activism and the Trans-Australia Railway,” *Australian Feminist Studies* 12, no. 25 (April 1997): 119.

<sup>103</sup> Nugent, *Botany Bay*, 72.

<sup>104</sup> One of the first ‘official’ guided tours to Uluru was operated by TAA in 1957. A women’s only tour group to ‘Alice and Beyond’ it was known as *The Petticoat Safari*, the idea of which was to ‘show the rest of Australia that if women could travel to such a far-off and inhospitable place, so could anyone else’. Edna Bradley was a member of the *Petticoat Safari*. A thoroughly modern Australian woman, at the age of twenty she had already ‘seen most of Australia by ship, rail and air’ and felt that the far reaches of Central Australia presented her with the kind of ‘adventure’ she was looking for. Edna Bradley, *A Rock to Remember: A Memoir* (Alice Springs: Kristina Kidd, 2009), xviii–xix, 2. The marketing strategy to entice white, modern, middle-class women to the Centre, appears to have worked. Frederick Rose observed in 1962 that 75%, sometimes up to 95% of the Central Australian Tourists Association tour group that passed through Angas Downs were women. He described the ‘representative tourist’ as ‘a woman, probably spinster, of either small independent means or with a profession’ from the south who was lured to the Centre by its promise of adventure. Rose, *The Wind of Change*, 56-8.

several places and there was no garden. No lawn, only red dust. There were used oil drums lying around, car tyres and bits of machinery scattered all over the area, giving the appearance of an old rubbish dump... Everything was covered in dust. I wouldn't have fancied living there and was pleased to be boarding the bus to continue on.<sup>105</sup>

The 'Dreamtime Aborigine' Bradley came in search of eluded her. The station too, experienced as a poor imitation of the romanticised image of the northern cattle station that had been imprinted upon her imagination after reading about Elsey Station in Jeannie Gunn's classic colonial works *The Little Black Princess* and *We of the Never Never*.<sup>106</sup> While the Red Centre was being marketed as the essential tourist destination in Australia, it would seem that the 'unkempt Aborigines' and dust at Angas Downs was somewhat disenchanting.



**Image 25 – The homestead at Bloodwood Bore, 1962.** Source: SLNSW Frederick Rose Papers Box 8.

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<sup>105</sup> Bradley, *A Rock to Remember*, 17–18.

<sup>106</sup> Bradley likens herself to author Jeannie Gunn in her memoir and says that she felt that they were of the same 'ilk'. It was the image of Gunn's lone adventures in the remote north that inspired her to travel to Central Australia, saying 'I was sure I could live in remote situations and survive just like Mrs Jeannie Gunn at Elsey Station'. *Ibid.*, 5–6.

Rose observed in 1962 that the only reason the buses detoured onto the Angas Downs loop was ‘to see and to trade with the Aborigines’.<sup>107</sup> Art historian and curator Ruth B. Phillips has described the tourist as both a consumer and a ‘collector of tourist experiences’ for which the ‘souvenir’ became an essential ‘marker’.<sup>108</sup> As such, objects understood by the tourist as the archetypal utilitarian objects of the hunter-gather, became increasingly popular commodities at Bloodwood Bore, which they purchased as tangible mementoes of their experience in the ‘primitive’ heart of the nation.



**Image 26 – Anangu trading with tourists at Bloodwood Bore, 1962.** Source: SLNSW Frederick Rose Papers Box 8.

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<sup>107</sup> Rose, *The Wind of Change*, 57. He also noted that it was ‘almost certain’ that if were not for the policy of the Northern Territory Administration to keep Anangu away from ‘the Rock’, and away from direct contact with tourists, Anangu would have almost certainly carried out their trade with tourists there. I will pursue this administrative attitude to Anangu interactions with tourists in greater detail in chapter four.

<sup>108</sup> Ruth B. Phillips, “‘Why Not Tourist Art,’” in *After Colonialism: Imperial Histories and Postcolonial Displacements*, ed. Gyan Prakash (Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 1995), 111.

*'Nulla nulla, how much? Two bob!'*

Sandra Armstrong recalls that when the tourists started to arrive:

*The old people started to make punu there at Angas Downs. The men would make boomerangs because of course they all knew how to make hunting boomerangs. They also made lots of small wooden dishes and various wooden bowls and wooden music sticks - and that's where it all started from. Nobody else was doing anything else like it at that stage. So we'd sell the things.<sup>109</sup>*

*Punu* is the Pitjantjatjara word for 'wood' and is also the name given to objects that are carved out of wood for sale to tourists. The 'advent of the white man', and the impact of this encounter on material culture, as Rose described it, was threefold: changes to the subsistence economy rendered articles of material culture redundant, the acquisition of iron led to the 'improvement or substitution' of tools used previously and, most significantly:

Economic change took place whereby tools etc. which previously were implements of production that enabled the Aborigines to obtain the wherewithal of living became commodities, in the modern sense of the word. And which could be exchanged for cash, by sale to tourists and others.<sup>110</sup>

Rose noted that, although the first two conditions would appear to have been 'universal' in Australian experience, the production of commodities for a tourist trade would only occur 'in restricted areas where conditions were appropriate', noting that at Angas Downs these 'conditions were fulfilled'.<sup>111</sup>

Rose observed that the majority of the trade with tourists at the time of his fieldwork was in customary tools such as spears, boomerangs and dishes. He also noted that the arrival of tourists had impacted upon the production of these objects as Anangu began to alter the dimensions of the tools to suit the market, with little regard for their traditional function.<sup>112</sup> Rose also documented the emergent form that he called 'wood carving in the round'.<sup>113</sup> As part of his fieldwork he collected 'specimens' of carved echidna, duck, kangaroo, turkey,

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<sup>109</sup> Sandra Armstrong. AI-0100843.

<sup>110</sup> Rose, *The Wind of Change*, 39.

<sup>111</sup> Ibid.

<sup>112</sup> Ibid.

<sup>113</sup> Rose, Summary of lecture, July 1964.

marsupial rat, lizard, frog and snake as well as a ‘three pronged branch that had been modelled into an emu foot’.<sup>114</sup>



**Image 27 – Carving *punu* at Bloodwood Bore, 1962.**  
Source: SLNSW Frederick Rose Papers Box 8.



**Image 28 – *Punu*, a carved and decorated wooden dish from Bloodwood Bore, 1962.**  
Source: SLNSW Frederick Rose Papers Box 8.

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<sup>114</sup> Ibid. He noted that the type of animal being made at any one time followed a ‘definite fashion’ and that when he first arrived it was mainly lizards in production, but that ‘changed almost overnight’ when the most highly skilled carver of animal sculptures, a man called Harry, made a native marsupial rat that sold for one pound. Rose, *The Wind of Change*, 95. Rose’s diary records the proliferation of marsupial rats in production after this moment.

Despite Sandra Armstrong’s claim that ‘nobody else was doing anything like this at that stage’, the conditions that Rose described, while novel for Anangu in the southwest region at the time, have occurred in earlier times at various sites of colonial encounter, both in Australia and further afield. Examples of Aboriginal people selling artefacts and crafts in the southeast of Australia emerged as early as the 1860s at places such as Coranderrk, La Perouse and Lake Tyers.<sup>115</sup> Early in the twentieth century in the southeast, missionaries were important intermediaries in the sale of Aboriginal crafts and artefacts to outside markets,<sup>116</sup> and by the 1930s and 40s this practice of ‘mercantile evangelism’,<sup>117</sup> as Rowse called it, had developed in the north of the continent, facilitated by missions in Arnhem Land, Hermannsburg and Ernabella.<sup>118</sup> Phillips analyses this type of indigenous commodity production in settler colonial societies outside of Australia by tracing the history of the ‘souvenir arts’ in North America in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.<sup>119</sup> Her work in particular emphasises the importance of the economic value of objects in local economies where indigenous people were systematically marginalised from settler colonial economies through the expropriation of land, the establishment of reserves and processes of assimilation.<sup>120</sup> There is a comparable emerging body of scholarly literature highlighting the history of the economic value of Aboriginal artefact and craft production in nineteenth and twentieth Australia.<sup>121</sup>

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<sup>115</sup> D.E. Barwick, “And the Lubras Are Ladies Now,” in *Woman’s Role in Aboriginal Society*, Second (Canberra: Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies, 1974), 54–57; Nugent, ‘Boomerangs For Sale’, *Botany Bay*; Maria Nugent, “An Economy of Shells: A brief history of La Perouse Aboriginal women’s shell-work and its markets, 1880-2010,” in *Indigenous Participation in Australian Economies II*, ed. Ian Keen et al., vol. 2, (Canberra: ANU E Press, 2012), 211–27; Sculthorpe, “When Whitefellas Go Walkabout.”

<sup>116</sup> Nugent, “An Economy of Shells.”

<sup>117</sup> Rowse, *White Flour, White Power*, 89.

<sup>118</sup> See Winifred M. Hilliard, *The People in Between*, 150; Howard Morphy, *Ancestral Connections: Art and an Aboriginal System of Knowledge* (University of Chicago Press, 1991), 13–17; Howard Morphy, “Indigenous Art as Economy,” in *Culture, Economy and Governance in Aboriginal Australia*, ed. Diane J. Austin-Broos and Gaynor Marilyn Macdonald (Sydney University Press, 2005), 19–21. This is not an exhaustive list, rather it is intended to be illustrative, given that missionary markets is not the focus of my analysis.

<sup>119</sup> Ruth B. Phillips, *Trading Identities: The Souvenir in Native North American Art from the Northeast, 1700-1900* (University of Washington Press, 1998); Phillips, “‘Why Not Tourist Art.’” See also Nelson H. H. Graburn, *Ethnic and Tourist Arts: Cultural Expressions from the Fourth World* (Berkeley: University of California Press, Berkeley, 1976).

<sup>120</sup> Phillips, “‘Why Not Tourist Art,’” 102. See also Phillips, *Trading Identities*.

<sup>121</sup> See Barwick, “And the Lubras Are Ladies Now”; Sylvia Kleinert, “‘Jacky Jacky Was a Smart Young Fella’: A Study of Art and Aboriginality in South East Australia 1900-1980” (PhD thesis, ANU, 1994); Sylvia Kleinert, “Aboriginal Enterprises: Negotiating an Urban Aboriginality,” *Aboriginal History* 34 (2010): 171; Morphy, “Indigenous Art as Economy”; Nugent, ‘Boomerangs For Sale’ in *Botany Bay*; Nugent, “An Economy of Shells.”

It is not only the tourists, but also the economic aspect of this encounter, which is salient in the oral histories of Tjuki Pumpjack and Sandra Armstrong. During my research I have heard numerous stories about the Anangu encounter with tourists and the trade in *punu* at Angas Downs. What each of these stories has in common, apart from the exchange of objects, are the words ‘*How much? Two Bob! How much? Two bob!*’ I heard this same phrase uttered over and over again. Sandra recalls the exchange in this way:

*My mother was still learning and she'd come to me and tell me that the tourists were always asking her 'how much?'. They were asking my mother 'how much?' she'd tell me. She told me that they would ask my father, even while he was having a snooze, 'how much?' and he'd give the wrong price because he was actually going a bit blind by then, and they were hers to sell. 'How much?' they'd ask. None of them, mum or dad, could understand English and so they'd sell their carvings for anything really.... They'd say "One bob" but we'd say "Mum put the price up a bit!" I'd say that to Mum, "put the price up a bit mum! Ten bob! Twenty bob!"... Those of us who had been to school and who new a few things about numbers would be going "bump up the price a bit!" because we knew the oldies would be going and standing in front of the tourists and saying "One bob! Two bob! Two bob! Two bob!" Those mad people! Poor things.<sup>122</sup>*

Tjuki Pumpjack's account is:

*The tourists would come down along that road, and come through here, and so the old women started cutting wood to make wooden carvings, nulla-nulla, coolamons and wira...they'd all gather with their children, along the roadside when the tourists came through and sell their punu to the tourists. The old men would be there as well, selling their wira and kali. The tourists would ask them "how much is this?" and the old women would say "two bob". "How much?" "two bob" The whitefellas would be asking "how much?" "How much?" "two bob" "how much?" "two bob". They couldn't speak English and that's all they could say those old women! They'd be there selling all their punu items. They'd be collecting all these coins, lots of money, lots of silver.<sup>123</sup>*

It is currency and the question ‘how much?’ that are emphasised in both Tjuki's and Sandra's memories of exchanges with tourists. The unit of currency at Bloodwood Bore was not the penny, nor the shilling, but rather the ‘florin’ or two-shilling piece. Although the florin was not normally used as a unit of currency, goods purchased from the store and

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<sup>122</sup> Sandra Armstrong, AI-0108943.

<sup>123</sup> Tjuki Tjukanku Pumpjack, 20 September 2012.



prices Anangu asked for punu were always in multiples of the florin, which Anangu referred to as ‘two bob’.



**Image 29 – Currency in circulation at Bloodwood Bore, 1962.** Source: SLNSW Frederick Rose Papers Box 8.

Until the arrival of tourists there was very little cash in circulation on the station. Rose noted during his fieldwork that Tjuki was the only person employed by pastoralism and that he was paid a wage of 10 shillings a day, which he received in a lump sum when he went to Alice Springs. Sandra was not paid a wage, but given ‘5 quid’ to spend when she visited Alice Springs.<sup>124</sup> Tjuki describes this practice:

*We bin get paid right there, when you go to Alice Springs. We gettem paid on the road, somewhere on the road. We gettem money this side of Alice Springs, on the road, that's your pay. We gettem clothes then, good clothes. He takem from here, thinking this man might lose money, gamble you*

<sup>124</sup> Rose, *The Wind of Change*, 67. 10 Shillings a day was the equivalent of 2 pounds, 10 shillings a week for a five day week. This was considered to be slightly above the ‘award’ wage as declared in the *Wards Employment Ordinance, 1953-59*. What Tjuki was actually paid in hand is not known. According to the Ordinance, Sandra was entitled to 1 pound per week. Again, whether or not the amount of time she worked equated with the frequency she went to town and was paid ‘5 quid’ is not known. Details of the *Wards Employment Ordinance* included in Rose, *The Wind of Change*, 113. Rose made the observation that although the amounts of Tjuki and Sandra’s wages may have seemed small by 1962 standards, it was the amount laid down in the *Aboriginals Ordinance*, and that what was remarkable was the ‘the fact that a wage was being paid at all’ given they were recently ‘fully tribalised’. Rose pointed out that in many parts of the Territory wages were not being paid at all, even to those Aboriginal people that had been in ‘contact with white men for a long time’, 34.

*know... that's why we gotta takem Alice Springs. We get paid there, Alice Springs, we can gettem clothes then. Old Milton Liddle. Old Arthur, Arthur Liddle. We can get everything then. Cowboy shirt, cowboy hat.*<sup>125</sup>

With little opportunity to spend cash on pastoral leases a continuing circumstance in the post-war period, the system of paying wages when employees went to town was hardly unique. Rowse's research shows that across 20 stations in Central Australia around mid-century, pastoralists determined the frequency with which people were paid and that this was generally contingent upon the proximity of the pastoral lease to town and the frequency with which pastoralists made the trip.<sup>126</sup>

Tjuki links getting paid before going to town with concerns about Anangu gambling their wages in card games that were very popular at Bloodwood Bore. The perception of gambling as both 'sinful' and facilitating the 'accumulation of cash without "thrif"' was common in Central Australia at this time and, as Rowse has demonstrated, contributed in no small measure to the 'hinterland retailing' pioneered by Lutheran Missionaries as a means to influence how Anangu spent their money.<sup>127</sup> Pastor Kaleski from Areyonga mission 'brought stores' to Angas Downs every six weeks to sell to Anangu in the late 1950s. However, when Arthur Liddle opened a store on Angas Downs sometime around 1960, Liddle asked Kaleski to stop trading so as to not interfere with his business.<sup>128</sup> Rose argues that it was the opening of the store on Angas Downs that significantly transformed the economic exchange that was taking place between Anangu and tourists.

Prior to the store opening, Anangu had been accepting copper coins, or preferably material goods and food, in exchange for the carved wooden objects that they made. The nature of these early exchanges led to assumptions that 'the few shillings' that Anangu made from trade was trivial and amounted to begging. In a 1964 letter to tour companies that sought to discourage them from engaging Anangu in trade, Assistant Director of Welfare, Les Penhall wrote:

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<sup>125</sup> Tjuki Tjukanku Pumpjack, oral history recorded with author and translated by Linda Rive, 19 September 2012, Walara, Angas Downs, Northern Territory.

<sup>126</sup> Rowse, *White Flour, White Power*, 131–32.

<sup>127</sup> *Ibid*, 132–5. Rowse also notes that although patrol reports rarely mention station stores on pastoral leases, there were a number of stores in operation in the early 1950s and that the existence of stores at that time correlated with those pastoral leases that paid their workers most frequently.

<sup>128</sup> Rose, *The Wind of Change*, 168. Rose's fieldwork diaries contain a list of the 31 items that Kalleske carried with him, which included expected items such as flour, tea, tinned meat, biscuits and also more unusual items such as salvital, milo, plum pudding and tinned fish such as herring and kippers. Rose also recorded that Kalleske told him that in 1962 Areyonga mission paid out about 200 pounds a fortnight in wages and that most of it passed through the store.

The few shillings that the Aboriginals make in this way tends to undo the work of my officers who regularly visit the area to try and curb the growth of these rather unsavoury places...I also believe it is common practice for tourists to hand out sweets or ‘two bob’ to Aboriginal children and adults to take their photograph. This sort of thing could have an adverse effect in our attempt to teach the Natives the principle of work for pay, and make them parasites on society.<sup>129</sup>

Penhall’s letter reflects A.P. Elkin’s description of this kind of economic exchange between Aboriginal people and tourists as an example of ‘intelligent parasitism’. As he understood it, this act of begging was a deliberate performance, and in the case of his observations along the Trans-continental Railway Line, Aboriginal people took the advantage with their ‘well-developed art of preying’ upon the passengers:

Donning tattered garments, and borrowing babies if they have none of their own, groups of men and women visit the train stopping places to sell their own few artefacts, to amuse and to beg.<sup>130</sup>

Elkin observed that the provision of ration depots and the work of the missions had failed to ‘prevent this active, successful, interesting, and new form of hunting’.<sup>131</sup> Assimilation policy sought to create self-sufficient citizens through education, domestication, and the transformation from ‘hunter-gather’ to wage labourer within the settler capitalist economy. That the money earned from the sale of *punu* was written off as merely a ‘few shillings’, and seen as undermining attempts to teach Anangu the ‘principle of work for pay’ highlights the ways in which ‘work’ was understood primarily in material terms and within a wage labour paradigm. However, Rose argued that:

To pass value judgement on the action of the Aborigines and describe them as parasitic on the white man in any way, [was] completely to miss the point.<sup>132</sup>

Once the store opened and provided an opportunity to purchase items such as flour, tea, tinned meat, ‘cool drink’, fruit, sweets and bread, Anangu started refusing the tokens that that tourists were offering and began ‘demanding money instead’.<sup>133</sup>

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<sup>129</sup> L.N. Penhall to Boomerang Tours, Sampsons tours, C.A.T.A Tours & Pioneer Tours, July 16th 1964, NTAS NTRS 629, Jim Downing, Research Material relating to *Ngurra Walytja: Country of My Spirit* 1964-1972.

<sup>130</sup> A. P. Elkin, “Reaction and Interaction,” 168.

<sup>131</sup> Ibid.

<sup>132</sup> Rose, *The Wind of Change*, 98.



**Image 30 – Anangu waiting for the store to open at Bloodwood Bore, 1962.** Source: SLNSW Frederick Rose Papers Box 8.



**Image 31 – The store at Angas Downs, 1962.** Source: Frederick Rose, *The Wind of Change*, illustration 15.

<sup>133</sup> Ibid., 35.

Located inside the homestead, Rose noted that the store was entered through a padlocked door from the living room. To open the store, a 5 x 2 ft. corrugated iron shutter on a wooden frame would be lowered, which also served as the counter (**Image 31**).<sup>134</sup> Sandra Armstrong emphasises the importance of being able to purchase food as a motivating force behind making and trading punu with tourists:

*They would get a lot of silver and with that money they'd go to the store and buy a lot of food! Tinameat, tea, sugar. They only had to do this once to learn to rush off and cut more wood!*<sup>135</sup>

Whereas missionaries had facilitated most artefact production in various locations around Australia until that point, Anangu at Bloodwood Bore were selling directly to tourists.<sup>136</sup> In a December 1965 report from Angas Downs, a patrol officer Stewart noted that Anangu at Angas Downs had 'a better comprehension of monetary values than Aboriginals on other stations'.<sup>137</sup> Furthermore, Rose wrote that at the time of his visit it was the general rule that Anangu demanded cash payment for anything that they did for a white person and that the general attitude of Anangu at Bloodwood Bore 'to the white man was much more self-assured and militant'.<sup>138</sup> He observed that:

The general attitude of the Aborigines in 1962 was that they endeavoured to obtain the highest price they were able from the tourists. Nevertheless, they knew the approximate value of the objects they produced and, even if there were no purchaser, they would not sell them at 'give away' prices.<sup>139</sup>

Rose described Mick<sup>140</sup> (No. 11) as an 'ardent trader', 'astute businessman', maker of the finest boomerangs at Bloodwood Bore and enthusiastic gambler who was unable to count

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<sup>134</sup> Ibid., 62.

<sup>135</sup> Sandra Armstrong, AI-0108943.

<sup>136</sup> Rose, *The Wind of Change*, 40. Rose cited La Perouse as the only other example of direct commodity exchange at this time. While missions dominated the artefact and craft market at this time, Aboriginal Enterprises in Belgrave, Melbourne had been operating since 1952 as a tourist outlet for Aboriginal art, artefacts and furnishings. See Kleinert, "Aboriginal Enterprises."

<sup>137</sup> D.A. Stewart, Patrol Report, 6 December 1965, NAA F133 1965/20, Angas Downs Census Files.

<sup>138</sup> Rose, *The Wind of Change*, 72.

<sup>139</sup> Ibid., 35.

<sup>140</sup> Mick's daughter, Nellie Mick, lives in Imanpa and was born on Angas Downs. She is one of the first women that I met when I started going to Imanpa in 2011. We have come to know each other well over the years and I have sat with her and relayed information about her father that is included in Rose's ethnography and fieldwork diaries. Nellie was always really pleased to hear stories about her father from the book. She is very shy and was never interested in recording any oral histories.

and would come to him frequently to get him to count his money.<sup>141</sup> On the 4th of September in 1962 rose wrote in his diary that Mick had done well at trading that day:

He had 9 pound-5-3d wrapped up in a piece of rag although part of this money he won at cards. He sold a boomerang for 10/- and had his photograph taken 13 times for which he received 26/-...Some of the tourists did not want to pay 2/- but the man who originally got No. 11 to pose said, "fair crack of the whip: give him a go!" And the other tourists paid up. No. 11 did not have a single copper coin in his possession!<sup>142</sup>

Two days later Rose wrote in his field diary that he saw Mick had five nice boomerangs for sale that day and asked Mick how much he was going to sell them for, to which he replied 'a pound'. Rose saw Mick trading later that day just before the buses left and overheard a young woman approach him and point to the boomerang he had under his arm, telling him "I'll give you one bob for that: there aren't any more tourists coming through today!" Mick's response to the young woman's offer was to walk 'away without saying a word, no doubt in disgust'.<sup>143</sup> Rose wrote that he often overheard Anangu describing tourists who did not want to part with their money, or tried to get a lower price, as being 'hungry'.

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<sup>141</sup> Rose, *The Wind of Change*, 35. Sandra Armstrong has also remarked about Mick being a skilled carver and she remembers him as making good money from *punu*. Rose noted that Mick was very skilled in finishing off boomerangs to show contrasting colours of the heart and sap of the Mulga wood to best effect.

<sup>142</sup> *Ibid.*, 147. Rose noted that in 1962 Anangu had completely rejected copper coins, largely due to their lack of purchasing power at the store. He recorded finding copper coins on the ground and in the bin around Angas Downs, 65-6.

<sup>143</sup> *Ibid.*, 149.



**Image 32 – Mick the ‘ardent trader’, ‘astute businessman’ and maker of the finest boomerangs at Bloodwood Bore.**

Source: SLNSW Frederick Rose Papers Box 8.



**Image 33 – Anangu trading with tourists at Bloodwood Bore, 1962. Mick is in front and has his back turned to the camera.**

Source: SLNSW Frederick Rose Papers Box 8.

Listening again to one of the earliest recordings made with Tjuki Pumpjack on the veranda of his house in Imanpa, some two years after it was created, I discovered a conversation at the end of the recording that had not been transcribed. Tjuki had finished his oral history telling, and he, Linda Rive and I continued to have a casual conversation. During this conversation, Tjuki Pumpjack told us that when Anangu told tourists a price sometimes the tourists would say that was too much. However, he felt that ‘two bob’ was like ‘pocket money’ and that some tourists were not able to recognise the work that went into the carvings. He said that some old people at the time did not properly understand the value of money and would stand on the side of the road and say ‘two bob, two bob’ to the tourists, and accept ‘anything’ for their *punu*. However, those people who were knowledgeable would ask for proper money for their work – for well-made boomerangs for example – and they would get it, and they would tell the tourists that they could not be cheated out of the money that their carvings deserved.<sup>144</sup>

There is a sense in Tjuki’s oral histories from this time, as well as in Rose’s observations, that the arrival of tourists, while providing Anangu with an important source of income, contributed to the emergent spatial order on Bloodwood Bore that separated the blackfella and whitefella domains. It was whitefellas who controlled the seemingly abundant supplies of food, cash and material goods. Until the arrival of tourists, it was also whitefellas who determined the share that Anangu received. A sphere of encounter and exchange developed in the vicinity of the Chalet, and it was in this space that the value of *punu* as commodity was being constantly negotiated, as Anangu incorporated money into what anthropologist Basil Sansom has referred to as an already existing ‘modality of exchange’.<sup>145</sup> Anangu had been exchanging material culture, ochre, ‘bush tobacco’, knowledge and marriage partners well before pastoralists, missionaries and tourists arrived.<sup>146</sup> Sansom observed that when money is absorbed into Aboriginal modalities of exchange it ceases to

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<sup>144</sup> Ibid. I am paraphrasing Tjuki here. Tjuki had finished his ‘official’ story telling and he, Linda Rive and myself were sitting around and talking about various things and the value of *punu* was one of them. I had left the tape recorder running and Linda was interpreting on the spot, as she always did. This part of the recording was never transcribed so I have worked from the recording and the on-the-spot interpretation.

<sup>145</sup> Basil Sansom, “The Grammar of Exchange,” in *Being Black: Aboriginal Cultures in “Settled” Australia*, ed. Ian Keen (Canberra: Aboriginal Studies Press, 1988), 159–77.

<sup>146</sup> D.J Mulvaney, “‘The Chain of Connection’: The Material Evidence,” in *Tribes and Boundaries in Australia*, ed. Nicolas Peterson (Canberra: Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies, 1976), 72–94; Isabel McBryde, “Travellers in Storied Landscapes: A Case Study in Exchanges and Heritage,” *Aboriginal History* 24 (2000): 152–174; Anthony Redmond and Fiona Skyring, “Exchange and Appropriation: The Wurnan Economy and Aboriginal Land and Labour at Karunjie Station, North-Western Australia,” in *Indigenous Participation in Australian Economies: Historical and Anthropological Perspectives*, ed. Ian Keen, vol. 1 (Canberra: ANU E Press, 2010), 73–90.



exist purely in market terms. Rather, in the spatial zone of the Anangu camp, cash that was procured around the Chalet was transformed into a resource that was subject to valuation in terms of the services of ‘help, helping and helping out’ among people who share history and a social relationship.<sup>147</sup> In this sense, *punu* can be understood not just as commodity, but also as a significant technique in the ‘production of locality’ and sociality at Bloodwood Bore.

### Emerging economies and making place

Appadurai conceptualises the ‘production of locality’ as a phenomenological quality that ‘expresses itself in certain kinds of agency, sociality, and reproducibility’.<sup>148</sup> In focusing on locality as a ‘structure of feeling that is produced by particular forms of intentional activity and that yields particular sorts of material effects’, Appadurai notes that this phenomenological quality cannot be separated from the ‘actual settings in and through which social life is reproduced’.<sup>149</sup> He argues that the production of actual existing *places* is ‘always historically grounded and thus contextual’, which is to say that places are what they are because they are derived from already produced places, and in relation to, and in spite of what they are not.<sup>150</sup> The circumstances at Bloodwood Bore throughout this period are a rich resource for exploring the mutual production of people in place and the ways in which this was created and maintained under ‘conditions of anxiety and entropy, social wear and flux’.<sup>151</sup>

At a time of increasing government intervention in Anangu lives, and given the limited economic opportunities available to them, the immediacy of the *punu* exchange, the direct access to significant sums of cash, and the greatly enhanced circulation of material goods and resources at Bloodwood Bore was undoubtedly appealing to Anangu. Patrol reports from the late 1950s onwards reflect a significant increase in numbers living at Angas Downs and also considerable movement between Bloodwood Bore and the mission settlements at Ernabella and Areyonga.<sup>152</sup> The emergence of a commodity driven market at Bloodwood Bore resulted in income from the sale of artefacts surpassing all other means.

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<sup>147</sup> Sansom, “The Grammar of Exchange,” 159.

<sup>148</sup> Appadurai, *Modernity At Large*, 178.

<sup>149</sup> *Ibid.*, 182.

<sup>150</sup> *Ibid.*, 182–8. I have chosen to use the term ‘place’ rather than Appadurai’s ‘neighborhood’.

<sup>151</sup> *Ibid.*, 181.

<sup>152</sup> I will explore the mobile nature of the *punu* trade and Bloodwood Bore as a node in a wider socio-economic network in greater detail in chapter four.

Rose estimated that 85 % of all money in circulation on the station came from the tourist trade.<sup>153</sup>

Nancy Munn recorded that Anangu at Areyonga in 1964-5 were paid fortnightly and that pay day was known as 'buyin' time', the time when money was spent at the store, while the week between was known as 'nothing-a-week'.<sup>154</sup> Furthermore, life on Ernabella and Areyonga missions was largely structured around routines of work and education, both religious and secular. The implementation of dormitories and communal feeding at Areyonga prevented people from preparing and sharing food according to their own systems of relatedness, a profoundly disruptive policy that Rowse identifies as probably the most significant attempt by colonial authority to intervene in Aboriginal lives in Central Australia.<sup>155</sup>

In contrast, the only direct contact with Christianity and the missions at Bloodwood Bore was Reverend Kalleske's 4-6 weekly visits. Rose observed that it was 'certain' that Anangu understood his primary role to be the selling of goods and the purchasing of dingo scalps.<sup>156</sup> He also noted that 'Christian ideology and the associated code of morality' had had little effect at Angas Downs; both gambling and chewing bush tobacco (two very popular past-times at Bloodwood Bore) were considered to be immoral by the missionaries and according to Rose, Christian morality was 'treated with contempt by the large majority of Aborigines'.<sup>157</sup> Arguably more important, Angas Downs, a cattle station owned by an Arrernte man and a Luritja woman, offered an opportunity for Anangu to camp relatively free from interference and according to their own cultural codes. During a visit to Bloodwood Bore in August 1960 Pastor Albrecht described the scene he encountered:

When out there we found nearly 100 people at the place, many of whom were passing through on the way to Ernabella, others going back to Areyonga...it appears that the whole atmosphere at the place attracts the people and they are a contented lot. Also, Mr Arthur Liddle is very sympathetic and prepared to help them. It appears the amount of meat he kills for their use is many times of what he

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<sup>153</sup> Rose, Summary of Lecture, July 1964.

<sup>154</sup> Nancy Munn, 'A Report on field research at Areyonga 1964-65', SLNSW Frederick Rose Papers, Box 26.

<sup>155</sup> Rowse, *White Flour, White Power*, 153. See also Cowlshaw, *Rednecks, Eggheads and Blackfellas*, 115.

<sup>156</sup> Rose, *The Wind of Change*, 37.

<sup>157</sup> *Ibid.*, 38. Rose did note that ritual Christianity, primarily the singing of hymns, had a 'very great appeal', particularly among younger Anangu.

uses himself. This is probably the main reason why most of them, with the exception of a few, are looking well and obviously not suffering.<sup>158</sup>

At a time of increasing interference in Anangu lives, as part of government attempts to assimilate them, Bloodwood Bore emerged as a ‘rich and exciting socialising space’.<sup>159</sup> Like the weir of 1950s and 60s Sydney, described by Heather Goodall and Allison Cadzow in their history of Aboriginal people on the Georges River as a site where Aboriginal people embedded their emerging social network, and thus resisted the Housing Commission’s attempts to assimilate them, Bloodwood Bore too was a relatively informal and unregulated space that emerged as an important meeting place for Anangu in an era of assimilation.

Rose documented in detail the regular hunting of kangaroo and the practice of dividing up and distributing the meat among families in the camp. He observed that the kangaroo was killed and cooked in a very particular way (never by a woman) and divided up among ‘a considerable number’ of people.<sup>160</sup> Despite not being able to formulate ‘any definite kinship rule’ for its division, he did note that the economic relations enacted were ‘not individual, but collective’ and ‘certainly retained some features that stemmed from that [earlier tribal] condition’.<sup>161</sup> Similarly, the redistribution of rations and money was also an important part of daily life on Angas Downs and Rose observed that time spent gambling, by both men and women either playing cards or the ‘matchbox game’, was the ‘largest item for any single activity’.<sup>162</sup> However, despite the significant sums of money changing hands, because of the apparent lack of relationship between this practice and an ‘earlier tribal condition’, Rose directed little attention to gambling as a means of distributing resources at Bloodwood Bore.

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<sup>158</sup> Pastor Albrecht to Director of Welfare, October 1960, NAA F1 1955/552.

<sup>159</sup> Goodall and Cadzow, *Rivers and Resilience*, 211.

<sup>160</sup> Rose, *The Wind of Change*, 73–74.

<sup>161</sup> *Ibid.*, 74. For similar observations regarding game sharing see Nicolas Peterson, “Demand Sharing: Reciprocity and the Pressure for Generosity among Foragers,” *American Anthropologist* 95, no. 4 (December 1993): 865–67; Nicolas Peterson and Jon C. Altman, “Rights to Game and Rights to Cash among Contemporary Australian Hunter-Gatherers,” in *Hunters and Gatherers: Property, Power and Ideology*, ed. Tim Ingold et. al. (Oxford: Berg, 1988), 77–80.

<sup>162</sup> *Ibid.*, 77. Decks of cards were only available in Alice Springs and Anangu played with a pack until they ‘were literally falling to pieces, stained red with sand and with the print half rubbed away’ (**Image 19**). *Ibid.*, 63. Rose noted that paper money was frequently used at card games and that big money could be won or lost this way, recording that one of his ‘informants’ ‘No. 142’, a man named Timothy, brought him thirty pounds to count, which he had won at cards and left in the possession of Rose in a dirty green sock. Thirty pounds was more than twice the weekly wage of a whitefella in Alice Springs in 1962. *Ibid.*, 159.



Image 34 – Card game at Bloodwood Bore, 1962. Source: SLNSW Frederick Rose Papers Box 8.



Image 35 - Playing cards that Anangu had been using at Bloodwood Bore. Rose exchanged a new deck for these cards, which he noted had stained red by the sand. Source: SLNSW Frederick Rose Papers Box 8.

The production and consumption of food and other resources is an integral process in Anangu culture. Building upon Fred Myers' notion of relatedness as something that is produced and maintained in social action, and Basil Sansom's conceptualisation of Aboriginal social relations as 'a grammar of service exchanges', anthropologist Nicolas Peterson, in his work on 'demand sharing', argued that the exchange of food and material goods is integral to the production and reproduction of social relations among Aboriginal people.<sup>163</sup> Rather than grounded in an 'ethic of generosity' and unsolicited giving, Peterson posits the exchange of goods as a complex set of behaviours, not simply predicated upon need, but bound up in relationships that have to be constantly produced and maintained, and understood in terms of hierarchy and authority, responsibility and obligation.<sup>164</sup> *Punu*, in particular the money generated from the exchange and the subsequent access to a more diverse range of resources, assumed a significant role in the process of producing and maintaining relatedness at Bloodwood Bore.



Image 36 – George (No. 16) cutting up kangaroo that has been cooked in ashes in the ground, Bloodwood Bore, 1962. Source: SLNSW Frederick Rose Papers Box 8.

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<sup>163</sup> Peterson, "Demand Sharing."

<sup>164</sup> Ibid.

No. 16 cooked and cut up a kangaroo shot by No. 131 yesterday afternoon as follows:

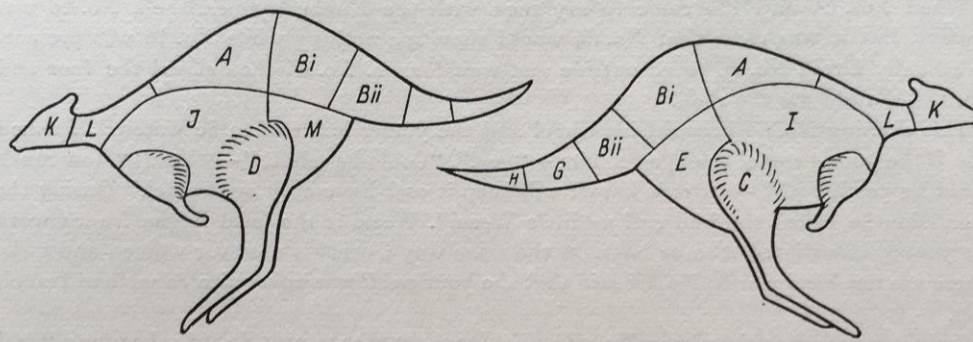


Diagram 9 Division and distribution of kangaroo

A went to Nos. 97, 113 and 114  
 B went to No. 17 who gave part ii to No. 133  
 C went to No. 24 and family  
 D went to Nos. 118 and to 52 and 53  
 E went to No. 129 who gave half to No. 100  
 F went to No. 98  
 G went to No. 18  
 H went to No. 16  
 I went to No. 2  
 J went to No. 112  
 K went to No. 128 } No. 16 insisted  
 L went to No. 132 } that the head was divided  
 M went to No. 120  
 The liver went to No. 111  
 The intestines went to No. 118

No. 131 received the two front legs which he distributed elsewhere.

Image 37 – Rose’s documentation of the division of the kangaroo that was cooked and cut up by George (No. 16) as captured in Image 20. Source, Frederick Rose, *The Wind of Change*, 170.

Jon Altman and Nicolas Peterson have both shown how the availability of cash in Aboriginal economies led to the adaptation of gambling as a mode of redistribution to serve local needs and family obligations.<sup>165</sup> Furthermore, they have observed that although there were no strict rules for the distribution of cash, there are ‘clear parallels’ between the treatments of game and cash and the goods that the latter purchased.<sup>166</sup> While Rose viewed the hunting and distribution of the kangaroo as one of the last ‘vestiges of earlier tribal economic relations’, he was not able to see the gambling that was taking place all around him on a daily basis as an articulation of the socio-economic relations he believed to be disappearing. Rose perceived the encounter with settler capitalism at Angas Downs as the

<sup>165</sup> Jon C. Altman, “Gambling as a Mode of Redistributing and Accumulating Cash among Aborigines: A Case Study from Arnhem Land,” in *Gambling in Australia*, ed. G. Caldwell et al. (Sydney: Croom Helm, 1985), 50–67; Nicolas Peterson, “Cash, Commoditisation and Authenticity: When Do Aboriginal People Stop Being Hunter-Gatherers?,” in *Cash, Commoditisation and Changing Foragers* (Osaka: National Museum of Ethnology, 1991), 67–90.

<sup>166</sup> Peterson and Altman, “Rights to Game and Rights to Cash among Contemporary Australian Hunter-Gatherers,” 80–81.

most significant factor contributing to the acceleration of ‘detrribalisation’ and ‘acculturation’. Thus, while his archive is a rich record of the economic encounter at Bloodwood Bore, his analysis obscures the ways in which access to cash and goods for sale was incorporated into existing modalities of exchange, enabling Anangu to continue reproducing social relationships that were fundamental to their autonomy and identity. In seeking evidence to support his theories of historical change, and what he understood to be the inevitable transition from hunter-gatherer to absorption within the capitalist economy, Rose missed the subtle and complex ways that Anangu were drawing upon their existing cultural materials to embed themselves at Bloodwood Bore.

While the value of *punu* was determined in monetary terms in the exchange with tourists, the processes of distribution and redistribution at Bloodwood Bore demonstrates the ways in which economic objects ‘circulate in different *regimes of value* in space and time’,<sup>167</sup> and illustrate Arjun Appadurai’s observation that a commodity is a ‘thoroughly socialised thing’. Sandra Armstrong’s oral histories from Bloodwood Bore emphasise the sociality of *punu* at Angas Downs:

*They’d go off on overnight trips to collect wood. They’d chop wood and cut and carve and carve and make things. Meantime Mr and Mrs Liddle would be buying rasps and tomahawks and files and bring them back to the store and of course they would be instantly snapped up! It was really lovely, what was going on and we were all learning.*<sup>168</sup>

*Punu* as souvenir was not just about the exchange of goods and resources, but a vessel for the all-important transfer of knowledge between people. Sandra’s memories from this period are replete with references to learning. The younger generation taught their parents about money and the value of their work in a changing socio-economic landscape; the older generation taught their young people how to carve objects from wood:

*All the young people was learning from their parents. How to carve coolamon. Anything. Put wire in the fire and hot wire burn all this smoke. We was helping our parents.*<sup>169</sup>

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<sup>167</sup> Arjun Appadurai, “Introduction: Commodities and the Politics of Value,” in *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective*, ed. Arjun Appadurai (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 4.

<sup>168</sup> Sandra Armstrong, AI-0108943. Rose also commented on the high demand for rasps, tomahawks and files for the production of artefacts. Rose, *The Wind of Change*, 46.

<sup>169</sup> *Ibid.*

Rose took many photographs at Bloodwood Bore that captured family groups sitting around a campfire carving *punu* together. The sociality of souvenir production has emerged as significant in other places where the tourist trade provided local people with an important income source. The souvenir trade at La Perouse facilitated family camping trips to collect wood and raw materials and the exchange of cultural knowledge and stories.<sup>170</sup> Ilaria Vanni describes the making of boomerangs and shell-work for tourists at La Perouse as being grounded in the handing down through generations of technical and local knowledge made manifest in a production process patterned by kinship relations. The souvenir became a vehicle for La Perouse families to secure the survival and transmission of local knowledge and Vanni illustrates how they act as ‘cultural markers of the community’ which both represents and recognises itself in them.<sup>171</sup>

Similar to the carved wooden objects made in La Perouse, the technique of using hot wire to burn a design into the surface of an object was used to embellish *punu* at Angas Downs. Rose observed that the technique was relatively new at Bloodwood Bore in 1962. Arthur Liddle had told him that it was he who first suggested that Anangu should use the method sometime around late 1960 or early 1961, and conversations with Anangu made him ‘reasonably certain’ that they had not used this method of ornamentation before then.<sup>172</sup> However, the method of branding artefacts was in use at Ernabella by the late 1950s and Albert Namatjira at Hermannsburg has been cited as an influence on the innovation in the 1940s.<sup>173</sup> This technique emerged on Angas Downs with the movement of people between these places as part of a journey of knowledge that possibly originated in the southeast where the technique was being used as early as the late nineteenth century.

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<sup>170</sup> Nugent, *Botany Bay*, 83. See also Ilaria Vanni, “Bridging the Gap: The Production of Tourist Objects at La Perouse,” in *The Oxford Companion to Aboriginal Art and Culture* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 2000), 402.

<sup>171</sup> Vanni, “Bridging the Gap,” 402.

<sup>172</sup> Rose, *The Wind of Change*, 93.

<sup>173</sup> Archival documents and objects from Ernabella Arts show branded *punu* in production in the 1950s, Ara Iritija, Ernabella Arts Collection. Billy Cooley, an Anangu man cited in John Carty’s history of Maraku Arts, mentions Namatjira as an influence on the technique. Carty, “Maraku Arts and Crafts,” 131.





Image 38 – Branded *punu* collected by Rose at Bloodwood Bore, 1962.  
Source: SLNSW Frederick Rose Papers Box 8.



**Image 39 – Decorating *punu* at Bloodwood Bore, 1962.**  
Source: SLNSW Frederick Rose Papers Box 8.

The Pitjantjatjara term for any meaningful mark is *walka*, a practice Anangu have always used to mark objects, bodies and the physical landscape in sometimes enduring, at other times, ephemeral ways.<sup>174</sup> Rose took photographs of a young girl at Bloodwood Bore with a wire that Anangu call *mani mani*, making marks in the red dirt as part of a storytelling practice called *milpatjunanyi* that involves drawing lines in the sand and beating the earth to establish the rhythm of the narrative. This practice is evoked in a description of marking *punu* from Amata community:

And it is said in the olden times, beating the sand with a stick, they were telling stories. And now, thinking of these stories, we tell them and draw them. These stories are caused to rise in our work. And we work truly hard making these stories rise by drawing.<sup>175</sup>

*Walka* encoded *punu* with stories and knowledge.<sup>176</sup> In *The Pitjantjatjara and Their Crafts* Peter Brokensha noted that there were arguments made that artefacts being produced were ‘non-traditional’ due to the fact that they were being ‘made for money’.<sup>177</sup> He argued that although the objects were no longer used for their traditional purpose, ‘the tendency for change and adaption was more pronounced’, and yet the practice of branding objects with *walka* retained some ‘traditionality’ through the depiction of stories and myths.<sup>178</sup> Although Rose described the poker work used by Anangu as ornamentation, he did also note that Anangu stated ‘quite emphatically’ that some designs were used only by women while others were used only by men, indicating that the designs had cultural significance as well.<sup>179</sup> Rose also observed that while the men sometimes used *karku*, or red ochre, to decorate their artefacts for sale, women never used *karku* because it was ‘too dangerous for them’.<sup>180</sup> Despite Rose’s efforts to maintain a discrete distinction between ‘sacred’ and ‘profane’ art, the evidence at Bloodwood Bore showed *punu* to be capable of moving

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<sup>174</sup> For a discussion of *walka* as a mode of meaningful ‘marking’ see Munn, “The Transformation of Subjects into Objects,” 142–43.

<sup>175</sup> Nelly Paterson quoted in Peter Brokensha, *The Pitjantjatjara and Their Crafts* (North Sydney: Aboriginal Arts Board, Australia Council, 1975), 47.

<sup>176</sup> For a discussion of the method of *walka* and the transmission of stories in relation to *punu* see Brokensha, *The Pitjantjatjara and Their Crafts*; Carty, “Maraku Arts and Crafts.”

<sup>177</sup> Brokensha, *The Pitjantjatjara and Their Crafts*, 69.

<sup>178</sup> *Ibid.*, 49.

<sup>179</sup> Rose, *The Wind of Change*, 92.

<sup>180</sup> *Ibid.*, 93.

between domains, thus leading him to comment somewhat ironically ‘so much for what one might call profane art’.<sup>181</sup>

Appadurai argues that space and time are ‘socialised and localised through complex and deliberate practices of performance, representation, and action’.<sup>182</sup> Furthermore, he states that a tendency to focus on practices of localisation as being either *cosmological* or *ritual*, distracts us from their ‘active, intentional, and productive character’ and creates the ‘dubious impression of mechanical reproduction’.<sup>183</sup> The ‘truly hard’ work of making the stories rise in *punu* can be understood as a technique in the ‘hard, often deliberate work of place making’.<sup>184</sup> Similar to the earlier nineteenth century examples of tourism-inspired commodity production in the southeast of Australia and in North America, *punu* emerged in the midst of increasing economic marginalisation experienced by Anangu as a result of colonisation. Carved wooden objects continued to play an integral role in the local economy, metamorphosing from technologies produced to exploit the natural resources of the desert, to commodities that were exchanged for cash. More than just a commodity, *punu* provided Anangu with the raw materials for social life, and thus this merging of economies enabled Anangu to continue carving a place for themselves in the desert.



**Image 40 – Family carving *punu* at *wiltja* with kangaroo in the foreground.** Source: SLNSW Frederick Rose Papers Box 8.

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<sup>181</sup> Ibid. For a discussion of the different domains, or regimes of value that Aboriginal art circulates in see Morphy, “Indigenous Art as Economy.”

<sup>182</sup> Appadurai, *Modernity At Large*, 180.

<sup>183</sup> Ibid.

<sup>184</sup> Raffles, “‘Local Theory’,” 329.

Bloodwood Bore really was a ‘new’ Angas Downs. The emergence of roads, bores, ‘ration-times’ and tourists heralded a new era in the cultural encounter on the station. The impact of growing settlement populations, an increasingly sedentary lifestyle and the intensification of government interference into Anangu lives, gave rise to an emergent spatial order on the station that materialised in separate spheres, or domains of social life and exchange. At a time that is largely characterised as a period of increasing dependence, the *punu* trade at Bloodwood Bore provided people with significant economic freedoms. As money from the sale of *punu* was assimilated into existing ‘modalities of exchange’ it acted alongside game, rations and other material goods as an essential means for the creation and reproduction of social relations. As Diane Austin-Broos has highlighted, for ‘people who are economically marginal and pushed to the edge of the nation-state, these kind of relations have central importance’.<sup>185</sup> Bloodwood Bore’s *locatedness* resulted in a set of circumstances that enabled Anangu to keep skills and knowledge in circulation. *Punu* afforded a greater degree of economic independence than on other stations or mission settlements at the time, and thus emerged as a vehicle for asserting and maintaining cultural identity during a period of marked change.

Despite the economic benefits that *punu* generated for Anangu, the emergence of tourism in the region presented the Northern Territory Welfare Branch with a new set of challenges. By the mid-1960s the *punu* trade had extended from Bloodwood Bore to form a network of trading sites along the road between Angas Downs and Ayers Rock. Combined with the trade in dingo scalps, and facilitated by the use of camels as a mode of transport, more frequent contact and new forms of social interaction between Anangu emerged. Travelling, trading and exchanging with family, Anangu wove a web of mobility in the southwest that persisted in frustrating Welfare Branch attempts to get them to ‘settle’ into wage labouring, domesticated, nuclear family units on the mission settlements at Areyonga and Ernabella. Anangu visibility, as well as their mobility, emerged as a significant problem for the Northern Territory Administration, and as such Anangu are increasingly cast as ‘the itinerants’ in the records surviving from this period. In tracing the itineraries of ‘the itinerants’, the next chapter pans out to situate Bloodwood Bore in the broader regional socio-economic network, and shift the focus to practices of place-making from cultures of economy to cultures of travel.

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<sup>185</sup> Diane Austin-Broos, “Places, Practices, and Things,” 118.



## CHAPTER FOUR

## ‘THE ITINERANTS’: ANANGU MOBILITY AND ADMINISTRATIVE IMAGINARIES

An increasingly sedentarised way of life at Bloodwood Bore did not necessarily result in a condition of complete immobility. Anangu oral histories map changing itineraries of travel in the region in the post-war period. A distance of some 250 kilometres separated the mission settlements at Areyonga and Ernabella, and yet travel between these two places was common and is frequently described in the oral histories of Anangu in the southwest. These two mission settlements, and the stations that lay between them, became the knots that tied the threads of travel together in a network that took shape as Anangu incorporated new places into existing patterns of mobility.

These lines of travel not only feature in Anangu oral memory; they have also left traces in the written archives. A series of letters and patrol reports produced by the Northern Territory Welfare Branch throughout the 1960s tracks and monitors Anangu travel between Ernabella and Areyonga. Constructing Anangu as ‘the itinerants’, the government documents represent Anangu mobility as anathema to the prevailing ideology of assimilation that sought to bring about their transformation into sedentary and self-sufficient citizens of the Australian nation state. However, Anangu had always been travellers, and their mobile mode of engaging with the world was problematic for the ‘settler’ state.

This chapter zooms out and broadens the perspective on Angas Downs to encompass the wider geography within which it was situated. The chapter begins by tracing a ‘story track’ that is frequently articulated in Anangu oral histories, which connects Angas Downs to the mission settlements as Ernabella and Areyonga. Focusing on mobility, the idea of place as bounded location becomes unstable. Anangu movements between the mission settlements and the stations reveal the ways in which places are created in the movements of people, and defined in relation to one another. In taking a ‘network’ approach, the chapter reveals the regional system that emerged in the southwest as a result of the encounter with whitefellas and new technologies of travel, highlighting the ways in which pre-existing patterns of mobility and exchanges continued to resonate.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Carey and Lydon, “Indigenous Networks: Historical Trajectories and Contemporary Connections,” 2.

By juxtaposing Anangu itineraries, with the discursive construction of Anangu as ‘the itinerants’ in the written archives, this chapter examines how mobility was seen and understood by the Northern Territory Welfare Branch. Taking an ethnographic approach to the written sources and reading them ‘along the archival grain’ reveals assimilation policy as an unstable technique of governance. Replete with tensions and uncertainties the Welfare Branch correspondence, when read alongside Anangu itineraries, is a productive ‘site’ for analysing what the Administration thought they were doing, what they hoped to achieve and what was actually happening ‘on the ground’. By foregrounding the encounters between different cultures of travel, the chapter highlights mobility as an important feature of experience that plays a central role in the production of locality and creation of places. Furthermore, it argues for mobility as a productive lens through which to grapple with the complex legacies of colonialism and cultural encounter, capable of capturing histories and economies that are obscured when we view place as bounded and fixed.

### ‘WE WERE ALWAYS TRAVELLING’

The alternating rhythm of *ananyi* (travelling) and *nyinanyi* (camping) described in chapter two still characterises contemporary desert life. Anangu regularly journey along well-travelled roads that connect communities and kin in a dense network of relatedness. These movements reflect observations made in other remote regions regarding the frequency and importance of ‘inter-community mobility’.<sup>2</sup> The ‘Bush Bus’ plays a central role in contemporary Anangu life, servicing over 35 remote communities that are spatially organised in several ‘clusters’ that lie to the north, south and west from Alice Springs. The Docker River route leaves Alice Springs twice a week, stopping at Erldunda, Mt. Ebenezer, Imanpa, Curtin Springs, Yulara and Mutitjulu along the 750 km trip through the southwest.

Everybody ‘out bush’ knows the Bush Bus timetable — what day the bus is due to come through and what route it is on. It always seemed as though Anangu began talking about the bus’ arrival, making sure to tell me it was coming and where it was going, not long before it got there. People would begin milling around in anticipation. When it finally did arrive, there was always a flurry of activity and noise as people got off the bus and mingled,

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<sup>2</sup> Angelique Edmonds, “Sedentary Topography: The Impact of the Christian Mission Society’s ‘Civilising’ Agenda on the Spatial Structure of Life in the Roper Region of Northern Australia,” in *Transgressions: Critical Australian Indigenous Histories*, ed. Ingereth Macfarlane and Mark Hannah, Aboriginal History Monograph 16 (Canberra: ANU E Press, 2007), 198. See also John Altman and Melinda Hinkson, “Mobility and Modernity in Arnhem Land: The Social Universe of Kuninjku Trucks,” *Journal of Material Culture* 12, no. 2 (2007): 181–203; Carty, “Creating Country,” 51–54.



seeing who was on it, who was in community, and who was travelling where. Some people visited the shop gathering supplies for the long journey, while other people passed on things to give to other people in other places. As I witnessed the various exchanges taking place along the Bush Bus itinerary, I began to realise that these encounters were more than just stopping off points on a journey from A to B. These moments punctuate spatially and socially; an ongoing dialogue that connects people and place in a wider network of relatedness. Mobility is a fundamental fact of life in this ‘region of places’<sup>3</sup> and, as Tim Ingold suggests, it is the path, not the place, that is the primary condition of *being-in place*.<sup>4</sup>

Geographer Tim Cresswell defines ‘constellations of mobility’ as patterns, representations and ways of practising movement that are not only interrelated, but also historically and geographically specific.<sup>5</sup> Cresswell argues that constellations can be thought of as emerging, dominant and residual, and illustrative of how past mobilities continue to resonate in the present.<sup>6</sup> In this sense, he sees constellations as having broadly traceable histories and geographies. Through sharing in stories with Anangu in all of the communities along that Docker River Bush Bus route, I came to understand that the contemporary constellation of movement and meaning in which the Bush Bus travelled is an articulation of earlier patterns of movement, relations and exchange.

Although Angas Downs was the initial focal point for the oral histories we recorded together, Tjuki Pumpjack’s memories often took us on journeys to places well beyond the station’s boundaries. Sitting down at some old cattle yards at Wilpiya in March 2013, Tjuki seemed oblivious to the oppressive heat and the clouds of flies that circled all around us. As Linda Rive and I sat sweating and swatting furiously, an unperturbed Tjuki told us that the place we were sitting in was the place he walked to with his family as a young child in search of his father’s older sister. He told us that Wilpiya was on an old *ivara*, which is the Pitjantjatjara word for a track or travel route. Motioning southward along the *ivara*, Tjuki said that a long time ago, Wilpiya spring, as well as others, used to carry water all along that *ivara*:

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<sup>3</sup> Edward Casey, “How to Get from Space to Place in a Fairly Short Stretch of Time,” in *Senses of Place*, ed. S. Feld and K. Basso (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), 44.

<sup>4</sup> Tim Ingold, *Being Alive: Essays on Movement, Knowledge and Description*, (London: Routledge, 2011), 12. See also Massey, *Space, Place, Gender*; Massey, *For Space*.

<sup>5</sup> Tim Cresswell, “Towards a Politics of Mobility,” *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 28, no. 1 (2010): 26.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 29.

*People have been living beside this water since ancient times. The water would flow down this watercourse here. The spring was just over there, at that small spring area there. We had to jump over, or cross over, to the other side, stamping our feet as we landed on the pathway to the water, when the water was still here.*

*The water is now long gone, since the wanampi left, probably he has gone much deeper inside the ground, and taken the water with him. Before there was a pond of water here, which flowed from the spring to that hill there. We would cross over the water to the other side. Naked people did this, landing on the other side, stamping their feet on the banks of the water. Later, we crossed over in cars and camels, as we travelled. We stepped over it, riding our camels, when we were on our way to Ernabella. We were always travelling. People have always come to this water, lighting their fires as they walked - all those naked people. We'd see them coming along, 'fire's burning over there!' - and then some people would arrive. They would stay for a while, and then move on. This water was on a very important route that everybody used to take, on the way to Areyonga*

**(Image 41).** *For rations. By way of Ilara.*<sup>7</sup>

Tjuki said that Anangu were always travelling. Petroglyphs and grinding stones, juxtaposed with the decaying remains of cattle yards and rusted out troughs, are the material remains of past mobilities that continue to resonate at Wilpiya **(Image 42 and 43)**. Sitting in that place, Tjuki wanted to emphasise that Anangu had been living around Wilpiya and Walara since the beginning of time; that it has been a really bountiful area, abundant in kangaroos, goannas, lizards, quandongs, fruit, honey ants and springs. He wanted Linda and I to know that was how people lived for a really long time, making sure that we understood he was not talking about people that he knew, but people who belonged to another time.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Tjuki Tjukanku Pumpjack, oral history recorded by author and translated by Linda Rive, March 15 2013, Wilpiya spring and Waltunta soak, Angas Downs, Northern Territory.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.



**Image 41 – *‘This water was on a very important route that everybody used to take’.* The *iwara* that runs between Areyonga and Ernabella (top) and Wilpiya spring, 2011 (bottom). Source: Photographs by author.**



Image 42 – Petroglyphs located along the *iwara* on Angas Downs, 2011. Source: Photographs by author.



**Image 43 – Remains of sheep yards and a grinding stone at Wilpiya, Angas Downs, 2014.** Source: Photographs by author.

Although the creation of the track and Wilpiya spring belong to deep time, this *iwara* is commonly evoked as the route that linked the mission settlements at Areyonga and Ernabella. It constitutes a significant thread in the fabric of Anangu collective memory, as rendered in oral histories and other memory-making that is itself often produced during travel along the same route.<sup>9</sup> It can be conceptualised as a ‘story track’. Anthropologists David and Lesley Green define ‘story tracks’, in relation to their fieldwork for a public archaeology project in Arukwa Brazil, as a mode of memory that represents a way of ‘doing history’ in everyday life.<sup>10</sup> Different from, but related to, ‘story maps’ that characteristically recount itineraries of travel by listing place names, ‘story tracks’:

Give form not only to a historical consciousness in the sense that one was following a historical trail, but to a temporal consciousness of multiple generations and creatures and polities that had dwelled and would dwell here. Knowledge of place cues the recognition of the interrelated temporalities that transform the simple act of being present in a place into an affirmation of the sources and antecedents of one’s being-in-the-world, ranging from culturally attuned perceptual skill to prior generations, social networks and current threats.<sup>11</sup>

‘Doing history’ in this sense, they argue, is a less a case of following lines through time, as having a conversation with place.<sup>12</sup> And more than just ‘doing history’ or demonstrating ecological knowledge, ‘story tracks’ reflect a way of knowing and dwelling in a place by moving through it.<sup>13</sup>

Tracing the ‘story track’ between Areyonga and Ernabella in oral histories, noting the intersections and entanglements with other tracks and modes of memory-making, has illuminated which of the older rhythms of travel continue to resonate. The *iwara* connects Tjuki’s travels recounted in his autobiographical narratives with the ecological times of the spring, the cosmological travels of the *wanampi*, and historical times of camels, cars, rations and the missions. While the *iwara* was carved into the earth with the ancestral travels of the

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<sup>9</sup> This is an observation that has sedimented over four years of conversations with Anangu and working with the Ara Irititja archive project. I have found it to be one of the most striking features in my research and work with Anangu and one of the strongest themes in Anangu memory from the southwest region.

<sup>10</sup> Lesley J. F. Green and David R. Green, “Space, Time, and Story Tracks: Contemporary Practices of Topographic Memory in the Palikur Territory of Arukwa, Amapá, Brazil,” *Ethnohistory* 56, no. 1 (January 1, 2009), 164.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid. See also “‘So Many Stories on This Day-World’: History as the Retracing of Tracks’ in Lesley Green and David Green, *Knowing the Day, Knowing the World: Engaging Amerindian Thought in Public Archaeology* (University of Arizona Press, 2013), 51–78.

<sup>12</sup> Green and Green, *Knowing the Day, Knowing the World*, 64.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 65.

Dreamings in the *Tjukurpa*, Tjuki’s memories reveal the new layers of meaning and values that came to be inscribed in places, and along lines of travel, which derive from their associations with human activities in the historical remembered past.<sup>14</sup>

In just one example of many iterations of the journey recorded by Tjuki Pumpjack, he describes travelling between Ernabella and Areyonga:

*We would bring them along that road and I’d come from Walara and we would leave Walara and go out along Wilpiya and arrive halfway, fairly close to Atila. That’s our old road, the old route we used to take. Nothing there now. People used to come up and follow that road right up to Areyonga. They would go to Areyonga for rations. And then they’d get those rations and put them on their shoulders, sometimes the tops of their head and walk all the way to Ernabella. It was a long way to carry that much flour on the top of the head. We would go to Marutjura, and other people would go via Atila. Go via Anari. Some of the people, half of them, would have camels and the camels would carry stuff. The camels would carry the flour all the way back to Ernabella, and arrive back there. And they would have done that journey using the flour they got all the way from Areyonga.*<sup>15</sup>

Niningka Lewis lives in Ernabella, but was born near Areyonga mission while her parents were visiting relatives there. Niningka says that her parents would visit Areyonga for long stretches of time, but would always go back to Ernabella. She recounts the itinerary in some detail:

*To walk from Ernabella to Areyonga would take about two weeks. If you left Ernabella and camped halfway, the day you’d arrive at Wanukulu. You’d spend a night at Wanukulu and then you’d walk for two days before you arrived at Tjulu. You’d leave Tjulu in the afternoon and then sleep halfway at a station windmill and then in the afternoon you’d get to Angas Downs or Bloodwood Bore. That was Mr Liddle’s station. That was his station. He’d be there with his wife Bessie Liddle. That’s her place. That’s where she used to live. She was nice, she’d give us rations. That’s her country right there, Tempe Downs. Her husband had the station. From Angas Downs*

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<sup>14</sup> Isabel McBryde, “Travellers in Storied Landscapes,” 169. See also Beckett, “George Dutton’s Country,” 14; Harrison, *Shared Landscapes*, 114–17; Spooner, Firman, and Yalmambirra, “Origins of Travelling Stock Routes,” 329–39. Beckett, Harrison and Spooner et. al. all explore the ways in which pastoral routes followed existing pathways and patterns of movement. For an exploration of water ways as an entanglement of mythical, ecological and human historical meanings see Sandy Toussaint, Patrick Sullivan, and Sarah Yu, “Water Ways in Aboriginal Australia: An Interconnected Analysis,” *Anthropological Forum* 15, no. 1 (2005): 61–74; Goodall, “Riding the Tide,” 355–84.

<sup>15</sup> Tjuki Tjukanku Pumpjack, 19 September 2012.

*you walk to Walara, and sleep there one night. From Walara you would walk and finally arrive at Irawa Bore and you'd spend another night there. Then another two days' walk with a sleep in between, and then finally the next day you would walk into Tempe Downs with your camels or your donkeys. After one night sleep at Tempe Downs you would get up and walk the next day, and by afternoon you'd be entering Areyonga. Walking fairly slowly, with a string of donkeys, it was a good holiday.*<sup>16</sup>

In this oral history, Niningka is travelling north. The places that Niningka recalls in the journey between Ernabella and Areyonga name a string of water sources that run like an artery in a north to south direction through the middle of southern Central Australia (**Map 4**). This string of water sources, and the pastoral stations and mission settlements that capitalised on them, provided a well-used corridor of mobility that continued to sustain Anangu socio-economic life well into the post-war period. In a discussion of Colombia's Pacific region, Escobar refers to this mode of articulation of socio-cultural forms of use and the physical environment as 'life corridors'.<sup>17</sup> Escobar observes that these corridors, such as those found in Colombia that are linked to mangrove ecosystems, foothills and rivers, or specific activities such as women's shell collecting in the mangrove areas, are marked by particular patterns of mobility, social relations and use of the environment.<sup>18</sup> The importance of water in creating 'life corridors' has been cited elsewhere in Australia. Fred Myers observed in his fieldwork with the Pintupi that during the hot summer months people often congregated around well-known and reliable water sources such as wells and that one much-used line of wells is known to the Pintupi as *yintawara* ("line of big waters") running from Jupiter Well south toward the Baron Range.<sup>19</sup> Colin Harris' research into South Australia's mound springs demonstrates that this lineal alignment of springs has provided the environmental and geographic foundations for one of the richest and most densely patterned travel and trade corridors in Australia.<sup>20</sup> These kinds of 'corridors' are not just confined to the underground waterways of the deserts of Australia. Heather Goodall and Allison Cadzow's history of the Georges River in Sydney demonstrates the importance of the river in providing a corridor of mobility that sustained the economic and cultural life of Aboriginal people throughout the whole period of colonial settlement to the

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<sup>16</sup> Niningka Lewis, AI-0156069-002.

<sup>17</sup> Escobar, "Culture Sits in Places", 161.

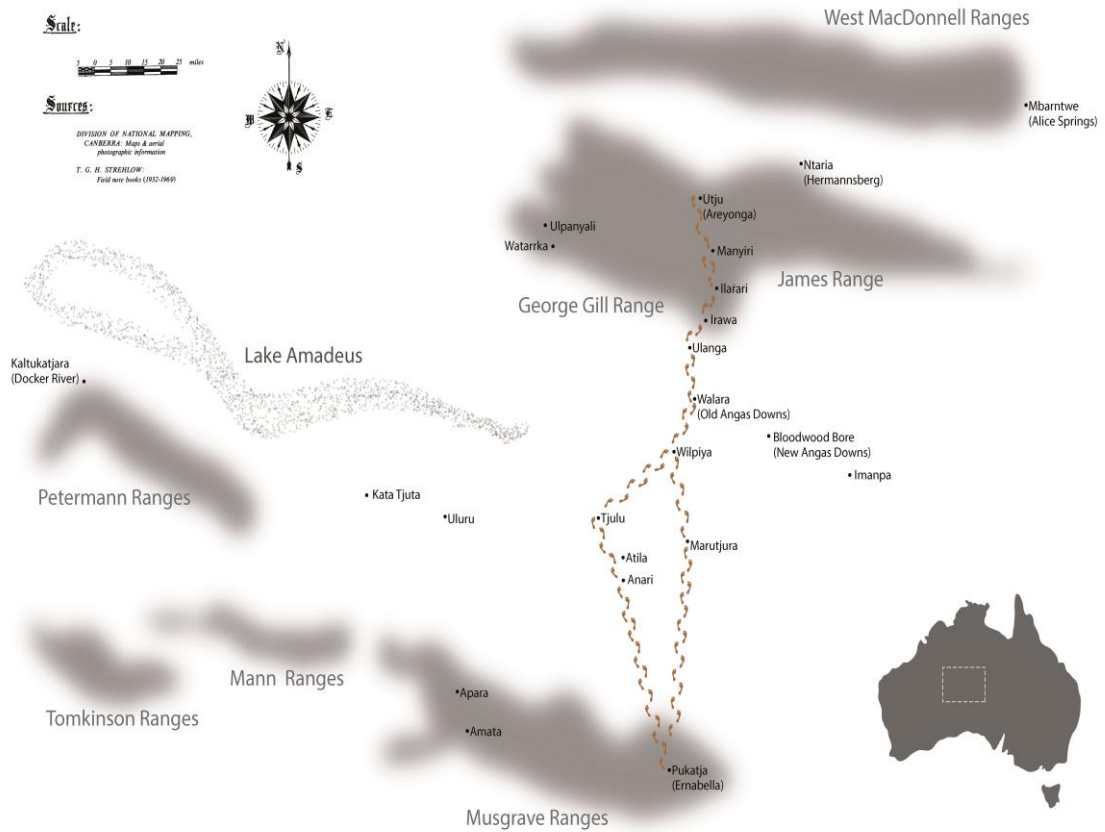
<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 161–2.

<sup>19</sup> Myers, *Pintupi Country, Pintupi Self*, 77.

<sup>20</sup> Colin Harris, "Culture and Geography: South Australia's Mound Springs as Trade and Communication Routes," *Historic Environment* 16, no. 2 (2002): 8-11.



present.<sup>21</sup> Despite the stark contrast between the environments of urban Sydney and the arid rangelands of the interior, as ‘life corridors’ these logical lines of travel reveal ‘routes’ as rich sites for exploring cultures of economy and travel and the cultural encounter in Australia.<sup>22</sup>



**Map 4 - Map of the southwest showing the ‘story track’ traced in Anangu oral histories recounting the journey between Areyonga and Ernabella missions. The places noted along the *iwara* are the water sources that form this Central Australian ‘life corridor’.**

<sup>21</sup> Goodall and Cadzow, *Rivers and Resilience*, 21.

<sup>22</sup> Sandy Blair et al., “Making Tracks: Key Issues about the Heritage of Australian Routes and Journeys,” *Historic Environment* 16, no. 2 (2002): 43. Blair et al. is a discussion of ‘routes’ from a heritage perspective. For a discussion of ‘routes’ as an analytical/theoretical frame, particularly the intersections of travel and culture, see James Clifford, *Routes: Travel and Translation in the Late Twentieth Century* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1997).

## Areyonga and Ernabella

Sandra Armstrong went to school at Areyonga mission before she went to live at Bloodwood Bore when she was about eighteen years old. During that time, Sandra's parents lived on Angas Downs. When it was school holiday time Sandra would travel to Bloodwood Bore and spend time on the station with her family:

*Yes we used to go long distances from here for school. We would both travel without a second thought, any travelling, all of those relations. There were family here from Ernabella and when they travelled, they would visit different places and in turn would come to Areyonga; they'd travel to Areyonga, travel to Ernabella and I would see this. And a whitefella there (whose name I have forgotten) worked for the Government and he would come and take us for school and find us when we would hide out at the station, all of those younger children, but we were able to see who was on board for school and we would get in with our family and go.<sup>23</sup>*

Sandra's experience of going to school on the mission and walking to the station to be with family for the holidays is not unique. Across the broader body of Anangu oral histories, journeys made during 'holiday time' from Areyonga mission to Angas Downs and Tempe Downs stations emerge as an important theme.<sup>24</sup>

Education was a cornerstone of assimilation policy in the Northern Territory and employees of the Welfare Branch were charged with the responsibility of gathering up school-age children living with their families on stations and enforcing their attendance at school on one of the missions. Sandra Armstrong recalls patrol officers threatening parents of school-age children with cutting-off their rations if their children were not in school:

*Government officials came and if any children on the bush stations were continually missing school, they'd come and talk (to the families) about taking them to school. The government came and took them to school but sometimes we'd hide, and they said, 'your mother and father won't receive any rations' and when they said that, we became afraid and we'd think, 'I'm going to school. I've been*

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<sup>23</sup> Sandra Armstrong, oral history recorded, translated and transcribed by Sam Osborne, 28th March 2012, Angas Downs, Northern Territory.

<sup>24</sup> In my work as Field Officer for Aṛa Irititja I worked in Areyonga community. I also worked in Mutitjulu and Docker River communities and many people in these communities went to school at Areyonga. Throughout the course of my fieldwork in these communities I heard numerous oral histories that spoke of travelling between Areyonga mission and the stations in the southwest at holiday time to visit family. There is also a significant collection of these narratives in the Aṛa Irititja archive.

*there before’ and we’d go to school when there were any visitors travelling from Ernabella to Areyonga.*<sup>25</sup>

This policy of ‘rounding up’ and removing children to go to school was an important process in the emergence of Areyonga and Ernabella as pivotal hubs in Anangu itineraries. In a letter written to Frederick Rose before his arrival on Angas Downs, Bill Harney informed him that the Welfare Branch were ‘ever around gathering up the children so that they can go to school on one of the settlements’.<sup>26</sup> His time at Bloodwood Bore led Rose to question the efficiency of the policy on the grounds that the opportunities for using education were ‘almost non-existent’.<sup>27</sup> He also observed that the policy of placing children of school-age on mission settlements for schooling had had a ‘profound effect on the pattern of movement of the itinerant Aborigines’ and that journeys made to Areyonga were, in large part, to visit children at the settlement.<sup>28</sup> Rose noted that the two main mission centres with a ‘direct influence’ on Anangu at Angas Downs were Ernabella and Areyonga. However, he wrote that it was by ‘tacit agreement’ that Angas Downs fell within the sphere of influence of Areyonga.<sup>29</sup>

Sandra Armstrong emphasises the importance of food in her willingness to go to school away from her family. She says that she thought about school ‘*from a different angle*’ from the government officials:

*[Y]es, it was going to where the food was, they would force us [to go] and to attend a good school and do good things, but I came to the view, “Oh, there’s good food to eat at school also and it’s good to learn”.*<sup>30</sup>

When asked why she went to school at Areyonga and not Ernabella, Sandra Armstrong explained that the people who ‘took us’ would ‘take us’ through Angas Downs to Areyonga and that ‘those South Australians are a different group’.<sup>31</sup> In her field notes from Areyonga in 1964–65, anthropologist Nancy Munn described the distinctions and connections between these two sites:

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<sup>25</sup> Sandra Armstrong, oral history recorded and translated by Sam Osborne, 5 October 2013, Stuart Lodge, Alice Springs, Northern Territory. Author present at recording.

<sup>26</sup> Bill Harney to Frederick Rose, 22 June 1962, SLNSW Frederick Rose Papers Box 4.

<sup>27</sup> Rose, *The Wind of Change*, 37.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.* Correspondence files and patrol reports from Angas Downs throughout the 1950s and 60s confirm this policy of regularly ‘rounding up’ kids on the station and sending them to school.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, 18.

<sup>30</sup> Sandra Armstrong, 5 October 2013.

<sup>31</sup> Sandra Armstrong, 28 March 2012.

Most of the Areyonga Pitjantjatjara come originally from the Petermann Range and bordering areas. They contrast themselves with people whom they also call Pitjantjatjara from the Musgrave, Mann and Tomkinson to the south by pointing out that the latter are ‘south side’ and can be labelled *nyangapurunypatjara*. In contrast, the northern peoples (‘north side’) are called *nyangapinyatjara*. *Nyanga* means ‘this’: *puruny* and *piny* are different terms for ‘like’ and here serve to symbolise a distinction between what my informants regarded as two different but closely related speech communities. Most of the southern people are now aggregated at Ernabella and the southern stations while the northern peoples have gravitated to Areyonga and the relatively northern stations...

While Areyongans usually recognised speech variations between northern and southern Pitjantjatjara, there were also occasions on which they insisted that the speech of Areyonga and Ernabella people was exactly the same. This variation in attitude is dependent upon context, and also reflects some informants’ sense of a close association between themselves and the southern peoples with whom there was (and still is) considerable interaction.<sup>32</sup>

The socio-cultural distinctions among people of the Western Desert were reflected in the constellations of people on particular mission settlements and stations in the southwest region. Sandra’s and Munn’s descriptions of the distinctions and connections between Areyonga and Ernabella reflect Francesca Merlan’s observations around Katherine in the Northern Territory that ‘no camp is entirely self-contained’. Merlan noted that while ‘networks of kinship and connection extend outward from all camps to other locales’, there is always a ‘dense clustering of ties between certain locales and others that [Aboriginal people] can encode and summarise in terms of socio-territorial identity’.<sup>33</sup> What Rose understood to be a ‘tacit agreement’ between Angas Downs and Areyonga was more a reflection of these strong socio-cultural threads that tied the mission settlement to Angas Downs though the Petermann Ranges. However, while Sandra clearly sees the Pitjantjatjara at Ernabella as a ‘different group’, her oral histories, like the broader body of Anangu oral history and memory, demonstrate that even though 250 kilometres separates Areyonga and Ernabella, people living in these places kept in regular contact.

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<sup>32</sup> Nancy Munn, ‘A Report on field research at Areyonga 1964-65’, Frederick Rose Papers, Box 26.

<sup>33</sup> Merlan, *Caging the Rainbow*, 43.



**Image 44 – Areyonga mission, circa 1970.** Source: Aṛa Irititja, Margaret and David Hewitt Collection AI-0038511.



**Image 45 – Ernabella mission, circa 1959.** Source: Aṛa Irititja, Aṛa Irititja Collection (source unknown) AI-0005983.

## ‘THE ITINERANTS’

The ‘story track’ connecting Ernabella and Areyonga in Anangu oral history narratives also features in Welfare Branch patrol reports and correspondence. In 1960 a Welfare Branch patrol officer was sent out with the purpose of surveying the southwest to ‘ascertain the reasons for and the destination of the current movements of the Pitjantjatjara people and also the general route used by them’.<sup>34</sup> Patrol officer Giddens noted that previous reports had indicated that Curtin Springs and Angas Downs were most frequently visited and would prove the ‘most fruitful field for inquiry’.<sup>35</sup> The patrol officer reported 38 Pitjantjatjara people camped at Angas Downs, noting that:

The party was enroute from Ernabella to Areyonga and with the exception of the two Areyonga natives...all were Ernabella people...The two men from Areyonga stated that they had gone from Areyonga to Ernabella in recent weeks and it is assumed that they acted as messengers to invite and to conduct the party to a possible ceremony at Areyonga...No other travellers to Areyonga were located at other centres but the various pastoralists reports indicate that an almost direct route from Ernabella to Areyonga is used taking advantage of what possible sources of water and food exist including the station homesteads of Mulga Park, Curtin Springs, Angas Downs and Tempe Downs.<sup>36</sup>

Giddens’ patrol of the southwest led him to conclude in his report that the opportunity to attend ceremony was ‘irresistible’ and as such the Pitjantjatjara migrations would prove difficult to keep in check. The report noted that any action to discourage movements from Areyonga or Ernabella would have to be in the form of the deprivation of rations, but Giddens felt that could prove too harsh a measure to mete out during the dry conditions that prevailed at the time. He recommended that a closer relationship be established with the pastoral stations on the general travel route to ‘prevent such undesirable congregations’.<sup>37</sup>

Anangu are constantly referred to as being ‘itinerant’ in the correspondence, and the subject line of patrol reports and directives was often ‘The Itinerant Aborigines’:

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<sup>34</sup> J.H. Giddens, ‘Report of Survey to Southwest’, 25 Feb 1960, NAA F133 1963/466, Angas Downs Station 1960-1964.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

The itinerant Aboriginals presently at Victory Downs have come mainly from Musgrave Park, Mount Davies and the Giles area, and those at Angas Downs seem to be continually on the move between Areyonga and Ernabella and the cattle stations in between. Efforts are continually being made to try and persuade them to either return to Areyonga where their children can attend school or to Ernabella mission. However, they are very independent and spend a large amount of their time wandering around Angas Downs, Mount Ebenezer, Victory Downs and Mulga Park.<sup>38</sup>

‘Itinerant’ describes a person who wanders from place to place. However, in the Welfare Branch correspondence the use of the term ‘itinerant’ to describe groups of travelling Anangu refers to more than just habitual wandering. Rather, ‘itinerant’ emerges in the correspondence files as shorthand for ‘unemployed’ and ‘idle natives’.<sup>39</sup> The prevailing policy in the 1960s sought to assimilate Aboriginal people through education, domestication and the transformation of the ‘hunter-gather’ to wage labourer within the settler capitalist economy. Within this political economy, Anangu mobility was understood as inherently problematic.

This mobile mode of engagement with the world, and the challenges it presented to assimilationist objectives of social reform, is not unique to this time and place. The construction of the category of ‘vagrant’, and the criminalisation of ‘vagrancy’, emerged in early modern Europe, in particular in those places that entered earliest into the period of mercantile capitalism, such as Holland and England in the late sixteenth century.<sup>40</sup> Angus Bancroft’s study of Roma and Gypsy-travellers in Europe notes that the construction of the ‘vagrant’ illustrated two developments, which combined to ‘produce a modern idea of spatial order and control’.<sup>41</sup> The first was the establishment of the nation state guaranteeing property rights. The other:

[W]as the emergence of the work ethic and the reviling of those nomadic individuals who appeared to reject it, and so were a threat to its legitimacy.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> T.C. Lovegrove, ‘Aboriginal Camps: Ayers Rock Area’, 16 Feb 1965, NTAS NTRS 629.

<sup>39</sup> H.C. Giese, Director of Welfare to Assistant Director (southern), 27 May 1964, NTAS NTRS 629.

<sup>40</sup> Angus Bancroft, *Roma and Gypsy-Travellers in Europe: Modernity, Race, Space and Exclusion* (Aldershot, UK: Ashgate, 2005), 16.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid. See also Cresswell, *On the Move*, 12–15.

<sup>42</sup> Bancroft, *Roma and Gypsy-Travellers in Europe*, 16.

Cresswell writes that the ‘new types of mobility’ that emerged with changing relationships to land toward the end of the sixteenth century called for ‘new forms of social surveillance and control’.<sup>43</sup> Bancroft writes that Gypsy-travellers in the early modern period were subsumed into the general category of vagrants and in some parts of Europe were subject to severe repression, punishment and segregation, which served to authenticate the emerging European social order and work ethic.<sup>44</sup> In this sense, Bancroft argues, the construction of the vagrant was important in the construction of ‘a settled European identity’, whereby ‘work ethic, the morality of property, and civility, were set off against the vagrant, the vagabond and wandering Gypsy’.<sup>45</sup> Coinciding with the emergence of the modern, bureaucratic nation-state in the eighteenth-century, governmental responses to itinerant travellers, Bancroft notes, changed from a position of repression and punishment to policies of *forcible incorporation* within the nation state.<sup>46</sup>

Anthropologist Liisa Malkki has argued that ideas about countries, cultures, roots, nations and national identities are associated with a ‘powerful sedentarism’ that represents a way of thinking that is ‘taken for granted to such an extent that it is nearly invisible’.<sup>47</sup> The construction of the ‘national order of things’ as the ‘normal or natural order of things’ constructs mobility as a problem, and as Malkki observes in relation to state responses to refugees, their rootlessness represents an anomaly requiring correction.<sup>48</sup> This construction of mobility as problematic is not just confined to Roma, Gypsy-travellers and refugees. James Scott’s research into modern state crafting was the result of an ‘intellectual detour’ that grew out of an effort to ‘understand why the state has always seemed to be the enemy of “people who move around”’.<sup>49</sup> Originally focused on Southeast Asia, Scott noted that the question transcended regional geography:

Nomads and pastoralists (such as Berbers and Bedouins), hunter-gatherers, Gypsies, vagrants, homeless people, itinerants, runaway slaves, and serfs have always been a thorn in the side of nation of states.<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> Cresswell, *On the Move*, 13.

<sup>44</sup> Bancroft, *Roma and Gypsy-Travellers in Europe*, 17.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, 17–18. Emphasis added. Bancroft notes that Roma and Gypsy-travellers became the objects of corrective, as opposed to punitive, regulation.

<sup>47</sup> Malkki, “National Geographic,” 31.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, 33.

<sup>49</sup> James Scott, *Seeing Like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1998), 1.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*



Inspired by these analyses of the relationship between mobility and sedentarism, it is possible to begin an analysis of ‘the itinerants’ by placing the correspondence files of the Northern Territory Welfare Branch within this broader geographical and historical context that is the Australian nation state’s colonial inheritance.

‘The itinerants’ is just one of many ways in which Aboriginal mobility has been discursively constructed within colonial power relations since Europeans arrived in Australia in 1788.<sup>51</sup> Branding Aboriginal people as ‘nomads’, and misrepresenting their mobility as the aimless wandering of the hunter-gather, were discursive strategies that underwrote the British possession of the continent and denied recognition of Aboriginal rights to land.<sup>52</sup> Civilising and domesticating both land and people in an effort to make them productive in the settler capitalist economy has been pursued primarily through ideas of sedentarisation. Bain Attwood observed of the so-called ‘habitual wanderers’ of the Gippsland region in Victoria in the late nineteenth century, that Aboriginal mobility at the time was understood by missionaries ‘as incompatible with proper control of them’,<sup>53</sup> and undermined their efforts toward re-socialising Aboriginal people as sedentary agriculturalists. Attwood illustrated how the sojourns of the ‘habitual wanderers’ of the Gippsland region in the late nineteenth century were problematic not just because it made the Brabiralong hard to control, but because their ‘excursions’ discredited the missions and undermined their ‘hard-won reputations’.<sup>54</sup> Despite efforts to civilise the local people and enforce the ethic that ‘able-bodied’ men should ‘work for their bread’, Attwood noted that ‘classic problems of economic underdevelopment’ meant that an Aboriginal sense of place persisted, frustrating missionary attempts to convert people to the work and time rhythms of industry capitalism.<sup>55</sup> In this regard, there is little to distinguish twentieth-century assimilation policy from earlier colonial attempts to absorb Aboriginal society into a capitalist wage labour framework. The similarity in the language used, and the objective of resocialisation it conveys, reflect historian Russell McGregor’s observation that rather than articulate a

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<sup>51</sup> Tim Cresswell, “The Production of Mobilities,” *New Formations* 43 (Spring 2011): 11-25. See also Cresswell, “Towards a Politics of Mobility,” 17–31.

<sup>52</sup> Goodall and Cadzow, *Rivers and Resilience*, 19.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, 67. See also Bain Attwood, “Off the Mission Stations: Aborigines in Gippsland 1860 - 1890,” *Aboriginal History* 10 (1986): 131–51.

<sup>54</sup> Attwood, “Off the Mission Stations,” 144.

<sup>55</sup> Attwood, *The Making of the Aborigines*, 63–65.

singular meaning, assimilation policy after the 1930s represented a re-emergence of a 'discourse that runs throughout the history of Aboriginal-European interactions'.<sup>56</sup>

The missionaries at Lake Tyers and Ramahyuck pathologised Aboriginal mobility, claiming that itinerant behaviour led to Aboriginal people squandering money, drinking and associating with 'depraved' white men, which inevitably resulted in the 'habitual wanderers' returning to the mission 'unwell in mind and body'.<sup>57</sup> Angelique Edmonds made a similar observation among the Christian Missionary Society (CMS) at the Roper River Mission in the Northern Territory, noting that a 1941 article in the CMS journal declared that 'healing the body' was the way to 'healing the soul', and that in order to heal the body the 'Aborigines... must be brought from a nomadic food-gathering existence to a food-producing village life'.<sup>58</sup> The normalisation of sedentarism in the national, or natural order of things, has resulted in the pathologisation of mobility. According to Malkki this pathologisation can take 'several different (but often conflated) forms, among them political, medical, and moral'.<sup>59</sup> This moral pathologisation of mobility has been a similarly powerful force in the desert.

The preoccupation with 'the itinerants' in the southwest in the 1960s was nothing new. As chapter one demonstrated, movement of peoples in the region emerged as a 'problem' to be grappled with when Strehlow, Duguid and Albrecht travelled into the Petermann Ranges in 1939 to investigate why Anangu were migrating out of the desert in large numbers. Strehlow declared that measures needed to be taken to 'correct' Anangu migrations in order to prevent their degeneration into a 'race of useless wasters'.<sup>60</sup> Similarly, chapter two sketched the highly mobile form of pastoralism that developed in the marginal arid lands of the southwest, which as Brigid Hains has noted, resulted in anxieties about the failure of pastoralists in Central Australia to adequately develop the land. Hains observed that semi-nomadic pastoralism rendered both pastoralists and their enterprises as remaining 'uncivilised and unsettled' and a subsequent threat to the prevailing social order.<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>56</sup> Russell McGregor, "Wards, Words and Citizens: A.P. Elkin and Paul Hasluck on Assimilation," *Oceania* 69, no. 4 (June 1, 1999): 255.

<sup>57</sup> Attwood, *The Making of the Aborigines*, 67.

<sup>58</sup> Edmonds, "Sedentary Topography," 199.

<sup>59</sup> Malkki, "National Geographic," 32.

<sup>60</sup> T.G.H. Strehlow, Report on Trip to the Petermann Ranges, August 1939, NAA F1 1938/418.

<sup>61</sup> Hains, *The Ice and the Inland*, 122.

Despite concerted efforts to ‘settle’ and ‘civilise’ both the landscape and the population, sedentarising the nomadic people of ‘the hinterlands’ continued to elude and frustrate the administration in the post-war period. Correspondence and reports generated over the years following Giddens’ 1960 patrol reveal the Welfare Branch preoccupation with stemming the flow of ‘idle’ and ‘unemployed’ ‘itinerants’ as something of an obsession. This fixation is evidenced in hundreds of pages of census taking and report making, documenting attempts to ‘settle’ Anangu at either Ernabella or Areyonga missions and place them into ‘permanent employment’. More than an account of Anangu mobility, the documents created by the Welfare Branch, both in the construction of the category of ‘the itinerants’ and in the records that tracked their movements, reveal the value of the archive as what Ann Laura Stoler calls an ‘artefact of bureaucratic labour duly performed’, and the ‘artifice of a colonial state declared to be in efficient operation’.<sup>62</sup> The documentary archive illuminates what the Welfare Branch wanted to do, and what its patrol officers thought they were doing. Transforming Anangu into domestic family units, provided for by ‘able-bodied’ wage labourers, would teach them the principle of individual effort for individual gain and make them responsible citizens of the nation. If only they could get them to stay in one place long enough. However, despite the ‘deceptive clarity of its mandates’, the Welfare Branch archive also bears the marks of what Ann Laura Stoler calls the ‘uncommon sense of events of things’, revealing the anxieties and ‘epistemic uncertainties’ that unsettled the bureaucratic ‘conceit’ that all was in order.<sup>63</sup>

**‘Groups such as these can do considerable harm to the public image...’**

The Anangu way of moving in the world was understood by the Welfare Branch as antithetical to the work ethic. The fixation on sedentarising Anangu, and fostering the transformation from subsistence lifestyle to wage-labourer, is reflective of a regime of value, tightly woven into the very fabric of settler capitalism. This system of values rendered patrol officers and administrators largely ignorant of the ways in which Anangu were incorporating the limited economic opportunities available to them into existing social and ecological itineraries. As chapter three demonstrated, when the *punu* trade came to the attention of the Welfare Branch, ‘the few shillings’ that they made was understood as undermining attempts to teach Anangu the principle of ‘work for pay’, while encouraging them to be ‘parasites’ on society. However, there are traces in the correspondence files that

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<sup>62</sup> Stoler, *Along the Archival Grain*, 2.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, 1.

reveal the anxieties surrounding the trade in artefacts to be about more than parasitism. When it was brought to his attention, Welfare Branch Director Giese viewed the *punu* trade as resulting in ‘the undesirable situation of large numbers of unemployed and idle natives’ congregating in camps outside of stations and mission settlements.<sup>64</sup> In a letter to the Assistant Director of the Southern branch Giese noted:

The congregation of itinerant Aboriginals...will need to be carefully watched. You will appreciate that groups such as these can do considerable harm to the public image of the work we are attempting to do and therefore all possible steps should be taken to reduce their number and their assemblies as much as possible.<sup>65</sup>

The emergence of tourism in the region presented the Welfare Branch with a new set of challenges and as such it was Anangu visibility, as much as their mobility, that posed a problem.

In a letter accompanying a patrol report, Assistant Director of Welfare Les Penhall wrote to Giese and acknowledged that Anangu, ‘like many people in the Northern Territory’ at the time were ‘out to make what they can while the tourist season’ was on.<sup>66</sup> However, he noted that their ‘bedraggled and neglected appearance’ presented a problem from a ‘public relations’ perspective:

The public relations aspect is important if the policy of the Government is to succeed and there is no doubt that these camps are undesirable from a Health, Education and Social Advancement point of view.<sup>67</sup>

Penhall issued a directive requesting that regular patrols be carried out. Patrol officers were instructed to not pay maintenance to station owners for the provision of rations to ‘itinerants’ in the hope that hunger would force them onto the settlements. Station owners were told to inform the Branch of ‘any unusual accumulation of Natives on their properties’ and patrol officers were to seek the co-operation of tourism companies in order to stop tourists engaging with camps of ‘itinerants’.<sup>68</sup> Penhall’s instructions reveal the irony

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<sup>64</sup> H.C. Giese to Assistant Director of Welfare Branch (Southern), ‘Aboriginal Camps - Angas Downs - Ayers Rock Area’, 27 May 1964, NTAS NTRS 629.

<sup>65</sup> H.C. Giese to Assistant Director of Welfare Branch (Southern), ‘Itinerant Aboriginals - S/W Area’, 20 June 1965, NTAS NTRS 629.

<sup>66</sup> Les Penhall to Director of Welfare, 18 May 1964, ‘Aboriginal Camps - Angas Downs - Ayers Rock Area’, NTAS NTRS 629.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid

<sup>68</sup> Ibid.

of a situation that required patrol officers to be highly mobile in order to stop Anangu from interacting with groups of mobile tourists in an attempt to get them to settle.

In October 1965, patrol officer D.A. Stewart was sent out to investigate:

[T]he sale of artefacts by Aboriginals to tourists travelling the roads to and from Ayers Rock and the approach and appearance of Aboriginals as seen by the tourists.<sup>69</sup>

Stewart reported learning of ‘several perturbing activities’.<sup>70</sup> While visiting Mulga Park station he ‘heard’ of the ‘methods being used by Aboriginals to stop tourists’:

The usual method adopted is for a group of children to run out and flag down a car or a bus and then those adults with artefacts to sell converge on the tourists. Some of the aboriginal women deliberately remove a clean dress and have a dirty torn one on underneath and this is to give the tourist the impression that they are in distressed circumstances, and that nobody, especially this Branch, has done anything to provide for them.<sup>71</sup>

Constant references in the records to the encounter between Anangu and tourists as a threat to the ‘public image’ of the work of the Welfare Branch shed light on the very real anxieties that all was not in order, and even worse, that word might get out. To complicate matters further, Anangu were not the only group of ‘itinerants’ proving difficult to control:

Those of us who come into contact with tourists in Central Australia invariably find that they wish to see Aboriginals in their primitive state and whether they are interested in the work that is being done on Settlements or not, they are forever asking whether they can find groups such as this... Tourist bus drivers are quite aware of this and naturally they are pleased to see itinerant groups so that they can cater for the needs of their clients.<sup>72</sup>

Despite concerted efforts to discourage and prevent the encounter between Anangu and tourists, the Branch found it difficult to counter the tourist desire for encounters of the

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<sup>69</sup> D.A. Stewart, ‘Report on Itinerant Aboriginals: South West Area’, 28 October 1965, NTAS NTRS 629.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid.

<sup>72</sup> T.C. Lovegrove to Assistant Director (Southern), ‘Itinerant Aboriginals - South West Area’, November 3 1965, NTAS NTRS 629.

‘primitive’ kind. Furthermore, patrol officers were reporting that the policy of not paying maintenance for those Anangu who refused to relocate permanently at one of the mission settlements had ‘done little to solve the problem’.<sup>73</sup>

It was apparent to the Welfare Branch that the artefact trade had given rise to an emergent local economy and was playing a significant role in Anangu migrations. Numerous references in the correspondence files that acknowledge the role of *punu* in supplementing a subsistence lifestyle are accompanied by statements that the policy of withholding rations was failing to discourage itinerant behaviour. Anangu were able to obtain sufficient food for themselves by selling artefacts or trading in dingo scalps, as well as sharing in the rations of permanent station residents, which was being complemented with ‘bush tucker’.<sup>74</sup> In conceding that the policy of the Welfare Branch was failing, patrol officer Stewart lamented that another ‘form of control’ was proving difficult to determine:<sup>75</sup>

The itinerant aboriginals in the area have become quite independent of the Government aid although they will accept it whenever it is offered. It seems that their main object of being in the area is to carry out rituals that are important to them and in view of the fact that this Branch is not prepared to maintain them, they have maintained themselves by living off country to some extent, but like many other people in the Territory these days, supplementing their other means of subsistence by exploiting the tourist industry...I am sure that they are not the least bit concerned about the harm which they may do to themselves or to this Branch so far as the public image is concerned.<sup>76</sup>

Despite coercive policy aimed at forcing people onto settlements, the Welfare Branch was faced with the reality that Anangu moved, as Assistant Director Les Penhall described it, ‘of their own free will and not usually at the instigation of anyone in particular’.<sup>77</sup> In response to being asked to relocate to a settlement or mission, patrol officers reported that Anangu would be most agreeable, often saying that they would be moving on ‘next

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<sup>73</sup> Ibid.

<sup>74</sup> See Layton, *Uluru*, 87.

<sup>75</sup> D.A. Stewart to District Welfare Officer, ‘Itinerant Aboriginals: South West Area’, 18 July 1966, NTAS NTRS 629.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid.

<sup>77</sup> L.N. Penhall to Director of Welfare, ‘Itinerant Aboriginals South-West Area’, 4 November 1965, NTAS NTRS 629.

Monday’, but in reality moving when they were ‘good and ready’ and returning to the area as soon as they felt the need.<sup>78</sup>

## THE WALKABOUT LEADERS

The Welfare Branch was acutely aware that Anangu mobility was linked to cultural objectives as well as economic ones and that patrol officers were largely powerless in their attempts to curb people’s movement.<sup>79</sup> Writing to the Director of Welfare some four years after first commencing the patrols to investigate ‘the itinerants’ in the southwest, Assistant Director Lovegrove conceded:

I don’t think the situation has changed at all since we first commenced these visits and the Aboriginals in this area have their own very definite ideas on when they will travel there, what they will do while they are there, and when they will return.<sup>80</sup>

While the documents record the difficulties encountered by the Welfare Branch in stopping itinerant behaviour, as anthropologist Gillian Cowlshaw observed in relation to the archives documenting the administration of Aboriginal people in the Bulman region in Arnhem Land, ‘nowhere was there serious consideration of why the Aboriginal people were simply not fitting in’.<sup>81</sup> Cowlshaw argues that the vast body of written evidence left behind is thus a record, not just of policy, but a ‘myopia’ that shows no signs of how the rules that were being made might be understood, or what the people who were subject to them may have wanted.<sup>82</sup>

Charles Rowley described the social and spatial distance of remote Aboriginal people from the encapsulating state as a form of ‘intransigence’:

But so long as the indigenous people within a nation state are not charmed into participation in a new way of living or somehow included to the point where they wish to lose themselves in the settler society... That such people may form a small racial and cultural minority, trapped as it were, within the European state, will, so long as they retain any determination to resist an administration which appears to

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<sup>78</sup> Lovegrove, 3 November 1965, NTAS NTRS 629.

<sup>79</sup> See Layton, *Uluru*, 84.

<sup>80</sup> T.C. Lovegrove to Director Welfare Branch, ‘Aboriginals - Ayers Rock Road’, 19 September 1968, NTAS NTRS 629.

<sup>81</sup> Cowlshaw, *Rednecks, Eggheads and Blackfellas*, 117.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*

them alien...The potential for dissidence remains, though there may be no hope of political separation. It will be stimulated and maintained by social and economic exclusion from participation on equal terms with the majority.<sup>83</sup>

The intransigence that Rowley describes as the wilful resistance of those ‘not charmed into participation in a new way of living’ was embodied in the men that the Welfare Branch referred to as the ‘Walkabout leaders’. Widely known in the present day communities of the southwest, and most likely beyond in places such as Hermannsburg, Haasts Bluff and Papunya, Harry Brumby, Captain No. 1 and Nipper Winmati were named in numerous patrol reports as the leaders of the ‘itinerants’. Many of the encounters between patrol officers and Anangu appear in reports as a conversation with one of these three men:

On my return from Docker River on the 14th September, I contacted a fairly large group of Aboriginals who were temporarily camped at the Mulga Park turnoff from Ayers Rock road. There was about 30 Aboriginals in this group and they informed me that they were travelling to Areyonga. They intended to join up with the group camped at Angas Downs turnoff. All of these people were travelling by means of camels and they expected to be at Areyonga in about a weeks time. This group was lead by the well-known “Walkabout” leader, Nipper...It is now becoming fairly obvious that this particular group of Aboriginals do not intend settling anywhere.<sup>84</sup>

References to the ‘Walkabout leaders’ in the documents are thoroughly entangled with accounts of ceremonial activities, the *punu* trade, ‘puppy dogging’ and ‘holidays’. Mention of their names is generally accompanied by an acknowledgement of their persistent refusal to settle, despite the repeated requests of the patrol officers for them to do so. In almost all instances of reported contact with these men, patrol officers recorded the use of camels as an essential means of transport.

## Camels

In *To Ayers Rock and Beyond* Bill Harney describes the camel as an integral part of the Anangu resistance to whitefella ways:

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<sup>83</sup> Rowley, *The Remote Aborigines*, 5.

<sup>84</sup> J.A. Cooke to Assistant Director of Welfare (Southern), ‘Aboriginals - Ayers Rock Road’, 17 September 1968, NTAS NTRS 629.



[L]ooking over the whole party I felt that I was in the presence of a people who were masters of their tribal lands. The camels too were somehow part of the picture. Having once opened this country they were now the chattels of a nomad race who refused to be bondsmen for white people who think they are free but are slaves to a convention that keeps them working to survive...What history has been made with the camels?<sup>85</sup>

Far more suited to the arid environment than horses, camels played an important role in the colonisation of the region. Explorers, Afghan traders, pastoralists, missionaries, doggers, police and anthropologists all relied on camels to facilitate their movement through the desert landscape.<sup>86</sup> However, they also played a significant role in the changing Anangu socio-economic itineraries.<sup>87</sup> In describing Anangu mobility in 1962, Frederick Rose observed that Anangu at Angas Downs journeyed to Areyonga in the north, Uluru and the Petermann Ranges in the west, and to Eralunda in the east and that they ‘were largely dependent on camels for transport’.<sup>88</sup> Rose argued that the excess army trucks that became available for purchase at the end of the Second World War had resulted in a rapid transition from camel to motor vehicles on pastoral stations, which left many pastoralists with ‘teams of useless camels on their hands’.<sup>89</sup> The camels were in turn given, or sold cheaply, to Anangu to use as they wished, which Rose argued completely ‘revolutionised’ the ways in which Anangu travelled, particularly in regard to the significantly increased carrying capacity of supplies and belongings.<sup>90</sup>

Rose took great interest in how Anangu had come to incorporate camels into their socio-economic itineraries and documented in detail, both in writing and photographs, the particular ways that people packed their camels, as well as the reasons for, and the various destinations of, their travel. While at Bloodwood Bore, he documented the contents of the

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<sup>85</sup> W. E. Harney, *To Ayers Rock and Beyond*, 136.

<sup>86</sup> Petronella Vaarzon-Morel, “Camels and the Transformation of Indigenous Economic Landscapes,” in *Indigenous Participation in Australian Economies II*, ed. Ian Keen et al., vol. 2 (Canberra: ANU E Press, 2012), 73.

<sup>87</sup> Layton, *Uluru*; Tom L. McKnight, *The Camel in Australia* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1969); Vaarzon-Morel, “Camels and the Transformation of Indigenous Economic Landscapes”; Rose, *The Wind of Change*; Roger Sandall, *Camels and the Pitjantjatjara* (Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies, 1969).

<sup>88</sup> Rose, *The Wind of Change*, 2.

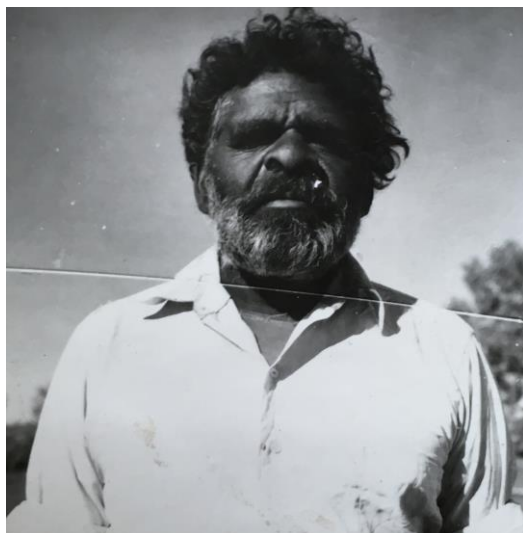
<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*, 25

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*, 22. This was one of the factors Rose cited as the cause of the disappearance of polygyny, primarily because women were no longer required to the ‘beasts of burden’.

camel pack of No. 45, a *Wintalyka* man named Jimmy Walkabout. He photographed all the gear in the pack (**Image 47**), which included:

- two large ground sheets
- a bundle of clothes, including a shirt, singlet, a pair of trousers and an old coat tails jacket
- a pillow
- a gallon tin for water
- two leather belts
- a piece of rope
- a 25 pound bag of flour
- a bag of tea and sugar
- a bag of money

Jimmy had also packed a 0.22 inch rifle and apologised to Rose that his wife had not yet put her belongings on the camel, except for her swag.<sup>91</sup> Nipper Winmati, one of the so-called ‘Walkabout Leaders’, told Rose that he had inherited his camels from his father and that there had originally been seven, but three had gone bush. He had recently travelled from Uluru to Angas Downs with nine others and it had taken four days, and was about to travel to Areyonga, which would take him five days. According to Rose, Nipper emphasised that he did not travel by the bitumen road used by tourists, but through the ‘bush using native wells and rock holes for water’.<sup>92</sup>

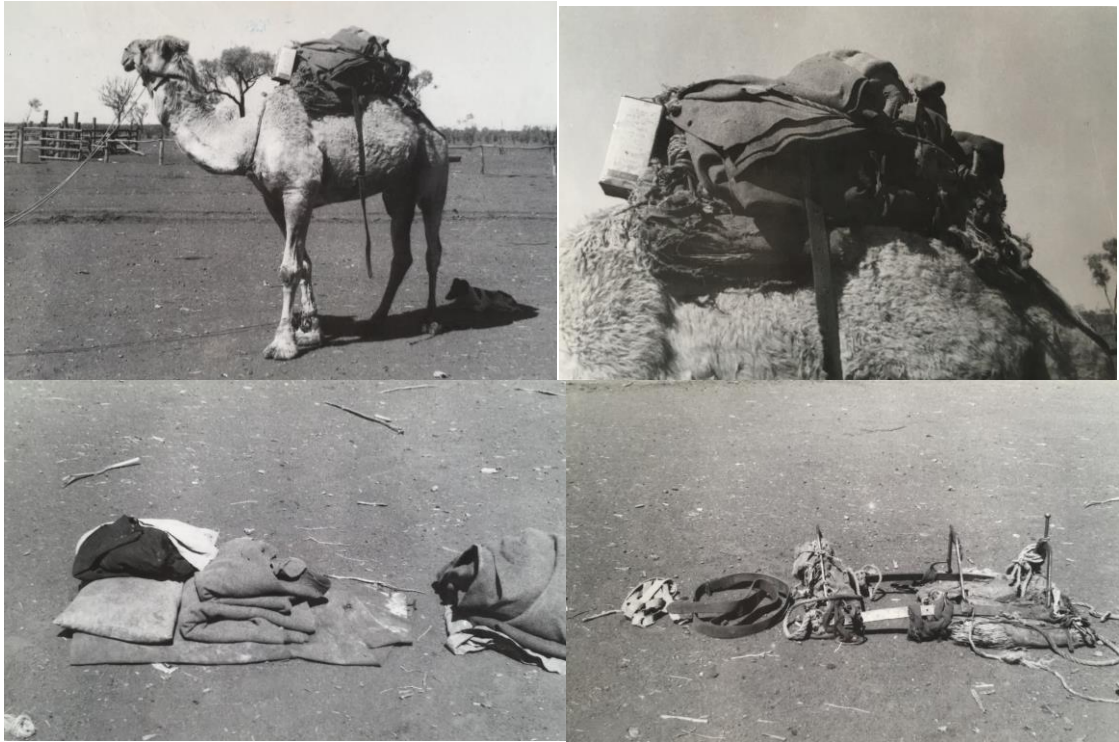


**Image 46 – ‘Walkabout Leader’ Nipper Winmati, 1962.** Source: SLNSW Frederick Rose Papers Box 8

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<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*, 153–4.

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*, 141.



**Image 47 – The contents of Jimmy Walkabout’s camel pack, including the saddle and straps.** Source: SLNSW Frederick Rose Papers Box 8

Rose grouped all of the Anangu living at Angas Downs into ‘family units’. He then divided these family units according to whether they were ‘permanent’ or ‘non-permanent’ residents at Angas Downs. Rose observed that nine of the eleven ‘permanent’ family units had no transport facilities, while eight out of the eighteen units that were ‘non-permanent’ had camels or donkeys. He noted that seven out of the remaining ten ‘non-permanent’ residents ‘were directly attached to other units possessing transport facilities’.<sup>93</sup> Rose’s observations are a rich resource for understanding the extent to which camels impacted upon changing patterns of travel, and the significant role that these animals played in the persistent peripatetic travel along the Areyonga-Ernabella route. Robert Layton also observed that in the period following the establishment of Ernabella and Areyonga, Anangu greatly increased their mobility by adopting camels as transport.<sup>94</sup> This is borne out by T’juki Pumpjack’s oral histories, which emphasise the significant role that these animals came to play along this travel route:

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<sup>93</sup> Ibid., 28–9. Although helpful for analysing the ownership and use of camels, and the impact of this on movements to and from Bloodwood Bore, Rose’s distinction between ‘permanent’ and ‘non-permanent’ should be treated with some caution. Rose noted that those he considered to be ‘permanent’ were almost entirely dependent on government rations and had given up their ‘nomadic way of life’. However, he also noted that these ‘permanent’ units would sometimes leave the camp for weeks at a time, indicating that ‘permanent’ did not mean entirely sedentary.

<sup>94</sup> Layton, *Uluru*, 80.

*A very long time ago we used to sit down at Areyonga. From there we started out on our journey, on camels. We travelled through Mount Connor, and from there we went to Tjulu. From Atila, Mount Connor, we travelled along the road, right down to Ernabella. We arrived at Ernabella and stayed there for a good bit of time. After that, we returned. Many people went back to Areyonga again, but I didn't. I stayed on at Walara then. I used to go around with camels. My own camels. We used to go very quickly, moving fast through the country.*<sup>95</sup>

Layton also noted that camels not only enhanced Anangu mobility, but were also important in transporting and guiding whitefella travellers such as H.H. Finlayson, Arthur Groom, Charles Mountford and Bill Harney.<sup>96</sup> In *To Ayers Rock and Beyond*, Bill Harney wrote of an encounter with Nipper Winmati and Paddy Uluru at 'the rock' where they told him their methods for catching and breaking in wild camels:

Naked hunters for ages, they had now adapted themselves to camel transport after the Afghans and Arab camel-men had been pushed off the roads by motor transport. I asked one of the men where he got his camels from. "Some we buy from 'nother one blackfellow...pay with puppy-dog scalp...some we catch in bush where mob run wild".

"How you catch them?" I asked him, and he replied "easy catch camel with mother one camel...just follow them up all day like dingo when they follow kangaroo...no-more-long-time camel knock up from follow-business then we throw rope on leg and they lay down on ground just like when man put pack on their back."

"They quiet then?" I questioned.

They laughed at my question then Winmati answered, "camel proper cheeky when caught, but we tie him".<sup>97</sup>

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<sup>95</sup> Tjuki Tjukanku Pumpjack, 26 October 2012.

<sup>96</sup> Layton, *Uluru*, 80.

<sup>97</sup> Harney, *To Ayers Rock and Beyond*, 135–6.

Harney then negotiated with the men to pay them cash to take him into the country west of Uluru with their camels. His recollections reflect Layton’s observations that Anangu had mastered camel husbandry, and that the animals were a potential source of income, as well as a mode of transport.<sup>98</sup>

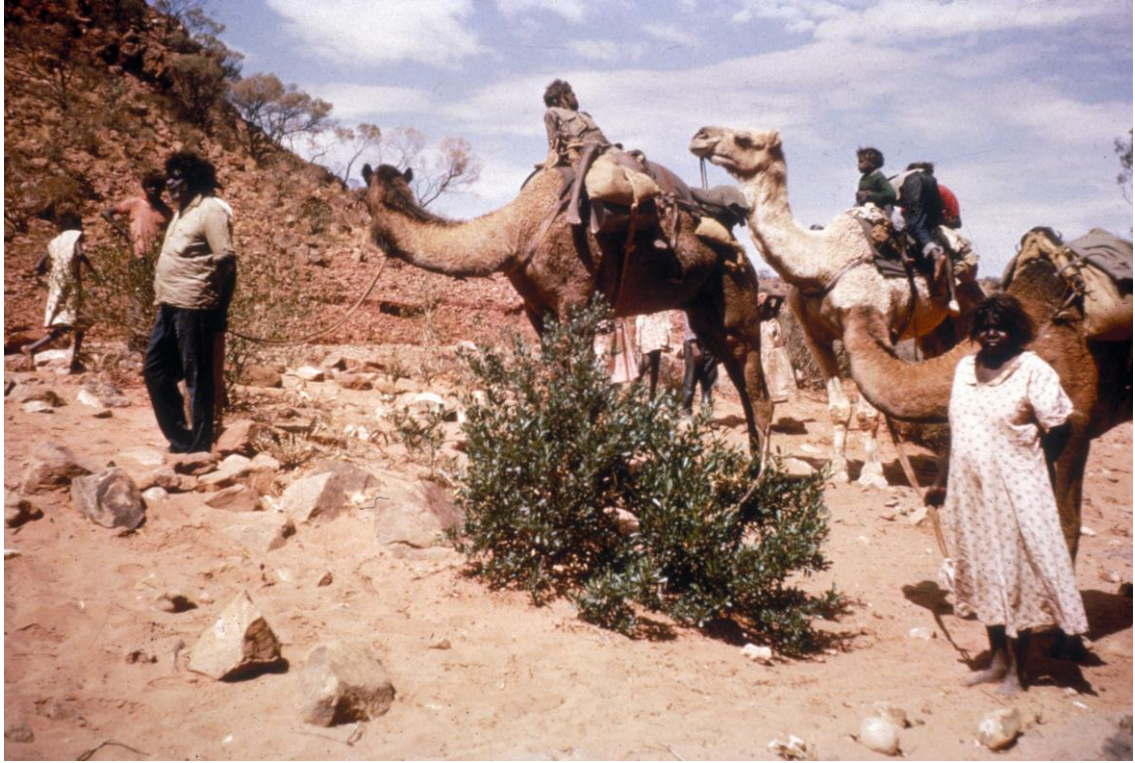


Image 48 – Nipper Winmati, his wife Barbara Tjikatu and family with camels at Utju creek, circa 1959. Source: Aṛa Irititja, Utju Community (Areyonga) Collection AI-0037787.

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<sup>98</sup> Ibid. According to Rose in 1962 a cow camel was worth 10 pounds, while a bull was worth 16 pound 10 shillings. Rose noted that Nipper Winmati’s camels were all cows and while Rose was at Bloodwood Bore Nipper sold a baby camel for 10 pound. His father, who died the year before, also had a baby camel, which he sold to Tjuki Pumpjack’s younger, brother Johnny Mulla, for 10 pound. When Rose asked Nipper if he would charge for travelling with him and his camels he said that he would charge Mick (No. 11) 2 pounds 10 shillings to travel from Uluru to Angas Downs, but he would not charge Tjuki Pumpjack as he was *walytja*. The average weekly wage for a white person in Alice Springs at the time was approximately 14 pound. Rose, *The Wind of Change*, 141. Despite noting that owners of camels were perceived as being ‘rich’ among Anangu, and citing Frederick Rose’s ethnography in her work, Petronella Varzon-Morel does not mention the value of camels in monetary terms in her analysis of camels and the transformation of the Anangu socio-economic landscape. Rather, she discusses the exchange in terms of dingo scalps and other material goods. Vaarzon-Morel, “Camels and the Transformation of Indigenous Economic Landscapes,” 84.

The Anangu grasp of camel husbandry is also evidenced in the 1969 ethnographic film *Camels and the Pitjantjatjara*. Made by anthropologists Roger Sandall and Nicolas Peterson, the film documents Anangu as they travel from Areyonga down through Tempe Gap into the mulga and sandhill country to the south, just north of Angas Downs, where they catch and then ‘smoke’ a wild camel to ‘make him quiet’. A man known as Captain No. 1 leads the group.<sup>99</sup> Captain No. 1 is named in the Welfare Branch reports as one of the ‘Walkabout leaders’. In a 1966 report, patrol officer Stewart wrote:

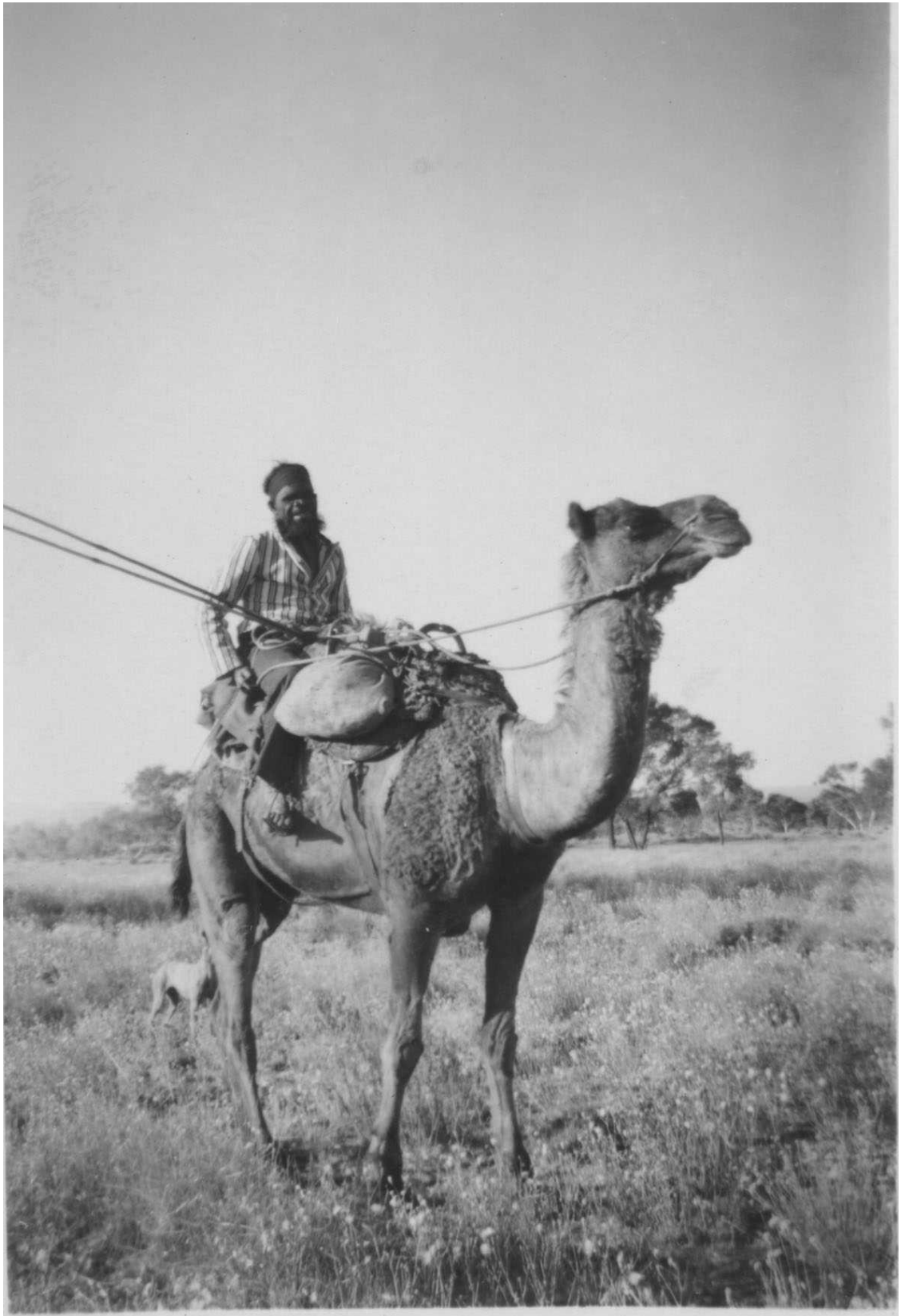
On route between Mulga Park and Curtin Springs I came across a group of twenty Areyonga aboriginals on walkabout. Captain No. 1 who was in charge told me they were going to look for camels and also hunt “puppy dog”. The group consisted of 9 men, 3 youths, 5 women and 3 children (only one child of school age). On every occasion I have visited this area over the past three years I always seem to strike Captain No. 1 and his group on “holiday” for one or two weeks. This is probably his method of satisfying a patrol officer, however, it is obvious he has little intention of staying in one place and will continue to “walkabout” as he wishes.<sup>100</sup>

As the reports of encounters with the ‘Walkabout leaders’ Nipper Winmati and Captain No. 1 suggest, camels had value beyond that for which they could be sold or exchanged. The animals not only revolutionised the way that Anangu could travel, but were an essential means to the trade and exchange of dingo scalps and the important ‘holidays’ that ‘dogging’ trips facilitated.

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<sup>99</sup> Sandall, *Camels and the Pitjantjatjara*.

<sup>100</sup> D.A. Stewart, ‘Report on Itinerant Aboriginals South-West Area’, 18 July 1966, NTAS NTRS 629.



**Image 49 – ‘Walkabout Leader’ Captain No. 1.** Source: Aga Irititja, Ali Cobby Eckermann Collection (Wilf Stiller photographer) AI-0174874.

## ‘Puppy Dogging’

The trade in dingo scalps was bound up with the business of travelling with camels in the southwest, which Anangu referred to as going ‘puppy dogging’. As chapter one illustrated, ‘dogging’ was responsible for many of the earliest encounters and economic exchanges between Anangu and whitefellas in and around the Musgrave and Petermann Ranges. In 1935, H.H. Finlayson observed that dingo scalps had become a form of ‘currency’ exchanged between Anangu and the white man for rations.<sup>101</sup> In 1937, Ernabella Mission introduced a policy to pay Anangu the full bounty for dingo scalps, instead of the rations they received from whitefellas, which effectively drove the white doggers out of the area,<sup>102</sup> making dingo skins a significant source of cash income for Anangu. Dingo skins remained valuable commodities and continued to play an important role in Anangu socio-economic itineraries for the next three decades. While the importance of dingo scalping has been previously under recognised, recent scholarship, in which memory is an important source, is revising earlier understandings.<sup>103</sup>

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<sup>101</sup> Finlayson, *The Red Centre*, 116.

<sup>102</sup> Hilliard, *The People in Between*, 97.

<sup>103</sup> In the 1966 work *Aborigines in the Economy: Employment, wages and training*, there is no mention of ‘dogging’ as a source of income or form of ‘employment’ in the Northern Territory, South Australia or Western Australia, even though dingo scalps had been involving Aboriginal people in economic exchange in these states for at least thirty years. In a 1972 comparative study of the ‘economic acculturation’ of Numic speaking people from the Great Basin in North America and Pitjantjatjara speaking people of the Western Desert, Gould et.al cite Finlayson as ‘suggesting’ that dingo scalps had become a kind of currency between Anangu and white people, but go on to argue that this ‘phase of trading was short-lived’ because dingo scalps were not a ‘saleable commodity’. Noting at the time that ‘only two types of employment’ existed for Anangu, both of which depended ‘entirely upon their native skills’, Gould et. al declared that the trade in artefacts for the tourist market and hunting dingos provided ‘occasional employment at best and contributed little income’. Richard A. Gould, D. Fowler, and Catherine S. Fowler, “Diggers and Doggers: Parallel Failures in Economic Acculturation,” *Southwestern Journal of Anthropology* 28, no. 3 (1972): 273. Rowse discussed both the production of artefacts for sale and the trade in dingo scalps in terms of the practice of ‘mercantile evangelism’. According to Rowse, the closest the Lutheran missionaries came to inducing a wider respect for the principle of ‘work for reward’ was to make commodities of customary practices like hunting and the production of tools and implements, so that in effect missionaries were also merchants, purchasing dingo scalps or artefacts to then trade with the wider Australian economy. However, by focusing solely on these two enterprises as a product of ‘mercantile evangelism’, Rowse’s history does not engage with the ways that Anangu were capitalising on the commodification of these customary practices outside of the mission economies and on their own terms. Rowse, *White Flour, White Power*, 89.





**Image 50 – Dingo skins laid out at Ernabella, circa 1957.** Source: Aga Irititja, Bill and Allison Elliot Collection AI-0018038.



**Image 51 – Dingo skins that belonged to Tjuki Pumpjack’s younger brother Johnny Mulla, Bloodwood Bore 1962.** Source: SLNSW Frederick Rose Papers Box 8.

Recent studies by anthropologist Diana Young and historian Rani Kerin has highlighted the significant role ‘dogging’ played in the development of economic relations between Anangu and settler society in northwestern South Australia and the Northern Territory, and as Young argues, the trade in dingo scalping was ‘far from marginal’, lasting as it did for some 40 years.<sup>104</sup> While Kerin’s study shows Anangu being integrated into the settler economy, Young approaches dingo scalps as ‘things’ and explores the ways in which, as commodities, they were incorporated into Anangu modalities of exchange and social relationships.<sup>105</sup> Young’s work illustrates dingo skins as a form of currency that ‘were wealth in many ways’ to Anangu.<sup>106</sup> She also highlighted that ‘puppy dogging’ was an important social activity that is recalled fondly by Anangu. Tjuki Pumpjack describes ‘puppy dogging’ in some detail:

*We were riding our camels and so off we went, right up towards Docker River. We went to Docker River. We were out there to hunt dingoes. Young ones and grown up ones. After we got the dingoes we skinned them and got the skin parts that we could sell. Skins. We got all those skins, a big bag full. We brought our big bag of skins back with us, as we started to turn back for home. We travelled in a big circle, right around from the Docker River area, turning back for home at that point, and starting to head back towards Ayers Rock again, travelling by way of Mantarur. We came back via a place called Mantarur.*

*Eventually we arrived back at Ayers Rock at the tourist camp... We started to organise our camels to go... We were getting ready to depart on our camels, when some people came up with trousers for us. Other people were getting ready to go so they took our camels and the tourists helped us by giving us a ride in their tourist vehicle back to Tjulu (Curtin Springs).*

*At Tjulu we all got out and started to go through our dingo skins, where we sold them all for brand new trousers and clothes. Good trousers! Money, \$100! We got all sorts of nice new clothes and then we arrived at Walara all clean and smart.*

*So that was what we did going out to get dingo skins. We went out. Right up towards Docker River and then turned back in a big circle, via Ernabella way. Ernabella was halfway on our big journey and then we went back up to Ayers Rock. There were lots of white people at Ayers Rock,*

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<sup>104</sup> Young, “Dingo Scalping and the Frontier Economy,” 103. See also Kerin, “Dogging for a Living” 136–58; Ushma Scales, “Dingoes and Doggers”, Ara Irititja, 2006.

<sup>105</sup> Young, “Dingo Scalping and the Frontier Economy,” 96.

<sup>106</sup> *Ibid.*, 103.

*all tourists. After that we went to Tjulu by truck. The other people continued on the three camels while we went to Tjulu by truck.*<sup>107</sup>

Over the period that we worked together recording his life history, Tjuki Pumpjack told a number of stories like this one. Reflecting Young’s observation of Anangu memories of ‘puppy dogging’, these dogging trips were always recalled fondly by Tjuki, and in the telling often took on the quality of a travelling epic, as they recounted in detail the journey to the west, and into the Petermann Ranges.

Frederick Rose’s fieldwork diaries are filled with references to Anangu coming and going from Angas Downs on dogging trips, none more so than Harry Brumby. Harry Brumby’s Anangu name was Tjuwiri and he was one of the *Wintaylka* (Mulga Seed) men from the Petermann Ranges who were recorded in William Liddle’s Day Book as being employed by him in 1939.<sup>108</sup> Tjuki Pumpjack said of Brumby that they had all ‘sat down together’ at Angas Downs from the ‘early days’ and that ‘he was our kin’.<sup>109</sup> Rose observed that while Brumby had clearly been associated with Angas Downs for a long time:

He was not one of the “permanents” and received neither Age Pension nor Sustenance from the Government. He was a man who obviously did not like remaining too long in the camp at Angas Downs.<sup>110</sup>

Furthermore, even though Brumby had been in contact with white people for as long as anyone at Bloodwood Bore, Rose noted he displayed a dislike for remaining in the station camp ‘as if he had an antipathy to remaining too long in contact with the white man’.<sup>111</sup> Brumby appears time and again in Welfare Branch reports as the ‘Walkabout leader’ that refused to ‘settle’:

There are included in this group of about 25 who are led by an aboriginal known as Harry Brumby who is from the Angas Downs, Curtin Springs area. This is the last group who are not really settled at a station or settlement. I have spoken often to Harry about this and he keeps assuring me he will go to Areyonga. I have made it quite clear to him that he will not receive rations at Mulga Park, Curtin Springs or

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<sup>107</sup> Tjuki Tjukanku Pumpjack, 26 October 2012.

<sup>108</sup> His Anangu name is taken from Layton, *Uluru*, 84. Information about his being a *Wintaylka* man Rose, *The Wind of Change*, 232.

<sup>109</sup> Tjuki Tjukanku Pumpjack, 26 October 2012.

<sup>110</sup> Rose, *The Wind of Change*, 70–1.

<sup>111</sup> *Ibid.*, 86.

Angas Downs and have told these stations I am not prepared to certify any future maintenance claims which show him and his group.<sup>112</sup>

Despite patrol officers' confidence that refusing to ration Brumby would force him to relocate to Areyonga once it became difficult to obtain food,<sup>113</sup> Rose's fieldwork diaries demonstrate that he had been living relatively independent of the government, and travelling continuously, for years.<sup>114</sup>



**Image 52 – ‘Walkabout Leader’ Harry Brumby, 1962.** Source: SLNSW Frederick Rose Papers Box 8

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<sup>112</sup> P.M. Mackey, ‘Aboriginal Camps Ayers Rock Area’, 9 October 1964, NTAS NTRS 629.

<sup>113</sup> G.F. Holden to Director of Social Welfare, 14 October 1964, NTAS NTRS 629.

<sup>114</sup> On the 23rd of August 1962, Rose documented that Brumby had 6 pounds 10 shillings ‘stowed away in a filthy old flour bag’. Rose deduced that Pastor Kalleske paid 5 pounds, or 5 pounds 10 shillings in exchange for dingo scalps when he travelled from Areyonga Mission to Angas Downs on a monthly basis. A week later Rose noted that Brumby brought in six dingo scalps, five pups and an adult female, for which he was paid 5 pounds 10 shillings by Kalleske. Brumby then left Angas Downs for three weeks, returning on the 25th of September with 14 dingo scalps, which Rose noted Brumby sold elsewhere, most likely Curtin Springs. Rose, *The Wind of Change*, 136, 143 and 169-70. Brumby was also regularly earning cash from selling *punu*, so compared with the 10 shillings a day that Tjuki Pumpjack was being paid as a stockman (in a lump sum when he went to town) this was not an insignificant amount of money for Anangu.

Evidence suggests that ‘puppy dogging’ continued to be of significant value in socio-economic itineraries in the southwest throughout the 1960s. Patrol reports indicate that when conditions permitted, Anangu chose to go ‘puppy dogging’, forgoing the opportunity to trade *punu* at the height of the tourist season. In June and July 1966, patrol officer D.A. Stewart carried out a census in the southwest, paying particular attention to numbers and movements of ‘itinerants’ in the area. Although the tourist season was ‘in full swing’, Stewart observed that Anangu were ‘not nearly as interested in selling artefacts to tourists as in previous years’.<sup>115</sup> There were several occasions of rain in the first six months of 1966. Stewart recorded that the rains had brought with them plenty of surface water, wildlife and bush foods and thus the main interest for the ‘walkabout’ movement for that year was for ‘puppy dog time’.<sup>116</sup> Stewart encountered no itinerants at Mt Ebenezer, Erldunda, Victory Downs or Mulga Park and only small groups at Curtin Springs, Wilpiya and Angas Downs, all of who said that they were on ‘holiday’ and had an interest in hunting ‘puppy dog’.

While historical scholarship has largely focused on the cattle industry as a mode of employment that enabled Aboriginal families to live on and maintain links to Country,<sup>117</sup> for Anangu in the southwest, whose homelands lay in the Western Desert, it was ‘dogging’ that provided the opportunity to combine earning an income with visiting Country with kin. In this sense, the ‘itinerants’ of the southwest share much in common with descriptions of ‘itinerant’ seasonal workers in other parts of the country, such as the hop-pickers in Gippsland during the 1870s and 1880s, who viewed hop-picking as a time ‘for holidaying as well as for working’. Attwood observed that hop-picking provided whole families with the opportunity to travel and gather and ‘teach children about natural food sources and the skills required to exploit them, and the related stories associated with particular places’.<sup>118</sup> As Attwood illustrated, hop-picking ‘holidays’ were an important part of the *rhythm* of the year for Aboriginal people; a ‘ritualised cycle’ that provided them with the opportunity to escape the humdrum of life on Lake Tyers and Ramahyuck missions, as well as ‘making tangible a vital link with nature, tradition and the past’.<sup>119</sup> Similarly, anthropologist John White described the value of seasonal bean and pea picking to Aboriginal people in the Eurobodalla region in southern New South Wales in the 1950s

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<sup>115</sup> D.A. Stewart, ‘Itinerant Aboriginals South West Area’, 18 July 1966, NTAS NTRS 629.

<sup>116</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>117</sup> Baker, *Land Is Life*; Goodall, *Invasion to Embassy*; Jebb, *Blood, Sweat and Welfare*; McGrath, *Born in the Cattle*; Harrison, *Shared Landscapes*.

<sup>118</sup> Attwood, *The Making of the Aborigines*, 66–67. See also Attwood, “Off the Mission Stations.”

<sup>119</sup> *Ibid.*, 77.

and 1960s which provided a means to make a living, while tracing ‘customary patterns of mobility’ within a broader geographical region that was marked by ‘nodes and webs of familial, social, cultural and economic significance’.<sup>120</sup> This movement was facilitated by motor cars, which allowed Aboriginal people to travel up and down along the coast for picking seasons, enabling whole families to work and live together for sustained periods of time.<sup>121</sup>

While dingo scalps had value in monetary terms, like *punu*, it was also a ‘thoroughly socialised thing’ that circulated in different regimes of value for Anangu.<sup>122</sup> ‘Puppy dogging’ trips provided the opportunity to hunt for the purpose of economic exchange, while travelling with family and continuing the crucial exchange of knowledge - in story, song and ceremony - among kin in Country. For some who had grown up on mission settlements, or stations, ‘puppy dogging holidays’ took them to see the homelands of their parents and grandparents, some of them for the first time.<sup>123</sup> The Anangu use of the word ‘holidays’ in relation to ‘puppy dogging’ needs to be understood in the broader context of colonial relations at the time. Life on the settlements, particularly on the missions such as Ernabella and Areyonga, was more rigidly controlled than that on the station at Angas Downs. ‘Puppy dogging’ not only presented an opportunity to travel with family, visiting Country and sharing knowledge, but as Attwood argued in relation to the hop-pickers in Gippsland, their activities have to be seen as a ‘*reaction*’ to the missionaries and patrol officers and ‘their highly ordered regimes’.<sup>124</sup> ‘Puppy dogging’ trips gave Anangu an opportunity to earn an income, while moving around and experiencing the world in ways that they were accustomed to, free from the imposed order and structure of the settlements, and the overt efforts of the Welfare Branch to make them settle. The country to the west was known for plentiful supplies of dingoes, and had always been difficult for whitefellas to travel, so while out there Anangu really were on ‘holidays’.

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<sup>120</sup> John White, “Histories of Indigenous-Settler Relations: Reflections on Internal Colonialism and the Hybrid Economy,” *Australian Aboriginal Studies* 1 (2011): 90.

<sup>121</sup> John White, “On the Road to Nerrigundah: An Historical Anthropology of Indigenous-Settler Relations in the Eurobodalla Region of New South Wales” (PhD thesis, Australian National University, 2010), 169–70. See also John White, “Peas, Beans and Riverbanks: Seasonal Picking and Dependence in the Tuross Valley,” in *Indigenous Participation in Australian Economies: Historical and Anthropological Perspectives*, vol.1 2 vols. (Canberra: ANU E Press, 2010), 109–26.

<sup>122</sup> Appadurai, “Introduction: Commodities and the Politics of Value,” 4.

<sup>123</sup> Layton, *Uluru*, 81. See also Young, “Dingo Scalping and the Frontier Economy,” 103.

<sup>124</sup> Attwood, *The Making of the Aborigines*, 75.



**Image 53 – Family group travelling west with camels, 1962.** Source: Aja Iritija, Bill Edwards Collection AI-0013332-001.



**Image 54 – Johnny Mulla (Tjuki Pumpjack’s brother) and Ada (Sandra Armstrong’s sister) and family getting ready to go on ‘holiday’ from Bloodwood Bore, 1962.** Source: SLNSW Frederick Rose Papers Box 8.

## The 'Red Ochre Cult'

The enhanced mobility of travelling with camels, coupled with the money or goods acquired from the exchange of dingo scalps and *pumu*, as well as rations supplied to 'permanent' residents on the stations and mission settlements, gave large groups of Anangu significant freedoms during the 1950s and 1960s. In the web of mobility and meaning traced in the southwest throughout this period, it was not just homelands in the Western Desert that emerged as significant sites; the stations and mission settlements were also important nodes in the constellation of mobility that emerged. The settlements at Angas Downs, Mulga Park, Victory Downs, Musgrave Park, Ernabella and Areyonga are cited consistently throughout the Welfare Branch correspondence files, particularly in relation to ceremonial activities.

Before the emergence of pastoralists and missionaries, and their abundant supplies of food, large ceremonial gatherings in the Western Desert and Central Australian ranges would have been infrequent, made possible only during times of ecological abundance. By the 1960s it was apparent that the emergence of ration depots had worked to alter the ceremonial migration of people. The provision of a stable and consistent food supply allowed for an increase in the frequency and duration of rituals, as well as the numbers of people that could be supported at any one time.<sup>125</sup> Like regions in other parts of Australia, such as that described by anthropologist Jeremy Beckett in the northwest 'Corner' of New South Wales, it was pastoral stations, and both their ability and need to support small communities of Aboriginal people, that 'sewed the knots of the social and ceremonial network' in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.<sup>126</sup>

In June 1965 patrol officer Grimwade reported encountering Harry Brumby at Angas Downs and trying to obtain information from him about the 'Red Ochre Corroboree', which had come to the attention of the Welfare Branch. Grimwade noted that he was able to 'find out very little about the Red Ochre corroborees, apart from the route followed' and that it was 'highly secret'.<sup>127</sup> He noted that the ritual had originated in Ooldea in South Australia and that the ceremonies taking place in the Northern Territory involved people from Warburton and Blackstone in Western Australia, Ernabella and Musgrave Park in

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<sup>125</sup> D.L. Busbridge, "Aboriginal Employment Problems in South Australia," in *Aborigines in the Economy*, ed. Colin Tatz and Ian G. Sharp (Brisbane: Jacaranda Press, 1966), 94. See also Rowse, *White Flour, White Power*, 149.

<sup>126</sup> Beckett, "George Dutton's Country," 23.

<sup>127</sup> G. Grimwade, 'Itinerant Aboriginals - S/W Area', 29 June 1965, NTAS NTRS 629.



South Australia, as well as Anangu from Areyonga, and the local stations and settlements as far north as Yuendumu.<sup>128</sup> Four months later patrol officer Stewart reported encountering a large congregation at Mulga Park station, noting that the reason for the gathering was for ‘ceremonials to be held so that important tribal beliefs and rituals could be passed on from the Elders’ to up and coming men.<sup>129</sup> He reported that some 250 people had been present at the ‘peak of the ceremonials’, which had been going for about three weeks. Stewart wrote that Mulga Park and Angas Downs had ‘fair sized permanent camps’ and that it was at these two places that Anangu usually congregated for their ceremonies, concluding that it was going to be difficult to ‘reduce the number of ceremonials’ as Anangu knew that they could ‘obtain sufficient food by the sale of artefacts, and also by the sharing of food with permanent residents’ on the stations.<sup>130</sup>

In 1966 District Welfare Officer Lovegrove reported encountering a ‘big Aboriginal ceremony’ at Musgrave Park. As many as 500 Anangu – 200 men and 250-300 women and children – had gathered for the purpose of ceremony from late June through until at least the third week of July. Lovegrove noted that the ‘exodus’ from both Ernabella and Areyonga was the biggest for many years and that it was likely due to the ‘favourable’ conditions that ceremonies had increased in importance and encouraged ‘whole families’ to migrate to the important areas.<sup>131</sup> Anthropologist Aram Yengoyan recorded 150-200 ceremonial activities at Musgrave Park over a 16 month period between 1966-67, arguing that the impact of settlements on the ability to support larger populations for longer periods of time, coupled with enhanced mobility, had given rise to ritual ceremonies being performed with a much ‘greater frequency and emphasis than in the past’.<sup>132</sup> Furthermore, Yengoyan argued that this religious realm was critical in establishing and maintaining distance and difference:

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<sup>128</sup> Ibid.

<sup>129</sup> D.A. Stewart, ‘Itinerant Aboriginals: Southwest Area’, 28 October 1965, NTAS NTRS 629.

<sup>130</sup> Ibid.

<sup>131</sup> T.C. Lovegrove to Director of Welfare Branch, 19 July 1966, NTAS NTRS 629.

<sup>132</sup> Aram A. Yengoyan, ‘Religion, Morality and Prophetic Traditions: Conversion of the Pitjantjatjara of Central Australia,’ in *Conversion to Christianity: Historical and Anthropological Perspectives on a Great Transformation*, ed. Robert W. Hefner (University of California Press, 1993), 236. See also Nicolas Peterson, ‘An Expanding Aboriginal Domain: Mobility and the Initiation Journey,’ *Oceania* 70, no. 3 (March 2000): 209; Aram A. Yengoyan, ‘A Comparison of Certain Marriage Features between the Pitjandjara Other Groups of the Western Desert with the Northern Groups. Also Some Comments on the Red Ochre Ceremonies,’ *Journal of the Anthropological Society of South Australia* 5, no. 4 (1967): 16–19.

The Pitjantjatjara use terms like “blackfella” and “whitefella” not only to establish and reassert the contrast between Aboriginal life and the white world but also to show what defines Aboriginality is a set of cultural features which white Australians can never understand, let alone possess.<sup>133</sup>

Yengoyan argued that contrary to assumptions that myth and ritual are inextricably linked, in the case of the Pitjantjatjara, among who he conducted fieldwork in the latter half of the 1960s, ritual was more of a social, rather than mythic expression and that just as people adjust according to their everyday social experience, so too did ritual respond to ‘life’s contingencies’.<sup>134</sup> In their analysis of ‘economic acculturation’ in the Western Desert, Gould et. al., drew upon Yengoyan’s fieldwork to posit that the ‘Red Ochre Cult’ not only demonstrated the rise of ceremonialism in the Western Desert as a result of increasing sedentarisation on settlements and stations, but also represented the possibility of a ‘new nativistic element’ in ceremonial life that assumed the characteristics of a ‘nativistic movement’.<sup>135</sup>

As chapter three illustrated, larger settlements created a significantly expanded social universe for Anangu, which, despite a rapidly changing socio-economic landscape, provided the circumstances that facilitated the production and reproduction of Anangu social life. This set of circumstances was ‘underwritten by economic, social and geographical isolation’,<sup>136</sup> and as a number of anthropologists have observed, resulted in the emergence of distinctive separate social and spatial spheres, or domains, that differentiated between ‘blackfellas’ and ‘whitefellas’.<sup>137</sup> While these separate spheres have been a product of both Anangu and whitefella desires at different times, ‘puppy dogging holidays’ and the expansion of the ‘Red Ochre Cult’ need to be understood in terms of efforts to maintain, and strengthen, the Anangu sphere of exchange. Furthermore, as Melinda Hinskion has posited in relation to a similar intensification and expansion of ritual practice among Warlpiri at Hooker Creek in the 1960s and 1970s, this can also be understood as ‘new acts of place-making’ that were harnessed by Warlpiri to deal with

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<sup>133</sup> Ibid., 238.

<sup>134</sup> Ibid., 241.

<sup>135</sup> Gould, Fowler, and Fowler, “Diggers and Doggers: Parallel Failures in Economic Acculturation,” 275.

<sup>136</sup> Peterson, “An Expanding Aboriginal Domain: Mobility and the Initiation Journey,” 206.

<sup>137</sup> Rowse, *Remote Possibilities*; Trigger, “Blackfellas and Whitefellas,”; J. Von Sturmer, “The Different Domains,” in *Aborigines and Uranium. Consolidated Report on the Social Impact of Uranium Mining on the Aborigines of the Northern Territory* (Canberra: Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies, 1984), 218–37.

dislocation, while simultaneously grounding themselves in ‘new country’.<sup>138</sup> Mobility, enabled and enhanced by camels, and later by motor vehicles, was a crucial element in this particular expression of autonomy.<sup>139</sup> Ceremonial activity in the region is reported frequently in Welfare Branch correspondence between 1964 and 1968, and even as late as 1972. Despite attempts made to learn more about the rituals, and to put a stop to the unsatisfactory situation of large congregations of Anangu, the archive demonstrates the limits of the Branch’s authority in the realm of the ‘Red Ochre’ ceremonies. While the Branch made distinctions between what was seen to be permissible and ‘unsightly’ or ‘undesirable’ congregations, it was beyond its knowledge and power to enforce such a distinction.<sup>140</sup> The little that was known of the region’s ‘travelling cults’ suggests that ceremonial leaders had fearsome reputations and an authority which the Welfare Branch could hardly match.<sup>141</sup>

**‘On the one hand it is good to see people who are self reliant and no expense to the Government, but on the other hand...’**

In 1965 it came to the attention of the Welfare Branch that a number of the ‘itinerants’ would relocate to the Petermann Ranges when a rations depot was established there.<sup>142</sup> As a result, Welfare Branch Director Giese instructed staff in the Southern Branch ‘to press on with all speed with the Petermanns project’.<sup>143</sup> The settlement at Docker River in the Petermann Ranges was finally established in 1967, on one of the sites that T.G.H. Strehlow had suggested thirty years earlier in an effort to stem the flow of Anangu migrating out of the desert.<sup>144</sup>

In April of 1968 District Welfare Officer Cooke met with Nipper Winmati and Harry Brumby at Curtin Springs and reported that although they were ‘very keen’ to move to Docker River, they were ‘adamant about taking a means of transport with them’.<sup>145</sup> Cooke advised the men to leave their ‘normal means of transport’, which was camels and an old

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<sup>138</sup> Melinda Hinkson, *Remembering the Future*, 124–5.

<sup>139</sup> Peterson, “An Expanding Aboriginal Domain,” 209–10. See also Annette Hamilton, “Coming and Going: Aboriginal Mobility in North-West South Australia, 1970–1971,” *Records of the South Australian Museum* 20 (1987): 47–57.

<sup>140</sup> Rowse, *White Flour, White Power*, 149.

<sup>141</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>142</sup> L.N. Penhall, ‘Itinerant Aboriginals - S/W Area’, 29 June 1965, NTAS NTRS 629.

<sup>143</sup> H.C. Giese, ‘Itinerant Aboriginals - South West Area’, [no day or month on document] 1965, NTAS NTRS 629.

<sup>144</sup> Layton, *Uluru*, 88.

<sup>145</sup> J.A. Cooke, ‘Patrol of South West Area’, 29 April 1968, NTAS NTRS 629.

truck, at Curtin Springs. In his report he noted that there was a strong possibility that Winmati and Brumby would insist on taking their own means of transport to Docker River, and that if that was the case there was little that could be done to prevent it.<sup>146</sup> Despite this, Cooke felt that it was ‘most desirable that this group be stabilised’ and that ‘every effort should be made to locate them permanently at Docker River’.<sup>147</sup> Four months later patrol officer Stewart travelled to Angas Downs and Curtin Springs with the ‘purpose of moving part of the Aboriginal population to Docker River settlement’.<sup>148</sup> He reported that at the time of his visit there was a ‘Red Ochre’ ceremonial gathering at Angas Downs involving 200 Anangu from Areyonga and Angas Downs and that the men did not want to depart for Docker River until the rituals were complete. Stewart also noted that the men ‘were quite adamant they were going to take their camels to Docker River’ and that he gave them ‘fair warning’ that if they insisted then their camels may be ‘destroyed’.<sup>149</sup>

In August 1968, 134 people were recorded as living at Docker River.<sup>150</sup> On a trip to the new settlement, District Welfare Officer Cooke intended on speaking with the men at Angas Downs who declined to relocate while ‘business’ was still going, to discuss the ‘case for and against the use of camels as a mode of transport’.<sup>151</sup> On the way out to Docker River, Cooke encountered Captain No. 1 and a group of approximately twelve Anangu and ‘at least 100 dogs’ camped between the Angas Downs turnoffs. He reported that they were ‘being supplied with rations by an Angas Downs vehicle’ and would return to Areyonga in one week’s time when a large group of Anangu at Mulga Park returned to Angas Downs.<sup>152</sup> On his return trip from Docker River a week later, Cooke encountered a group of approximately 30 Anangu camped at the Mulga Park turnoff who intended on meeting up with the group at the Angas Downs turnoff. Led by the ‘well known “Walkabout” leader Nipper’, Cooke reported that they were travelling with camels and horses and expected to be in Areyonga in ‘about a weeks time’.<sup>153</sup> Cooke concluded that it was:

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<sup>146</sup> Ibid.

<sup>147</sup> Ibid. In the same report Cooke notes that the owner of Curtin Springs, Peter Severin, told tourists and visitors passing through that ‘he feeds his Great Dane one “black fella” a day’. Cooke noted that if the ‘anecdote’ was to receive any publicity he suggested that ‘it be ignored’. Severin still owns Curtin Springs.

<sup>148</sup> D.A. Stewart, ‘Aboriginals - Ayers Rock Road’, 19 August 1968, NTAS NTRS 629.

<sup>149</sup> Ibid.

<sup>150</sup> T.C. Lovegrove, ‘Movement of Aboriginals to Docker River’, 20 August 1968, NTAS NTRS 629.

<sup>151</sup> J.A. Cooke, ‘Aboriginals - Ayers Rock Road’, 17 September 1968, NTAS NTRS 629.

<sup>152</sup> Ibid.

<sup>153</sup> Ibid.

Becoming fairly obvious that this particular group of Aboriginals do not intend settling anywhere. They seem to be almost constantly on the move between Areyonga, Angas Downs, Mulga Park and Curtin Springs, with the occasional foray to Musgrave Park and Ernabella. Their most permanent centre seems to be Angas Downs and if any attempt is to be made to stabilise this group I think that the only place they will regard as “home” will be Angas Downs.<sup>154</sup>

The tensions and fissures of assimilation policy, and the resilience of Anangu social life, can both be read in the Welfare Branch correspondence files. In their persistent efforts to curb the socio-economic activities that were encouraging Anangu mobility, the ‘uncommon sense’ of the deeply contradictory assimilationist agenda is revealed as reflected in the observations of patrol officer Lovegrove:

On one hand it is good to see people who are self reliant, and are no expense to the Government but on the other hand it is unfortunate that this way of life does a considerable amount of harm to their own image and to the branch public image.<sup>155</sup>

Anangu capitalised on the very few economic opportunities available to them in the economically under-developed north. They did so in a way that enabled the expansion of their existing social universe, while simultaneously distancing themselves from whitefellas and the encapsulating social order they represented. However, demonstrating relative economic independence, in ways that enabled the maintenance of their own social sphere, was seen to be incommensurable with the settler capitalist story that assimilation policy would simply make Aboriginal people ‘more like us’. It was Anangu mobility, and by extension their visibility, that undermined the administrative pretence that all was in order and as it should be.

The ‘story track’ that connects Areyonga, Ernabella and the stations that lay in-between is significant not just because it sheds light on the historical importance of the route, but also because it illuminates mobilities that lay at the heart of an Anangu engagement with the world. Following this ‘story track’, noting the clusters of camps and the roads that connect them, reveals how existing patterns of mobility and kinship incorporated new technologies of travel and resources to create new geographies and expanded social networks.

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<sup>154</sup> Ibid.

<sup>155</sup> T.C. Lovegrove, ‘Itinerant Aboriginals South West Area’, 3 November 1965, NTAS NTRS 629.

Furthermore, it highlights how places, rather than bounded and fixed, are relational made through intersecting travels, encounters and exchanges.

As Jane Carey and Jane Lydon have recently argued, a focus on Aboriginal networks of travel and exchange reveals ‘a range of new histories “from below”’, but also ‘sharpens our appreciation of the limits and contradictions of imperial power, authority and legitimacy’.<sup>156</sup> The construction of some Anangu as ‘the itinerants’ in the correspondence files of the Welfare Branch reveals the deeply contradictory architecture of an assimilation agenda that sought to sedentarise and transform Anangu into the kind of human material suitable for a capitalist system, in the economically underdeveloped north.<sup>157</sup> Juxtaposing ‘the itinerants’ with the itineraries that mark Anangu memory exposes the ways in which mobility was structured by different knowledge traditions, undermining the normalisation of sedentary thinking, and reflecting it as a projection of bureaucratic policy objectives.<sup>158</sup>

Despite establishing the settlement at Docker River as a means to ‘stabilise’ the itinerant groups, Anangu brought their own interpretations to bear on the new settlement, as the next chapter will demonstrate. The establishment of Docker River in 1967-68 coincided with a suite of other factors around that time that contributed to continuing mobilities, and yet another significant reconfiguration of Anangu socio-economic constellations and spatial orientation. Furthermore, despite the above report arguing that the only hope at ‘stabilising’ the remaining itinerants would be to establish a ‘permanent centre’ at Bloodwood Bore, these changing circumstances of the late 1960s and 1970s would instead result in the eventual demise of Angas Downs.

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<sup>156</sup> Ibid.

<sup>157</sup> Rowse, “Indigenous Heterogeneity,” 305. See also Rowse, *White Flour, White Power*, 139–43.

<sup>158</sup> Malkki, “National Geographic.” See also Samia Khatun, “Beyond Blank Spaces: Five Tracks to Late Nineteenth-Century Beltana,” *Transfers* 5, no. 3 (2015): 68–86.

## CHAPTER FIVE (UN)MAKING ANGAS DOWNS

The late 1960s and 1970s in northern Australia witnessed significant migrations of Aboriginal people away from pastoral stations. These movements marked the end of the interdependency that had characterised the pastoral industry in the region throughout the twentieth century. The event of the ‘equal wage’ has become symbolic of this significant period of change in the history of colonialism and cultural encounter in the north of Australia. Despite the assumed emancipation of Aboriginal labour following the decision, the extension of equal wages to Aboriginal stockmen coincided with movements of large numbers of Aboriginal people off the pastoral stations. While this historical moment has divided opinion as to whether it heralded the end of an era of exploitation, or brought about mass evictions and the subsequent collapse of socio-economic relations in the northern regions, as a number of historians have demonstrated, it was but one event among many in a larger process of change.<sup>1</sup>

Just as there was no one reason for Anangu migrating out of the Western Desert toward mission settlements and pastoral stations, there is no one reason why, decades later, Anangu left Angas Downs. Arguably the most significant period of change since Anangu first began walking out of the desert, the complexity of this moment cannot be apprehended in singular, cause-and-effect narratives. The late 1960s and 1970s was a period marked by flux, and complex processes of transformation, in the northern regions of the continent. Multiple factors in a rapidly changing national social, political and economic landscape resulted in a recalibration of relationships between Anangu and the state, and a reconfiguration of the regional system in the southwest. Some places ceased to exist, as new places emerged, in a changing Anangu constellation of socio-cultural mobility.

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<sup>1</sup> Thalia Anthony, “An Anniversary Shrouded in Myths,” *Australian Policy Online*, August 22, 2006, accessed 15 May, 106, <http://apo.org.au/resource/anniversary-shrouded-myths>; Thalia Anthony, “Labour Relations on Northern Cattle Stations: Feudal Exploitation and Accommodation,” *The Drawing Board: An Australian Review of Public Affairs* 4, no. 3 (March 2004): 117–36; Baker, *Land Is Life*; Jebb, *Blood, Sweat and Welfare*; Rowse, *White Flour, White Power*; Fiona Skyring, “Low Wages, Low Rents, and Pension Cheques: The Introduction of Equal Wages in the Kimberley, 1968-1969,” in *Indigenous Participation in Australian Economies: Historical and Anthropological Perspectives*, vol. 2 (Canberra: ANU E Press, 2012), 153–69.

Pastoral stations like Angas Downs were sites where people had lived, worked, shared, fought and died for three decades or more by the time a movement away from them began. In this sense, they were no different from mission and government settlements, no matter the administrative policy or development rationale behind them.<sup>2</sup> Despite a focus on Aboriginal movements away from stations during this period, it is important to note that they were not the only places that Aboriginal people were walking away from in large numbers. This chapter argues that movements away from Angas Downs during the 1960s and 1970s cannot be understood in isolation, or solely in relation to the collapse of the relationship between Anangu and pastoralism. Rather, they must be examined in the context of the broader, regional changes and migrations taking place at the time. Furthermore, it argues that these regional shifts, which resulted in yet another phase of spatial reorganisation, must be understood in a longer-term view and as part of a continuous historical process of transformation that began with the earliest encounters with whitefellas and ‘settlements’.

This chapter seeks to make sense of the multiple factors contributing to the complex processes of transformation taking place at this time. Drawing upon the oral histories of Sandra Armstrong and Tjuki Pumpjack, along with government correspondence files, the chapter is structured around two very different ways of remembering the end of Angas Downs. While Sandra’s memories of the multiple forces of the ‘return to Country’, ‘sit-down money’ and aspirations for autonomy allow for the construction of this period into a somewhat linear historical narrative, Tjuki’s story of Arthur Liddle’s death raises the problem of how to explain the ‘end’ of Angas Downs. Arthur Liddle did not die during this period, but that Tjuki remembered it this way is rich with meaning. In juxtaposing these different ‘endings’ to the story of Angas Downs, the chapter argues that memory provides valuable insights that are essential to understanding the meaning and significance of this period, which archival records alone cannot reveal. Analysing Tjuki’s story of Liddle’s death, through a consideration of the shifting meanings of *ngura* over half a century of change, the chapter explores how a cattle station was made Country and the ways in which

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<sup>2</sup> Susan Tod Woenne, “Old Country, New Territory: Some Implications of the Settlement Process,” in *Aborigines and Change: Australia in the 70s*, ed. Ronald M. Berndt (Canberra: Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies, 1977), 59. In her discussion of the newly established Docker River settlement Woenne notes that although from an ‘outsider’ point of view it could be argued that a mission is very different to a government settlement or pastoral station, for Anangu, although it was widely acknowledged these kinds of settlement would be experienced differently, they were not viewed as intrinsically different in terms of *kinds* of places. Differences were articulated in terms of ‘cumulative individual experience’ of the people who worked at each type of settlement and the range of services available.



the unmaking of Angas Downs speaks to contemporary politics of place, recognition and ownership.

## THE BEGINNING OF THE END

Director of Welfare, Harry Giese, urged the southern division of the Welfare Branch to establish a new settlement at Docker River in 1965.<sup>3</sup> However, the suggestion for the establishment of a settlement in the Petermann Ranges had re-emerged earlier in 1961, when Research Officer for the Welfare Branch, Jeremy Long, reported that ‘developing the Petermann Ranges area offered much better prospects’ than what was then on offer at Areyonga.<sup>4</sup> Long’s reasoning at the time was that the people at Areyonga were ‘markedly more mobile than those in other settlements’, that there was little opportunity to develop a cattle project, and that the water supply might prove inadequate for the growing population.<sup>5</sup>

It was around this time that the capacities of mission and government settlements were emerging as yet another problem for the Welfare Branch and its assimilation agenda. In March 1961, Long submitted a report that outlined the prospects for ‘accelerated development’ in order to meet the needs of the growing populations at the western settlements of Papuyna, Yuendumu and Haasts Bluff.<sup>6</sup> Long reported at the time that the ‘settled areas’ in the region were not able to provide enough work. Furthermore, he noted that the hope that the settlements might ‘serve their purposes as “staging camps” and “training centres”’, and that Aboriginal people would then ‘disappear’ into the general population, seemed unrealistic.<sup>7</sup> He suggested sinking several bores and establishing ‘outpost stations’, comparable to those that had been established at Fregon and Amata in South Australia in 1961, to relieve the pressure of the growing population on firewood and water supplies at Ernabella mission.<sup>8</sup> Establishing an ‘outstation’ in the Petermanns, as Long imagined it, would be a move toward ensuring a future for Anangu, as well as

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<sup>3</sup> H.C. Giese, ‘Itinerant Aboriginals - South West Area’, [no day or month on document] 1965, NTAS NTRS 629.

<sup>4</sup> Jeremy Long, “Returning to Country: The Docker River Project,” in *Experiments in Self-Determination: Histories of the Outstation Movement in Australia*, ed. Fred Myers and Nicolas Peterson (Canberra: ANU E Press, 2016), 52.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Long’s 1961 report quoted in Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> Bill Edwards, “From Coombes to Coombs: Reflections on the Pitjantjatjara Outstation Movement,” in *Experiments in Self-Determination*, 32.

reducing the number of them ‘moving round the stations and sitting down on the Ayers Rock road’.<sup>9</sup>

Despite the assumption within the Welfare Branch that establishing a settlement at Docker River would solve the problem of ‘the itinerants’, patrol reports reveal an underlying anxiety that, in reality, this was not the case. Although the population at Docker River was increasing – a population of 80 was recorded at the new settlement in May of 1968<sup>10</sup> – similar numbers were reported as living at Bloodwood Bore and Wilpiya on Angas Downs at around the same time. In April 1968, District Welfare Officer Cooke noted that the group at Wilpiya was ‘opposed strongly’ to Cooke’s suggestion that they move to Areyonga. They also resisted a move to the newly established Docker River:

This group wish to remain at Angas Downs and I can therefore make no recommendation to provide for their welfare other than a concentration of welfare activity at a centre on the Angas Downs lease.

The owner of Angas Downs is willing for a settlement to be established on the lease and action has already commenced to start a school. I recommend therefore that the school be extended to include a settlement complex so that full provision can be made for the welfare of Angas Downs Aboriginals. If something is not done along these lines urgently we can expect numerous critical reports from travellers during the forth-coming tourist season...I would suggest that urgent negotiations take place to establish a permanent settlement for these people at Wilbia Bore...I would like to see a school established at Wilbia Bore or in the near vicinity with a view to expanding the centre to settlement proportions. I feel that the Angas Downs population could then be stabilised and the centre could avail itself of any benefits obtainable from the tourist industry. Some gardening and farming could be carried out and labour could be supplied on a casual basis to Angas Downs and other surrounding stations.<sup>11</sup>

The primary objective of assimilation was ‘waged citizenship’, and as Rowse has observed, two decades of efforts to implement assimilation had made the state increasingly aware of connection to place as a continuing determinant of Anangu actions, and also an obstacle to

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<sup>9</sup> Long, “Returning to Country: The Docker River Project,” 52.

<sup>10</sup> T.C. Lovegrove, ‘Movement of Aboriginals to Docker River, 20 August 1968, NTAS NTRS 629.

<sup>11</sup> J.A. Cooke, Patrol of the South West Area, 29 April 1968, NTAS NTRS 629.

their becoming wage labourers.<sup>12</sup> A waged citizenry rested upon the stabilisation of the population, and as the previous chapter demonstrated, the traveling mode in which Anangu made their way in the world was antithetical to the social transformation that the Welfare Branch desired. Despite assumptions that Docker River would be a panacea for the problem of ‘the itinerants’, Anangu kept moving, and Angas Downs became the focal point for the Welfare Branch’s sedentary visions.

Assimilation policy was collapsing under the weight of its internal contradictions. Cooke’s report is evidence of an ideological project in the death throes; the chimera of a settled group of Anangu, tending gardens, farming and partaking in casual labour, is at risk of being subsumed by a sense of ‘urgency’, and the foreboding of a ‘critical’ condition. In a patrol report five months later, Cooke observed that the ‘itinerants’ displayed no intention of settling anywhere and that if an attempt to ‘stabilise’ the constantly wandering Anangu was to be made, ‘the only place they would regard as “home” would be Angas Downs’.<sup>13</sup> Late in 1968, presumably sometime after September, five large caravans were placed on Angas Downs. One was to be used as a schoolroom, two as ablutions vans, one a kitchen, and a three-bedroom flat for the teacher.

Less than a year later, in August of 1969, Cooke wrote to the Assistant Director of the Welfare Branch recommending that the mobile units be removed from Angas Downs as he felt that the:

Aborigines are unlikely to congregate there in any numbers in future and it would not be advisable to give them any encouragement to do so.<sup>14</sup>

It was recommended that the units be moved to Docker River. Cooke noted that the decision was motivated by a visit to Angas Downs by Rev. George Hardy from the Presbyterian Synod in Sydney, who later wrote to the Director of Welfare to complain about the ‘apparent abandonment of the expensive units’ on the station for a period of about two years. In 1969, Arthur Liddle complained to Reverend Jim Downing that he had fought hard and long to get a mobile school, ablution facilities and house for a teacher from the Welfare Branch. Liddle told Downing that it was not long after the mobile units

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<sup>12</sup> Rowse, *White Flour, White Power*, 210.

<sup>13</sup> J.A. Cooke, *Aboriginals – Ayers Rock Road*, 17 September 1968, NTAS NTRS 629.

<sup>14</sup> J.A. Cooke to Assistant Director Welfare Branch, *School Buildings – Angas Downs*, 15 August 1969, NAA F133 1978/435 Angas Downs Station, 1968-71.

had been delivered to Angas Downs that a patrol officer turned up with trucks and urged people to go to Docker River.

This episode raises a number of questions. What happened at Bloodwood Bore that could have brought about such a dramatic change in circumstances in the course of less than a year? Why was the 'urgent' and possibly 'critical' condition of the 'itinerants' around Angas Downs no longer an issue for the Welfare Branch? If, as reported, Angas Downs had been abandoned, where had Anangu gone? Perhaps more pertinent, why did they leave a place where they had adamantly expressed a desire to stay?

### The return

When I asked her why the Welfare Branch took the caravans away from Bloodwood Bore, Sandra Armstrong said that it was around the time that everyone started to leave. Docker River had been established and many people decided to make the journey home:<sup>15</sup>

*They brought the caravans here but all of Anangu were beginning to disperse to their own country, thinking to return to various sites for cultural reasons and they were leaving. There were people at Wingelina, there was probably a bore there for them and Docker River people, and others were leaving for Amata, which was a new settlement. There were many new (communities) at that time; Fregon, Amata, Wingelina, Blackstone and others, Warakurna and others were somewhat later but the main ones people were living at were Fregon, Amata and other people were also living at the homelands and we were the only ones (left) living at the station.<sup>16</sup>*

Sandra did not talk about movements away from Angas Downs in terms of Anangu being forced off the station. Rather, she narrates these migrations as being motivated by 'cultural reasons', primary among them the desire to return 'home'. The notion of a 'homelands movement' has come to characterise this particular articulation of Aboriginal mobility in the north of the continent. The return to Country has largely been understood as a phenomena resulting from an assertion and affirmation of Aboriginal autonomy, the origins of which is assumed to be the dramatic changes taking place in the Aboriginal policy landscape of the 1970s. However, a number of the places that Sandra cites as enabling Anangu to return to Country emerged as early as 1961, and in the case of Docker River, Fregon and Amata, were not ancestral homelands, but rather new government and mission settlements. For this reason, the notion of a 'homelands movement', and its role in

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<sup>15</sup> Sandra Armstrong, interview with author, 20 January 2015, Alice Springs Hospital, Northern Territory.

<sup>16</sup> Sandra Armstrong, 28th March 2012.

Aboriginal migrations in the 1960s and 1970s, begs closer scrutiny in an effort to understand Sandra's remembrance of this process.

Fred Myers and Nicolas Peterson's recent edited collection exploring the history of decentralisation in Australia clearly demonstrates that not all movements away from settlements and stations at this time were made to ancestral 'homelands', a position reflected in their deliberate use of the term 'outstation' to describe the process. Despite assumptions that the 'homelands movement' represents the moment where the Aboriginal desire to decentralise from larger settlements was made manifest, as a number of the chapters in the collection demonstrate, outstations have emerged at various times and locations throughout the twentieth century,<sup>17</sup> many predating the so-called 'movement'. Myers and Peterson define 'outstations' as 'small, decentralised and relatively permanent communities of kin established by Aboriginal people on land that has social, cultural or economic significance to them'.<sup>18</sup> They note that the term has a 'distinctly Australian history' that is connected to the pastoral industry, referring to the camps or dwellings that were more than a day's return travel from the main homestead, the term in this context suggesting a 'dependent relationship between the outstation and the main homestead, but with a degree of separation'.<sup>19</sup> In contrast, in the Aboriginal context, Myers and Peterson understand outstations as manifestations of Aboriginal 'life projects' that reflect the desires of Aboriginal people who:

[S]eek autonomy in deciding the meaning of their life independently of projects promoted by the state and market, and to...[develop] their own situation-based knowledge and practices in the contemporary world.<sup>20</sup>

In this sense, outstations can be understood as an effort to reinforce the distinctions that had emerged in the preceding decades between the separate spheres, and spatially assert their independence from the dominant whitefella domain. However, as Myers and Peterson highlight, this movement should not be understood as merely a form of 'cultural apartheid'. Rather, as they see it, outstations can reflect the ways in which Aboriginal people might align themselves with various 'outsiders' in order to pursue their own values and

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<sup>17</sup> See Bill Edwards, Jeremy Long, Peter Sutton and Neville White in Myers and Peterson, eds., *Experiments in Self-Determination*. See also Downing, *Ngurra Walytja*.

<sup>18</sup> Fred R. Myers and Nicolas Peterson, "The Origins and History of Outstations as Aboriginal Life Projects," in *Experiments in Self-Determination*, 2.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 2-3.

concerns,<sup>21</sup> resulting in what Peterson has described elsewhere as examples of ‘co-existences’ that give rise to ‘continuously emergent forms and resilience’ of Aboriginal people.<sup>22</sup>

This entanglement of objectives is critical in understanding Anangu movements away from existing settlements and pastoral stations in South Australia, the Northern Territory and Western Australia throughout the 1960s — movements which predate both the implementation of equal wages and the phenomena of the ‘homeland movement’. While the settlements at Fregon, Amata and Docker River were ‘outsider’ initiatives intended to relieve the pressure of increasing populations at Ernabella and Areyonga missions, as Sandra explains, many Anangu who moved to these new settlements did so because they saw it as an opportunity to live on, or closer to, their Country. The settlement at Fregon was established in 1961, as an outstation of Ernabella mission, which was implemented with the aim of relieving the mounting pressure that the increasing population was placing on available resources.<sup>23</sup> Bill Edwards supervised the establishment of the new settlement at Fregon and noted that at the time the South Australian Aborigines Protection Board was critical of Ernabella’s policies of education in the Pitjantjatjara language and respect for Anangu culture. Frustrated by the distinct lack of assimilation taking place on the mission, it established a government settlement at Amata in the same year.<sup>24</sup> Whatever the rationale was for the establishment of these new settlements, for Anangu they presented an opportunity for people to move closer to their homelands. The people who moved from Ernabella to Fregon, approximately 50 km to the south of the mission, were primarily ‘*pilatja*’ or plains people, whereas those who moved to Amata, at the western end of the Musgrave Ranges, were ‘*api mirrputja*’ people from the hills of the Musgrave Ranges.<sup>25</sup>

Regardless of the official logic as outlined by the likes of Welfare Branch Director Giese and officer Jeremy Long, from an Anangu perspective the establishment of Docker River was understood as the government’s acknowledgement and support for their intrinsic

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<sup>21</sup> Ibid. See also Nicolas Peterson, “What Can Pre-Colonial and Frontier Economies Tell Us about Engagement with the Real Economy? Indigenous Life Projects and the Conditions for Development,” in *Culture, Economy and Governance in Aboriginal Australia*, ed. Gaynor Marilyn Macdonald and Diane Austin-Broos (Sydney: Sydney University Press, 2005), 7. Howard and Frances Morphy also conceptualise their theory of ‘relative autonomy’ in a similar fashion, noting that the Aboriginal domain is not necessarily produced in opposition to the whitefella domain. Rather, they see it as existing due to the social imperatives that exist within Aboriginal society that are distinct from whitefella society. See Frances Morphy and Howard Morphy, “Anthropological Theory and Government Policy”.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> Edwards, “From Coombes to Coombs,” 32.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 33.

<sup>25</sup> Downing, *Ngurra Walytja*, 56.

relatedness to that land.<sup>26</sup> Recalling the time that Anangu began to move from Areyonga to Docker River, Anangu man Sandy Willie said that this was the time that ‘Welfare been shifting [people back to] their own country’ and that when they got to the new settlement Anangu were saying “‘Oh, my country that way” or “My country that way” - “I got to go to my place”...“I got to go to my place””.<sup>27</sup> Sandy Willie was part of the small group of men from Areyonga who worked on the clearing of the airstrip to service the settlement at Docker River,<sup>28</sup> which commenced in December 1967. By February 1968, the population was beginning to grow, the first manager of the ‘outpost’, Max Cartwright, reporting at the time that some people were arriving ‘by any means possible’.<sup>29</sup> By August of 1968, 134 people were living at Docker River,<sup>30</sup> having travelled there from various locations in the Northern Territory, South Australia and Western Australia, all of who considered Docker River to be their Country, or part of their Country, or closer to their Country in the Petermann Ranges than where they had been living previously.<sup>31</sup> However, as anthropologist Susan Tod Woenne has argued, while the act of returning to country is an ‘important social statement’, in the context of Docker River this act needs to be understood in terms of the ‘spatial and conceptual location and relocation’ of people/place relationships that had been ‘modified’ by the settlement situation.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> Tod Woenne, “Old Country, New Territory,” 57.

<sup>27</sup> Sandy Willie in Bowman ed., *Every Hill Got a Story*, 232.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>29</sup> Long, “Returning to Country,” 56.

<sup>30</sup> T.C. Lovegrove, ‘Movement of Aboriginals to Docker River, 20 August 1968, NTAS NTRS 629.

<sup>31</sup> Tod Woenne, “Old Country, New Territory,” 57.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, 54.



**Image 55 – Aerial view of Docker River with the Petermann Ranges in the background, 1970.** Source: Aya Irititja, Margaret and David Hewitt Collection AI-0097133.



**Image 56 – Docker River community, also known as Kaltukatjara, circa 1974-76.** Source: Aya Irititja, Margaret and David Hewitt Collection AI-0097252.



Despite administrative intentions to limit settlement at Docker River to those people who were ‘from’ the area, or who had previously resided in the Northern Territory, Anangu had different ideas about who had the right to live there. Woenne observed that claims to relationship with Docker River were continually subject to dispute and negotiation within the new settlement.<sup>33</sup> Administratively defined ‘areas’ were very different from Anangu definitions of the area which, as Woenne noted, is understandable given that Docker River is only ten kilometres from the Western Australian border and that the Petermann Ranges are closely connected to the Rawlinson Ranges, which lay fully within the Western Australian administrative area. Woenne observed that distinctions such as ‘Western Australian people’ versus ‘Northern Territory people’, or ‘Areyonga people’ versus ‘Warburton people’, were ‘frequently used by settlement staff and taken up by Aborigines themselves when rights to settlement services and privileges were contested’.<sup>34</sup> As Woenne described it, Docker River became a ‘focal point for and interconnecting link in the widespread network of social and territorial relationships’.<sup>35</sup> This reconfiguration of relationships to place is reflected in Anangu woman Tjukupati James’ statement that the ‘traditional Ngaatjatjarra people left this [Docker River] area, intending it be only temporary, but they died while they were away’. Tjukupati says that Anangu who live there now are ‘keeping’ the land, and are from ‘the same big extended family’.<sup>36</sup> Docker River, and Tjukupati’s description of the Anangu relationship to it, reflects Hugh Raffles’ description of ‘locality’ as:

[A] set of relations, an ongoing politics, [and] a density, in which places are discursively and imaginatively materialised and enacted through practices of variously positioned people and political economies.<sup>37</sup>

Not to be confused with ‘location’, Raffles argues that ‘locality’ emerges in ‘the multiple practices of numerous individuals working in the midst of various situated projects’, the location of which is ‘never secure and is always in need of reaffirmation and redefinition’.<sup>38</sup> Not simply a return journey home, in making the move to Docker River Anangu were

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<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., 57–8.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., 63.

<sup>36</sup> Tjukupati James in Bowman ed., *Every Hill Got a Story*, 232.

<sup>37</sup> Hugh Raffles, “‘Local Theory’,” 324. See also Appadurai, “The Production of Locality,” in *Modernity at Large*, 178–99.

<sup>38</sup> Raffles, “‘Local Theory’,” 327.

seeking to assert and maintain their relationship to Country, while simultaneously securing their place in yet another new home.

Angas Downs had always been intimately connected to the Docker River area. Tjuki Pumpjack's oral histories and the historical evidence that survived in the photographs and diaries of H.H. Finlayson and Frederick Rose and T.G.H. Strehlow's early correspondence and patrol reports, point to the *Wintaylka*, or Mulga Seed Dreaming, as the thread that spanned approximately 500 kilometres, and half a century, to connect these two places. The establishment of the settlement at Docker River had a significant impact on the population at Angas Downs as Anangu seized the opportunity to re-people the places they thought of as home. Sandra Armstrong recalls her mother getting homesick for her Country:

*My mother would tell me the stories. Perhaps my mother was very knowledgeable, greatly so. For that side [west, towards and including Ngaanyatjarra region]. My mother got homesick for [her] Country and I asked her, "why are you so homesick for your Country? Do you want to go back?"*

*This is how she spoke and I'd say "No, you can't go now, you're talking about places with ini kura kura [ordinary or made-up, names that are not the real thing] this country is no good!" She spoke about those places and she'd say "we're living in no good country, living in other people's country...I want to go back to my own country...I want to go back to my relations and live in my country".*

*After talking about it and talking about it, she snuck off; she really went and she left her family behind. She took my younger sister, the youngest one, since she had grown up, having raised her to the age of a young teenager, she took her but I was still living [at Angas Downs] by myself.<sup>39</sup>*

Sandra Armstrong was a baby when her parents left the Ngaanyatjarra country near present-day Irrunytju (Wingelina) community in Western Australia and walked to Walara. Like many of her generation, for Sandra, mission settlements and pastoral stations had *always* been there and as Woenne highlighted, had *always* constituted some part of their everyday social life.<sup>40</sup> Unable to relate to the placenames evoked with such yearning by her mother, for Sandra, it was Angas Downs that was her place. Raffles writes that it is through both 'daily and exceptional practices' that 'local subjects' are produced: 'the making of

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<sup>39</sup> Sandra Armstrong, oral history recorded and translated by Sam Osborne, 22 February 2012, Yulara, Northern Territory.

<sup>40</sup> Tod Woenne, "Old Country, New Territory," 56.

people who think of themselves (at least sometimes) as belonging in and to a place'.<sup>41</sup> Raffles argues that much of this 'locational identity' is tied up with the immediate environmental context.<sup>42</sup> Reflecting the generational differences in experience, Sandra's historical remembrance demonstrates that despite the fact that the *physical* country around Irrunytju is her ancestral homelands on her mother's side, it is Bloodwood Bore that is *meaningful* to her.

### Death, drink and 'sit-down money'

In a July 1969 census report, Tjuki Pumpjack's widowed father, Sandra's mother and father, Tjuki, his wife Dolly, daughter Edith and son Rover, and his brother Johnny Mulla and his wife, Sandra's older sister Ada, and their family, were all recorded as living at Angas Downs. Sandra is adamant that even though people were starting to leave the stations and places like Areyonga and Ernabella to live closer to their homelands, she and Tjuki and their families wanted to continue living on Angas Downs.<sup>43</sup> However, at around the time that they took the caravans away, Tjuki's older brother passed away. Just as the death of Tjuki's grandfather near Amata over three decades earlier had compelled their move away from the area, marking the beginning of the journey that eventually led them to Angas Downs, the death of his older brother compelled a move away from the station, marking the beginning of a journey that appears to have led, in one sense, to the end of Angas Downs. Tjuki recalled of the time:

*We lost my number one brother. That's why we cleared out a little bit. We shifted away. We moved to Amata, and we went there via Ernabella. We lost my brother, my oldest brother. That's why we got out, you know? Like early days people.*<sup>44</sup>

Tjuki and his wife and children, and his brother Johnny Mulla and his family, travelled to Ernabella, to Amata and right up to Pipalyatjara, his mother's and grandmother's country in South Australia. It would seem that they were gone for a considerable length of time. When asked how long, Tjuki replied '*we walked around for two years. It could have been one year, we don't know*'.<sup>45</sup> Sandra went to Amata too. By this time she was married and she says that

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<sup>41</sup> Hugh Raffles, "'Local Theory'," 333-34.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

<sup>43</sup> Sandra Armstrong, 20 January 2015.

<sup>44</sup> Tjuki Tjukanku Pumpjack, 16 July 2014.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid.

she and her husband Esky were there for a few years, but she felt homesick for Angas Downs:

*I didn't really know that place. [I said] "Hey no, let's go, I'm getting homesick because this is their place [not ours]". So we both got a car after working and we snuck off and left.*<sup>46</sup>

Tjuki recalled of their return to Angas Downs:

*We came back again and things had changed here. Where is everyone living now?*<sup>47</sup>

A letter from a patrol officer Weber in September 1969, a month after patrol officer Cooke recommended the removal of the caravans from Angas Downs, noted that he had visited the station a few days previously and that:

There were no Aborigines present at the time of my visit and the Aborigines that were resident there, have in the main, shifted to Mt. Ebenezer.<sup>48</sup>

By the time Tjuki and Sandra returned to Angas Downs sometime in the early 1970s, Mt. Ebenezer roadhouse had become the main locus of Anangu activity in the area. Given its location on the direct tourist route, Mt. Ebenezer was a popular place for Anangu to sell *punu* to tourists. When the remaining families at Bloodwood Bore left the station on 'sorry business', it would seem that the tourist buses no longer had a reason to detour onto the Angas Downs loop, redirecting both the *punu* trade and the income generated by the Liddles from catering to the tourists, to Mt. Ebenezer roadhouse. Sandra Armstrong says that at the same time that many people were leaving and returning to their Country, 'other families had learned to drink and went to Ebenezer'.<sup>49</sup>

A number of factors coincided around the latter half of the 1960s and early 1970s that contributed to increasing migrations away from pastoral stations and missions, toward new places. The *Social Welfare Ordinance 1964* ended the restrictions that had prevented Anangu access to alcohol. The availability of alcohol, combined with access to the *punu* trade, meant that Mt. Ebenezer roadhouse became a popular place for Anangu. Coupled with the increased access to cash, via aged pensions and unemployment benefits, Anangu mobility

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<sup>46</sup> Sandra Armstrong, 22 February 2012.

<sup>47</sup> Tjuki Tjukanku Pumpjack, 16 July 2014.

<sup>48</sup> A.C. Weber, Patrol to Angas Downs Station, 19 September 1969, NAA F133 1978/435.

<sup>49</sup> Sandra Armstrong, 22 February 2012. The *Social Welfare Ordinance 1964* ended restrictions that had prevented Anangu access to alcohol.

was further enhanced. Sandra Armstrong says that while they were living at Ebenezer people were talking about the new settlements at Amata and Docker River:

*We were forever going on the road to Amata, of course, 'sit-down money' and the pension had been established. And that got me thinking, "Hey, we should do that [start our own community] in our own country". That's what I was thinking about.*<sup>50</sup>

Both Tim Rowse and Mary Anne Jebb have highlighted the importance of increased access to cash via aged pensions as a significant factor in the disintegration of pastoral paternalism in the Northern Territory, and the Kimberley region respectively. While the pastoral award did not come into effect until 1968 in the Northern Territory, and 1969 in Western Australia, and was made available only to men, aged pensions had been extended to Aboriginal people in these regions in 1959 and 1960.<sup>51</sup> While in both regions eligible people only received a 'pocket money' portion of their benefits, the rest going to the stations or settlements that rationed them, it signalled the eventual transition from rations to cash and the beginning of what Rowse refers to as a 'crisis of managed consumption'.<sup>52</sup> Although Aboriginal people were only receiving a portion of their benefits for much of the 1960s, as chapter four illustrated, the increased amount of cash in circulation undermined the ability of the stations and settlements to hold people in the hinterlands.<sup>53</sup>

As direct access to cash through pension payments enhanced Aboriginal freedoms, it simultaneously began to erode what had been a not insignificant source of income for pastoralists. Having been in receipt of government payments for the 'maintenance of dependents' on their stations since 1947, in the 1960s Northern Territory pastoralists were known to joke that they made more money from Aboriginal people than they did from cattle,<sup>54</sup> while Rowse observed that pastoralists who kept their stations solvent by encouraging large camps of subsidised 'dependents' were described as being engaged in

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<sup>50</sup> Sandra Armstrong, 28 March 2012.

<sup>51</sup> Rowse, *White Flour, White Power*, 114–17. Rowse notes that this was an important factor in the objective of social reform. The 'wage-working citizen has thus been gendered and made head of a nuclear family'. Jebb notes that the award in the Kimberley was only available to male members of the Australian Workers Union and not those considered to be 'full-blood natives', unless they were in possession of an exemption certificate. See Jebb, *Blood, Sweat and Welfare*, 285–90.

<sup>52</sup> See 'The Crisis of Managed Consumption' in Rowse, *White Flour, White Power*, 118–146.

<sup>53</sup> Jebb notes that in the Kimberley, Aboriginal people's residency patterns began to change noticeably as early as 1961 as town-based employment increased (which paid significantly more than station work) and aged pensions provided further income to survive off the stations. Jebb, *Blood, Sweat and Welfare*, 280.

<sup>54</sup> Rowley, *The Remote Aborigines*, 304.

‘nigger farming’.<sup>55</sup> Following the Equal Wages decision in 1966, and the 1967 Referendum that voted overwhelmingly in favour of removing two references in the Australian Constitution that discriminated against Aboriginal people,<sup>56</sup> from 1968 onwards in the Northern Territory, and 1969 in the Kimberley, social security benefits were paid directly to Aboriginal people. While these factors combined to form an economic blow to some pastoralists,<sup>57</sup> as Sandra’s recollection above demonstrates, they also served as a stimulus to Anangu desires to assert their autonomy and establish outstations.

Nicolas Peterson has argued that up until this point government policy had largely ‘resulted in large sections of the Territory population being isolated from the cash economy and from any substantive consumer dependency’.<sup>58</sup> The extension of most social service payments in cash from 1968 onwards, followed by unemployment benefits in 1974, largely eliminated the need to sell labour to survive and created a new threshold of possibility for the establishment of outstations.<sup>59</sup> Peterson has referred to this moment as something of a ‘watershed’, arguing that it was the direct access to cash that resulted in the abandonment of camels by Anangu, and a ‘greatly increased involvement with cars’.<sup>60</sup> This enhanced

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<sup>55</sup> Rowse, *White Flour, White Power*, 119. While Kimberley pastoralists did not receive subsidies for rationing, they did administer the aged pension and Jebb documents that in 1965 there was a formal investigation that revealed the blatant misappropriation of tens of thousands of pounds of Aboriginal pension monies by pastoralists. Jebb, *Blood, Sweat and Welfare*, 264.

<sup>56</sup> In regard to Section 51 (xxvi) removal of the words ‘The people of any race, other than the aboriginal people in any State, for whom it is necessary to make special laws’, gave the Commonwealth the power to legislate on behalf of Aboriginal people. The removal of the whole of Section 127 provided for Aboriginal people to be counted in the Census. See ‘The 1967 Referendum’, National Archives of Australia, accessed 4 May, 2016, <http://www.naa.gov.au/collection/fact-sheets/fs150.aspx>

<sup>57</sup> The last census report from Angas Downs conducted by the Welfare Branch was in 1969. In 1973, correspondence indicates that Arthur Liddle sought financial assistance from the Commonwealth Capital Fund for Aboriginal Enterprises. In a letter to the DAA in Canberra, regional officer J.L. Wauchope noted that Angas Downs was a ‘very depressed area’ and that Liddle was ‘an old style battler who perhaps lacks some managerial competence which has resulted in the station appearing to be a rather unimpressive economic enterprise’. By 1980 he was employed as a cattle consultant at Amata community. See NAA F133 1978/435. While the extent to which pastoralists profited from monies intended for Anangu in Central Australia is beyond the scope of this analysis, it is an area, which beckons further research. As historian Fiona Skyring has argued in the case of misappropriated pension cheques in the Kimberley, there are enduring misconceptions about the realities of the northern Australian economy and the impact of the introduction of equal wages. Skyring argues that the significant subsidisation of the pastoral industry demands a deeper engagement in order to further explore questions about what constitutes the ‘economy’ in the regional north. See Skyring, “Low Wages, Low Rents, and Pension Cheques.”

<sup>58</sup> Nicolas Peterson, “Capitalism, Culture and Land Rights: Aborigines and the State in the Northern Territory,” *Social Analysis: The International Journal of Social and Cultural Practice*, no. 18 (December 1985): 91.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>60</sup> Nicolas Peterson, “An Expanding Aboriginal Domain,” 210.

access to motor vehicles worked to further transform Anangu mobility and played a significant role in the gathering momentum of the outstation movement.<sup>61</sup>

As growing numbers of people expressed their desire to live in smaller, decentralised camps located on or near their homelands, as Peterson observed, plans for the transformation of the Aboriginal situation in the wake of assimilation ‘had to recognise the structural constraints of isolation and radical cultural difference’.<sup>62</sup> The prevailing political paradigm of the ‘absorption’ and ‘incorporation’ of Aboriginal culture into settler society was thus necessarily eclipsed by an emergent policy era articulated in the language of ‘rights’, ‘cultural difference’ and ‘self-determination’. While this shift in policy is largely attributed to the election of the Whitlam Labour Government in 1972, it was Liberal Prime Minister McMahon who declared in his Australia Day speech at the beginning of that year, that Aboriginal people should be supported in maintaining their culture, language and traditions and encouraged to exercise ‘effective choice about the degree to which, they come to identity themselves with...[the wider Australian] society’.<sup>63</sup> It was, however, the Whitlam Labor Government that called this sentiment ‘self-determination’.

Rowse argues that the shift in policy rhetoric from ‘assimilation’ to ‘self-determination’ ‘not only conferred new legitimacy on outstations, it made them instances of the government’s genuine commitment to self-determination’.<sup>64</sup> The decision to financially assist groups who wished to move, coupled with the establishment of Royal Commission into Aboriginal Land Rights in 1973, provided significant stimulus to the establishment of outstations, marking the beginning of what became known as the ‘homelands movement’.<sup>65</sup>

Throughout the 1970s, in the ‘first wave’ of the Pitjantjatjara ‘homelands movement’, outstations were established at Pipalyatjarra, Kunamata, Yaluyalu and Walinya (Cave Hill) in South Australia, and Irrunytju (Wingelina), Papulankutja (Blackstone), Warakurna (Giles

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<sup>61</sup> Ibid. See also Nicolas Peterson, “Aboriginal Involvement with the Australian Economy in the Central Reserve during the Winter of 1970,” in *Aborigines and Change: Australia in the 70s*, ed. Ronald M. Berndt (Canberra: Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies, 1977), 140; Hamilton, “Coming and Going,”; Altman and Hinkson, “Mobility and Modernity in Arnhem Land”.

<sup>62</sup> Peterson, “Capitalism, Culture and Land Rights,” 91.

<sup>63</sup> McMahon quoted in Myers and Peterson, “The Origins and History of Outstations as Aboriginal Life Projects,” 9. See also Rowse, *White Flour, White Power*, 204.

<sup>64</sup> Rowse, *White Flour, White Power*, 212.

<sup>65</sup> W.J. Gray, “Decentralisation Trends in Arnhem Land,” in *Aborigines and Change: Australia in the 70s*, ed. Ronald M. Berndt (Canberra: Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies, 1977), 116. See also Downing, *Ngurra Walytja*; B. Meehan and R. Jones, “The Outstation Movement and Hints of a White Backlash,” in *Northern Australia: Options and Implications*, ed. R. Jones (Canberra: The Australian National University, 1980), 131–57; Myers and Peterson, “The Origins and History of Outstations as Aboriginal Life Projects.”

Weather Station) and Mantamaru (Jamieson) in Western Australia, all of which contributed significantly to the reconfiguration of the populations of pastoral stations and settlements in the southwest.<sup>66</sup> Reverend Jim Downing, writing of the enthusiasm for ‘self-determination’ at the time, claimed that ‘extravagant help was given, and some rash promises made, [that] rais[ed] people’s expectations high’.<sup>67</sup>

## Muntawarra

Sandra Armstrong recalls that it was while she was living at Mount Ebenezer that a whitefella,<sup>68</sup> who she describes as being ‘*from the government [from] the department that allocates land*’, came looking around and asking Anangu, ‘*Do you people want a job? Do you mob want to sit down with Aboriginal people separately?*’ Sandra says that she thought to herself, ‘*Yes! We might think about that, to make a new community*’.<sup>69</sup> An agreement in the correspondence files reads:

The Community known as Muntawarra may reside upon Angas Downs near Centenary Bore three miles in from the Mt. Ebenezer Boundary for a period of two years... After the expiration of this Agreement negotiations can take place for a permanent excision over said area for the purposes of Aboriginal communal living.<sup>70</sup>

In a letter to the Department of Aboriginal Affairs (DAA) in January 1979, Arthur Liddle wrote that he agreed in principle, however, he wished to add that he would like to receive

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<sup>66</sup> Downing’s ‘first wave’ radiates out from Amata in the first half of the 1970s. The ‘second wave’ extends from Ernabella and takes place in the second half of the 1970s. See Downing, *Ngurra Walytja*, 60–66. See also Edwards, “From Coombes to Coombs”; Noel M. Wallace, “Pitjantjatjara Decentralisation in North-West South Australia: Spiritual and Psycho-Social Motivation,” in *Aborigines and Change: Australia in the 70s*, 124–35. However, Arnhem Land is generally understood as the locus of the so-called ‘movement’ to outstations and is where the term ‘homelands movement’ emanated from. By the end of 1974, 25 per cent of the Yirrkala population had moved to outstations across Arnhem Land, while 450 people, or 35 per cent of the population had left Maningrida. The number had increased to approximately 800 people by 1977. Gray, “Decentralisation Trends in Arnhem Land,” 115; Meehan and Jones, 135–36. See also Frances Morphy and Howard Morphy, “Thwarted Aspirations: The Political Economy of a Yolgnu Outstation, 1972 to the Present,” in *Experiments in Self-Determination*, 301–22. Pintupi attempts at establishing a separate community began in 1967 and culminated in 1973 with the outstation at Yayayi. See Fred Myers, “History, Memory and the Politics of Self-Determination at an Early Outstation,” in *Experiments in Self-Determination*, 81–104.

<sup>67</sup> Downing, *Ngurra Walytja*, 67.

<sup>68</sup> Sandra does name this man in her oral histories. She has called him Bill Simbly, Bill Kimbly and Bill Gingley at different times. There is significant correspondence in the Angas Downs archive from this period written by Department of Aboriginal Affairs Community Advisor Bruce Tilmouth, which I believe to be who Sandra is referring to.

<sup>69</sup> Sandra Armstrong, AI-0108943.

<sup>70</sup> Muntawarra Agreement, DAA, January 1979, NAA F133 1978/435.



rent for the land, compensation for maintenance and running costs of the water supply and requested that the community supply their own pumping equipment, noting that:

After such an agreement is reached between Muntawarra Community, DAA and myself, I agree to allow the community to reside on this bore... We welcome this community and will continue to assist them in every way possible. We look forward to their future development and success in this venture.<sup>71</sup>

DAA Community Advisor Bruce Tilmouth held meetings with Tjuki Pumpjack, Sandra Armstrong and Johnny Mulla to discuss the establishment of the community. In the correspondence, Tjuki, Sandra and their families are referred to as ‘the Muntawarra people’ and Tilmouth proposes the establishment of a community garden, as well as a chicken run and provision of a tractor. Tilmouth reported that the camp at Centenary Bore was ‘spotlessly clean and garbage put into a tidy heap’ and recommended that the ‘community should be given as much assistance as possible’.<sup>72</sup> By April of 1979, a tractor had been delivered, goat pens and chicken yards had been constructed and a garden cleared.<sup>73</sup> The report reflects the agricultural trope that Myers and Peterson argue represented a ‘comprehensible mediation’ between Anangu aspirations for autonomy, and state concern for Aboriginal people learning the value of ‘work’ and the need to contribute to their ‘self-sufficiency’.<sup>74</sup>

Sandra says that they established the outstation at Centenary Bore because they wanted to get away from the drinkers and problems at Mt. Ebenezer and the recently established Imanpa community.<sup>75</sup> This was not a unique situation: as early as 1974, then Chairman of the Council for Aboriginal Affairs H.C. (‘Nugget’) Coombs, observed that as well as wanting to assert and maintain a special relationship to the land, Aboriginal people also sought to relocate to outstations to avoid the tensions associated with living in large communities, and to minimise white influence in their lives, including the alcohol they were

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<sup>71</sup> Arthur Liddle to Regional Director, DAA, 11 January 1979, NAA F133 1978/435.

<sup>72</sup> B. Tilmouth, DAA Internal Minute, 16 January 1979 and B. Tilmouth, DAA Inter-Office Memorandum, 27th February 1979, NAA F133 1978/435.

<sup>73</sup> B. Tilmouth, DAA Internal Minutes, 20 March 1979 and B. Tilmouth DAA Internal Minutes 4 April 1979, NAA F133 1978/435.

<sup>74</sup> Myers and Peterson, “The Origins and History of Outstations as Aboriginal Life Projects,” 5–6.

<sup>75</sup> Imanpa was established at Perentie Bore in 1978 after owner Ted Kunoth excised a portion of Mount Ebenezer Station. Although I have not looked into this specifically, the establishment of the community was presumably an attempt to draw Anangu away from the roadhouse, which was frequented by tourists.

associated with.<sup>76</sup> Similar motivations have been expressed in the desire to establish outstations away from other desert settlements such as Papunya and Yuendumu,<sup>77</sup> and as Scott Cane observed in relation to Yagga Yagga in northern Western Australia, the establishment of the outstation was not a manifestation of a nostalgic desire to return to the past, but rather a contemporary solution to the tensions and problems that troubled social life at Balgo in the early 1980s.<sup>78</sup>

Despite Tilmouth's report in April 1979 stating that 'the community at Muntawarra [was] running quite smoothly',<sup>79</sup> six months later he reported that Arthur Liddle stated he would not grant an excision for the 'community' and wanted 'them moved back to Ebenezer or Imanpa as soon as possible'.<sup>80</sup> Tilmouth noted that people visited the area from Amata and other communities frequently and Sandra Armstrong says that Arthur Liddle changed his mind because:

*Well too many drinkers was coming to his boundary. We was in the boundary of Angas Downs, Centenary's Angas Downs. And people, you know when they drink too much grog, and they lookin' for us all the time and he [Arthur Liddle] don't like people from drinkers.<sup>81</sup>*

Despite Sandra's claim that Anangu wanted to avoid the problems encountered at Mount Ebenezer and Imanpa, it would seem that issues relating to alcohol consumption surfaced at Muntawarra too. It is probable, as Sandra suggests, that it was the heavy drinking and fighting crossing over his boundary and onto his property that discouraged Arthur Liddle from assisting Anangu in their desire to continue living on Angas Down. However, it is also possible that the decision was influenced by the growing realisation that the \$10,000 he requested in compensation for the outstation being established on his property would most likely be held up in a protracted bureaucratic process.

In August 1981, the Imanpa Community Advisor, a Mr G. Langford, wrote to the DAA on behalf of Tjuki Pumpjack regarding the 'Muntawarra land problem'. The letter stated that Arthur Liddle:

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<sup>76</sup> H.C. Coombs, "Decentralisation Trends among Aboriginal Communities," *Search* 5, no. 4 (1974): 141.

<sup>77</sup> See Myers and Peterson, "The Origins and History of Outstations as Aboriginal Life Projects."

<sup>78</sup> Scott Cane, "People and Policy in the Development and Destruction of Yagga Yagga Outstation, Western Australia," in *Experiments in Self-Determination*, 260.

<sup>79</sup> B. Tilmouth, 4 April 1979, F133 1978/435.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>81</sup> Sandra Armstrong, 20 January 2015.

[S]aid he would give land to Tjuki Pumpjack not to the government. This issue has been going on for a long time. Could you please tell us what you can do to help.<sup>82</sup>

Correspondence between the DAA, the Community Advisor at Imanpa, Tjuki Pumpjack, Arthur Liddle and the Aboriginal Development Commission (ADC) paints a picture of the administrative labyrinth that had to be navigated in order to secure a sublease on Angas Downs. In a two-page letter to Tjuki the DAA informed him that they needed to receive written confirmation from Liddle as to the area of land to be leased, as well as permission for the Northern Territory Government to drill for water in the area negotiated. Upon written confirmation from Liddle, Tjuki would then need to meet with the DAA and apply to the Northern Territory Department of Land for a sublease. The land also had to be surveyed, after which Tjuki was informed there would be ‘numerous forms to be filled in and agreements reached’ and that the ‘main problem’ would be:

The final negotiations of an area of land and equipping of a suitable water supply. As these issues involve two sections of government and the provision of money the finalisation of a lease takes time. In respect to the money issue this is even more serious (for yourselves) when it is remembered there are many groups pushing for their own areas of land over the Northern Territory.<sup>83</sup>

Tjuki could not read or write, so it is probable that the information in the letter was relayed to him through the Imanpa Community Advisor. Langford also received a letter from the DAA. Written on the same day, it requested that Langford visit the DAA when next in Alice Springs so that they could discuss ‘in greater detail the problems that do beset us in obtaining land tenure for people in similar circumstances to the Muntawarra group’.<sup>84</sup>

In addition to the increasing demand for outstations, the passing into legislation of the *Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act 1976*, allowed for Aboriginal people in the Northern Territory to make claims upon unalienated Crown Land. Claims were to be made on the basis of ‘traditional’ Aboriginal rights to land, which would be judged by a Land Commissioner whose job it was to ascertain whether those making the claim were the rightful ‘traditional owners’ of the land. Although the legal interpretation of what

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<sup>82</sup> G. Langford on behalf of Tjuki Pumpjack to Mr R. Styles, Area officer DAA, 13 August 1981, NAA F133 1978/435.

<sup>83</sup> G.K. Castine, Senior Assistant Director, Community Development, DAA to Tjuki Pumpjack, 27 August 1981, NAA F133 1978/435

<sup>84</sup> G.K. Castine to G. Langford, 27 August 1981, NAA F133 1978/435.

constitutes a 'traditional owner' under the Act has evolved and expanded over the 40 years since it first emerged, in its infancy the legal definition of traditional ownership was largely based upon the orthodox model of Aboriginal land tenure first posited by Radcliffe-Brown in the early twentieth century.<sup>85</sup> Although from the earliest claims heard in the Northern Territory in the late 1970s, none of the evidence presented upheld the narrow definition of the socially and spatially bounded 'patrilineal horde',<sup>86</sup> in 1981 judgements of rights to land would almost certainly have been made with this narrow definition in mind.<sup>87</sup> It is highly likely that the problems that the DAA anticipated in 'obtaining land tenure for people in similar circumstances' to Tjuki and Sandra was the apparent futility in seeking land tenure for a cattle station mob who had ancestral homelands several hundred kilometres to the south or west.

Francesca Merlan has argued in relation to Aboriginal speech of 'getting the land back' that the 'getting' is not understood by Aboriginal people as gaining formal title, but rather taken to 'signify an active process of reasserting practical relationships to it'.<sup>88</sup> In light of this insight it is possible to read Tjuki's letter to the DAA seeking help in 'getting' the land

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<sup>85</sup> Ian Keen, "A Question of Interpretation: The Definition of 'Traditional Aboriginal Owners' in the Aboriginal Land Rights (NT) Act," in *Aboriginal Land-Owners: Contemporary Issues in the Determination of Traditional Aboriginal Land Ownership*, ed. L.R. Hiatt (Sydney: University Of Sydney, 1984), 25–27. See also L.R. Hiatt, "Real Estates and Phantom Hordes," in *Arguments about Aborigines: Australia and the Evolution of Social Anthropology* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 13–35; Povinelli, *Labor's Lot*, 28–30.

<sup>86</sup> Hiatt, "Real Estates and Phantom Hordes," 31. See also Merlan, "The Regimentation of Customary Practice," 76; Merlan, *Caging the Rainbow*, 163–75. The nature of Aboriginal social organisation and land tenure has been long and hotly debated in the discipline of anthropology. This is particularly the case in relation to the 'enigma' of Western Desert land tenure as Paul Burke refers to it. The unusual flexibility of identification, and the fluidity of relationships to land among the Western Desert cultural bloc has resulted in different conceptualisations of land tenure and conflicting interpretations among anthropologists as to what constitutes a traditional owner. See Paul Burke, *Law's Anthropology: From Ethnography to Expert Testimony in Native Title* (Canberra: ANU Press, 2011), 173–208. A war of words has waged over categories and concepts such as 'hordes', 'bands', 'clans' and 'estates'. This is an anthropological debate that lies beyond the scope of this research. While there has been much ethnographic fieldwork since the 1950s that has challenged the orthodox model of Aboriginal land tenure, the concern here is the influence that these highly circumscribed ideas had on definitions of 'traditional ownership' in the early days of the Land Rights (NT) Act.

<sup>87</sup> It should be noted that 1981 was also the year the Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara (APY) Land Rights Act was passed in the South Australian parliament. The APY Land Rights Act 1981 differs significantly from the Northern Territory Act. The South Australian legislation designated an area of 102,650 square kilometres as APY lands. APY was established as a body corporate and all Anangu are considered members of the body corporate. All Anangu have unrestricted access to the APY Lands under the Act. The role of APY is to 'ascertain the wishes and opinions of traditional owners' and to 'protect the interests of traditional owners'. Thus, determinations of ownership are not determined by the state in a court of law, but by Anangu themselves via APY. See *Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara Land Rights Act 1981*, accessed 7 November, 2016, <https://www.legislation.sa.gov.au/LZ/C/A/ANANGU%20PITJANTJATJARA%20YANKUNYTJATJAR A%20LAND%20RIGHTS%20ACT%201981/CURRENT/1981.20.UN.PDF>

<sup>88</sup> Merlan, "The Regimentation of Customary Practice," 79–80.

from Arthur Liddle as an attempt at maintaining a practical relationship with Angas Downs. Tjuki Pumpjack never talked to me about Muntawarra and the failed attempt to secure an outstation at Centenary Bore in the four years that we knew each other. When I brought it up with him he was not interested in talking about it much. We visited the abandoned outstation at the suggestion of his granddaughters, but standing among the ruins of a windmill and pieces of a rusted, decaying boring plant, his mood seemed to reflect the day itself, which was sombre and overcast (**Image 57**). We did not stay long and never spoke of Muntawarra again. While I do not know exactly how the meetings about Muntawarra played out, I imagine that the bureaucratic process outlined above to secure land tenure on Angas Downs would have been strange and unfamiliar to Tjuki Pumpjack. Four months after Tjuki wrote to the DAA seeking help, the area officer wrote to Arthur Liddle informing him that:

After due consultation with Tjuki and other members of the community it became evident that the Muntawarra group does not at this stage wish to move to Angas Downs.<sup>89</sup>

Sandra Armstrong says that they left Centenary Bore because they had to travel to Imanpa everyday to take the kids to school, so it made more sense to live there.<sup>90</sup> Access to resources such as water and vehicles, and the provision of services such as education and health care, were significant in the establishment of outstations, and as Myers observed in relation to the settlement at Papunya, the concentration of these resources had constrained Pintupi aspirations for smaller, decentralised communities for decades prior to the ‘homelands movement’.<sup>91</sup> Muntawarra, with not so much as an adequate bore, lacked even the most basic of resources, and thus the raw materials for social life.

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<sup>89</sup> R.A. Styles, Area Officer DAA to Arthur Liddle, 14 December 1981, NAA F133 1978/435.

<sup>90</sup> Sandra Armstrong, 20 January 2015.

<sup>91</sup> Myers, *Pintupi Country, Pintupi Self*, 261.



**Image 57 – The remains of a windmill, boring plant and tank at Muntawarra.** Source: Photograph by author.

From 1981 the history of Angas Downs gets infinitely more complicated. It moves into territory that lies beyond the scope of the thesis, which was a whole new world order with radically different meanings.<sup>92</sup> The shift in rhetoric to a language of ‘rights’ and ‘self-determination’, and the subsequent funding for autonomous ‘outstations’ and ‘communities’, began to rapidly recalibrate social practices and relationships of exchange among Anangu yet again. It is likely that ‘the Muntawarra group’ were encouraged to move to Imanpa, due to the likelihood of their failing to secure land tenure on Angas Downs, just as they were simultaneously drawn there to avail themselves of the resources and services that had been concentrated there. Although the station continued to be a focus for both Tjuki and Sandra in various contexts, they were never able to ‘get it back’ in terms of reasserting the practical relationships that had *made* Angas Downs.

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<sup>92</sup> In regards to the periodisation of this thesis, the reasons for not taking it into the ‘self-determination era’ are several. One important reason, which I will explore in greater detail in the next section, is that Tjuki Pumpjack’s oral history stopped at this point. The question of how to interpret his periodisation is complex, but I do believe that the period of change being examined in this chapter represents the most significant transformation in the relationship between Anangu and whitefellas and Anangu and place in the entire period covered in this thesis. The story of what became of Angas Downs as a result of this shift requires a PhD thesis of its own. I touch on this further in the thesis conclusion.

*'THERE'S NOTHING THERE NOW, BUT IT'S STILL OUR PLACE'*

In response to my question “why did Anangu leave Angas Downs?” Tjuki Pumpjack provided a very different narrative from that provided by Sandra and discussed in the previous section:

*A long time ago we were living on Angas Downs. A long time passed and then we all moved to New Angas Downs. A long time passed...Arthur Liddle was our boss for a long time. One day Arthur Liddle became ill and died. Bessie Liddle's husband died. After that we had no idea what we were to do. We said 'what are we to do now?' 'Where should we go?' We decided, 'Let's all move to Imanpa, Imanpa is very close'. We all moved out of our houses, left those buildings and moved to Imanpa. This was because our boss Arthur Liddle had died. If he had not died we would still be there today.<sup>93</sup>*

Tjuki Pumpjack and Sandra Armstrong began living at Imanpa community sometime around 1980-81. Despite Tjuki's statement that they moved away from Angas Downs because their boss died, Arthur Liddle was still alive at the time. In a history of the pastoral development at Angas Downs, historian Dick Kimber noted:

Arthur Liddle continued to run Angas Downs as a cattle station during the 1980s and 1990s, but was under increasing pressure, as were many pastoral enterprises and was eventually taken over by the mortgagee. In 1994 the property was advertised for sale by the Commonwealth Bank and on 2 May 1994 it was purchased by the Imanpa community.<sup>94</sup>

Arthur Liddle lived for at least a decade after Anangu moved away from Centenary Bore. For ten years or more after Tjuki and Sandra moved to Imanpa, he persisted with trying to eke out a living on the marginal pastoral lands of Angas Downs, and yet Tjuki Pumpjack's oral history tells us that the cause of Anangu leaving the station was Liddle's death, stating matter-of-factly that if he had not died, they would still be living there today. What could this utterance mean?

Arthur Liddle's death was not the cause of the demise of Angas Downs, but that Tjuki remembered it as such makes this episode in his memory rich with meaning. Sandra's

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<sup>93</sup> Tjuki Tjukanku Pumpjack, 26 October 2012.

<sup>94</sup> Kimber, 'History of Pastoral Development' in "Angas Downs Indigenous Protected Area: Plan of Management".

memories of the same period – the desire of many Anangu to return to Country, increased access to cash via pensions and ‘sit-down money’, the emergent social problems of settlement life, the resulting aspirations for autonomy in smaller, decentralised communities and the difficulties encountered in realising those objectives – articulate more squarely with the broader social, political and economic forces exerting an influence at the time. Congruent with the archival evidence and the various threads of historical and anthropological arguments woven since then, her memories lend themselves to the framing of this complex period of change into a somewhat ‘faithful’ and linear historical narrative. In contrast, Tjuki’s remembrance illuminates the ways in which memory actively and creatively manipulates the past in an effort to make sense of the present.

In the essay ‘The Death of Luigi Trastulli: Memory and the Event’, oral historian Alessandro Portelli explores the death of Luigi Trastulli, a 21 year old steel worker from Terni in Central Italy, and the ways in which the event of his death was ‘elaborated, changed and interpreted in the *longue duree* of memory and culture’.<sup>95</sup> Portelli illuminated the ways in which memory, employing strategies of ‘displacement’ and ‘condensation’, manipulated the dynamics, causes and chronology of Trastulli’s death in order to heal the historical wounds inflicted by circumstance and the event.<sup>96</sup> Portelli argued that sometimes it is the ‘dubious reliability’ of oral histories that make them valuable, and that the causes of ‘faulty memories’:

[M]ust be sought, rather than in the event itself, in the meaning which it derived from the actors’ state of mind at the time; from its relation to subsequent historical developments; and from the activity of memory and imagination.<sup>97</sup>

Portelli’s work, alongside that of oral historians Michael Frisch, Luisa Passerini, and Heather Goodall, was influential in focusing attention beyond the content of oral histories, and toward questions of why people remember in the ways that they do.<sup>98</sup> Subsequent developments in oral history work and memory research have further enriched

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<sup>95</sup> Portelli, *The Death of Luigi Trastulli*, 1.

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*, 19.

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid.*, 15.

<sup>98</sup> See M. Frisch, “The Memory of History,” in *Presenting the Past: Essays on History and the Public*, ed. R. Rosenzweig and S. Benson (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1986), 5–17; M. Frisch, *A Shared Authority: Essays on the Craft and Meaning of Oral History and the Public* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1991); L. Passerini, *Facism in Popular Memory: The Cultural Experience of the Turin Working Class* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987); L. Passerini, ed., *Memory and Totalitarianism: International Yearbook of Oral History and Life Stories*, vol. 1 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992); Goodall, “The Whole Truth and Nothing But...”.



understandings of the relationship between documented history and oral memory, illuminating memory as complex representations of the past that are ‘replete with absences, silences, condensations and displacements’ and shaped in the present moments of their telling.<sup>99</sup>

According to Portelli, memory manipulates factual detail and chronological sequence in order to serve symbolic, psychological and formal functions.<sup>100</sup> It ‘makes sense’ to understand the collapse of the pastoral era as a traumatic experience for Tjuki Pumpjack and to interpret the death of Arthur Liddle as an attempt, conscious or otherwise, at seeking adequate causation for an otherwise incomprehensible event. However, while the death of Arthur Liddle seems to suggest a psychological interpretation, there is much in Tjuki’s oral histories that suggests more than individual psychology is required to understand his insistence that when Arthur Liddle died ‘*everything changed for good*’. Ruminating on the shifting and layered meanings of *ngura*, within the context of the momentous change that came with whitefellas, sheep, cattle, bores and settlements, is necessary to understand Tjuki’s interpretation of this period and to speculate upon the broader spheres of place, politics and recognition in which his memory might be interpreted as speaking to.

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<sup>99</sup> Susannah Radstone, “Working with Memory: An Introduction,” in *Memory and Methodology*, ed. Susannah Radstone (Oxford/New York: Berg, 2000), 11. See also Kate Darian-Smith and Paula Hamilton, eds., *Memory and History in Twentieth-Century Australia* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1994); Bain Attwood and Fiona Magowan, eds., *Telling Stories: Indigenous History and Memory in Australia and New Zealand* (Crows Nest: Allen & Unwin, 2001); Deborah Bird Rose, “Oral Histories and Knowledge,” in *Frontier Conflict: The Australian Experience* (Canberra: National Museum of Australia, 2003), 120–32; Katherine Hodgkin and Susannah Radstone, eds., *Memory History Nation: Contested Pasts* (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Transaction Publishers, 2007); Bill Schwarz and Susannah Radstone, eds., *Memory: Histories, Theories, Debates* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2010).

<sup>100</sup> Portelli, *The Death of Luigi Trastulli*, 26.

## *Nguraritja*

The half-century traced over the course of this thesis saw Anangu migrate to Angas Downs, set up camp there, and begin to translate existing social relations, made up of expectations and obligations, into the new pastoral context in which they found themselves. Bill Liddle sought to transform Walara into a sheep run he called Angas Downs, and from the moment Anangu arrived, in an open-ended system of exchange among kin, they set about transforming that sheep run into *ngura*. As the spatial dimensions of Anangu relationships to place were reorganised through the act of migration and the encounter with rations and work, Anangu simultaneously set about mobilising existing social practices to make a place for themselves at Angas Downs.

To be *nguraritja* is to belong to a place. Tjuki Pumpjack recalled that it was while he was living at Bloodwood Bore that he began to think that he was *nguraritja* for that place:

*I lived my life here, without leaving, in the same way a nguraritja would. I always thought to myself that I must be considered a nguraritja by now. I've been here my whole life, and I am now a tjilpi (old man). So here I am - a nguraritja. I married here, all my children were born here, my grandchildren were born here... Because I have been here for so long, I have to be considered to be a nguraritja. I got old here. I am a nguraritja, and I have no feeling or desire to be any other place. This is where I belong.<sup>101</sup>*

Over the course of a life, Tjuki and others like him, many of who are now deceased, hunted, shared food, exchanged knowledge, performed ceremony, got married, had children, fought and died and, as Myers' ethnography of the Pintupi illustrated, these social events are both memorialised in the places they occurred, and made the basis for claims of identification with particular places.<sup>102</sup> Tjuki's evocation of himself as *nguraritja* reflects Hugh Raffles' conceptualisation of 'intimate knowledge'.<sup>103</sup> Writing in relation to his experiences in Igarapé Guariba in Amazonia, Brazil, Raffles writes that people enter into relationships among themselves and with nature through embodied practice, and it is through these relationships that they come to know nature and each other. Furthermore,

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<sup>101</sup> Tjuki Tjukanku Pumpjack, 20 September 2012.

<sup>102</sup> Myers, "Ways of Placemaking," 84. See also Myers, *Pintupi Country, Pintupi Self*, 128–36.

<sup>103</sup> Hugh Raffles, "Intimate Knowledge," *International Social Science Journal* 54, no. 173 (September 2002): 326.

through these relationships, the knowledge and the practice are mediated, not just by power and discourse, but also by *affect*.<sup>104</sup> This ‘affective sociality’, according to Raffles, is the site for the social production of knowledge and human/place relationships, and is ‘always in place, always embodied, always relational’.<sup>105</sup> Tjuki Pumpjack articulated his identification with Angas Downs in terms of a lifetime of embodied experience in that place. Over the period of time that we recorded together, it is the significant relationships he formed there that he repeatedly cited as justification for his claim of being *ngurarijja* at that place, and as he described it, he had ‘*no feeling, or desire to be any other place*’.

Tjuki Pumpjack recalled that when they moved from Walara to Bloodwood Bore, ‘ration times’ started and many Anangu began arriving at the station. According to Tjuki they came to Bloodwood Bore looking for rations and because of this Anangu who arrived at that time:

*[W]ere visitors really, just visiting. They were people just visiting, coming to ask for rations. All visiting. However, people like me were the real ngurarijja who had been there all our lives.*

Having walked to Walara with his family as a young child, Tjuki’s sense of belonging to Angas Downs as *ngurarijja* at around this time when others were arriving is made explicit, demonstrating the ways in which the cattle station was being incorporated into an ‘intimate knowledge’ of place and relatedness. Frederick Rose carried out ethnographic fieldwork at Bloodwood Bore, the place where Tjuki said that he first began to feel like he was *ngurarijja*. Tjuki is ‘No. 1’ in the 150 portraits that make up the final pages of Rose’s ethnography. Rose spelt his name as Chuki and made the observation that:

No. 1 appears as Chukumba in William Liddle’s Day Book as being employed by him. He clearly has had considerable experience in the pastoral industry. He wore elastic sided boots and a wide brimmed hat, but there was nothing of the lair of about him.<sup>106</sup>

The 150 photographs are arranged in family groups and Tjuki, his two brothers and their respective families are the first families to appear. Rose’s observation that Tjuki had appeared in Liddle’s day book and was clearly knowledgeable about the pastoral industry

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<sup>104</sup> Ibid. Emphasis added.

<sup>105</sup> Ibid.

<sup>106</sup> Rose, *The Wind of Change*, 56.

indicates Rose's awareness that Tjuki had been with the Liddles and worked on Angas Downs for a considerable period of time. Situating Tjuki as 'No. 1' in his visual record of the station community would appear to reflect Rose's recognition of Tjuki's senior status at Bloodwood Bore at the time of his fieldwork. Anangu acknowledged this too. Sandra Armstrong says of the time that she began working at Bloodwood Bore that:

*Old Tjuki Tjukanku was really ninti, he was the number one, and he would be there. Old Tjuki Tjukanku.*<sup>107</sup>

The word *ninti* in Pitjantjatjara means to *know* or be *knowledgeable*. To be knowledgeable in the Anangu social universe is to carry authority and Sandra's use of the term to describe Tjuki, referring to him as 'number one', indicates recognition of the authority he held at Bloodwood Bore.<sup>108</sup>

I have been struck by Jeremy Beckett's descriptions of Wilcannia man George Dutton and the similarities between his observations and those I made over a handful of years listening to Tjuki Pumpjack's life history. Like Dutton, it was the country that provided the link between Tjuki's life as a stockman in the pastoral industry, and his life as an Anangu man.<sup>109</sup> When I first arrived in Imanpa community wanting to know more about Angas Downs station, everyone agreed that Tjuki Pumpjack 'was the man to see', just as the locals spoke of Dutton in Wilcannia.<sup>110</sup> Like Dutton, Tjuki's oral histories had a 'dual character' and had life continued as it was on Angas Downs, he would have been a man of some standing in both worlds. However, just as Beckett observed of Dutton, by the time Tjuki reached maturity the 'dual order was disintegrating', and in the modern setting 'he had an acute sense of cultural deprivation'.<sup>111</sup> As Beckett's presence did for Dutton, my arrival presented Tjuki with an opportunity to validate that existence. I would keep returning to record his knowledge and, as such, I would also bear witness to his claim. The analysis offered has been shaped in profound ways by this relationship.

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<sup>107</sup> Sandra Armstrong, AI-0108943.

<sup>108</sup> The value placed in hierarchy and authority among desert peoples is complex and can be based in ritual knowledge, ecological knowledge, marriage and the ability to "look after". It is not my concern to explain what constitutes that value here, rather I take it as a given from the evidence at hand that Tjuki possessed it. For a discussion of the politics and value of hierarchy in desert culture from an anthropological perspective see 'The Cultural Content of Hierarchy' in Myers, *Pintupi Country, Pintupi Self*, 219–55.

<sup>109</sup> Beckett, "George Dutton's Country," 2.

<sup>110</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>111</sup> *Ibid.*, 21-4.

Regardless of the nature of my interest in Angas Downs, Tjuki had his own message that he wanted recorded and as such his oral histories demonstrate characteristics of what Beckett has described elsewhere as ‘testimonial discourse’.<sup>112</sup> In approaching oral history as testimony, the act of ‘witnessing’ is of critical importance in the relationship between speaker and listener. When the academic historian engages with oral history and testimonial discourse, as Kelly Jean Butler has argued, the act of ‘witnessing’ shapes the way that historians produce their histories and the ways in which they ‘attempt to hear the voices of the past’.<sup>113</sup> In an analysis of the impact of the ‘imperatives of witnessing’ on academic historical writing, Butler observes an emerging body of historical scholarship that ‘privileges the necessity of responding to the voices of the present as the starting point for a study of the past’.<sup>114</sup> This act of witnessing necessarily brings an oral historian close to their ‘sources’ and raises the challenge of how to respond, both ethically and critically, to voices in the present, as a means to understanding the past.

The half a century traced in Tjuki Pumpjack’s life history was in many ways focused upon a very present dilemma. He enjoyed that I kept turning up at Imanpa wanting to *know* more, and that I went to him to learn. He always made sure to emphasise when he was saying something that he considered to be important, while also stressing his authority to do so. It is significant that much of his oral history that features in this chapter was recorded in our first two sessions together. Although he would go onto record various aspects of his life in detail over the following four years, at the time we recorded these memories he could not have been certain that we would build a relationship that lasted as long as it did. The knowledge we recorded over those two days on the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> September 2012, I believe, is what he considered to be the most important:

*I always stayed in the one place and I grew old and grey in that place, never leaving. I lived my entire life in that one place, looking after it, managing it. It was there that I became an old man... I grew up there from a little boy to an old man, in that one single place. I am now a nguraritja of that place. I have been there my whole life. This is an important detail, which is why I am mentioning it. Everyone says I am one of the most important people around here. White people always come and consult me. They always ask me where I am from and I always tell them 'I have spent my entire life right here!' I grew up at Walara. I became a man here. I married here.*

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<sup>112</sup> Beckett, “Autobiography and Testimonial Discourse”.

<sup>113</sup> Kelly Jean Butler, *Witnessing Australian Stories: History, Testimony, and Memory in Contemporary Culture* (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Transaction Publishers, 2013), 117–18.

<sup>114</sup> *Ibid.*, 118–19.

*I lost my wife here. As time went by I decided to get myself a second wife...I became a tjilpi (senior man) here! By then of course, I would always think to myself - surely I am nguraritja of this place? I must be a nguraritja. I never moved from here. I have lived here my entire life. I must be nguraritja. This is what I thinking. It was a fact that could not be denied. I would think to myself, 'I have lived my entire life here, working this land, caring for this place, and never left. I am an owner for this land now. I am just like a proper nguraritja, fulfilling all of the duties required by a nguraritja, living here my entire life.*

*So, even though I was born elsewhere, from the point in my life when my father announced we were all moving to where his older sister was living, we came here, and settled here, and never lived anywhere else.<sup>115</sup>*

Tjuki Pumpjack lived a kind of life on Angas Downs that left him in no doubt that he truly belonged to this place. That he was *nguraritja* was not just something he felt deeply, but as he makes a point of emphasising, carried an authority that was recognised by others.

However, it is not only between Anangu that claims of identification are assessed. With the emergence of the *Aboriginal Land Rights (NT) Act 1976*, and the *Native Title Act 1993*, the Australian state has made judgements as to whether Aboriginal people are who they say they are, and whether or not they conform to the legal discourse of 'authenticity' that have developed with these legislative frameworks for the legal 'recognition' of ownership.<sup>116</sup> Anthropologist Patrick Wolfe developed the terms 'repressive authenticity' and 'state-conceded Aboriginalities' to describe the discursive regime that allows the settler colonial state to construct indigenous peoples and identity.<sup>117</sup> More recently, Melinda Hinkson has drawn upon James Scott's distinction between 'hidden' and 'public' transcripts, whereby the 'public performance' of those less powerful is made to yield to the expectations of those who wield power. Hinkson notes that the current public transcript for Aboriginal people in Australia 'is one that subscribes to clear unchanging criteria of authentic Aboriginality'.<sup>118</sup> Hinkson makes the important point that unchanging relationships between people and place lie at the heart of this public transcript. State-conceded notions

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<sup>115</sup> Tjuki Tjukanku Pumpjack, 20 September 2012.

<sup>116</sup> Deborah Bird Rose, "Histories and Rituals: Land Claims in the Territory," in *In the Age of Mabo: History, Aborigines and Australia*, ed. Bain Attwood (St Leonards, N.S.W: Allen & Unwin, 1996), 35–53. See also Merlan, "The Regimentation of Customary Practice"; Povinelli, *Labor's Lot*.

<sup>117</sup> Patrick Wolfe, "Nation and MiscegeNation: Discursive Continuity in the Post-Mabo Era," *Social Analysis* 36 (1994): 93–152; Patrick Wolfe, "Settler Colonialism and the Elimination of the Native," *Journal of Genocide Research* 8, no. 4 (2006): 387–409.

<sup>118</sup> Melinda Hinkson, *Remembering the Future: Warlpiri Life through the Prism of Drawing* (Canberra: Aboriginal Studies Press, 2014), 101.

of authenticity and ownership have, as Hinkson observed in relation to Warlpiri people, impacted in numerous ways on the politics of Warlpiri representation, particularly in relation to painting country, and to which I would add the practice of storytelling.<sup>119</sup> Both painting and telling stories about places, among other things, are important creative practices in the repertoire of place-making for desert people.

I understand Tjuki Pumpjack's statement above as a reflection of what Hinkson calls the 'sedimented influence' of the expectations that our 'public transcripts' place upon Aboriginal people.<sup>120</sup> Ngura and his sense of himself as *nguraritja*, as evoked in his oral histories is somewhat self-conscious, as evidenced in his statement '*I think to myself, I must be the traditional owner, what else can I be?*'<sup>121</sup> Tjuki shifts between stating '*I am nguraritja of that place*' to questioning '*surely I am nguraritja of this place?*' to saying he is '*nguraritja purunypa*' which translates to *like* or *similar* to a *nguraritja*. Tjuki *felt* deeply that he was *nguraritja*, that Angas Downs was his *ngura*, and yet there is much in his oral histories that indicate he was cautious about making such claims. Tjuki's statement above, which is something he uttered on many occasions, can be read as what Hinkson has described as a 'hidden transcript' — one where the status of terms such as *ngura* and *nguraritja* are complex and ambiguous, inflected as they are 'by the concerns and consequences of history'.<sup>122</sup>

The term *nguraritja* has been codified in land rights and native title legislation as 'traditional owner'. Anthropologist Peter Sutton notes that in the native title framework:

“[T]raditional owners” are deemed to have rights to assert a relationship with their country as a matter of origin there, whether they live there or not. They “really come from” or “properly belong to” their country in an intrinsic sense...“Historical people” are living where they are because of historical factors such as migration and deportation, and do not “really come from” their current location.

Sutton notes that while it took nearly twenty years for the phrase 'traditional owner' to come into use in the Cape York Peninsula, 'where land rights for so long seemed a lost cause', it took a far shorter time for the term 'historical people' to spread from Queensland

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<sup>119</sup> Ibid.

<sup>120</sup> Hinkson, *Remembering the Future: Warlpiri Life through the Prism of Drawing*, 101.

<sup>121</sup> Tjuki Tjukanku Pumpjack, 20 September 2012.

<sup>122</sup> Hinkson, *Remembering the Future: Warlpiri Life through the Prism of Drawing*, 102.

to much of Australia in the 1990s and that *'this seems to have been a distinction waiting for a tag'*.<sup>123</sup> Whether or not Tjuki was, or would ever be, recognised as a 'traditional owner' by the state is not the concern here. Rather, I am interested in illuminating the ways I think he came to internalise the paradoxes of place and belonging in the wake of colonial 'settlement'. Tjuki Pumpjack's evocation of his status as *nguraritja* seems very aware of the 'consequences of history' — emphasised in his utterance that even though he was born 'elsewhere' he considered himself *nguraritja* for Angas Downs.<sup>124</sup>

Both Tjuki Pumpjack and Sandra Armstrong's oral histories have been rich source material, not just for charting the history of Angas Downs station over the course of the twentieth century, but also for the important insights they provide into changing relationships between people and place. Like Tjuki, Sandra Armstrong articulates her identification with Angas Downs in terms of her hard work and the process of learning that she underwent on the station. Although she grew up at Areyonga mission, where she went to school, it was Angas Downs to which she always returned. Bloodwood Bore was where she learned the way of the cattle, the tourists, money and *punu*. It was also the site where her children were born, and the place where she took her older sister to die because she was afraid she would die in the wrong place.<sup>125</sup> Angas Downs is the place she still returns to daily, in memory and in speech, as the primary locus of her identity, forged in the everyday intimacies of living, sharing and learning among kin. Over the four years I have known her, there has not been a single occasion where Sandra has not discussed Angas Downs and expressed her sense of ownership of the place and raised the issue of 'getting it back'. There is no question in her mind that Bloodwood Bore is her place and, like Tjuki, she has lived a kind of life there that makes her sure of that.

Throughout this thesis, Tjuki's and Sandra's memories have highlighted how the ways in which meaning was produced changed as Anangu lives were lived, as Merlan describes it, 'under different conditions of being in places from those that characterised earlier forms of

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<sup>123</sup> Peter Sutton, "Kind of Rights in Country: Recognising Customary Rights as Incidents of Native Title," *National Native Title Tribunal*, Occasional Paper Series, no. 2 (2001): 19–20.

<sup>124</sup> The 2000-01 *De Rose Hill* native title claim in South Australia hinged upon the development of a definition of *nguraritja* that was 'stable' and 'law-like'. However, as anthropologist Paul Burke noted, the Anangu evidence of what constituted a *nguraritja* was indicative of the 'multiple pathways to "country" in the Western Desert' and in a number of cases asserted a more impenetrable, metaphysical assessment of *nguraritja*.<sup>124</sup> In response to a question about his not being born on De Rose Hill station, Burke notes that Whisky Tjukanku responded 'No I didn't born there but I am a *nguraritja*. The land tells me I'm a *nguraritja*'. See Burke, *Law's Anthropology: From Ethnography to Expert Testimony in Native Title*, 200–5.

<sup>125</sup> Sandra Armstrong, AI-0108943.



Aboriginal social life'.<sup>126</sup> Furthermore, they show us how the production of meaning changed as a result of the significances attributed to new places, which emerged within the colonial context, and shaped by the cultural encounter.<sup>127</sup> Perhaps most significantly, even as Angas Downs reorganised the temporal and spatial dimensions of Anangu relations to place through migration, rations and work, as Tjuki's and Sandra's oral histories demonstrate, Anangu simultaneously began to transform the cattle station into 'camp', and in turn, into Country.

### Death of the *mayatja*

Country is not only a source of identity — it is also an object of exchange that is passed down from one generation to the next. One gets Country from those who 'held' them as a child and as Myers observed of the Pintupi:

They regard this 'giving' as a contribution to the substance and identity of the recipient, a kind of transmission of the generation's (or person's) identity to the next. But this is more than just a passing on of 'identity'. It is passing down, as well, of transformative power or agency, the wherewithal to socialise the next generation.<sup>128</sup>

Those who 'hold' the Country are obliged to teach the next generation and as Myers describes it, *replace* themselves as holders of the Country.<sup>129</sup> Approaching the age of 50, Tjuki Pumpjack was a senior man when the social order of Angas Downs began disintegrating. As Sandra said, he was *ninti*, and had reached the time in his life when the responsibility had fallen to him to hand down the knowledge he had accumulated and valued to the next generation. However, the world in which he had become a knowledgeable man disappeared.

Tjuki Pumpjack could not have seen coming the collapse of the world in which he saw himself as *Nguraritja*. Writing of Plenty Coups, the last great Chief of the Crow nation, and the moment the Crow moved onto a reservation in Montana in the early 1880s, philosopher Jonathan Lear observed that the Crow had no conscious understanding of the 'breakdown of happenings' that were about to occur, and nor were they 'in a position to

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<sup>126</sup> Merlan, *Caging the Rainbow*, 212–13.

<sup>127</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>128</sup> Myers, "Ways of Placemaking," 89–90.

<sup>129</sup> *Ibid.*

understand the significance of what it was they were about to endure'.<sup>130</sup> The Crow did not 'self-consciously formulate laws of logic', but rather they were lived in a way that 'manifested certain basic commitments' that opened out onto a 'field of possibilities' and Lear notes that when the Crow moved onto the reservation the field of possibilities broke down.<sup>131</sup> Lear asks the question 'what happens to the subject when the possibilities of living according to its associated ideals collapses?'<sup>132</sup> It is impossible to know how Tjuki Pumpjack experienced the unravelling of life on Angas Downs. However, following Lear it is possible to interpret his memory of the death of Arthur Liddle as witness 'to a loss that is not itself a happening but is the breakdown of that in terms of which happenings occur'.<sup>133</sup>

Tjuki stated unequivocally that they left Bloodwood Bore because their 'boss' had died, and that if he had not died they would have still been living there today. Rowse has observed that it must have perplexed the old people who had grown up on the stations when the opportunity to pass down the way of the horses, bullocks and managers disappeared.<sup>134</sup> The death of Arthur Liddle in Tjuki's memory suggests a psychological interpretation — it seems to make sense to interpret the collapse of the pastoral era as traumatic for Tjuki Pumpjack.:

*One day Arthur Liddle became ill and died....After that we had no idea what we were going to do. We said, 'what are we going to do now? Where should we go?'...We were thinking, 'Oh, we got nothing!...We have no boss man now!' And our old place went to nothing.*<sup>135</sup>

The world he knew had given way to a new social order that required dealing with a 'quite different kind of whitefella' who, as Gillian Cowlshaw puts it, insisted upon meetings, 'self-determination' and an array of new techniques of governance and social practices that were often mystifying in their intent.<sup>136</sup> In the wake of the failed attempt to keep living on Angas Downs, Tjuki surely felt powerless in the midst of such dramatic change. However, there are other possibilities for interpreting what the death of Arthur Liddle in Tjuki's memory might mean.

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<sup>130</sup> Jonathan Lear, *Radical Hope: Ethics in the Face of Cultural Devastation* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006), 10.

<sup>131</sup> *Ibid.*, 25-6.

<sup>132</sup> *Ibid.*, 44.

<sup>133</sup> *Ibid.*, 38.

<sup>134</sup> Tim Rowse, "Paternalism's Changing Reputation," *Mankind* 18, no. 2 (1988): 71.

<sup>135</sup> Tjuki Tjukanku Pumpjack, 26 October, 2012.

<sup>136</sup> Cowlshaw, *Rednecks, Eggheads and Blackfellas*, 118.

Lear’s book *Radical Hope* is a philosophical enquiry into Crow chief Plenty Coups’ statement:

But when the buffalo went away the hearts of my people fell to the ground, and they could not lift them up again. After this nothing happened.<sup>137</sup>

At the outset Lear argues that although it makes sense to interpret this statement as meaning the Crow became depressed after moving onto the reservation, the psychological interpretation is ‘in too much of a rush’.<sup>138</sup> Tjuki Pumpjack’s oral histories indicate that the demise of Angas Downs struck at the core of his sense of self as *nguraritja* in that place. What if the death of Arthur Liddle went deeper than traumatic response? What if, as Lear suggests, his memory provides insight into the ‘structure of temporality’ and insight into a particular point – the demise of Angas Downs – where things stopped happening?<sup>139</sup>

### ‘Sit-down times’

There was no decisive moment that brought the end of life on Angas Downs. Rather, life gradually ebbed away over more than a decade, some thirteen years passing between the establishment of Docker River toward the end of 1967 and the move to Imanpa around 1981. While some may choose to look upon Anangu migrations to Angas Downs as representative of displacement, it is the demise of the station that emerges in Tjuki’s oral histories as an experience of being displaced.<sup>140</sup> As I understand it, this sense of displacement underpins a politics to Tjuki’s remembrance, which is not just symptomatic of the trauma of past events, but rather is ‘articulated to an ethics of the present’.<sup>141</sup> As memory researchers Bill Schwarz and Susannah Radstone have argued, it is in the politics of memory that ‘meanings remain perpetually in tension and open to question’, and that this ambiguity risks being obscured by the elevation of “trauma” as an explanatory frame.<sup>142</sup> Keeping this ambiguity of meanings in mind, the death of Liddle in Tjuki’s oral history, perhaps not only served to condense a complex and confounding period of change into a coherent narrative of adequate causation, but also sought to endow the moment with an

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<sup>137</sup> Plenty Coups quoted in Lear, *Radical Hope*, 3.

<sup>138</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.

<sup>139</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.

<sup>140</sup> For a discussion of displacement and testimonial discourse see Beckett, “Autobiography and Testimonial Discourse in Myles Lalor’s ‘Oral History’”.

<sup>141</sup> Bill Schwarz and Susannah Radstone, “Introduction: Mapping Memory,” in *Memory: Histories, Theories, Debates*, ed. Bill Schwarz and Susannah Radstone (New York: Fordham University Press, 2010), 9.

<sup>142</sup> *Ibid.*, 8–9.

‘adequate time-marking function’.<sup>143</sup> The death of Arthur Liddle signified a turning point in the *long duree* of Tjuki’s life history and he stated unequivocally that when Liddle died ‘*everything changed for good*’.<sup>144</sup> Portelli has written that to ‘date an event is to break down continuous time into a sequence of discrete events, grouped into periods around certain key facts’.<sup>145</sup> The imaginative act of singling out Liddle’s death as momentous marked the eclipse of ‘ration times’, with which Liddle was intimately associated, with the beginning of ‘sit-down times’. ‘Sit-down times’ refers to the period characterised in Tjuki’s memory by the distribution of cash in the form of welfare payments, or ‘sit-down money’ as Anangu call it. Perhaps more significantly, beyond the literal association with the extension of unemployment benefits to Anangu, the symbolism of ‘sit-down times’ in Tjuki’s memory also points to the transformation of a social world understood in terms of travelling, sharing, learning and working, to a social condition articulated in terms of immobility.

In relation to a Katherine woman called Julie, Francesca Merlan observed that there was a sense in Julie’s stories that the kinds of mobilities which she evoked to reaffirm her place in Katherine were conditions of what she knew, or felt worthy, to report.<sup>146</sup> In contrast, Merlan noted that ‘interim periods’ in her life, like going to school, were articulated as a ‘function of immobility’, often relayed by a summary such as ‘We been siddown there little bit long time’.<sup>147</sup> Rather than referring solely to the distribution of welfare payments, or to immobility in a literal sense, inspired by Merlan’s interpretation it is possible to read Tjuki’s ‘sit-down times’ as reflective of a shift to conditions that were unknown, representing not so much an ‘interim’ period, but more of a ‘gap’ in his life story, reflective of an experience of (dis)placement. In reflecting upon recording the life story of Darwin man Roy Kelly, anthropologist Basil Sansom wrote that there are two things to note about life story, one is sequence, and the other is ‘gaps’. Sansom observed that ‘Army Time’ was a gap in Kelly’s life story, as was his time served as a police tracker. Sansom wrote that it was a required gap:

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<sup>143</sup> Portelli, *The Death of Luigi Trastulli*, 26.

<sup>144</sup> Tjuki Tjukanku Pumpjack, 26 October 2012.

<sup>145</sup> Portelli, *The Death of Luigi Trastulli*, 20–1.

<sup>146</sup> Merlan, *Caging the Rainbow*, 66.

<sup>147</sup> *Ibid.*

A time without story, consigned with good reason to the backward abyss of deliberately relegated experience. Things beyond recall are not unremembered, but are rather things deliberately to be put away.<sup>148</sup>

Tjuki Pumpjack relayed his oral histories as a series of journeys made over a lifetime of travelling. These journeys stopped short in his retelling with the beginning of ‘sit-down times’. In recounting his life he never ventured into territory beyond this time, and sensing that this ‘time’ had been ‘put away’ I never asked him to.

Similar to Plenty Coups’ statement ‘[a]fter this, nothing happened’, Tjuki Pumpjack’s remembering ended with Angas Downs. ‘Sit-down times’ was a place in his memory without story and it is possible that this was an implicit critique of that era. As *nguraritja* for that place, there was nothing left for him to do, and insofar as he was *nguraritja*, in practical terms he ceased to be.<sup>149</sup> There was a sense, not just in Tjuki’s oral histories, but also his perspective on the world and demeanour, that after Angas Downs life lacked order and meaning:

*They are seeking new ways of life. They are moving around and tasting the white man’s ways. They want to drink white man’s wine. They want to smoke white man’s drugs... They want all these things and they are prepared to travel widely in search of them... A lot of Anangu live like that nowadays. That’s their choice. They have made their own lifestyle choice. I think they should all go home and stay home and look after their homes. But that is not their idea. That’s not what they want. But their lifestyle choice leads to tears. I think they should stop, forget about the drinking and come back home.<sup>150</sup>*

As Lear’s interpretation of Plenty Coups’ statement ‘after that nothing happened’ suggests, witnessing such a breakdown of happenings might well lead someone like Tjuki Pumpjack to say something enigmatic like when Arthur Liddle died ‘*everything changed for good*’.

The various explanations for the demise of Angas Downs traced in this chapter illustrate Appadurai’s observation that ‘locality is a fragile social achievement’:

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<sup>148</sup> Basil Sansom, “In the Absence of Vita as Genre: The Making of the Roy Kelly Story,” in *Telling Stories: Indigenous History and Memory in Australia and New Zealand*, ed. Bain Attwood and Fiona Magowan (Sydney: Allen & Unwin), 118.

<sup>149</sup> Lear, *Radical Hope*, 50.

<sup>150</sup> Tjuki Tjukanku Pumpjack, 20 September, 2012.

Even in the most intimate, spatially confined, geographically isolated situations, locality must be maintained carefully against various kinds of odds...ecology and technology dictate that houses and inhabited spaces are forever shifting, thus contributing to an endemic sense of anxiety and instability to social life.<sup>151</sup>

Approximately ninety years old when he passed away in September 2015, the scale of the change Tjuki Tjukanku Pumpjack witnessed over nearly a century is impossible for me to fully comprehend. Over the course of his life, ecology, technology, and government policy did indeed dictate that places would be ‘forever shifting’. Against various kinds of odds, Tjuki Tjukanku Pumpjack, and Anangu generally, drew upon the raw materials of social life to negotiate that which was imposed upon them by whitefellas, and create new techniques and technologies of making place that would enable them to accommodate a constantly changing world.

For reasons beyond his control, Tjuki Pumpjack never got the opportunity to socialise the next generation and replace himself as *nguraritja* at Angas Downs. He had witnessed the collapse of a way of life and the passing into a time of no story. Toward the end of his life he seemed troubled by the reality that he was unable to pass on his place. When recording at Walara, he would often say that the Country was dying because he was the last one left, and after him there was no one to ‘hold’ it. It seemed as though when he died Angas Downs would die with him. This underpinned the four-year process of talking, travelling and recording oral histories with me — he was on a mission to have his knowledge, and his relationship to his place, recorded. Tjuki Pumpjack had lived a form of life on Angas Downs that had left him in no doubt that it was *his place*. Articulated in terms of nurturance, authority and life-long residence, he evinced the self-assurance of a person who truly *knows* a place.<sup>152</sup> Like Beckett observed of George Dutton, Tjuki was not interested in the role of ‘informant’, he had his own message and his own way of telling it. He told his story to preserve it and did so with the hope that one day future generations of his family would find it and learn about who they are and ‘*come back home*’.

However, Tjuki himself had not lived on Angas Downs for thirty or more years when I met him. While it is often assumed that the kinds of migrations that brought people like Tjuki Pumpjack to places like Angas Downs were representative of ‘dislocation’, it was clearly Angas Downs from which he felt dislocated. My turning up served as a catalyst for

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<sup>151</sup> Appadurai, *Modernity At Large*, 179.

<sup>152</sup> Merlan, *Caging the Rainbow*, 59.

thinking and talking at length about the place. Tjuki was also keenly aware that others might end up reading this, and like Dutton, ‘in showing us the country’ he is telling us who he was, and what his rightful place was in it.<sup>153</sup> Having recorded his knowledge, I believe he left this earth with some sense that Angas Downs would remain *ngura*, which is to say a named and enduring place.

*There is nothing at Angas Downs, only the place itself, but it is still our place.*<sup>154</sup>

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<sup>153</sup> Beckett, “George Dutton’s Country,” 24.

<sup>154</sup> Tjuki Tjukanku Pumpjack, AI-0108954.





A HISTORY *IN* PLACE

This thesis began with what I initially assumed to be a pastoral station. This assumption was influenced by the myths and histories that dominate thinking about the Northern Territory – pastoral progress, ‘exodus’, ‘coming in’, drought and dependence are narratives that have been particularly powerful in shaping how we understand the history of this region. The spatial approach and analysis offered in this thesis has emphasised different ways of seeing, reading and interpreting this place. Angas Downs emerged in the research as not only lived in, but made by Anangu in their encounters, relations and exchanges with others over half a century.

In tracing a history of Angas Downs this thesis has sought to demonstrate how Tjuki and Sandra, and Anangu generally, inscribe historical knowledge in places, which are produced and remembered as the spatialisation of social relations and recalled in narratives of movement from one location to another. Adopting a travelling methodology and recording stories on the move and in country, as well as tracing inscriptive practices across the landscape in memory, has revealed mobility as an essential lens through which to understand the historical processes in this region. Remoteness and aridity meant that mobility was necessary for both Anangu and whitefellas, and as such I have found that both place and mobility are productive prisms to think through and write history. An enplaced and mobile perspective on the past not only reveals colonialism, and attendant policies such as assimilation, as unstable technologies of governance, but also points to the mutual production of people in place, highlighting the ways in which assumed colonial processes such as pastoralism were being shaped by existing patterns of travel and modes of land use.

Focusing upon the extended oral histories of two lives that spanned five decades of change, the thesis has illuminated the complex and creative social process involved in making place at Angas Downs. Through the life histories of Tjuki Tjukanku Pumpjack and Sandra Armstrong I have documented how they made histories through the labour of remembering, simultaneously creating Country by inscribing places with meaning and telling stories about it. Recorded in the Pitjantjatjara language, these oral histories have revealed this particular repertoire of place and history-making as refracted through an Anangu conceptual framework. This perspective has been critical in illuminating the process by which people, whose experiences were shaped by migration and dislocation, as

has been the case for so many ‘historical people’, came to make a place for themselves. At Angas Downs Anangu cultures of economy and travel converged with processes such as pastoralism and tourism to create a place that cannot solely be understood in relation to settler structures, processes and relations. As Gillian Cowlshaw wrote of Bulman station as a palimpsest, new surfaces moulded to existing ones and, as such, meanings grafted onto one another, each layer using the contours of the other to establish its own shape.<sup>1</sup> In some cases these surfaces combined, ‘only to separate again when left alone’, while in others the imported surface never ‘takes’.<sup>2</sup>

Pastoral colonialism in Central Australia never really ‘took’ to the arid geographies that it sought to transform. This thesis ends in 1980, a decade or so after the pastoral paradigm collapsed, when the layers that made this place finally separated and Anangu moved off Angas Downs to Imanpa community. The story of Angas Downs gets markedly more complex as it moves into the ‘self-determination’ era, or the period that Tjuki Pumpjack refers to as ‘sit-down times’. It is a different world from the one covered in this thesis and one that presents a starkly different set of circumstances in terms of the relationship between Anangu and the state, and people and place. It is very difficult to write a history of the present, particularly one as complex as contemporary remote northern Australia. Perhaps with time it will be easier to make sense of what became of Angas Downs.

Like Tjuki’s evocation of ‘sit-down times’, Sandra too expressed a sense that life lacked order and meaning in the present:

*It’s important that the Elders continue to hold on to the good stories, not bad. At the moment there are many issues. They are mixed together and it destroys their [young people] mind. People are thinking of mixing [bad things, like drugs and alcohol] and it does internal damage, damages their brains. Drinking, the water quality is poor, the food is unhealthy, and there’s violence, sickness, some people are needing hearing aids, their ears are being affected. But in the early days, there was good food and that’s why there’s good thinking coming out of that generation.<sup>3</sup>*

While Aboriginal people’s memories of their time on pastoral stations and mission settlements as the ‘good old days’ lends itself to interpretation as nostalgia for a ‘golden age’ in the past, what if such a view could be interpreted as meaning more than that. In her recent work with Warlpiri, interpreting the crayon drawings Meggitt collected in the 1950s,

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<sup>1</sup> Cowlshaw, *Rednecks, Eggheads and Blackfellas*, 15.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> Sandra Armstrong, 5 October, 2013.

Melinda Hinkson wrote that she was ‘struck’ by the ways in which the drawings were ‘taken up’ by Warlpiri to ‘animate the pressing concerns of the present’.<sup>4</sup> Analysing how contemporary Warlpiri interpreted past pictures of *Jarnpa*, which are malevolent beings, to speak to present conditions of anxiety and worry, Hinkson notes that increasing unemployment, intensifying government intervention in Warlpiri people’s lives, alarming rates of imprisonment and endemic violence has created a set of circumstances that call for ‘new means by which Warlpiri might...reclaim some power, if only to explain these circumstances to themselves’.<sup>5</sup> This pursuit of power takes place in two directions; through ‘shoring up’ the explanatory power of the *Tjukurpa* and in attempting to secure positive recognition from whitefellas.<sup>6</sup> I too have been struck by the ways in which Angas Downs was often mobilised, by both Tjuki and Sandra, by way of contrast to a complicated, and what seemed at times anxiety-inducing, present. Angas Downs, evoked as *ngura*, was remembered and reimaged by them as an alternative, or solution, to the pressures of current circumstances.

What if, as Jonathan Lear suggested in relation to Plenty Coups’ statement ‘after that nothing happened’, that more than nostalgia for the past, such a view is the result of witnessing the ‘breakdown of happenings’ and uncertainty about what followed.<sup>7</sup> Perhaps Sandra’s statement above, and Tjuki’s characterisation of ‘sit-down times’, can be understood as an acknowledgement that ‘old ways of living a good life were gone’.<sup>8</sup> However, as Lear posits of Plenty Coups’ acknowledgement that the traditional ways of structuring significance had been irrevocably altered, such an expression should not necessarily be read as an act of despair, but rather as the ‘only way to avoid it’.<sup>9</sup>

Despite the significant shift in experience that came with the end of Angas Downs, there are sentiments that have nevertheless remained constant. In an article in the *Alice Springs News* in 2002, both Tjuki Pumpjack and Sandra Armstrong were quoted as saying that a proposed tourism business on Angas Downs was about ‘keeping’ the land so that their children and grandchildren could ‘hold it’ forever. Tjuki Pumpjack is quoted in the article as a resident of Angas Downs and senior traditional owner:

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<sup>4</sup> Melinda Hinkson, *Remembering the Future*, 106.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 109.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>7</sup> Lear, *Radical Hope*, 6.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 152.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*

*We're making a tourism business to make money for the children. We are keeping this land as Anangu land and the children can hold it forever... these are our ideas, not the Government's idea or other people's ideas. We have to take care of our land so that when we pass away, somebody doesn't come and take it over.*<sup>10</sup>

Sandra Armstrong is also quoted in the article:

*We need Aboriginal businesses, so that the children can work when they finish school. We are making the business on Angas Downs now and when we finish up, then our children and grandchildren will run the businesses and manage the land forever. The kids are going to Nyangatjatjara College now and then later they will work at the new roadhouse and animal sanctuary on Angas Downs.*<sup>11</sup>

The tourism business never eventuated on Angas Downs. Ten years later, I sat in on a recording with Sandra and Sam Osborne and listened as she expressed the same ideas about Angas Downs. In this sense, it is possible to understand Angas Downs, in Sandra's evocation of the place, as a symbol of what Lear describes as 'radical hope':

*But I'm thinking I need to settle down now at Angas Downs and do what they want, all of the younger generation. That's what I'm looking at. And this is what I'm talking about here [pulls out papers with a business plan for Angas Downs on it]...I need to look at Angas Downs. That's all I need to do...They first need to learn from Angas Downs, how to run a business for themselves, that's what I think. I'll be leaving this here and what will they think afterwards? And I'll be watching them like a spirit. That's what I think and I'm talking to them about this in advance, I don't know when I will pass away, [only] God knows my time...From all of my affairs, they're all preparing, that's what I'm looking at, and you will all run business on your own for the future generations, through your children, through your grandchildren. That's what I can see into the future.*<sup>12</sup>

Lear writes that for a vibrant culture, it is the 'task of the older generation to adapt the culture's ideals to current challenges and to pass on those ideals to the next generation'.<sup>13</sup>

However, the period after 1980 witnessed a profound disruption and that meant for Tjuki

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<sup>10</sup> Tjuki Pumpjack quoted in Kieran Finnane, "Major Aboriginal Tourism Venture Near Ayers Rock."

<sup>11</sup> Sandra Armstrong quoted in *ibid*.

<sup>12</sup> Sandra Armstrong, 5 October, 2013. In the original transcript Sam Osborne emphasised the word 'they' in the first line of this quote in italics. Although Sandra often expresses *her* desire to return to Angas Downs, in this instance she articulates the desire to return as something that the younger generation aspire toward.

<sup>13</sup> Lear, *Radical Hope*, 140.

and Sandra they could not ‘pass on those ideals’ and socialise the next generation ‘in an unproblematic way’.<sup>14</sup> In Sandra’s statement above, it is possible to interpret Angas Downs as symbolising that ideal and the hope for future generations of her family. A generation of absence from Angas Downs has passed, and yet I have not spent a day in her company where Sandra has not spoken about ‘getting Angas Downs back’. While I was writing the introduction to this thesis, I received a phone call from her asking me to help her find some phone numbers that she needed for her latest attempt at ‘getting Angas Downs back’. However, as Francesca Merlan has observed, this talk of ‘getting the land back’ should not be understood in terms of state-conceded land rights or native title.<sup>15</sup> Rather, as Sandra articulates it, if she can re-establish the practical, lived relationship with Angas Downs, then future generations can live a good life *and* hold onto their land.

At a time when the politics of place continues to be keenly felt in Australia, and the ‘problem’ of the remote north is now commonly described by politicians and bureaucrats as ‘intractable’, this detailed history *in place* makes an important contribution.<sup>16</sup> Many assumptions and misapprehensions circulate about the circumstances of the region in which Angas Downs is situated, but in reality it is poorly understood. This plays out in the present in multiple policy failures: Anangu present a major policy ‘problem’ because of their continuing ‘difference’ from ‘mainstream’ Australian society; policy discussion around ‘employment’ and the economic viability of the remote north remains largely ignorant of structural issues embedded in the ‘marginality’ of much of the geography; and ‘public transcripts’ of Aboriginality continue to emphasise static notions of relationship to place and view ownership as something evidenced in uninterrupted occupation, which fails to

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<sup>14</sup> Ibid., 141.

<sup>15</sup> Merlan, “The Regimentation of Customary Practice,” 79–80.

<sup>16</sup> While the issues and debates surrounding the circumstances of the remote north have been gathering in intensity since the 1990, they have assumed particular salience following the Northern Territory Emergency Response (NTER) in 2007. The publication of Peter Sutton’s *Politics of Suffering* in 2009 ignited fierce debate in this arena, particularly within the field of anthropology and has led to much commentary and analysis. The debate has largely centred on whether notions such as ‘suffering’ and ‘crisis’ adequately represent remote circumstances, how to interpret the causes of the so-called crisis, and how the ‘problem’ of the remote north should be responded to. See Jon C. Altman and Melinda Hinkson, eds., *Coercive Reconciliation: Stabilise, Normalise, Exit Aboriginal Australia* (North Carlton, VIC: Arena Publications, 2007); Jon C. Altman and Melinda Hinkson, eds., *Culture Crisis: Anthropology and Politics in Aboriginal Australia* (Sydney: UNSW Press, 2010); Diane Austin-Broos, *A Different Inequality: The Politics of Debate About Remote Aboriginal Australia* (Crows Nest, N.S.W: Allen & Unwin, 2011); Helen Hughes, *Lands of Shame: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander “Homelands” in Transition* (St. Leonards, N.S.W: Centre for Independent Studies, 2007); Tim Rowse, *Rethinking Social Justice from “Peoples” to “Populations,”* Aboriginal Studies Press (Canberra: Aboriginal Studies Press, 2012); Peter Sutton, *The Politics of Suffering: Indigenous Australia and the End of the Liberal Consensus* (Carlton, Vic: Melbourne University Press, 2009).

accommodate for the lived experience of Anangu and the ways in which they make and relate to places.

Deborah Bird Rose has argued that the legacy of colonialism is that contemporary circumstances are the result ‘not only...[of] violence, but also...a misguided and misleading hope for the future’.<sup>17</sup> When the purpose and meaning behind what colonialism has bequeathed us collapses, what are the alternatives? Bird Rose writes that there are no models from the past to guide a project aimed at decolonising modern settler societies. While the extent to which modern settler societies can ever truly decolonise is debatable, her ‘ethics for decolonisation’ advocates for a moral and ethical engagement with the past as a means to a more just and equitable future.<sup>18</sup> Bird Rose argues that ‘recuperative histories and ethnographies’ have an important role to play in this move towards decolonisation. She does not frame the future as a ‘dialectical opposition of overcoming’; rather she posits that the recuperative mode ‘trawls the past for hidden histories and the local possibilities that illuminate alternatives to our embeddedness in violence’.<sup>19</sup> As she sees it, there is no ‘perfect state’ for this kind of history writing to return to or aspire toward. Rather, in Bird Rose’s conceptualisation of recuperation as a move toward decolonisation, historians must engage with, and be open to, plurality and difference.<sup>20</sup>

By tracing the making and unmaking of Angas Downs, this thesis contributes to still unfolding understandings of how Anangu make places in the wake of colonialism, and in a world where, as Hinkson describes it, Country ‘is clearly much less contained’.<sup>21</sup> In doing so, it too holds out Angas Downs as a symbol of ‘radical hope’. Lear writes that what makes hope *radical* is that it is ‘directed toward a future goodness that transcends the current ability to understand what it is’.<sup>22</sup> Following Lear, Angas Downs in this thesis presents an ‘actual historical example — as well as an imaginative construction built on historical circumstances’<sup>23</sup> that provides the material for the kind of recuperative histories that Rose suggests. In this sense, the (un)making of Angas Downs suggests more responsive and creative formulations of relationship to place, rather than ‘a compensatory

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<sup>17</sup> Deborah Bird Rose, *Reports from a Wild Country: Ethics for Decolonisation* (Sydney: UNSW Press, 2004), 5.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 5–6.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 24.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>21</sup> Hinkson, *Remembering the Future*, 111.

<sup>22</sup> Lear, *Radical Hope*, 103.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 104.

land rights of loss'.<sup>24</sup> Furthermore, tracing the creative social processes that were mobilised to make this place reveals intersecting cultures of economy and travel from the not-too-distant past that illuminate alternatives to current policy impasses. Finally, as remembered and brought into being by two people who lived through and survived extraordinary change, transforming in order to make a place for themselves, Angas Downs points to the possibilities of how past places might be imagined and interpreted anew in shared histories with a view to a more just and equitable future.

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<sup>24</sup> Jackie Huggins, Rita Huggins, and Jane M. Jacobs, "Kooramindanjie: Place and the Postcolonial," *History Workshop Journal*, no. 39 (1995): 172.





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