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GOLDEN DREAMS:
People, Place and Mining in the Tanami Desert

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this work is the result of research carried out by the author.

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Dedication

Few of us understand, but we all feel it though, and I say all without exception, because those who do not feel do not count. Each blade of grass has its spot on earth whence it draws its life, its strength; and so is man rooted to the land from which he draws his faith together with his life. I don’t know how much Jim understood; but I know how he felt, he felt confusedly but powerfully, the demand of some such truth or some such illusion - I don’t care how you call it, there is so little difference, and the difference means so little...

Yet you, too, in your time must have known the intensity of life, that light of glamour created in the shock of trifles, as amazing as the glow of sparks struck from a cold stone - and as short-lived, alas!

- Joseph Conrad, Lord Jim

For the Warlpiri people of Lajamanu and Yuendumu who grew me into a man and taught me another way of seeing the world,

I thank you most sincerely.
In Memory

In affectionate memory of my father D. Johnson Japanangka

who sadly passed away in February 2001.

Ngajukupalangu kirdana,
tarnnga karnarla purdanyanyi.
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Abstract

The Tanami Desert is classed as a semi-desert and covers a large area of land in the central-west of the Northern Territory of Australia as well as a much smaller area of the north-east of Western Australia. The majority of the Tanami Desert has been inhabited by Warlpiri speaking Aboriginal peoples for thousands of years; in their terminology from time immemorial since the creative period, or jukurrpa, that transformed the world from a featureless mass to the form it has today. For Warlpiri the landscape of the Tanami Desert is covered with places that mark the events and histories of the extraordinary beings and ancestors of the jukurrpa whose essences remain in these places, the land and the worlds above and below the surface of the earth.

There have been a number of attempts to account for the complex relationships between Warlpiri people and their land. These accounts shared a common objective that aimed to elucidate patterns of ownership, or land tenure, that related sets of kin, jukurrpa and tracts of land. The most sophisticated of these models determined that discrete ‘estates’ existed where the patrilineally inherited rights of ownership were elevated as the strongest form of attachment to place in contrast to other rights that may have been claimed by other Warlpiri people. This thesis isolates rights in place as the key to answering the question of whether there were estates and, if there were, how boundaries of such estates could be determined. The ethnographic data presented here marks the first in-depth survey of accurately plotted site information amongst Aboriginal people of Australia’s interior deserts.

Place is the central focus of this thesis. It examines changes to Warlpiri sociocultural concepts and categories regarding their relations to their land since colonisation within the context of intensive gold exploration, mining and royalty payments. It is contended that Warlpiri people continue to reproduce a cultural order of place that has become increasingly more relevant to daily life beyond the realms of kinship and ritual and has actually reinforced claims of knowledge and authority over decisions regarding the ownership of place. Further, the data illustrates the fact that, in regard to the contemporary development of gold mining in the Tanami Desert the grounds upon which land tenure is negotiated and informs boundaries between people and places demonstrates that indigenous principles which are responsive to changes in history, demography and political economy remain in operation.
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Notes on Data

The spelling of Warlpiri words has been, for the most part, based on the Warlpiri-English Dictionary (15-09-96) compiled by Steve Swartz. Italics have been used for all Warlpiri subsection names, places and words. However, when referring to specific individual people their subsection name has not been italicised.

The information in this thesis has been collected in the context of support of the Central Land Council (CLC) although the views and arguments put forward in this thesis remain the sole responsibility of the author who in no way purports to represent the CLC.
Map of the Tanami Desert indicating major communities and mines
Chapter One

Golden Dreams: Warlpiri and Socio-spatial Economics

What we are concerned with, then, is the long *history of space*, even though space is neither a ‘subject’ nor an ‘object’ but rather a social reality - that is to say, a set of relations and forms... It must account for both representational spaces and representations of space, but above all for their interrelationships and their links with social practice. The history of space thus has its place between anthropology and political economy (Lefebvre 1991:116).

In his work with Pintupi, Fred Myers (1986:67) noted that Aboriginal people in central Australia often employed “gold” as a metaphorical equivalent for their cultural value of things that were different and not readily translatable into English concepts or language. Therefore, when Pintupi were talking about most of their sacred sites they were said to be “gold”. In the context of the Northern Territory’s Tanami Desert, most of which is land held by people who identify themselves as Warlpiri, this metaphor of Aboriginal sites being spoken of as gold has in fact become a reality. In the wake of intensive gold exploration and mining both Aboriginal people and a host of exploration and mining companies are coming to terms with the fact that land in the Tanami Desert has both cultural and economic value albeit on substantially different scales of meaning and magnitude for both parties.

The title of this thesis, Golden Dreams, acknowledges this equation commonly made by Aboriginal people in the larger communities of the Tanami Desert (Lajamanu and Yuendumu), between gold (transformed into royalty monies paid by mining companies) and certain places or ‘dreaming tracks and sacred sites’ known as *jukurrpa*. Françoise Dussart (2000:20-1) distinguished five distinct yet interrelated meanings of *jukurrpa* as: (i) the travels of Ancestral Beings; (ii) the time of the Ancestral Present; (iii) the narratives of those travels and time; (iv) the site-specific segments of those travels and narratives and, finally; (v) the ritual material that is remade by nocturnal dreams of individuals. Of particular intellectual concern is the fact that there has been a distinct lack of analysis concerning how Warlpiri people relate to *jukurrpa* as the travels of Ancestral Beings incarnate in site-specific segments. This thesis engages directly with how Warlpiri people reproduce their relationships to place and how these relations have changed as a result of intensive gold exploration and mining on their land.
Golden Dreams simultaneously refers to both Warlpiri and Euro-Australian meanings produced in their unique encounter in the Tanami Desert. On the one hand it refers to the continuing hope of mining companies in their search for gold, a dream that for many early prospectors proved a tragic illusion. On the other hand gold is discussed by Warlpiri in terms of travelling and running under the ground in a manner not unlike their own jukurrpa, gold is spoken of as a “white man’s dreaming”. In the current context of mining in the Tanami Desert there are three fully operational mines (Tanami, The Granites and Dead Bullock Soak) already as well as numerous pits and two processing facilities, one located at Tanami and the other at The Granites. For Warlpiri, gold represents an infusion of economic significance into Warlpiri places. Gold is transformed into royalty monies that are generated from its extraction at, or near, Warlpiri places which have been the sources and objects of profound social and cultural significance from time immemorial. The analysis of these Golden Dreams provides a unique opportunity to discuss old and new debates in Aboriginal anthropology about relationships between people and places, how they have been represented in the past, and have been, and are being, transformed. The complex relationships between Warlpiri people and their places will be maintained as the central point of analysis, the axis upon which the historical events and contemporary experiences of Warlpiri people may be seen to revolve.

**Gold and Warlpiri in the Tanami Desert**

Currently in the Tanami Desert in excess of seven million dollars in royalties may be distributed to Aboriginal communities and individual Aboriginal people each year. This royalty money can fluctuate markedly from year to year depending on variables such as the success of exploration, the price of gold, mining company expenditure, and the rates of production in terms of mass and quality of ore from both the pits and the mining plants themselves. The money, commonly referred to simply as ‘royalties’, is primarily paid out by mining companies and is subject to legal agreements made with traditional landowners through their representative body, the Central Land Council (CLC). Under the *Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act 1976* (the Land Rights Act) there are provisions (s.35 and s.64) for financial payments to be made to the traditional owners, as Aboriginal landowners are referred to in the Act, of areas associated with, or affected by, mining and exploration. The advent of the Land Rights Act and the land claim process represented a significant shift in the objective relations of Warlpiri cultural conceptions of place. Land claims and the statutory requirements of the Land Rights Act combined to place an emphasis on the relationships of Aboriginal people to their land in a new way. The land claim process required people to articulate and objectify their relationships to place in a court setting that demanded the definition of which people owned which land, their membership of descent groups and the boundaries of their
‘estates’. In essence, the Land Rights Act signalled a reification of cultural forms that would underscore the fundamental tenets of Aboriginal society, history and culture which were so clearly different from those of Euro-Australians.

In the Tanami Desert the CLC, as instructed by Warlpiri and land owners from other linguistic groups, has entered into agreements with a large number of companies. These agreements allow for exploration and mining on Aboriginal land. The two most important features of these agreements, as far as Warlpiri people are concerned, centre on the protection of their places of significance and the payment of royalties to the relevant traditional owners of the land affected by either mining leases or exploration licences. The developments associated with the exigencies of mineral exploration on Aboriginal land have forced, and are continuing to force, traditional owners to make many decisions about their land, such as the relative importance of places and the bases for membership of royalty receiving associations. This is occurring at a time when the older generation of land owners who actually grew up in the desert have almost passed away resulting in some instances in a loss of first hand knowledge of the location of places of significance. As a result those few remaining people with such knowledge are themselves objectified by younger Warlpiri as repositories of ‘authentic culture’ because they are the people who can accurately identify places and the links that people have to them from their first hand knowledge and experience of places in the Tanami Desert. The objectification of Warlpiri knowledge of place and people's relationships to place is extremely significant. It is at the centre of tensions and politicking between people to identify who is eligible to receive money from specific tracts of land and the criteria upon which such eligibility is based, contested and upheld.

A number of factors combine to lead to greatly intensified negotiations and politicking over land and rights to associated religious knowledge. The passing of the Land Rights Act in 1976 and the development of gold exploration and related activities on Warlpiri land have opened the way for a substantial flow of cash into the Tanami Desert which presents a variety of problems. This is readily recognised in the meetings which are held to distribute royalties. The multiple contexts of representation and articulation of rights in land, affiliation to specific places and contingent religious knowledge of jakurrpa are most acute during these meetings. ‘Culture’ can be seen to be objectified at this point not only by external agencies, but by Warlpiri themselves who are trying to define its substantive elements (Merlan 1989). Objectification is completed in the sense that Warlpiri culture is appropriated by the institutional framework provided by the Land Rights Act in order to successfully distribute money.
The context of place data

For the better part of seven years and later as a consultant I undertook research on behalf of the CLC. The cornerstone of this work was the mapping of place in the Tanami Desert and the identification of the correct groups of traditional owners of those places as primary objectives within the context of escalating gold exploration and mining. The majority of the time I spent in the Tanami Desert mapping places was for the purposes of issuing instructions (to protect places of significance to Aboriginal people) on the work programs (exploration proposals) of mining companies such as Normandy NFM, Otter Gold, Anglo Gold, Sons of Gwalia, Delta Gold, Poseidon, Zapopan, Tanami Gold, Western Mining Corporation, Shell/Billiton, Acacia Resources and Goldfields to name but a few. In the year 2000 the study area of the central Tanami Desert is covered by over 160 exploration licences within 53 separate agreements, with a further 100 awaiting consideration, and seven mining leases, within an area of 85,250 square kilometres. Extensive consultations beginning with the seeking of consent of the appropriate traditional owners are necessary before any work by mining companies or other external development interests can take place on Aboriginal Land. Then follows the project of the mapping of places and the identification of those to be protected and avoided during exploration and mining work. As a result of these activities and other factors Warlpiri relations to the lands from which they now derive financial benefits have changed greatly since the arrival of land rights.

It is necessary to emphasise that Warlpiri sociocultural concepts of central concern involve the identification and definition of places and the social relationships of Warlpiri to those places. Yet at the same time the work of site identification was undertaken within a set of specific contexts involving gold exploration, mining and the distribution of royalty monies. Perhaps one of the most important points to bear in mind is that the payment of royalties and the identification of traditional owners and Warlpiri places is an ongoing process that has evolved over fifteen years. Within this timespan Warlpiri have become increasingly reflexive about these processes as the following newspaper extract neatly illustrates:

A feud has developed over land subject to compensation for exploration... Money paid in compensation to Aboriginal owners has come under dispute as several families claim ownership of the land. Ms Limbiari said a meeting was held last week to try to determine who was eligible for compensation... Ms Limbiari said it is up to the Central Land Council to help resolve the issue. “The CLC should stop these sorts of problems. And they shouldn’t be paying out the wrong people because it brings big trouble.” She is concerned at the way these sorts of disputes are worked out and said it was too difficult for individual Aboriginal families to work out ownership among themselves (Centralian Advocate May 24 1996:4).
There is no intention to delve into, or evaluate, the various merits of specific so-called ‘disputes’ between different groups or families of Warlpiri over places in the Tanami Desert such as the one reported in the case of Ms. Limbiari above. Rather, the intention is to explore the ways in which various key Warlpiri concepts of relationships to place have been identified by both legislation and Warlpiri themselves which is of concern to the ethnography and the broader anthropological debates with which it engages. Ms. Limbiari’s predicament raises the question:

- How, and on what basis, are issues regarding the ownership of place that are contested by different groups of Warlpiri people resolved?

Such a question as this involves an historical approach to the ethnographic data and the individual example of another Warlpiri person raises further issues.

Mr. A was born in early 1940s at The Granites at the site of the present day mine of the same name just prior to the period when people were moved by Welfare Officers to the newly established community of Yuendumu approximately 250 kilometres to the south-east. His father was one of the first men to work with the prospectors and miners at The Granites and was instrumental in organising other Warlpiri people to work and camp in close contact with the miners over a sustained period of time. Mr. A’s father had what is described and acknowledged by most Warlpiri people as his major dreamings and sites several hundred kilometres to the south of The Granites in the Chilla Well region. This area of land was considered as a ‘heartland’ area of those people who were related patrilineally with Mr. A and his father’s semimoieties. The drift of people into contact with the miners at places like The Granites and Tanami resulted in many of the current middle aged population of Warlpiri being born and conceived in these areas of land and thus sharing affiliation, identity and rights with those tracts of land within an existing system of cultural order of rights to place. In the case of Mr. A he was conceived and born on an area of land with which another descent group of people with whom he shared the same semimoieties membership were considered to be the ‘owners’ through the principle of patrification. When the mine at The Granites was opened in the mid 1980s Mr. A became a key figure in the negotiations between the company, the CLC and Warlpiri people as royalties began to flow and be divided amongst those people who were identified as traditional owners over the jukurrpa of the sites at, and in close proximity to, The Granites. However, at The Granites there are also places associated with two other jukurrpa which are classified with two other semimoieties. Thus, the division of royalty monies requires decisions to be made that involve sociocultural concepts that accord weight to the importance of places in the area of mining and the claims of people to those places.
• Which *jukurrpa* are affected by the development of mining in a region? This entails related questions surrounding the identification of places, their boundaries and extent of influence, the relationship of *jukurrpa* to each other and the criteria used to determine how they are weighted and ranked in order to apportion monies and authority over decisions.

• Which groups of people are related to the *jukurrpa* and places that are affected by the development of mining in a region? The social issues involved orbit around the clarification of who can claim affiliation to *jukurrpa* and place, the cultural concepts on which the claims are based or put forward, how these claims are arbitrated and ranked and how the membership of social groups is defined.

Mr. A was included as a senior traditional owner and spokesman for The Granites group by virtue of a number of interrelated factors including place of conception, birth and residence, as well as religious knowledge and membership of the appropriate semimoiety who claimed primary responsibility of ownership of the major *jukurrpa* at The Granites. Many other Warlpiri people, due to historical circumstance as much as anything else, could also claim affiliation to The Granites by virtue of their place of birth or conception yet are not included as ‘owners’ of The Granites. This raises the question of the principles at work that distinguish between different categories of ‘owners’? There are both individual and broader kinds of affiliation in Warlpiri ordering of cultural links to place that are at work in the Tanami Desert. It is clear that how these linkages to place are argued and appealed to, such as in this case and the dispute alluded to by Ms. Limbiari, is a complicated arena where key Warlpiri cultural concepts of place, ownership, knowledge, identity, authority and history intersect, collide and are at once both resolved and disputed. Even this brief account underscores the variety of bases upon which Warlpiri people construct claims to place that this ethnography addresses including the conditions within which these rights are constrained and ordered.

The questions raised in these two examples require an historical approach. Place is a fundamental element of personal and social identity and politics. To understand complex issues of contemporary Warlpiri land tenure involves a consideration of how knowledge of place is produced, transferred and negotiated and how authority over place is maintained over time. Barbara Glowczewski (1999:3) advocated a similar dynamic approach to Warlpiri people’s relationships to place by looking at how they have been grounded in the past as well documenting the ruptures to those relations which have been brought about by technical, economic, demographic and political upheavals, all of which have affected Warlpiri social life. Such an investigation involves clarification of both the local history of the Tanami Desert and the social and physical constructions of relations between Warlpiri people and their places.
From this vantage the shift in conditions of relationships between people and place will be more easily charted.

The social history of place

One of the most lucid and certainly influential, anthropological approaches that addressed the question of perceived changes to indigenous cultural orders with respect to local structures and histories is Marshall Sahlins' *Islands of History* (1985). Sahlins' rejection of traditional western intellectual distinctions between structure and history, past and present as well as system and event as though they are separate objects of inquiry is at once an attractive and forceful argument. From this vantage Warlpiri conceptions of places and their relationships to them can be viewed as part of the organisation of the current situation they face in terms of the past. There is no need here to reproduce the development of Sahlins' argument other than to isolate two of his key premises that are taken as critical to the foundation and presentation of the ethnographic data. First, the symbolic relations between people and things within a cultural order are historical objects. Second, a structural transformation is a pragmatic re-definition of the categories which alters the relationship between them. Sahlins' work is acknowledged here as a definitive moment in the development of anthropology that has not only drawn together earlier work on the questions of stability and change in culture through time but also informed contemporary inquiries into the nature of sociocultural transformations. These works, which have their roots in the French Annales School of the 1920s, can make a valuable contribution towards the analysis of the current relations between Warlpiri people, place and gold mining in the Tanami Desert. In the light of the examples of Ms. Limbiari and Mr. A the following four questions are identified as of major concern for the thesis.

- What are the fundamental tenets of Warlpiri relationships to place and how do they work to order and inform one another?

- Have the relationships between Warlpiri people and their places undergone a structural transformation with respect to how these relations are ordered?

- If people's relationships to place have undergone a structural transformation is it that the values of places have changed, the relations of Warlpiri people to them or a combination of both factors?

- What has been the impact of gold mining and royalty payments on the relationship between people and place?
Henri Lefebvre (1991) indicated, and Sahlins demonstrated, that the analysis of place and its links with Warlpiri social practice is necessarily a historical investigation which must be sensitive to both local and external treatments of Warlpiri place through time. There is a growing recognition in Australian ethnography that accounts of Aboriginal histories have to some extent been ignored. As Chris Anderson (1995:1) pointed out:

The focus on gross structural relations in Australian history has precluded or ignored micro-ethnographic and historical accounts of what actually happened on the ground. Also, in the re-telling (reinvention?) of colonial encounter, social action has been all but left out.

Perhaps part of the reason for this oversight is that Fourth World peoples, such as Aboriginal people of the Northern Territory, have been idealised as either autonomous or dominated cultures (Merlan 1998:230-231). Francesca Merlan argued that these oversimplified accounts ignore the relationship between continuity and change in contemporary sociocultural formations of Aboriginal people.

Merlan’s work is of significance because she was interested in the conditions within which Aboriginal peoples’ lives have changed from those earlier forms that informed their interactions with places. Critically, and of particular relevance to Warlpiri in the context of gold mining on their land in the Tanami Desert, Merlan (1998:211-13) demonstrated that the production of meanings of places has changed due to the significance that both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people attribute to places that now have character (the term value is preferred) within an intercultural social context. Place is no longer seen as passive or abstract, a site in which social structures are potentially contained, but rather as a dynamic dimension of social processes.

Lefebvre (1991:117) cautioned that the history of space cannot be distinguished from the history of time and thus the initial point of inquiry into the nature of Warlpiri place should commence with the spatio-temporal rhythms of nature as transformed by social practices. The first determinant to consider here is anthropological, according to Lefebvre, and investigation must start with how nature was appropriated by people to help them construct their images of the world. Indeed there is a long tradition in Aboriginal anthropology which has concerned itself with the relationships between land, totemic symbols, social classifications and land ownership that remain central in unfolding the history of changes to Warlpiri life in the Tanami Desert. Nevertheless Patrick McConvell (1998:195-6) warned:

Modern socio-political contexts are not enough, in themselves, to explain how people have reacted, and the models that they propose for claims to land. Rather traditional patterns which differ in different areas, dating back to times before
European contact, still play a significant role in conjunction with the modern contexts.

The unique history of Warlpiri in the Tanami Desert and the role that the pursuit of gold has played in characterising this history has been a process operating for almost a century and one which must be thoroughly examined in order to discuss the complexities of the contemporary relations of people, place and mining in the Tanami Desert. Both Warlpiri and other external agents (e.g. mining companies) and political processes (e.g. Land Rights Act) have had to come to terms with the fact that meanings of place are not immutable but are an integral part of dynamic social processes. As a result the relationships of Warlpiri people to place have become increasingly complicated because over time people have come to acquire different reflexivities, to varying degrees, towards those relations.

How are Warlpiri people reproducing their relationships to place, have these changed, and if so to what extent have these changes been conscious, do they represent a “structural transformation” in Sahlin’s terms? Such theoretical considerations have also been raised in a slightly different manner by Pierre Bourdieu in reply to questions posed by Loïc Wacquant in An Invitation to Reflexive Sociology (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992:140):

The tendency toward the self-reproduction of the structure is realized only when it enrolls the collaboration of agents who have internalized its specific necessity in the form of habitus and who are active producers even when they consciously or unconsciously contribute to reproduction. Having internalized the immanent law of the structure in the form of habitus, they realize its necessity in the very spontaneous movement of their existence. But what is necessary to reproduce the structure is still a historical action, accomplished by true agents.

Both Sahlin (1981) and Bourdieu (1977) have offered models of systemic change from changes in practices through their development of their respective theories of the structure of the conjuncture and habitus (Ortner 1984:155). Sahlin’s model is preferred here, although not strictly adhered to, because it is more easily applied in the Warlpiri case. This efficacy is primarily due to Sahlin’s focus on change brought about by situations in which traditional strategies and patterns of relations are deployed in relation to novel phenomena (gold mining and royalty payments) that do not respond to those strategies in traditional ways (Ortner 1984:155). Cultural concepts are as much transformed by historical forces as they work to mediate those forces for the social group as Elizabeth Povinelli (1993:13) indicated in her work amongst the Belyuen Aborigines of the Darwin region in the Northern Territory.

The intellectual guide posts within which data are couched are influenced by an approach to Warlpiri place which is not only sensitive to people’s relationships to place over time but also rigorously investigates the question of change and stability in those relations. This is not to
presuppose homogeneity in the way Warlpiri perceive their relationships to place as individuals act upon those very relations: “practice is at once an individual initiative assumed with respect to ephemeral circumstances and an instantiation of structure... a set of predispositions and an individualised ground of circumstance-sensitive action” (Biersack 1991:19). The understanding of such reflexivities of peoples’ interactions as individuals and social groups necessitates what Michael Carrithers (1990:270) called an account of events in the past and connecting them with the present. To proceed with such an investigation requires briefly foregrounding some of the key intellectual work on the relationship between history and anthropology and the recognition and analysis of changes to cultural concepts over time.

The temporal history of place: a diachronic approach

Emiko Ohnuki-Tierney’s edited volume Culture Through Time (1990), addresses theoretical issues concerning time and symbolism as well as epistemological issues arising out of the current intellectual rapprochement between the disciplines of anthropology and history. Much of this work has been based on the trailblazing of Jan Vansina who wanted to dispel the mythical power of the “zero-time fiction” (Vansina 1970:165) that would have the history of peoples before colonial contact as peaceful and unchanging (Ohnuki-Tierney 1990:3). History in anthropology has relied too much upon what Daniel Miller (1994:59) identified as false distinctions between the traditional and the progressive characterisation of societies which places tradition at the stagnant level of civilisation.

One of the most immediate and oft criticised aspects of any detailed ethnographic study of Aboriginal people in Australia today revolves around the extent to which they are reified as ahistorical subjects. Indeed it appears unavoidable that any ethnographic inquiry into pre-colonial Aboriginal cultural forms is to be so easily dismissed as a reconstruction, a fiction that seeks to maintain the fetishised other in order to perpetuate a distinction between the famous “hot” rapidly transforming and “cold” slowly changing societies attributed to Claude Lévi-Strauss (in Ohnuki-Tierney (1990:3). It is important to avoid taking the position that Warlpiri society was such a “cold” society frozen in time where the relationships between people and place were unchanging. Increasingly anthropologists working in Australia have been giving more emphasis to the fluidity within Aboriginal relations over time. Ohnuki-Tierney (1990:3) developed Lévi-Strauss’ idea and argued that so-called “cold” societies do have histories and that ethnography should be sensitive to change versus stability in meanings over time. What time frame can be established in order to investigate possible changes to Warlpiri concepts? A recurrent theme that will be addressed involves clearly articulating the period of time in which
sociocultural concepts are being referred to. To this end the thesis will employ a “diachronic approach” to Warlpiri history.

Vansina (1973:165) advocated the formulation of anthropological theory through collection of data of both the ethnographic present and history that considered the evolution of culture and abolished a “zero-time fiction”. This was what he termed the “diachronic approach” in anthropology. This approach is particularly attractive in the context of the history of peoples’ relationships to place in the Tanami Desert because structures of kinship and territoriality usually remain as core aspects of a culture (Vansina 1973:166). More recently, and with specific reference to Aboriginal anthropology, McConvell (1998:200) echoed Vansina’s approach and indicated the need for:

the development of a diachronic anthropology which includes explicit theory addressing the conditions under which cultural elements diffuse and the conditions under which diffusion is resisted and traditions retained... A key question in developing such theory is the relationship between conceptualisation of links between land and people and patterns of movement and settlement.

The diachronic approach in anthropology is actually part of a long intellectual tradition developed in the Annales School of France. The distinguishing feature of the School was its concern with the history of slowly changing societies or “cold” societies in Lévi-Strauss’ terms. The work of the scholars involved in the Annales School was the major force that brought history back into the social sciences and their greatest contribution according to Emmanuel LeRoy Ladurie (1977:120) was the recognition that there is no science of man that doesn’t include a temporal dimension. Fernand Braudel was the most recent of influential writers associated with the Annales School and he identified three kinds of history: the almost changeless history of cycles of relations between man and the environment that are endlessly renewed; above this unaltering history is that of the gentle rhythms of social groups and groupings of people; and finally, the history of people and events in particular, and the short, sharp and nervous vibrations contained therein (Braudel 1980). In the relations between people and place in the Tanami Desert I argue that place can be seen to thread throughout each of these histories. Warlpiri hold that *jukurrpa* and the places within which it is inscribed in the landscape are timeless and eternal. Yet the vicissitudes of its cultural ordering and the social groupings of those people who claim attachment to place is a process open to the events of history and the actions of people as historical agents.

Any discussion of historical process must refer to a number of issues. These include the identification of the primacy of a certain principle of culture in the sequence of change, the evaluation of the relative weight of the structure vis-à-vis historical events, since structure affects historical changes, and the examination of historical
actors as causal agents, although these polarities dissolve in practice (Braudel 1980:3).

Ohnuki-Tierney (1990:11) re-iterated the point made by Vansina earlier: a successful synthesis of anthropology and history requires that the “cultural principles” under consideration, in this case structures of kinship and territoriality, must be clearly identified. In the Tanami Desert these principles, or cultural concepts, have been identified as those which are involved in the cultural ordering of Warlpiri place and a related concept of the “production of social space” (Lefebvre 1991).

If the selection of the core cultural principles to be investigated appears to be relatively straightforward the parameters of events in the Tanami Desert and the time scale of study is more complicated. The arrival of Europeans in the Tanami Desert marked the beginning of a long term series of ruptures of the relationship between people and place beginning with the physical removal of Warlpiri people from the Tanami Desert and their later re-introduction on substantially altered terms. There were a number of significant events that contributed to this rupture which included the establishment of permanent water supplies, the exchange of goods for Warlpiri labour, the government decision to relocate people to the fringes of the Tanami Desert and the eventual return of gold mining on a large scale. It is difficult to isolate certain events in history for study because it is not always apparent if they alone can account for basic changes in people’s lives (Ricoeur 1980). In order to overcome this difficulty LeRoy Ladurie (1977:115-6) recommended that in order to determine whether an event made a difference involved the “measurement of the impact of an occurrence strictly in context with respect to its antecedents and even more with respect to its consequences.” Of import in the case of Warlpiri in the Tanami Desert is to follow the history of place through all of these events because no single event, be it gold mining, the Land Rights Act or resettlement, can alone account for changes in peoples relation to place. Braudel (1980:4) cautioned that:

resounding events often take place in an instant, and are but manifestations of that larger destiny by which alone they can be explained. Thus we have been brought to the breaking-down of history into successive levels. Or rather to the distinction, within historical time, of a geographical time, a social time, and an individual time.

The arrival of European explorers and prospectors in the Tanami Desert marked the beginning of a conjuncture in history in the sense of Braudel’s distinction of changes over time in the long run as opposed to a surface oscillation of an event. A conjuncture in history may play itself out over a substantial period of time ranging from a decade to a century or even longer. I argue that the conjuncture in the Tanami Desert is one that will not end until that time in the future when the production of gold has been exhausted and the payment of royalties has ended. In the meantime it is important to chart the history of the production and reproduction of the
relationships between Warlpiri people and place, an inquiry that begins with “the spatio-temporal rhythms of nature as transformed by a social practice” (Lefebvre 1991:117).

**Boundaries of people, places and dreams**

The illustration of how Warlpiri social practices are embedded in place may be introduced by a brief depiction of the metaphor of the *Ngatijirri* (Common Budgerigar - *Melopsittacus undulatus*) *jukurrpa* which will illustrate the intricacies of the ways relationships between people and place interrelate and inform one another. This metaphor may be characterised as the way in which budgerigars represent how Aboriginal people maintain and reproduce associations and rights in land as well as social linkages throughout the Tanami Desert. The metaphor also has a wider significance relating to notions of boundedness and separation within the broader constructions of how different social groupings of Warlpiri and places are matched and negotiated.

Travelling in the open spinifex plains and low sandhills of Central Australia the eye becomes accustomed to a slowly changing landscape where evidence of life, in the form of tracks and burrows, is more likely to be encountered than animal life itself. This uniformity is occasionally broken up by interesting geographical features and, less often, is punctuated by thick flocks of budgerigars wheeling into view, the still air suddenly reverberating with their shrill calls. As much an Australian icon as the undulating red sandhills themselves, the budgerigars are identical in their electric green colouring. As the birds turn sharply the beating of their wings becomes audible as the sound pitch changes with the new direction of their movement. Sometimes, these flocks numbering thousands of individuals will flow by for minutes on end, one after the other, like rolling waves of green surf breaking upon themselves and then reforming again. It is an extraordinary sight and for the observer one that is not easily forgotten.

In the wet season, or summer time, budgerigars gather together in the northern parts of Australia’s central desert in widely known important Aboriginal sacred places such as *Mulan* (Lake Gregory, near Balgo in Western Australia) and *Yinapaka*, Lake Surprise (the floodout of the Lander River in the central Tanami Desert). In these places, among others, there may often be water in abundance and the brief gestation period of the budgerigar allows the birds time to breed within the short period of the wet season. The budgerigars arrive at the watered places in small groups eventually coalescing into huge flocks feeding and mating in the relative plenty. When the waters diminish and food resources become depleted these huge flocks disperse and break back up into the small bands that roam the desert in search of seed and water left in rockholes and watersources spread throughout the Tanami.
The pattern of gathering together during the good season of the year is a common element of both the behaviour of the budgerigar and the occupation of the Tanami Desert by Warlpiri, or yapar, as they refer to themselves. During the summer period yapar would gather into larger groups at major places where there was plenty of water, at what is referred to as ‘business time’. There the classic features of Aboriginal social life, as they have been described by anthropologists, would come to the fore. Disputes were settled (and begun), marriages organised and ceremonies held, all of these activities culminating after long periods of organisation and discussion. When water and food supplies dwindled and the season changed, groups of Warlpiri would break up and disperse moving back into different parts of the desert. This was a matter, in the crudest deterministic terms, of pure economic and physical survival.

The movement of the Ngatijirri as birds today is reminiscent of the way their travels are related in jukurrpa as myth. Understanding the significance of these narratives as they are explained by the Ngatijirri myth is enriched when it is realised that the actual physical manifestations of Ngatijirri places in the landscape closely relate to the habitat the birds themselves occupy in the desert today especially at places such as Patilirri, Karntawarranyungu and Yinapaka. The image of how the small bands of budgerigars travel around and join together to form huge flocks is a metaphor for how Warlpiri maintain sociocultural links with each other. This parallel is obvious when one considers how the budgerigars join into these huge flocks during the good seasons and how the initiated Warlpiri men, Marliyarra, moved around like the budgerigar visiting their distant country and kin renewing and maintaining links of social, political and religious import. The metaphor may be expanded to examine the notion of social collectivity and relatedness with the following story told by Jimmy Jungarrayi (1994:95-99), a senior traditional owner of the Ngatijirri jukurrpa.

The budgerigars belonging to the dreaming came from that place. There were so many they covered the area bright green. Well, Patilirri, our place, is a very, very important place... The two men set out from that place there. They went up into the sky. They returned to the ground... This is how those two young men travelled. The two of them travelled together this way to a place just over there... Later the two men, the two initiated men, came back in this direction... the two men came across a whole flock of budgerigars... From Patilirri, the budgerigars flew away spreading out towards... They met together, they went their separate way, they met again. From Murlinjarri and Karntawarranyungu, they ate on their way back to Yinapaka. From Yinapaka, they came directly to Patilirri. They were so many, they covered Patilirri, turning the whole area bright green. From Patilirri, they travelled to the hills that stand along Yarnmarrpatu, near Yuendumu. There they stand... I know the whole of this dreaming, the songs, and also I have walked around the whole of this country. I have followed the tracks of the budgerigars. I have followed their travels to the east. I have followed them everywhere they went. I can relate this law... Well, the budgerigars that belong to us lay down and slept there
just in the south, at the place whose name is Patilirri. From that place, from Patilirri, the two young men walked around visiting different places near the Granites. The budgerigars spread everywhere and multiplied, all coming from the one place. Because of this, we people who live in the west, in the south, along the north side, are all from one family.

Jungarrayi’s narrative blends together the familiar themes of Aboriginal relations to country that are seized upon by anthropologists working with Aboriginal people in Central Australia. For these researchers the essence of Aboriginal identity lies with the anthropomorphised activities of the dreamtime beings who move around the landscape infusing the land with meaning and essence. The residual effect is that these stories of the jukurrpa (as accounted for in designs, songs, stories and ceremonies of people) are the interface between the past, present and future as well as prescribing knowledge, authority and belonging through the generations (Munn 1984). The metaphor of the Ngatijirri suggests notions of social and physical boundaries that are woven through issues of land ownership. The theme of sociocultural and physical boundaries will be recurrent throughout the analysis of people and place in the Tanami Desert.

Individual people’s identification with a dreaming (or dream), totem, place or group is cast against a pervasive background of cultural prescription in which certain kinds of rules and relations are mapped through the generations in order to give people a sense of identity and belonging. Ownership is ascribed through the appeal to the corporate group, which in turn is mapped down from the dreamtime and into the human present. Older Warlpiri men may refer to Ngatijirri (as both the jukurrpa and the bird itself) as Marliyarra (initiated man). Ngatijirri are also seen as what has been translated as the “souls of the dead” - that is of initiated men who have passed away. The reasons for this identification of initiated men as budgerigars are quite clear. Young recently initiated men often had a considerable period of time to wait before marriage. As a result they were encouraged to travel widely visiting other linguistic groups and participating in religious life and learning about places and jukurrpa throughout the landscape. These travels would allow the men to establish lasting social links and relationships. Jungarrayi’s narrative of the Ngatijirri myth refers to dreams, travels, and places and how they define relatedness between families - in essence he speaks about relationships between people and place and ultimately about people with each other. The Ngatijirri jukurrpa not only links people with place but also defines people as a group which is at once internally subdivided yet distinct from other dreamings and associations.

Ownership of land in Warlpiri society is negotiated through a variety of claims and appeals dependent on combinations of descent, age, gender, knowledge, place of birth and conception, personal and family history, residence and authority. When land ownership, or more
specifically the rights and interests which correspond to land ownership, is required to be defined by external interests discussions among anthropologists often revert to according different weights or merits to claims of authority in order to define and distinguish between different interests and kinds of eligible land-holding units.

The notion of boundedness implies the establishment of criteria which allow Aboriginal people to distinguish between different groups in a variety of contexts. This notion must be located with respect to contemporary contexts as well as history. If the metaphor discussed earlier illustrated how relationships between people and place are deeply enmeshed, what are the kinds of criteria that Warlpiri people use to distinguish between different interests and how are those in turn formulated as distinct? An analysis of people and place involves examination of the kinds of appeal that people make to ownership of *jukurrpa* and place through new understandings of how place informs the reproduction of Warlpiri social relations through time, and is directly related to broader anthropological concerns with issues such as cultural reproduction, stability and change.

The metaphor of the *Ngatijirri jukurrpa* can also be usefully used in order to explore a tension between place and myth. While the *jukurrpa* ensures enduring associations to the land, there are forces which potentially rupture this complex interrelationship of myth and identification in the land. Gold mining and the distribution of royalty monies are such forces that require Warlpiri to adopt reflexivities about their identification with place and each other and how boundaries between people as individuals and groups and place and space are determined, ordered and negotiated in the context of gold mining in the Tanami Desert.

**Chapter outlines**

Chapter Two is devoted to the discussion of how place has been constructed in anthropological readings of Aboriginal land tenure in Australia. Alfred Radcliffe-Brown, among others, was instrumental in influencing how Aboriginal places were subordinated in functionalist theory to a role where they had a symbolic meaning which was only of value in terms of their capacity to maintain the structure of Aboriginal society. Place was conceived of as an institution that was an unchanging feature of a wider social order (Sahlins 1996). For Radcliffe-Brown Aboriginal places were part of strict social and physical boundaries in the landscape that maintained differences between different land-owning units. This position on Aboriginal land tenure was vehemently contested by Les Hiatt and later modified by William Stanner yet the focus of debate in anthropology in Australia remained solely on the role that place played in ordering relations of land use and occupation. This was a hallmark feature of *Desert People*, Mervyn Meggitt’s famous ethnography of Warlpiri, first published in 1962. The failure of these
pioneering anthropologists working in Australia to analyse the implications of how people conceived of place as something that also informed practice was clearly influenced by the functionalist tradition of the day and was, to a certain extent, redressed in the atmosphere of the establishment of the Land Rights Act in the early 1970s. The development of differing models of Warlpiri land tenure increasingly accorded more attention to how people expressed their relationships to place and its impact on their relations with each other. Of most importance were the various constructions of Warlpiri land tenure that were put forward in land claims heard in the Tanami Desert and the work of Myers on negotiation of Aboriginal identity with place amongst Pintupi of central Australia.

Chapter Three traces the history of the rupture of Warlpiri relationships to place since contact with Euro-Australians in the Tanami Desert at the turn of the 20th century and begins to unravel how the significance of place began to be submerged as the Tanami Desert was appropriated for its value within a Western scheme of economic value. As Warlpiri were moved out of the Tanami Desert place retained its cultural value for them. However Warlpiri knowledge of the locations of places began to decline as they were no longer living on their land among their places.

Chapter Four introduces the ethnographic data that commences with the examination of the physical features of the sites in the Tanami Desert and then follows how Warlpiri social practices and beliefs transform sites from mere physical features of empty space to places of meaning which have rich cultural value. The chapter also illustrates a related argument that concerns the substitution of the term ‘place’ for ‘site’ precisely because of the values with which Warlpiri place is imbued by social practice.

Both Chapters Five and Six are concerned with place primarily from the perspective of how it is culturally transformed and ordered from a physical, topographical feature. Chapter Five continues the analysis of social meanings of place by investigating how Warlpiri order their claims of identity and affiliation to place and provides comments on how this order has been influenced by the permanent removal of people from the Tanami Desert and their relocation in communities. Chapter Six expands further upon the analysis of how Warlpiri place is culturally ordered by discussing how people identify sites as belonging to one social grouping as opposed to another. The chapter also addresses how the data accords with the earlier models of land tenure discussed in Chapter Two and highlights the fact that the passage of time and the ways in which people now articulate affiliation to place has influenced the cultural order of rights to place.
Chapter Seven charts a reverse in the historical flow of people away from place through the processes that surrounded the Land Rights Act and subsequent exploration and mining in the Desert that actually brought Warlpiri back into contact with place under radically altered circumstances. This shift in conditions arose from a legal framework that now not only recognised the cultural value of place but had also imbued it with a dimension of economic significance for Warlpiri in terms of the payment of royalties. The processes of gold exploration and mining resulted in the measurement of the extent of places and jukurrpa by both mining companies and Warlpiri and on this basis the land tenure model under the mining regime is advanced.

Chapter Eight continues the examination of the emerging cultural order of relationships to place which increasingly relies upon the clarification and definition of boundaries between different social groupings of people that at once both create and enforce claims of affiliation to place. This chapter signals the conclusion of the analysis of the relationships between people and place and draws together the complexities of how decisions are made about place and its role in defining identity of Warlpiri people in the context of gold mining in the Tanami Desert.

Chapter Nine returns to the theoretical issues raised in the introduction and offers concluding remarks on questions of stability and change in key Warlpiri sociocultural concepts over time and their relationship to an emergent model of Warlpiri land tenure brought about by gold exploration and mining in the Tanami Desert.

In essence the multiple contexts and agencies (including Warlpiri themselves) demanding or defining the authentic representation of Warlpiri place will provide the points for the analysis of the ethnographic data presented in the thesis. Currently Warlpiri do not permanently live on their traditional land and it is unlikely that they ever will again, yet gold mining represents for them a heightened emphasis on certain sociocultural features and concepts concerning the identification of rights in place over others. The complexities of changes and continuity in Warlpiri life by centring analysis on the study of place are a focus that has not been accorded the attention it warrants in Warlpiri ethnography in terms of informing Aboriginal identity, history and politics. What are the processes at work that produce, change and transmit the meaning of Warlpiri place and under what circumstances has this occurred (Merlan 1998:223)?
Chapter Two

The Elementary Formulation of Warlpiri Land Tenure

One of the tasks of culture is to organise the relations of human beings to one another. This is done by means of the social structure and the moral, ritual and economic customs by and in which that structure functions. But another task of culture is to organise the relation of man to his environment. In Australia this involves a system of customs and beliefs by which the human society and the natural objects and phenomena that affect it are brought into a larger structure, which is very important to recognise, but for which it is difficult to find a suitable name. The function of much of the myth and ritual is to maintain or create this structure. What is commonly called totemism is part of this structural system. It should be noted that the most important determining factor in relation to this wider structure is the strong social bond between the horde or local clan and its territory (Radcliffe-Brown 1930:63).

Perhaps the earliest, and certainly the most celebrated, anthropological works published in Australia concerning Aboriginal land tenure were produced by Alfred Howitt and Lorimer Fison (1883 and 1885). The writings of these authors were instrumental in developing the concepts of ‘clans’, ‘hordes’, and ‘tribes’, terms whose meanings have been debated in anthropology for nearly a century to follow. Hiatt (1996) and Peter Sutton (1999a) both noted that there were contradictions throughout the works of Howitt and Fison, in particular, their uses of the words ‘clan’ and ‘horde’ with respect to the appropriation of rights in land through descent. Sutton indicated that the most valuable contribution made by Howitt and Fison was their distinction between local, as opposed to, social organisation. Local organisation was concerned with the occupation of land whereas social organisation focused upon kinship and descent-based social structures.

The central importance of the complicated relationships between Aboriginal people and their land was identified by Bronislaw Malinowski (1963). When The Family Among the Australian Aborigines was first published in 1913, Malinowski set himself the task of answering the question: “Do the natives usually live scattered, in single families, or in larger groups?” Malinowski’s work was informed by a review of the published information produced in Australia at the turn of the 20th century. He argued for the importance of understanding land ownership in Australia in terms of ‘tribes’ acting as local groups as well as individual family units (Malinowski 1963:134). Crucially, Malinowski noted that occupation and possession of territory was vested in the local group that was comprised of several families. It was this unit,
he maintained, that was the primary economic utiliser of land and, thus, was the most important unit for the analysis of land ownership. Malinowski (1963:153) also identified “religious/magical connections”, as he termed them, that linked the economic unit to the broader social structure: “We know of a whole series of ideas of totemic character that bind a group of men to a given totality.”

This chapter pursues an analysis of how functionalist anthropology developed a treatment of Aboriginal place that ignored its importance as part of a dynamic process involving land tenure, politics and identity. The chapter begins with the examination of the primacy that Radcliffe-Brown ascribed to the patrilineal, patrilocal, exogamous group in Aboriginal territorial organisation, a model of land tenure that remained unchallenged by Adolphus Elkin (1954) when his work The Australian Aborigines: How to Understand Them was first published in 1938. Indeed, the work of Radcliffe-Brown can be seen as a rejection of the individual and ‘tribal’ levels of connections to place (first identified by Malinowski) in order to champion the primacy of the local agnatic descent group as structuring people’s relationship to land. This position was also advocated by Joseph Birdsell (1953) whose environmentally focused research on the occupation of land by Aboriginal people also concluded that descent groups inhabited their own discrete territory.

Radcliffe-Brown acknowledged that it was the findings of researchers such as Ursula McConnel (1930), Baldwin Spencer and Francis Gillen (1899 and 1904), and Howitt and Fison (1883 and 1885) that informed his general observations. In the light of these findings, he proposed a general typology within which to contrast and classify the different varieties of social organisation reported in Australia (Radcliffe-Brown 1930:34). Radcliffe-Brown’s efforts were driven by a need to account for people’s relationships to place that could be abstracted to the extent of providing a template for a reproducible model of land tenure across Australia. The search for a definitive model of land tenure for Warlpiri people in the Tanami Desert was conceived and influenced to a certain degree by the work established in the tradition of Radcliffe-Brown. To come to grips with the relationships of people and place necessitates a thorough engagement with the changing parameters within which Warlpiri land tenure has been formulated.

The burial of place

Radcliffe-Brown’s pioneering work on Aboriginal social organisation was characterised by a strictly structural approach to the analysis of the relationship between Aboriginal societies and the lands they occupied. He produced a model of land tenure that gained considerable
influence over the formulation of legislative policies, academic discourse and the public imagination alike. This chapter will illustrate, and critically discuss, the dominant structural-functionalist models of Australian Aboriginal land tenure: the model developed by Radcliffe-Brown (1930) and the modified Radcliffe-Brown model proposed later by Stanner (1965). They are of particular interest because of the proposals they make concerning the relationship between social organisation and the structure of localised, land-using groups. This relationship was usually referred to as ‘local organisation’, and is currently more commonly termed ‘land tenure’.

It can be seen that the role accorded to the individual as part of a local group in the early theoretical models of land tenure tended to blur the differences between economic and social categories. This distinction was not recognised and continued to be reproduced. Of particular interest is the manner in which the separation of these categories was later accorded a central role in the development of anthropological notions of the relationship of people to place in Australia. Common to all early models of local organisation was their location within broader theoretical debates of the time concerning how peoples in marginal environments are able to survive. This was primarily attributable to the patrilineal band model devised by Julian Steward (1936) which was supposed to answer the question of how the band, or local group, was sustained in terms of a cultural ecological approach (Peterson and Long 1986:1). The work in this tradition was firmly established in Australian anthropology and found its initial and powerful expression in the work of Radcliffe-Brown (1930) who effectively matched units of social organisation, such as ‘bands’, to units of ‘land’. According to Radcliffe-Brown the typical Australian Aboriginal society was made up of patrilineal bands, or ‘hordes’ who lived in circumscribed territory and it was this ‘horde’ that was the primary land owning unit.

In the original issue of *Oceania* (1930) Radcliffe-Brown published the first instalment of his paper “The Social Organization of Australian Tribes”. In many ways it was the definitive article on local organisation in terms of land occupation because it presented the first complete analysis developed from a theoretical perspective. Most notably the work abstracted from the particular ethnographies of the time in order to make, and substantiate, general observations. Nicolas Peterson and Jeremy Long (1986:16) indicated that the earlier work of Radcliffe-Brown in 1913 on territorial organisation actually “depicts a relatively fluid and flexible system.” They observed that by 1918 Radcliffe-Brown began to place more reliance on abstraction for general principles than perhaps his own data would have suggested, and that he increasingly equated social organisation with land use. It is at this point, as much as any other in the development of functional anthropology, that the investigation of social constructions of people’s relationships to place was buried and forsaken for other intellectual pursuits.
Radcliffe-Brown, the ‘horde’ and land tenure

Radcliffe-Brown argued that local organisation was the first part of the social system destroyed in the face of European colonisation and expropriation of Aboriginal land (Radcliffe-Brown 1930:34). However, he did not elaborate on the effects of that rupture. Radcliffe-Brown was interested only in accounting for the pristine world of Aboriginal relations to land. He was less interested in the dramatic upheaval that were brought about by European colonisation. This was an important point that became a hallmark of the influence of functional anthropology as it was established in Australia: Aboriginal peoples’ relations to land were treated as frozen in time by the imposition of a time frame that could only focus on the reconstruction and explication of ideal, pre-contact Aboriginal societies.

Radcliffe-Brown believed that it was Australian Aboriginal peoples’ social organisation that determined their relationship to the landscape. He declared that social structure in terms of kinship was based on the family and the ‘horde’, defined as: “(1) the family, _i.e._, the group formed by a man and his wife and their children, and (2) the horde, a small group owning and occupying a definite territory or hunting ground” (Radcliffe-Brown 1930:34). Radcliffe-Brown indicated that other social groupings were both important and possible, such as those to do with the secular aspects of social life, gender and age. However, he accorded neither these other social groupings, nor economic considerations regarding resource appropriation, the same structural weight in defining the relationship of people to land as he accorded to patrilineal descent equated with patrilocal residence. Radcliffe-Brown (1930:439) declared:

In his adaptation to a somewhat unfavourable environment the Australian native has to rely on accumulated detailed knowledge of the animals and plants he uses for food and for other purposes. A most important part of this knowledge is topographical, _i.e._, consists of detailed knowledge of a certain piece of country. A boy begins to acquire this knowledge about the country of his own horde from a very early age. If he left his own country, say at marriage, this knowledge would be lost... The local knowledge possessed by the men is therefore of great importance, and the patrilineal descent of the horde is of very real advantage to the aborigines in their adaptation.

From the outset, Radcliffe-Brown maintained that kinship, characterised by patrilineal descent, was more important for the ascription of land ownership because the ‘horde’ occupied a definite territory. The need for the transmission of knowledge and rights in land to be effectively transferred through successive generations determined that the kinship system alone should contain the blueprint for local organisation. This effectively privileged the linkages of men’s rights to place over women’s. Specifically, knowledge was seen to rest with men and
was transferred through the patriline. This conclusion was echoed in the patrilineal band model championed by Steward (1936).

Radcliffe-Brown did not investigate how rights in land, acquired through patrilineal descent, were transferred because he treated knowledge of places not primarily as a cultural resource, but as a means to demarcate land ownership. If, as Radcliffe-Brown asserted, kinship was the prime organiser of local organisation, then what he referred to was the physical use and occupation of the land and its resources. Social organisation and the sociocultural means of ascribing identity in, and through, land remained coded within the kinship system only and directly expressed in local organisation.

For Radcliffe-Brown the most important local group was the ‘horde’. The ‘horde’ was presumed to be made up of closely related family units, and it was this grouping that structurally organised the occupation and use of the land and its resources:

The horde is a small group of persons owning a certain area of territory, the boundaries of which are known, and possessing in common propriety rights over the land and its products - mineral, vegetable and animal. It is the primary land-owning or land-holding group. Membership of a horde is determined in the first place by descent, children belonging to the horde of their father. There is normally, in the tribes about which we have adequate information, no provision by which a man could leave his own horde and be 'adopted' or 'naturalised' in another. Therefore, as a normal thing, male members enter the horde by birth and remain in it till death (Radcliffe-Brown 1930:35).

Here Radcliffe-Brown can be seen to have a very fixed notion of the ‘horde’ as conferring identity. There was no recognition that, structurally speaking, political or religious considerations had any role to play in local organisation: their importance was abstracted to another level, a superstructure that served to unify disparate ‘hordes’ at ‘tribal’, linguistic and cosmological levels. Moreover, such a model left no room for individual agency which might affect the composition of the ‘horde’.

An individual was only supposed to live with their close relatives. Radcliffe-Brown achieved the effective separation of land into distinct self-contained units that conferred membership for individuals, simultaneously relating them to a specific circumscribed tract of land. This division of land also confined politics, like land ownership, as effectively understandable only within the constraints of the patrilineal local ‘horde’ model. The political significance of the ‘tribe’ was only evident in wider ritual contexts, and individual agency was accorded limited importance. Radcliffe-Brown recognised the importance of ritual and mythology in Aboriginal society, yet admitted that he was reluctant to investigate further: “It is impossible to give any
succinct account of this social structure in the wider sense as it appears in Australia, as this would require a systematic treatment of the ritual and mythology” (1930:60). Consequently, he avoided any considered appreciation of the manner in which place contributes to the constitution of the identity of people.

Radcliffe-Brown did, however, recognise the importance of the ‘tribe’ as providing a structural feature for the organisation of kinship categories (1930:41-3). He identified seven kinds of ‘tribes’ in Australia based on a classificatory system defined by kinship types. According to this typology, Warlpiri of the Tanami would fall into Radcliffe-Brown’s “category four”, “with eight subsections” or the ‘Arandic’ kin class system. The key feature of the Arandic system is more appropriately characterised in the designated four grandparental terms and ideal marriages between second cousins. In discussion of its features, Radcliffe-Brown took the opportunity to re-emphasise the importance of kinship as the only way to understand local organisation. “In the Aranda system we have marriage with the mother's mother's brother's daughter's daughter, and the classification of relatives into four lines of descent” (Radcliffe-Brown 1930:52). This is technically incorrect because there are actually only four terminological lines of descent not four lines of patrilineal descent amongst Warlpiri.

Radcliffe-Brown’s construction of the primacy of the ‘horde’, and the patrilineal patrilocal descent group as the corporate unit in which land tenure was vested through local organisation to circumscribed territory was complete. Critical to this argument was the fact that political life and connectedness to place was contained within the patrilineal dimension of the model. A diagrammatic rendering of land tenure in Australia as envisaged by Radcliffe-Brown effectively divided the landscape into discrete blocks unified at a higher level to indicate the overall territory of the ‘tribe’.
Diagram 2.1 - The 'tribe' and constituent 'hordes' model of Radcliffe-Brown (1930)

The clearly defined boundaries have serious consequences for fluidity of an individual's movement through the land of the 'tribe' if Radcliffe-Brown's model is to be accepted. This model will be returned to in Chapter Six where its flaws will be more apparent in the light of the ethnographic data. To begin with, Radcliffe-Brown understood that by virtue of ritual links there may be reciprocated interests in the territory of 'hordes' that had mythological connections with other 'hordes' through affiliated totem centres. This is critical because although Radcliffe-Brown allowed for the extension of one group's interest in the territory of another, he did not extend this privilege to the individual. Radcliffe-Brown held that there was no possibility of individual interests being transferred from the territory of one 'horde' to another. In this way, Radcliffe-Brown developed a static model of the Aboriginal occupation of land in Australia and the relations that this engendered between people and place.

Radcliffe-Brown avoided any consideration of the social dimensions of people's relationship to place. When he turned his attention to totems, dreaming tracks, stories and rituals he saw these as constituting a separate sphere which provided a ready made connection with the landscape. A physical world to be read through the combined knowledge of the family and 'horde', and linked on a wider scale through the 'tribe':

Normally, if not universally, there is an association between the totem centres and certain mythical beings who are believed to have existed at the beginning of the world, and who were responsible for the formation of the totem centres. Every
totem centre lies, of course, in the territory of some horde, and there is therefore a special connection between the members of the horde and the totem. Usually each horde possesses a number of different totem centres, some of which are more important than others (Radcliffe-Brown 1930:61).

The following diagram illustrates Radcliffe-Brown's belief that the patrilineal local group carried the meaning of the landscape within itself as the only social avenue through which knowledge could be transferred and maintained. Radcliffe-Brown recognised the complex relationships between the physical environment and its social significance that he saw as mediated through totemism.

Diagram 2.2 - Totemism and the 'local group' (Radcliffe-Brown 1930)

Radcliffe-Brown (1930:61) identified four different kinds of associations that forged linkages between people to place:

1. Localised rites which were for the increase of natural species. Each local totem centre had its own rite, usually performed by the clan/'horde' who owned the centre.

2. Rites that were not localised. That is, not performed at a specific place, but were dramatically represented in reference to that place.
3. Connection between each individual and a specific totem. A person was seen as a reincarnation of the totemic ancestor, or incarnation of an emanation from the totemic centre.

4. Totemism used natural species as representative of social divisions.

Thus, the patrilineal local group lying at the bottom of the diagram was the nexus where totemic place, the natural world and the mythical beings came together to be symbolically represented and socially apprehended. Radcliffe-Brown believed that the relationships between people and natural objects and phenomena were created by myth and ritual which involved totemism. He returned to this theme in 1952, and expanded upon the role of totemism as drawing the world of nature into a social and moral order, a theory elaborated later by Lévi-Strauss (1969). Radcliffe-Brown failed to account adequately for the social significance of place and the role that it plays in the formation of identities of people as well as social groups and in turn how place forges links between geographically separate places and spaces.

The decline of the ‘horde’ and the revival of place

Olive Pink, in her discussion of land ownership amongst Aranda (who are close southern neighbours of Warlpiri), advocated the use of the term “ancestral clan estate”. She believed this estate was “associated mystically, symbolically and economically with species or aspects of nature” (Pink 1936:278). Significantly, Pink made no reference to Radcliffe-Brown at all in her discussion of the estate model amongst Northern Aranda people. She observed that divisions of Aranda territory were comprised of a number of totemic clan estates formed around father-son subsections (Pink 1936:283). Further, Pink observed that there were linkages of dreaming tracks between estates, and even divisions of the ‘tribal’ territory. In between estates lay areas of “no-man’s land”. These areas were acknowledged as part of the territory of the ‘tribe’ but not affiliated with any one particular estate. Estate boundaries were indicated through the presence of totemic sites which separated the estate from the land outside that receded into “no-man’s land”. Supporting this was the fact that an estate was further bounded by the ownership of ritual paraphernalia and songs that distinguished between estates.

For Pink, estates were isolated from one another, and could not be seen as checkerboard or patchwork-like in appearance as contended by Radcliffe-Brown. Importantly, estates were linked by dreaming tracks. A totemic site was part of the inheritance of a particular clan estate, but it was only one part of the whole of the estate’s complement of affiliated totemic sites. Pink’s ancestral clan estate model was developed through an analysis of the territory of one Aboriginal group, as opposed to Radcliffe-Brown’s general typology. Her lasting achievement demonstrated that through careful analysis of the significance of place, people could be seen to
have rights in lands that were not necessarily geographically contiguous. This was an outstanding contribution to the theoretical work on local organisation that, unfortunately, was never fully accorded the significance it deserved in the debates of the time. Interestingly, in his assessment of territorial organisation Stanner noted that his views shared much in common with the earlier work of Pink (1936). For example, Pink stressed the importance of personal rights in the sense that territorial affiliation could be analysed as a dimension of social relations. In particular, she stressed the importance of the role of the father’s sister’s son or mother’s brother (*kurdungurlu*) in ritual management of country (Niblett 1992:30, Myers 1986:128).

As noted earlier the bulk of ethnographic research, including Pink’s, was proving to be exceptional in terms of Radcliffe-Brown’s general type model. Extraordinarily his model of local organisation in Australia was accepted and remained as anthropological orthodoxy until the 1960s. Radcliffe-Brown’s harshest critic was Hiatt (1962 and 1966) whose criticisms centred on what he identified as Radcliffe-Brown’s unquestioning belief that the patrilineal local descent group carried the only social ascription for membership of a ‘horde’, and with it, its territorial focus. Hiatt’s paper set out to review the data that had been gathered by anthropologists since Radcliffe-Brown first published his articles in *Oceania*. The purpose of his review was to assess the validity of Radcliffe-Brown’s generalisations concerning the primacy of the patrilineal local group. Hiatt maintained that the ‘horde’ could never have existed in any ‘tribe’ because it neglected the existence of other perfectly legitimate avenues available for relating people to place. In Hiatt’s view the local groups consisted of people who were not limited to members of one patrilineal clan.

Significantly, Hiatt rejected the idea of the economic function, in terms of resource acquisition and use, of the patrilineal band in local organisation, and did not accept that kinship was the determining feature of organising people’s relationship with place. In 1965, Stanner rebutted most of Hiatt’s criticisms and effectively reappraised Radcliffe-Brown’s work. Stanner’s work contained a much needed clarification of Radcliffe-Brown’s conception of local and social organisation. This was essentially due to Stanner’s increased emphasis on the economic aspects of Aboriginal peoples’ relations to land. However, Stanner did not go as far as others such as Richard Lee (1976) who believed that adaptation to resources was the sole organising feature for the structure of any band. Stanner certainly recognised that, in order to improve on Radcliffe-Brown’s understanding, more than a simple substitution of ‘economic interest’ over ‘social interest’ was required. He distanced himself from Radcliffe-Brown by his proposal that the patrilineal band failed to distinguish between users of land, as opposed to, owners. Stanner
maintained a close connection between land use and social classification but separated them into distinct categories for the purposes of analysis.

Stanner clarified Radcliffe-Brown’s concept of ‘horde’, showing that Hiatt’s conclusion was based on a misrepresentation. In Stanner’s opinion, Hiatt failed to distinguish clearly between Radcliffe-Brown’s notion of clan and ‘horde’. According to Stanner, the ‘horde’ was more appropriately used for wider applications of general concepts relating to local organisation, while the clan was a ritual group. Hiatt also failed to note that Radcliffe-Brown (1952:120) emphasised that a major distinguishing feature of the ‘horde’ was that it also took into account the exogamous nature of the clan. Moreover, Harold Scheffler (1984:42) argued that Radcliffe-Brown also stressed the rights of individuals as kin with reference to country inherited through one’s mother, and was not as concerned with the patrilineal/patrilocal nucleus as Hiatt had argued.

To his credit, Hiatt anticipated that there were other bases for claims through which the individual could legitimise their affiliation with a particular place. Importantly Hiatt (1962:284) argued that it was vital to distinguish between ritual and economic relationships between people and land; “ownership of land (if the term is to be used) must be understood in the light of this distinction”. Hiatt however did not succeed in replacing Radcliffe-Brown’s model of land tenure with any viable alternative and it was this issue with which Stanner engaged.

**Stanner and the estate model**

In 1965, Stanner noted that the study of local organisation amongst Australian Aborigines had been generally treated as a branch of social organisation. Consequently it had tended to be studied and conceptualised in terms of social relations alone. Stanner believed that this view allowed the term ‘local’ to carry a double meaning, wherein the distinction between local territory and local social organisation became blurred. In order to elucidate this confusion, Stanner unpacked the concept of ‘local’ by identifying: (i) that a group and its territory have an ecological dimension; and (ii) that the relations between members of that group has a social dimension. By taking this approach, Stanner was able to propose a model of land tenure that clarified and adjusted some of the deficiencies that were so apparent in the earlier work of Radcliffe-Brown.

Unlike Radcliffe-Brown, Stanner advocated looking at territoriality from an ecological point of view in order to define estate and range as distinct concepts. For Stanner, the estate may be either a dreaming place, or, an association of such places, matched by a corresponding
patrilineal descent group. Further, Stanner’s concept of estate was a more or less continuous stretch of landscape. In contrast, the range was the area over which a group may travel in order to hunt, forage and maintain the necessities to ensure their basic survival. The distinction was that the physical spaces prescribed by ownership and economic use do not necessarily correspond. That is, the estate of a land-owning group rarely coincided with the range of their land use. This was a particularly important distinction in the desert: the range, with its economic emphasis, was more important for survival in terms of day-to-day living. The combination of the estate of owned land and the range was the domain of a local group. Stanner successfully resolved the problem of the double meaning carried by the term ‘local’ by articulating its economic dimension. He avoided confusion about the social composition of Radcliffe-Brown’s ‘horde’ by identifying the ‘domain’ that was a combination of the estate and range.

Radcliffe-Brown was far more interested in social than in local organization. It was the horde as clan, that is, as a ‘corporation’ having an ‘estate’, and therefore as a structural element of a persistent system, that stimulated his theoretical interest; not the horde as an ecological or life-and-survival group (Stanner 1965:10).

Stanner’s vital contribution was his clarification of the term ‘local’ that enabled him to dispel the belief that the ‘horde’ only ever occupied its own territory to the exclusion of all others. He argued that different ‘hordes’ would travel over and use the territory of others depending on a combination of local environmental and political factors. Additionally, Stanner’s consideration of the harsh environment that Aboriginal people in Australia faced allowed him to develop a much more dynamic version of the model proposed by Radcliffe-Brown. From the outset, Stanner tried to account for how people moved through the landscape in terms of social, economic and cosmological dimensions. Radcliffe-Brown’s preoccupation with the immediate account of territorial organisation as mapped through the kinship system never led him to consider, as Stanner obviously did, how people survived economically? "Clustering was evidently sometimes a response both to plentitude and scarcity and, therefore, the facts of the physical regime must be clarified if each case is to be understood" (Stanner 1965:5).

Stanner made substantial use of data on the specifics of land use, through which he saw the importance of accounting for the seasonal variations he had observed during fieldwork. In contrast, Radcliffe-Brown’s model focused on an abstraction from the particular to the general, and was based more on theoretical than empirical postulates. He was, therefore, prone to attribute lesser importance to the multitude of disparate environments faced by the indigenous population (this of course was due to his primary concern with the pre-eminence of the patrilineal patriloclal ‘horde’). Similar to Pink, Stanner’s knowledge of a specific group of people, in this case Warumangu who are the eastern neighbours of Warlpiri, allowed him to
formulate a model that was more sophisticated than Radcliffe-Brown’s. Stanner (1965:6) recounted:

In some dry-region tribes a significant proportion of personal totem sites - the places at which mothers supposed they had conceived - lay outside a local group's estate but on its habitual range (and, incidentally, even on another's domain).

This acknowledgment allowed for the recognition that people also established social links with places beyond their own territory, a territory that was too narrowly defined by Radcliffe-Brown. Stanner's model recognised that no single estate was used by one group of people exclusively:

The conception which most nearly accommodates the facts of regions known to me is that of spaced estates with overlapping ranges and, thus, partially interpenetrative domains and life-spaces. All were probably, to some extent, subject to long-term changes. Within estates and ranges there might be marginal, scarcely-used regions. Between estates and ranges there might be zones of indeterminacy shared by contiguous groups without clash over title (1965:12).

Due to his consideration of the physical environment Stanner projected a picture of the local territory of a group, that is a domain (the combination of estate and range), as overlapping the territory of other groups in terms of interest. If this was the case, and his evidence indicated that it was, then local groups would constantly come into contact with one another in an economic context. Given such a situation, it must have also been evident that there was potential for confrontation and negotiation over interests in the exploitation of land. Here, Stanner introduced a critical point for the contemporary understanding of territorial organisation: that it has an implicit political dimension. The political dimension identified by Stanner was completely overlooked by Radcliffe-Brown who held that Aboriginal political life was essentially carried out within, and between, the patrilineal clans. Stanner also argued that the reproduction of local knowledge was complemented by the 'superstructural' role of the organisation of ritual at the 'tribal' level. Stanner's radical departure from Radcliffe-Brown's model was possible because he appreciated that local organisation must also account for inter-group relations that entailed a capacity for fluid interaction including politics. Political relations changed according to variable contexts and could be seen as dependent upon combinations of economic, political, historical and ritual circumstances:

Two points of great importance must be stressed. The known facts of inter-group relations simply do not sort with the idea of precise, rigid boundaries jealously upheld in all circumstances. And the idea that a region was cut up, as it were without remainder, into exclusive but contiguous descent-group estates, could not have sufficed for the dynamic aboriginal life we know to have existed (Stanner 1965:11-12).
Stanner (1965:11) realised that the resolution of disputes or conflicts over land was mediated at the level of current political relations. Convergent interests were not resolved by resorting to justifications determined by appeals to title through exclusive possession. Stanner recognised the function of places themselves in complicated interactions involving potentially opposed interests. The land and its sites of significance also informed the political process themselves: “Interest lay predominantly in the material, historical and symbolic values of particular places” (Stanner 1965:11).

Stanner effectively introduced the idea that the identification of land, territory and its occupation (territorial organisation) must be understood as a dialectical relationship between people and the landscape. The work of Stanner is acknowledged as a turning point in the development of anthropology in Australia as he drew attention of empirical inquiry back to the social constructions of people’s relations to place within the framework of a land tenure model. His success was due in part to the fact that he was able to switch between different timeframes in his analysis of the dynamics of social classification amongst Aboriginal people because he was interested in how they were negotiated in post-contact communities (Heath 1982:9). More recently Povinelli (1993:9) concluded that Stanner’s progressive position was no doubt partly due to his rejection of the notion that a society’s mode of production determined its cultural institutions.

Meggitt, the ‘community’ model and Warlpiri place

Stanner’s estate model still had considerable flaws however as it was conceived in a like manner to that of Radcliffe-Brown’s and assumed certain notions of ‘group’. It was Stanner’s contemporary, Meggitt who, with the publication of Desert People, provided the most detailed ethnographic study of local organisation that relates directly to the ethnographic data. In many ways, Meggitt’s research complemented the work of Stanner during that period. Unlike Stanner, however, who sought to improve Radcliffe-Brown’s model, Meggitt developed his arguments directly against it, through his presentation of rich ethnographic detail. It is critical to note that Radcliffe-Brown, Hiatt, Stanner and Meggitt were all concerned with attempts to reconstruct a picture of an Aboriginal lifestyle that had already disappeared. Hiatt (1984a:1) later admitted: “accounts of traditional Aboriginal territorial organization are all in varying degrees historical reconstructions on shaky empirical foundations.”

Nevertheless, both Stanner and Meggitt were concerned with the complexities of the definition of different kinds of groups of people (and the claims of individual membership to such groups), as well as the intricacies with which these groups were able to demarcate different
aggregations of named countries. Such discussion of local organisation was made possible because both anthropologists took into account a number of factors, namely: (i) the political implications of the rights of individuals; (ii) ritual groupings were not confined to the patrilineal clan; (iii) economic interests in land beyond the prescribed territory of the economic 'horde' as well as the role of place itself as providing a nexus for identity; and (iv) the transmission of rights and the detailing of boundedness of land.

Stanner (1965:14) believed that a descent group's estate could be both 'owned' and 'bounded', but that the political dynamics engendered by the fact of overlapping ranges and 'company' countries were not so easily understood or explicable. Meggitt's work with Warlpiri went some way in explaining how these difficulties could at least be conceptualised in order to approach their complexities, although he too noted the confusion in discussion of the totemic affiliation with a variety of estates (Meggitt 1974:59). Unlike Stanner's, Meggitt's account of local organisation among Warlpiri was not concerned with the production of a general theoretical account of Aboriginal land tenure. Meggitt began his discussion of local organisation by taking kinship into account within the context of both the local group as a functional economic unit and the cosmological system itself. Meggitt (1974:48) recorded that Warlpiri divided themselves into four major divisions or 'countries'. These tribal subgroups were the Yalpari, Waneiga, Walmalla and the Ngalia - each division varying in geographical size from 7000 to 15,000 square miles.

It was the knowledge of the men and women that defined the boundaries of these countries, boundaries that were "fixed, validated and remembered through the agency of religious myths" (Meggitt 1974:48). According to Meggitt the different Warlpiri divisions or countries were distinguished by reference to totemic sites and corresponding knowledge of associated songs, rituals and designs. People within each country referred to one another as walaldja - 'my own countryman'.
Map 2.1 - The community division of Warlpiri by Meggitt (1974)
The distinction between countries was further reinforced by slight linguistic variations between the four Warlpiri divisions. Once Meggitt had established the four countries as the idealised structure within which further qualifications about land tenure could be cast, he took local organisation as the ‘starting point’ for understanding the everyday pattern of land usage. Meggitt, like Stanner, sought to discard the strict correlation between ownership and occupation of land as advocated by Radcliffe-Brown. Indeed, he suggested that the residents of a country “were free to wander anywhere in the district” (Meggitt 1974:49). Moreover, such movement through the landscape itself was contingent upon seasonal variations according to the availability of water and foodstuffs. However, as noted earlier, at the time of Meggitt’s writing Warlpiri people had already ceased living permanently in the Tanami Desert.

In his study of the formation of idealised foraging groups (that roughly corresponded to Radcliffe-Brown’s ‘horde’ and Stanner’s ‘band’) Meggitt surmised that there was seemingly no single underlying principle that could be discerned to rationalise their composition. Whilst Meggitt recognised that these foraging groups certainly functioned in the same economic sense as the ‘horde’, he proposed that they had no rigid membership rules. Nor did they carry with them exclusive claims to possession of title over certain tracts of land. Meggitt observed that the membership of a foraging local group could be taken from the entire complement of available countrymen. Countrymen in turn could belong to a variety of categories: division, country, or community. Depending on different contexts “these might reflect consanguineal links, affinal ties, bonds of ritual friendship or obligation, the pull of temperamental compatibility - or combinations of them all” (Meggitt 1974:51). There are, therefore, a wide variety of possibilities for the composition of local groupings of people which allowed for apparent flexibility in the use of country.

In an attempt to analyse local organisation from the vantage of indigenous conceptions Meggitt (1974:58-9) introduced the Warlpiri term nguru (ngurra). This term has a number of context-specific connotations. It can roughly be equated with the English term ‘country’, but also qualifies different social corporations. Meggitt (1974:59) indicated:

a man may define country in terms of the subsection affiliations of the totems believed to reside there, or he may be referring to the ties that unite all the people whose individual conception-totems were found in one locality, or he may be speaking of the quasi-localization of totemic cult-lodges.

As a result, an individual may recognise that their affiliation with a dreaming both ascribed their identity as well and linked them to a wider social group. Furthermore, Meggitt went on to argue that totems and their sites simultaneously informed connection to country through kinship and the subsection system. In effect local organisation was a process that was
mediated by place, ritual responsibility, membership of a local group and community, and individual political concerns. In no way though did one single feature determine residence to the exclusion of other criteria. It was, rather, dependent on combinations of these factors.

Meggitt rejected the ‘horde’ model conceived by Radcliffe-Brown as it applied to Warlpiri, notwithstanding the fact that Radcliffe-Brown conceded that it was “deficient” as it was constructed as an “ideal” type. Meggitt transferred all rights of tenure vested in the ‘horde’ to his notion of the community. ‘The community’ was best conceptualised as the supra-unit for economic and social reproduction composed of separate patriline and their associated totemic ‘cult-lodges’.

Meggitt (1974:69-70) elaborated the notion of sites as places that have a socially significant role. He argued that there were another three critical criteria (all of which carried no economic [food-gathering] or residential implications) that must be considered in any discussion of country. The criteria were, rather, of cosmological significance. To explain, ‘country’ for Meggitt could refer to: (i) a specific dreaming site or track; (ii) dispersed sites associated with a totemic or cult lodge; or (iii) a group/cluster of dreaming sites geographically contiguous that may group people together through conception or membership of a lodge. As Meggitt stated:

Neither the patriline nor its associated lodge ‘owns’ a defined tract of land on which its members reside or hunt to the exclusion of other people; but, when all the ritual relationships between lodges and dreaming-sites are summed, they constitute in part the community’s title to its country and to the resources of that region (1974:214).

In support of his conclusion, Meggitt (1974:64) illustrated that in the limited geographical area in the vicinity of Yuendumu in the south of the Tanami Desert there were at least 14 different jukurrpa, that could be identified. He opined that it would have been impossible for the land to physically sustain the needs of 14 discrete ‘hordes’ corresponding to those dreamings. Named countries were, therefore, not to be interpreted as the exclusive domains of patrilocai ‘hordes’. The valuable contribution of Meggitt was his articulation of the fact that places play an important role in defining how ‘country’ may be variably expressed by Warlpiri. Meggitt successfully reincorporated the centrality of understanding the role of place in models or accounts of local organisation and land tenure.

The early models of land tenure produced by Radcliffe-Brown, Hiatt, Stanner and Meggitt failed to provide a processual means for understanding the intricacies of a person’s affinity to place, that is to sites in the landscape which conferred a social identity as part of a group. Yet it is at these levels that much politicking in Aboriginal life takes place concerning the transmission and articulation of rights and obligations in matters concerning both ritual and
land. In addition these classic models of local organisation also ignored the wider regional issues surrounding places and their capacities through Warlpiri cultural concepts to bind individuals and different social groups together and simultaneously enforce distinctions between them. In the introduction it was clear, in the example of Mr. A and the newspaper account of a royalty related land dispute, that there were a number of factors which could be called upon that differentially linked individuals to place, *jukurrpa* and each other. Such considerations could not be accommodated by a functionalist anthropology which sought to account for structural relations to distinguish between cultural categories such as kinship and ritual. These considerations failed to consider the processes at work which Aboriginal people employed to order those very categories.

The fundamental problem with the structural-functional model proposed by Radcliffe-Brown was that relationships between people and place were explained in terms of a system and the failure to take individual perspectives and data into account to construct the model meant that those relations could not be adequately explained (Boissevain 1974:12). Basil Sansom (1980:266) demonstrated that personal destinies must be related to long-term social participation within a system and the exclusion of this aspect of how people relate and order claims to place amongst themselves lay at the core of the inadequacy of Radcliffe-Brown’s model of land tenure.

Despite the efforts of Stanner, Meggitt and Hiatt and the fact that, in anthropological circles at least, the Radcliffe-Brown model was overshadowed by their improvements, it was the model of Radcliffe-Brown that was adopted as the basis for the outline of the Land Rights Act. Graeme Neate (1989:302) observed, “the Northern Territory (Land Rights) Act of 1976 constitutes the formal moment at which the Radcliffe-Brownian paradigm became appropriated by the Australian state.” Radcliffe-Brown’s descriptive model became anthropological orthodoxy, an orthodoxy that defined ‘traditional owners’ in the Land Rights Act (Hiatt 1990:102-3).

It was precisely the static representations of people’s relationship to place, derived from Radcliffe-Brown, that became so important during the land claim hearings in the Northern Territory that commenced in the late 1970s. The dynamic aspects, in terms of the transmission of rights in the ritual context that was linked to ownership of place, became highlighted with each successive hearing. The emergent models that were produced during the land claim process sought to re-integrate these aspects under considerable legal, political and intellectual scrutiny. The chapter continues with an investigation of how Warlpiri land tenure and rights in place were conceived and modelled within this new frame of anthropological analysis. It has already been noted that both Pink and Meggitt argued that coming to terms with land tenure in
central Australia required an understanding of the subsection system. To understand the models of Warlpiri land tenure which have been advanced up to the present it is necessary to briefly discuss the Warlpiri subsection system since it is in terms of this system that much of the information and argument is formulated.

The Warlpiri subsection system

In direct questions pitched to Warlpiri that are intended to elicit answers to “Who owns such and such a place?” people invariably respond by providing a pair of subsection terms. The use of subsection terms in this context is only a shorthand and indirect method of indicating the set of patrilineal descent groups from which the actual descent groups that owns the land comes from. Subsection pairs, or semimoieties as they are known (see below) are not land owning groups. Nevertheless because subsections are the first point of reference in any discussion of land tenure they need to be discussed.

Subsections are a sociocentric classification of the population into eight categories that have matching male and female forms. The male form begins with a ‘J’ whilst the corresponding female form begins with an ‘N’ except in the case of Napurrurla where an “Na” is substituted for the “Ju” in Jupurrurla. The male and female pairs of subsection terms indicate a brother/sister relationship that may be either real or classificatory. This is in part explained by the Warlpiri belief that persons are descended not only from their parents but associated jukurrpa and ancestral heroes as well. Therefore, if a man’s subsection name is Japangardi, then his brother’s subsection classification will be Japangardi also. Similarly all of Japangardi’s sisters will have the corresponding female subsection name, Napangardi. Warlpiri are divided into eight categories or subsections and each individual is born into one of these categories, their membership of which can never be changed (Tonkinson 1991:72-3). Warlpiri subsection terms are divided into matching gender categories thus:
### Diagram 2.3 - Warlpiri subsection terms indicating sibling relationships

Importantly a child cannot be the same subsection category as its parents, the ascription of the subsection of an individual to one of the eight categories is automatic because they inherit their membership of a specific category from their father. Males of a patriline alternate between two subsections in what is termed a patricouple, or semimoioety. Although a daughter will inherit the same subsection as her brother from their father, her children will of course take their subsection from their father. Therefore, children of the females of a patriline will belong to a different semimoioety that they will take from their father who will ideally come from a different semimoioety given the ideal marriage rules. Today there are many more children born from marriages that are not ideal, or 'first-choice' and as a result these individuals often have two subsection names, one derived from the mother and one from the father. This places the subsection system under some stress. Nevertheless in terms of land ownership it is universally stressed that a child will inherit their primary rights of ownership through their father.

At the most fundamental level patrilineal descent confers rights that maintain ritual identity and the ownership of *jukurrpa* and place (Dussart 2000:28).
The Elementary Formulation of Warlpiri Land Tenure

Jangala - Jampijinpa
Jupurrurla - Jakamarra
Jungarrayi - Japaljarri
Japanangka - Japangardi

Diagram 2.4 - Warlpiri semimoieties or patricouples

Ideally these semimoioety units operate in an unbroken chain generation after generation due to the fact that the subsection names are handed down alternately between fathers and sons. Taking the example of Japanangka through ascending generations his father was Japangardi, his grandfather was Japanangka and his great grandfather was Japangardi. With respect to descending generations Japanangka’s son will be Japangardi, his grandson will be Japanangka and his great grandson will be Japangardi and so on and so forth. However, although brothers and sisters belong to the same subsection a woman’s children in an ‘ideal’ marriage will take their subsection name from their father. To understand how this occurs without confusing the categories involves the division of the eight subsections into patrimoieties. In general, Aboriginal patrimoieties are determined by descent (Keesing 1975:31) and indicate intermarrying divisions but do not regulate marriage (Tonkinson 1991:72-3). The Warlpiri kinship system also involves generation moieties and patrimoieties, yet it is the analysis of the patrimoieties and their role in land ownership that is of immediate concern here. A diagrammatic representation of the ideal marriage pattern reveals how the subsection, and semimoieties are divided between the patrimoieties.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Patrimoity A</th>
<th>Patrimoity B</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>N/Jangala</td>
<td>N/Jungarrayi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N/Jakamarra</td>
<td>N/Japaljarri</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N/Jampijinpa</td>
<td>N/Japangardi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Na/Jupurrurla</td>
<td>N/Japanangka</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

= - ‘First choice’ marriage
------> Semimoioety pair or patricouple link

Diagram 2.5 - Warlpiri patrimoieties, semimoieties and ‘first choice’ marriages
Diagram 2.6 - Warlpiri semimoiet terms indicating ideal 'first choice' marriages
As mentioned earlier the Warlpiri kinship system is of the ‘Arandic’ type distinguishing between four grandparental terms which identifies the four semimioieties. The Warlpiri subsection system is best understood as an indigenous semimioity system in which people themselves employ sociocentric terms to distinguish four types of patrilineal descent groups. Diagram 2.6 shows the formal relationship between the system of kin classification and the subsection system.

In Diagram 2.6 N/Japananga and N/Japangardi call each other wapirra (father) as members of the same semimioity. The term wurruru is used by members of both subsections to refer to N/Japaljarri and N/Jungarrayi who make up the other half of the same patrimoity. The members of the subsections of a semimioity apply the terms kirda and yarriki in reverse when referring to members of the opposite moiety. The explanation for this is that although all members of the opposite moiety may be potential kurdungurlu, a distinction is made between them because within the kirda semimioity are the ideal first choice marriage partners within ego’s generational moiety (kuyurra - my flesh) and father’s mother in the other generation (kuyukari - other flesh). The semimioity in the opposite moiety is referred to as yarriki and here are to be found ideal second choice marriage partners within ego’s generation and mothers and mother’s brother with in the alternate generation. The ideal kurdungurlu for any semimioity are taken from the composite set of those people who fall within the kirda and yarriki semimioieties who are of course the opposite patrimoity as will be explained further below. The organisation of all Warlpiri kinship terms within these different moiety term sets has been extensively analysed elsewhere (Meggitt 1974, Laughren 1982, Glowczewski 1991:140).

In terms of land ownership, subsections are categories that may be usefully understood as summarising the affiliation of those people, of a particular patriline, who are entitled to own rituals and place. This ownership is coded within jukurrpa, in turn matched to a semimioity, and reproduced and expressed through ritual that reproduces ties of people to place (Dussart 2000:24). Scheffler (1978) has also noted that Warlpiri ritual is an expression of the ownership of place that in turn relates people to each other as members of genealogically connected groups.

The discussion of subsections here has been concerned with the ways in which they work to position individuals on a sociocentric, as opposed to egocentric, basis within the Warlpiri kinship system. This is most readily observed in the way that subsections function to distinguish between different groups of people as owners depending upon, in the first instance, their semimioity, but most importantly, the patrilineal descent group within which they were born from which they inherit their subsection term and rights of ownership from their father.
Two important points for Warlpiri land tenure that are derived, indeed enshrined, in the subsection system need to be drawn out here. First, there are the rights of primary ownership inherited patrilineally by *kirda* that are passed exclusively through the male line to their male and female children. Thus within the patriline these people also include F, FB and FZ and FF, FFB and FFZ and in descending generations all of the children of males only. These individuals will all belong to the same patricouple pair or semimoiety and this is the first point of terminological reference for all questions relating to ownership of land and *jukurrpa*. Second, there are the matrilineally linked rights of managers, *kurdungurlu*, that are exercised by those who stand in certain relationships vis-à-vis those whom they call *kirda*. The simplest formal designation of these people is that they are children of the women of the patriline. In his analysis of the origins and application of the term *kurdungurlu*, the linguist David Nash (1982:151-2) concluded that historical linguistic evidence points to:

 connexion between the term *kurdungurlu* ‘other patrimoiety’ and terms including *kurdul* ‘child’ and *kurduna* ‘sisters child’. The origin of the patrimoiety terms *kirda* and *kurdungurlu* are found in the complementary relationships of these two groups to a Dreaming ancestor.

Mary Laughren (1982:72) characterised the Warlpiri kinship system as a hierarchically organised structure that encompasses a conventionalised set of relations based on maternal and paternal relations. The outline of the Warlpiri subsection system offered here provides a basic orientation as to why these maternal and paternal sets are important in understanding the relationships between people and place in the Tanami Desert. Significantly, as Laughren observed, the kinship system extends to Warlpiri people’s actual and ontological world thereby encoding their social and political organisation.

The land tenure models proposed for the Tanami Desert which were developed for the preparation of land claims all addressed the relationship between *kurdungurlu* and *kirda* in terms of rights to place, terms that are determined by the specifics of Warlpiri kinship which distinguishes between relations of maternally and paternally related sets of people. Howard and Frances Morphy (1984:53) in a comparative discussion of Aboriginal managers in the Northern Territory have noted that both Peterson and Nancy Munn in their respective work among Warlpiri have argued that in reality the *kurdungurlu* and *kirda* relationships are mediated at the level of alliance rather than descent. This point shall be returned to in Chapter Five. The distinction between the term *kurdungurlu* as one that arises from the subsection system or as an individually achieved status to exercise actual rights over place helps to understand how Warlpiri land claim models differed in their definition of *kurdungurlu* as primary land owners. The discussion of the background within which the land claim models
for Warlpiri were put forward marks a theoretical shift in the frames of reference in Australian anthropology.

The shifting frame of Warlpiri land tenure


The requirements of the Land Rights Act and contemporaneous academic discourse concerning Aboriginal land tenure could be seen to produce more than one model of Warlpiri land tenure. In addition, these forces introduced a wider set of criteria employed to explain and comprehend the relationship between people and place in the Tanami Desert. As Peterson and Long (1986:59) noted; “Rights in places or estates are expressed in terms of interests of varying kinds and degrees usually in the ritual property associated with them. Such rights are mediated by descent, residence, kinship and/or ceremonial links.” These authors clarified the social and political nature of the transfer of rights to place and access to religious paraphernalia (and, presumably, esoteric knowledge) that was a pivotal departure from the work of Radcliffe-Brown.

Arguments of a legal and anthropological nature presented during the land claims in the Tanami Desert were not uniform in character. Rather, they were formulated on a case-by-case basis to address the specific cultural and historical contexts of each claimant group and the land to which they laid claim. All of these land claims conducted on behalf of Aboriginal people were directed by the CLC. It should be noted that the boundaries of these claims were arbitrarily defined for the purpose of holding a land claim, and that these boundaries were completely unrelated to Aboriginal conceptions of the ownership of the landscape.

Prior to discussing the land tenure models of the Warlpiri land claims it is necessary to provide preliminary comments concerning anthropological developments from the trailblazing work of Meggitt in 1962 until the introduction of the Land Rights Act in 1976. Academic research was continued by anthropologists amongst Warlpiri and from the outset this research explored the
intricacies of people’s relationships to land. Significantly, researchers placed less emphasis on
the role that social organisation (kinship) played in the economic utilisation of resources that
was the hallmark of the investigations of Radcliffe-Brown and Stanner, and to a lesser extent
Meggitt. Using different approaches Peterson and Munn concentrated on the actual transfer
and negotiation of rights and symbolism used to connect people and place. Their concern was,
in part, due to the fact that the people they worked with were spending far less time hunting
and gathering. Their research provides a background within which to place the models of land
tenure, put forward in the land claims, in the temporal context of academic research.

The combination of the intellectual and practical issues surrounding the preparation of land
claims and the anthropological work continuing in the academy during the 1970s expanded the
analysis of land tenure. It was not until the 1970s that wider criteria used to legitimate access
to land, or claims over it, were identified by Myers (1976) and John von Sturmer (1978). One
of the most important developments was that attention was shifted from the reconstruction of a
pristine, pre-European contact, characterisation of Aboriginal people’s relation to place. In the
1970s research for land claims and work in the academy dealt with the complexities of how
Aboriginal people conceived and articulated their relationship to land, both as individuals and
as groups. By pursuing the development of Warlpiri land tenure models in these two contexts
it will be demonstrated that the criteria used to conceptualise relationships between people and
place were expanded. As a result the various attempts to create a definitive model of land
tenure for Warlpiri relied on different emphases of rights to land, hence a universal Warlpiri
model became increasingly difficult to construct. I maintain that the most accurate
representations of Warlpiri land tenure are best understood as differentiated according to how
they ranked various kinds of claims to rights in place.

The work of Peterson and Munn

Peterson (1969) began to identify the issues surrounding the transfer, and expression, of rights
in land by an in-depth treatment of kinship that took into account the significance of
matrifiliation for Warlpiri. Peterson (1969:34) was concerned that the anthropological
treatment of kinship studies in Australia had tended to confuse elements of the ritual and
political system with kinship and simply equate them with kinship. This was one of the major
problems highlighted in the previous chapter concerning the work of Radcliffe-Brown.
Kinship and ritual interpenetrate one another and are not discrete domains. Consequently
Peterson argued that “the failure to see that the patri-local groupings are part of the ritual
superstructure and not the kinship system has led to the ascription of rights and functions to
units that do not exercise them” (Peterson 1969:34). He elaborated on the ascription of
identity, which in turn conferred attachment to place for Warlpiri and was passed on from adults to their children in two, distinct ways through the kinship system.

The first process to consider is that kinship, traced through the mother, was most important in the initial stage of an individual’s life and would continue to be of significance because it was through the mother that their secular identity was constructed. This identity was gained through the means of rites of passage including initiation, betrothal, marriage and death. Second, amongst Warlpiri, male children accompanied their mothers until puberty when the links between father and son were formally activated. At this time the child was initiated into the cult lodge, to use Meggitt’s term, of the patrilineal local descent group and religious life and the novice’s responsibilities in terms of “the masculine philosophy of place” were learned. It was at this time that negotiations over marriage occurred based on matrilateral kinship links.

For Meggitt the patrilodge was comprised of the adult male members of the patriline whose status was inherited through birth. Peterson (1969) demonstrated that rights and knowledge regarding place are contained within the patrines and associated rituals that exist through time. Secular links are essentially social, and are ordered by matrilateral kinship ties. Underplayed in Peterson’s account is the fact that the women of the patriline enjoy equal rights to the men in terms of ownership of land and ritual and this issue has been thoroughly engaged with by Dussart (2000).

With respect to affiliation with place, Peterson agreed with Meggitt (1974) that the community existed, but he did not equate it with the custodianship of totemic rites. He also concurred that local organisation was determined by neither the patriline nor the matriline. However, Peterson argued strongly against Meggitt by asserting that although the community had a political function of sorts, it only had meaning through time in terms of broad local organisation. The community was comprised of the sum of its patriles and the association of each with ‘cult lodges’ (ritually responsible for specific totems). It was only in this way that the community could unite patrines at a political and ritual level. The key to understanding relations to place for Warlpiri, Peterson maintained, involved the acknowledgment that totemism was the defining element because it conferred rights as the means to claim membership of the land owning group. This was achieved through two kinds of totemism – ‘conception’ and ‘clan’ totemism, that further ascribed an individual’s identity and links with the land. Conception totemism involved an individual’s rights over certain sites and dreamings as opposed to ‘clan’ totemism. The latter was the mechanism that regulated the transfer of rights and knowledge of a whole range of sites, dreamings and ritual responsibilities vested in the corporate group as ‘clan’.
The Walbiri speak of a life-force or essence, guruwari, left behind by ancestral heroes at various points on their travels, where they emerged from the subterranean world and where they re-entered it. The agents of conception are guruwalba, spirit children... (who) may enter the woman through her foot, navel or elsewhere. Meggitt (1962:274) records that when a woman is sure she is pregnant she informs her husband and they recall the locality in which they were residing when her menses were first interrupted. They assume that guruwari from a totemic site in that area has entered the woman. This event determines the child’s conception totem (Peterson 1972:21-22).

Thus, beliefs about conception were crucial for establishing the connection between an individual and place in the first instance. It was here that Peterson related his argument for sentimental attachment to place through totemism for both the individual and group, where they look to the land in order to confirm their social identity. “Aboriginal territoriality is inward looking, sustained by beliefs and affective bonds to focal points of the landscape and the cultural symbols associated with these points” (Peterson 1972:28).

Peterson believed that the rapid movement of Warlpiri people away from traditional subsistence led to an approach to totemism that de-emphasised its ecological context. Sentiment, he argued, was important for understanding social organisation because it was through attachment to totemic ideology and designs that spatial relationships could be understood. The occupation of land was seen as being in a sense ordered by the social world and not maintaining it as Radcliffe-Brown had it. “Old men, motivated to live in particular places, become nodal points about which bands form. As long as at least one old man in each clan lives on his estate the totemic ideology will be affecting the spatial distribution of population” (Peterson 1972:27). It is clear that Peterson’s argument hinged on an understanding that the localised totemic affiliations of the ‘clan’ served to spatially order the occupation of land by Warlpiri through sentimental links.

Munn, like Peterson, also disputed Meggitt’s belief that it was the community which was responsible for the organisation of local land owning units, although she arrived at her conclusion by virtue of a very different kind of ethnographic inquiry. In her introduction to Warlpiri Iconography first published in 1973 Munn (1986) noted that many social anthropologists working in Australia concentrated their investigations on kinship without due attention to its interaction with religion, myth and cosmology. Munn’s semiotic analysis of Warlpiri graphic signs and symbolism allowed her to comment on the relationship of Warlpiri people to place from an entirely new perspective. In an earlier work Munn (1962:972) asserted:
Rights over Dreamings are held by patrilineages, each of which has jurisdiction over a number of different species and over the designs (and other objects) associated with them. One or more designs are associated with each Dreaming. These graphs Walbiri regard as stabilized, unitary configurations transmitted in essentially the same form over time.

Munn believed that these designs were transferred through the generations via the patrilineal descent group, and that it followed that land ownership was conceived of in the same manner because the knowledge of designs carried particular reference to certain areas of land. "Ownership" refers to ritual rights exercised by men of the group over a series of ancestral localities and their associated ceremonies, cult objects, and ancestral totemic designs" (Munn 1986:21).

The combined work of Peterson and Munn conducted amongst Warlpiri provided an effective rejection of Meggitt’s vesting of title in the community and re-emphasised the significance of the patrilineal descent group in terms of the rights it bestowed via the transmission of ritual knowledge and paraphernalia. Together, these authors did not so much produce models to replace Meggitt’s community title model as signal the beginning of the decline of the central concept of that model. Peterson and Munn emphasised the fact that title in land was to be appreciated as something which was more than simply accounted for by affiliation with the patrilodge. Further, local organisation was identified as vested in relationships between people and their social identities through which the maintenance of objects and designs and the performance of ritual of their totemic affiliations linked them to place.

During the same period that Munn and Peterson wrote about Warlpiri other anthropologists working in Australia were drawing similar conclusions concerning the links between Aboriginal people and place, links which were transferred through patrilineal descent. Ronald and Catherine Berndt (1977) took up the distinction between the land occupying group as the 'horde' and the ritual relationship to land of the patrilineal descent group or 'clan' in which ownership was vested. The residence approach of Radcliffe-Brown, Stanner and Meggitt was superseded by the general acceptance of the primacy of ownership as based in descent, whether it be local descent groups as was advocated by the Berndts or the 'clan' as championed by Kenneth Maddock (1972) and Peterson (1970). As Neate (1989:32) summed up succinctly:

By the early 1970's there was broader appreciation of traditional Aboriginal rights in land than was suggested in the rigid model proclaimed by Radcliffe-Brown. Yet a general model of patrilineally recruited land-holding groups was widely accepted, though the terminology which was used varied widely among anthropologists.
The Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act 1976

The Land Rights Act legislation provides definitions that were the basis upon which land claims should be formulated and presented. These documents were prepared on behalf of Aboriginal people in the Northern Territory by anthropologists who were employed by the Northern Land Council (NLC) and CLC. These anthropologists were charged with the responsibility of presenting an outline of a model of land tenure derived from extensive fieldwork and research with the claimants. The definitions provided in the Land Rights Act assisted the Aboriginal Land Commissioner in making a report that hinged upon findings based upon two essential burdens of proof. The first required a demonstration that an individual fulfilled the criteria of 'traditional owner’. The second requirement that the Land Commissioner had to determine concerned the strength of attachment of an individual and local descent group to the land to which they laid claim (s. 50(1)(a)(i), s. 50(3) ALRA 1976).

In order to come to a decision, the Land Commissioners had three primary definitions to which they were to refer in order to make a judgment on the relationship between claimants and the land. Definitions in the preamble for the interpretation of the Land Rights Act (1976) were as follows:

“Aboriginal tradition” means the body of traditions, observances, customs and beliefs of Aboriginals or of a community or group of Aboriginals, and includes those traditions, observances, customs and beliefs as applied in relation to particular persons, sites, areas of land, things or relationships.

“sacred site” means a site that is sacred to Aboriginals or is otherwise of significance according to Aboriginal tradition, and includes any land that, under a law of the Northern Territory, is declared to be sacred to Aboriginals or of significance according to Aboriginal tradition.

“traditional Aboriginal owners” in relation to land, means a local descent group of Aboriginals who -

(a) have common spiritual affiliations to a site on the land, being affiliations that place the group under a primary spiritual responsibility for that site and for the land; and

(b) are entitled by Aboriginal tradition to forage as of right over that land.

The definition of ‘Aboriginal tradition’ was very broad, and allowed for an interpretation on a variety of bases that could establish different kinds of relationships between people, sites and areas of land. Whilst this definition provided an amount of leeway in discussion of the complexities of relationships between people and their land, it was rendered less significant because of the qualifications on the definitions of ‘sacred site’ and ‘traditional Aboriginal
owners'. It is the causal link that existed between these two definitions that meant that 'Aboriginal tradition' was really only of significance in terms of its ability to illustrate the relationships between people and land. The Land Rights Act actively sought a discussion of tradition only in so far as it would demonstrate the manner in which Aboriginal people conceived of land ownership in the sense of mapping land onto land owning groups and vice versa. The Land Rights Act further stipulated that the primary reference used for ownership of land must be established through the notion of the 'sacred site'.

'Sacred sites' were defined as places in the landscape that were of significance to Aboriginal tradition. The burden of proof on Aboriginal people required them to explain a site's meaning with regard to the local descent group and articulate their rights to it in terms of how it was given significance within their own worldview. This will be seen to be problematic in the light of two different scenarios. First, what would be the situation if there was only one person who is an Aboriginal owner (ie. (s)he were the last surviving member of a local descent group)? Second, what happens to the status of a site when the local descent group ceases to exist altogether? Would such a situation necessarily result in a loss of relevance or meaning of the site? These issues will be returned to in Chapter Five.

In order for claimants in a land claim to be determined 'traditional Aboriginal owners' of an area it had to be established that together they constituted a local descent group. Importantly, the definition of a local descent group meant that two criteria must be met: the local descent group must have both a common and primary spiritual affiliation to a site on the land. However, the actual means of defining what a local descent group consists of was left open to interpretation as Hiatt (1990:106) pointed out:

Thus while the statutory definition as it stands, is compatible with Radcliffe-Brown's model, the absence of an adjective or some equivalent form of words specifying the mode of descent as patrilineal clearly leaves it susceptible to wider interpretation. One of the main issues debated during Mr. Justice Toohey's term of office concerned the inclusion in the list of traditional owners of certain nonagnates, that is, individuals linked to the area through their mothers.

The Land Rights Act was based on the Aboriginal Land Rights Commission that began in 1972 (Woodward 1973 and 1974) which took as its starting position the orthodox model of land tenure developed by Radcliffe-Brown. Ian Keen (1984:11) argued that this orthodox model was effectively retained by Stanner and Hiatt; albeit with modifications involving the distinction between ritual and economic spheres, yet the core model remained: land tenure was held by an exogamous patrilineal descent group or 'clan'. A key issue on which the development of land claims focused revolved around interpretation of the meaning of 'local
descent group'. According to Keen this term was first used by Edmund Leach (1951) in a different sense, inasmuch as he was not referring to the inheritance of rights but the implications of certain kinds of cross-cousin marriage. Keen suggested that the only anthropologists to use the term 'local descent group' in Australia prior to the Land Rights Act were Berndt and Berndt who in 1977 defined "a descent group with ritual and spiritual 'ties' to sites united by common patrilineal descent as a 'local descent group', reserving the term clan for a wider exogamous patrilineal or matrilineal unit" (Keen 1984:14).

Interpretations of what actually constituted a local descent group, and the land and sites for which they claimed responsibility in land claims were quite varied. The elaboration of how the different land claims in the Tanami Desert proposed this relationship will demonstrate this fact. Each of the land claims heard in the Tanami region had a different approach in terms of the evidence that was presented by anthropologists in support of the claimants. On the one hand this served to show that the local contexts of claimant groups were different, on the other hand it showed how the understanding of Aboriginal land tenure within the framework of the Land Rights Act was continuing to evolve.

**Land claim models in the Tanami Desert**

Nicolas Peterson, Patrick McConvell, Stephen Wild and Rod Hagen drafted the Warlpiri and Kartangarurru-Kurintji claim in 1978 and, from the outset, they rejected Meggitt's proposition that land ownership was ultimately vested in the four main communities of Warlpiri. Peterson et al. (1978) described the boundaries of the communities as being topographical in nature. The boundaries between the communities had more to do with reflecting movement and communication amongst Warlpiri than demarcating land tenure divisions as Meggitt had it.
Map 2.2 - Claimed Areas and Land Trusts of the Tanami Desert
Further, these topographical boundaries helped to reinforce minor language dialect differences between the communities. Indeed, the claim book expressly stated: “for both Warlpiri and the Kartangularurru-Kurintji the main land-owning group is based on the patrilineal clan... it is the claims of these clans that are dealt with here” (Peterson et al. 1978:2).

The discussion of land tenure in the claim book examined a continuum of land-holding in the Northern Territory systems with Yolngu of Arnhem Land at one end of the scale and Pintupi of the Western Desert area around Lake Mackay at the other. The authors concluded that a Warlpiri model of land tenure most closely corresponds to that of the Pintupi, a model characterised by the fact that “the focus of their religious organisation is on major places and the tracks that link the heartlands” (Peterson et al. 1978:6). By heartlands the authors referred to the focal sites and waters associated with the heroic activities of particular Dreamtime ancestors. The claim book noted a significant point regarding place: that there was a tendency for discussions regarding ‘sacred sites’ to neglect the fact that the whole landscape was of cultural significance. The claim book identified 24 major heartlands in Area 2 and nine in Area 1, with their associated ‘clans’ as evidence for the traditional ownership of the land under claim. The discussion of each ‘clan’ also identified their main dreaming tracks, the travel route of ancestors, major sites of significance and offered other comments in order to elucidate the specific connections through which the claimants expressed their unique relationship to the land. The Aboriginal Land Commissioner, Justice John Toohey, accepted this explanation of links to country after hearing the evidence, and in his report commented that there were no defined areas or estates (ALC 1979:24). Toohey concluded that land tenure focused on heartland areas and their associated dreaming paths (ALC 1979:30). The heartland was an area with a permanent water supply from which radiated a ‘cobweb’ of dreaming tracks (ALC 1979:26).

It is easily established that all of the other claims in the Tanami Desert relied on the heartland model put forward in the Warlpiri and Kartangularurru-Kurintji claim as a precedent. The authors of the later Warlpiri land claim books differed slightly as to how the boundaries of the estates put forward were identified. However, they were unanimous in their view of the local descent group as being specifically tied to one heartland. Ironically it was Stanner himself who was the anthropologist who advised the Aboriginal Land Commissioner in the Warlpiri and Kartangularurru-Kurintji claim. The Commissioner found that “common spiritual affiliation” referred to the patrispirit of the ‘clan’, and that the descent group was formed through the patriline of a common ancestor. In fact, Toohey went so far as to comment that traditional ownership was vested in the “exogamous patrilineal clan” (ALC 1979:28). These findings bear a remarkable resemblance to the orthodox model of Radcliffe-Brown.
In the Warlpiri and Kartangarurru-Kurintji claim the authors re-emphasised that it was the patrilineal ‘clan’ that was the land-owning unit instead of developing an argument regarding the ownership of land in its religious context. The definition in the Land Rights Act required traditional owners of an area to be members of a local descent group and anthropological investigation in the earlier land claims focused on who was an ‘owner’ and why, rather than where or what they ‘owned’. This approach was to the neglect of in an in-depth treatment of place. However, Peterson et al. did comment on the fact that religious responsibilities as owners of land *kirda* were performed in conjunction with *kurdungurlu* who were the sons of female ‘clan’ members and ritual managers, the ‘nonagnates’ to which Hiatt (1990) referred.

In the Willowra claim (ALC 1980b), which was on the eastern boundary of the Warlpiri and Kartangarurru-Kurintji claim, the list of claimants put forward by Jim and Petronella Wafer (1979) included those persons who were related to the land through their mothers, the *kurdungurlu*. They were listed in complementary sets to the eight local descent groups put forward as *kirda*. Toohey (ALC 1980b:12) found that the “clan or patriline is composed of people descended from a common ancestor through the male line. Each patriline is *kirda* for one or more dreamings and sites and tracks associated with them.” The Commissioner accepted that *kurdungurlu* combined with the members of the patriclan together comprised the local descent group (which was stripped of any residential emphasis). This expanded set was deemed to exercise primary spiritual responsibility for the land (ALC 1980b:18). Interestingly, Toohey (ALC 1980b:16) noted that “the concept of a local descent group is flexible, that it is not determined by some previous anthropological model and that it depends upon the relationship of people to each other and how they see that relationship.” Thus, matrifilial ties to place were first formally recognised as criteria for traditional ownership. Wafer and Wafer (1979:25) proposed that:

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Descent is traced through the father and father’s father in the case of those members of the group who are known as *kirda*; and through the mother and her father and father’s father in the case of those who are known as *kurdungurlu*.
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Here is the argument for the constitution of the local descent group that became the standard for subsequent land claims in the Tanami Desert. Keen (1984:31) has already provided an in-depth assessment of the history of the usage of the expression ‘local descent group’. This term had come under intensive scrutiny during the Utopia land claim (ALC 1980a:para117) where Toohey reported:

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the words ‘local’, ‘descent’ and ‘group’ are ordinary English words to which a meaning can be attached, given the context, which in this case is the Land Rights Act. Whatever the situation in anthropology...I do not think I should approach the
matter with some preconceived model in mind to which the evidence must accommodate itself. Rather it is a matter of listening to the witnesses and asking, in the light of that evidence, who may fairly be said to constitute the local descent group for the land claimed. The answer in this case may not be the answer in the next.

In 1981, in an article entitled *Warlpiri Land Tenure: A Test Case in Legal Anthropology*, Maddock reviewed the differing models of Warlpiri land tenure. He had given evidence on the local descent group at the Utopia claim, and was eager to critique the models that had been put forward by Meggitt (1974) (originally in 1962), Peterson et al. (1978), Munn (1986) (originally in 1973) and Wafer and Wafer (1979). Maddock’s objective was to compare and contrast the construction of the different representations for the vesting of title in Warlpiri land. His chief concern was to discover why the authors of Warlpiri models seemed to disagree with one another and analysis of his argument reveals that his focus was on the contextual representation and emphasis of different kinds of rights in land.

As noted earlier in this chapter, Maddock, like most of his contemporaries in the early 1970s, believed that ownership of land in Australia was transmitted via the principle of patrilineal descent. In order to elaborate upon his own discussion, Maddock characterised Meggitt’s ‘community title’ in terms of its pluralistic ability to relate people to land. This title included the membership of women and prevented a single group from claiming exclusive ownership of any block of land (Maddock 1981:88). Maddock contrasted Meggitt’s position with that of Munn. Maddock believed that Munn had a much narrower view of rights in land; ownership being held only by initiated men though their affiliation with distinct patrilineal descent groups.

In reference to the Warlpiri and Kartangarurr-Numintji claim, Maddock indicated that Peterson et al. (1978:6) asserted that “the traditional land owning unit is the exogamous patrilineal clan”. Maddock (1981:91) continued:

> By equating the patrilineal clan with Meggitt’s patriline, the claim book is apt to leave an impression that Meggitt, too, saw this group as having ownership of land, when in fact he ascribed title to the community and treated the relation of a patriline to a place as one of a number of elements going to make up title. But his opinion is ignored, and the claim book states that communities, like tribes, ‘are not land owning units’ (1978:1). Thus the Warlpiri claim went forward on the basis of the Munn-Peterson concept of ownership in its less narrow form.

Wafer and Wafer (1979) went into greater detail regarding the role of *kurdungurlu* in the Willowra claim and added a new dimension to the understanding, in legal terms, of the notion of primary spiritual responsibility. In the Willowra claim composite descent groups owned land whereas in the Warlpiri and Kartangarurr-Numintji claim it was only the patrilineal group. Maddock proposed that there was no contradiction between the community model of Meggitt,
the Warlpiri and Kartangarurru-Kurintji claim heartland model, or the Willowra estate model in terms of the function of the land-owning groups. Rather, he suggested that there was a difference in the composition of those groups concerning the matter of which could most correctly be vested with ownership or title. Maddock (1981:99) concluded that neither the patrilineal ‘clan’ model of Peterson et al. (1978) nor the Warlpiri composite descent model of Wafer and Wafer (1979) were sufficient to fulfil the requirements of the Land Rights Act. He believed that Meggitt’s community model was the most viable because it demonstrated that people would forage together and request the use of each other’s land as required by the Land Rights Act. This raises an interesting question of translation as Maddock (1981:89) indicated:

But often more is demanded than translation in a narrow sense, because an ethnographer may try to convey a reality which is not expressed in the society studied. An example would be the concept of title with which Meggitt puts into one word the legal essence of Warlpiri relations to land. Here the critical question is whether what he has so conceptualised is covertly present in Warlpiri thought and action.

Maddock (perhaps unconsciously) raised an important issue regarding the presentation of anthropological work in land claims. His discussion of which model most neatly fitted the requirements of the Land Rights Act exposed the Act’s central reliance on the orthodox model of Radcliffe-Brown. The anthropologists who prepared land claims in the Tanami Desert attempted to elaborate on the different ways that people expressed their relationship to the land. They sought to account for both the local complexities of heartlands or estates and the transmission of rights simultaneously. These attempts naturally resulted in different emphases. Meggitt, in a sense, was primarily concerned with Warlpiri sociocultural categories, whereas land claim models attempted to relate people to place for a specific purpose.

The next claim heard in the Tanami after Willowra was the Warlpiri, Kukatja and Ngarti land claim (ALC 1985). Following the precedent set during the Willowra claim, which earned a favourable decision from the Aboriginal Land Commissioner, Fred Myers and Betty Clark (1983:23) presented land ownership in the local descent group as comprised of both *kirda* and *kurdungurlu*. The clarification of the role of *kurdungurlu* as it was expressed in land claims became increasingly more sophisticated in terms of its inclusion in the constitution of the local descent group.

Importantly a new argument was advanced that attempted to incorporate the links between people and land which could not be confined to the local descent group itself. These individual links were clearly formulated by Myers and Clark (1983:13) when they stated that different criteria for “the membership of a landholding group are not mutually exclusive and individuals
have very different and extensive personal constellations of rights.” The authors discussed a variety of claims to membership within a local descent group which included descent and conception, links to adjacent dreaming tracks and adoption, as well as the recognition of individuals in a caretaking role. In addition, an individual’s connection to land through conception or birth was recognised as a right in a site, estate or track, but clearly distinguished from the collective responsibility of the land-holding group (Myers and Clark 1983, Stead 1985). Justice William Kearney (ALC 1985:5) commented:

Individuals are said to be recruited to the local descent group according to certain basic principles, the most important of which is the existence of direct links to the country through descent from father’s father or mother’s father. It is implicit that the member must remain in contact with the land and the group and acquire detailed knowledge of the land, its Dreamings, sites and ceremonies. Such links constitute an automatic entitlement to membership. Certain other individuals may be incorporated into the group if they become closely associated with the land, and knowledgeable about it, and are accepted into the group. The people who are named in answer to the question Who is from that country? - the claimants - are said to have acquired membership of the group by reference to one or other of those principles.

Myers and Clark (1983:15) took into account the links between different land-holding groups when they considered the transmission of rights in the ownership of dreaming tracks and associated sites. They proposed that land was not formally bounded; rather, they emphasised that estates may overlap. The reason for overlapping was that sites and associated dreaming tracks provided the reference points for expressions of ownership for the land-holding group, a point noted previously by Wafer and Wafer (1979). Like the two earlier land claims, the Warlpiri, Kukatja and Ngarti claim cast ownership within the parameters of the estate model yet recognised that an estate may not encompass all of the sites affiliated with a particular land-holding group which was a similar position proposed in the heartland model. Dreaming tracks could cover vast distances and responsibilities for them may be handed over from one group to another. The account of this aspect of land tenure was fully articulated later in the Warlpiri claim to Jila (Chilla Well) (Stead 1985).

The most important development during the course of the first three land claims concerned the composition, and justification, of the land-holding group termed the local descent group. Whilst there was a general agreement on the correlation between the local descent group and the heartland-estate, the question of which people actually comprised the membership of the local descent group was yet to be argued more forcefully. The expanded sense of the local descent group presented the children of the female members of the patriline in their ritual capacity as kurdungurlu. Jeff Stead (1985:12) advanced that “each land-holding group
includes people with *kirda* and *kurdungurlu* rights and responsibilities." Stead (1985:16) then elaborated on the ramifications of this recognition in order to illustrate the connection between the local descent group and the land-holding group:

The land-holding group, which has spiritual responsibility for the portions of the Dreaming tracks which make up its estate, constitutes a local descent group. The land-holding group is local in the sense that all its members are jointly affiliated to the same geographic area. The land-holding group is also a descent group.

It is necessary to clarify what is meant by the rights and responsibilities of *kurdungurlu* because the argument that surrounded their inclusion sought to develop an explanation of ritual responsibility yet its implication was that there were two primary spiritual affiliations that Warlpiri could claim.

*Kirda* and *kurdungurlu* rights and obligations are of equal force and are complementary. Both *kurdungurlu* and *kirda* are responsible for the care and maintenance of sites and land, and for ceremonies performed to maintain the link between man, the land and the ancestors of the Dreamtime (Stead 1985:10).

In the preparation of the claim book for the Jila (Chilla Well) claim Stead (1985:4) devoted a substantial section to illustrate the inter-relationship between social structure and land tenure. He identified three types of social structure classification through which the claimants themselves would discuss their relationships to land; the kinship system, the subsection system and the complementary roles of *kirda* and *kurdungurlu*. Rights, of varying strengths of attachment, were recognised through all four grandparental descent lines: *werringyi* (FF, FFZ), *jamirdi* (MF, MFZ), *yaparla* (FM, FMB) and *jaja* (MM, MMB). In his comments, Justice Michael Maurice (ALC 1987:11-12) did not support the view that primary spiritual responsibility could lie with persons who traced descent through either their father’s mother or their mother’s mother. Maurice agreed that in principle it was essentially through reference to these four lines of descent that the rights and obligations of individuals could be defined in different ceremonies and rituals. However, the Land Commissioner did not believe that all were ranked equally for the ownership of place when compared with the strength of rights associated with connection through father’s father (*kirda*) or mother’s father (*kurdungurlu*). Moreover, Maurice (ALC 1987:21) believed that the members of the other two lines of descent could not be distinguished as corporate bodies in terms of the ownership of land and ritual and as a result could not be recognised as a local descent group. Importantly, however, he did recognise that *kirda* and *kurdungurlu* could simultaneously share primary spiritual affiliation to land.
Both the Western Desert and Tanami Downs land claims advanced *kirda* and *kurdungurlu* together in the model for traditional ownership as comprising the local descent group. In fact the Western Desert land claim (Peterson et al. 1989:26) emphasised that the role of *kurdungurlu* should not only be seen as relevant in terms of kinship links, but as an integral part of managing the economy of knowledge for any particular estate. In a major reversal of the findings of the three previous land claims heard in the Tanami region the Land Commissioner, Justice Howard Olney (ALC 1990:15) found that *kurdungurlu* were not traditional owners. This finding was based on his argument that although *kurdungurlu* undoubtedly had a primary spiritual responsibility, they could not be said to have a common spiritual affiliation with an estate. However, two years later Olney included *kurdungurlu* as traditional owners in Tanami Downs (ALC 1992:9):

> The spiritual responsibilities of the *kirda* and *kurdungurlu* whilst not necessarily identical nevertheless arise by reason of descent and in my view can properly be regarded as primary responsibilities arising from a shared spiritual affiliation to a site or sites on land.

The explanation that Olney (ALC 1992:9) offered for this decision (so glaringly at odds with his findings in the Western Desert), was that he was presented with a substantially different interpretation of the statutory definition and, as a result, the evidence was heard on a different basis.

Both the Tanami Downs and Western Desert land claims put forward the established estate group model and noted that sites were usually close together but could be interpreted as parts of a more expansive set of places. In the Western Desert claim, Olney (ALC 1990:12-13) commented that an estate had a number of named places, usually, but not always, adjacent to one another. In addition, he observed two kinds of dreaming tracks that may render sites close together or geographically separate, depending on whether dreamtime ancestors fly or travel underground and that different kinds of travel can link disparate regions. These issues will be thoroughly examined in Chapter Four. Critically, Olney believed that site density within an estate indicated the amount of resource use for a particular region. For the second time in the Tanami Desert, an area of land within a claim was not recommended for grant. This opinion of Olney’s was adjusted in the Tanami Downs land claim where he noted (ALC 1992:14) a group’s country was not a block or bounded area but should rather be seen as the portions of tracks for which they have primary responsibility. In this case Olney’s decision was influenced by the fact that a previous finding he made was overturned after the NLC’s High Court challenge in the Kenbi claim (1991) where he erroneously concluded that an absence of sites on the ground implied that there were no people who could realistically claim spiritual affiliation.
The land tenure model in the Western Desert land claim (Peterson et al. 1989:21) presented the estate as an area with a variety of significant features: people had various rights and interests in places; there were a number of individual and group rights in an estate; the estate group comprised all those people with rights and interests in an estate, and; there were ways of dealing with the extinction of an estate group. Additionally, individual rights in land such as those derived from birth, conception and burial were not as common due to the substantial residential changes brought about by a more sedentary community life.

Significantly, both the Western Desert and Tanami Downs land claims grappled with the issues of ownership and succession to estates through time. In the Western Desert claim Olney (ALC 1990:15) accepted that succession was possible in the desert because the numbers of people within the patrilineal group could be numerically small. Effectively succession could be open to traditional owners of the adjacent estate of the same moiety or those people who had close residential ties or detailed religious knowledge. Olney (ALC 1992:16-17) further elaborated on his opinion of succession in the Tanami Downs claim. He recognised that succession hinged upon the conversion of secondary rights (those that were neither kirda or kurdungurlu) into primary rights. Olney opined that succession usually fell to those people who were in a ‘company’ relationship; that is from the same moiety but responsible for a different section of the dreaming track. These discussions regarding the negotiation of other rights were a significant development from the earlier claims heard by Toohey, Maurice and Kearney. The different principles in operation to determine succession will be considered along with other individual and residential rights in place in detail in Chapter Five.

The element common to all of the Warlpiri land claims was their location of ownership within the local descent group, its affiliated estate(s) and heartland models being the vehicle used to circumscribe the tracts of land to which people expressed their spiritual affiliation. The local descent group was quickly expanded after the Warlpiri and Kartanganurrurru-Kurintji claim to include the descendants of women of the patriline (kurdungurlu). As the claims progressed over time, more emphasis came to be placed on political negotiation over individual links to place, and increasing detail on sites and their location became important. In effect, the models of land tenure advanced in each land claim were building upon the findings of the land claims heard previously, as well as responding to the increased scrutiny and legal opposition of the Northern Territory Government.

The review of the literature on Warlpiri land tenure has thrown up a number of important issues that will remain as integral to the analysis of Warlpiri place. Collectively these issues may be conveniently summarised as centring on the ways that people and places are conceived and bounded relationally to both themselves and each other. The following chapter presents a
historical overview of the changes that have occurred in Warlpiri people’s occupation of their land over the last century and charts the process of the rupture and physical dislocation of Warlpiri people and place brought on by the arrival of non-Aboriginal people exploring and prospecting for gold.
Chapter Three

A Desert of History

We had heard that in Granites, to the west, a strange kind of people, with white skins were staying. One day my father decided to have a look at those people, so we walked to Granites, where we saw them working in the coppermine [sic] there. To me those white people looked strange and I couldn’t understand the way they were talking. We stayed there for a few days and then went back to the bush again. There was a road that went from Granites to Thompsons Rockhole and on to Alice Springs, but we didn’t go there, we stayed in our own country, east of Thompsons Rockhole and lived there off the land (Jangala 1977:1).

Life, the history of the world, and all individual histories present themselves to us as a series of events, in other words of brief and dramatic acts (Braudel 1980:10).

The encounter between Warlpiri and the predominantly European explorers, settlers and prospectors in the central Tanami Desert was an unusual one in the context of the colonisation of Australia. The reasons for this are related to the fact that due to their relative geographical remoteness Warlpiri were not to fall under the direct authority of the Australian state until the middle of the 20th century. The Tanami Desert was the scene of some of the last incursions by colonisers into the heart of the continent, these explorers and prospectors marked the culmination of a long process of ‘opening up’ Australia at the turn of the last century. This chapter is concerned with the contact histories of the local encounters between Warlpiri people and place and European Australians (Anderson 1983). From these encounters the pursuit of gold was established and maintained as a key role in the development of relations between Warlpiri and the rest of Australia up until the present time.

It was not until 1946 that the Warlpiri people, who were gathered around Tanami and The Granites, were taken to the newly established Aboriginal reserve and settlement of Yuendumu. Prior to this moment in history the majority of Warlpiri people had some experience of Euro-Australians who had intruded onto their land and had been exploring, and later, mining for gold. Warlpiri had also came into contact with the settler society on the pastoral stations that had been established to the north, south and east of the central Tanami Desert. The survey area of the Tanami Desert had been reported as an area of limited potential for stock grazing because of the few permanent water supplies and scant, unpredictable rainfall. At that time interest in the Tanami Desert was restricted to its potential for yielding gold or other minerals,
hence the relations between the Warlpiri and Australian societies developed primarily around the production of gold.

This chapter will illustrate how the prospectors' interaction with Warlpiri places in pursuit of economic wealth, in the form of gold, resulted in a sudden infusion of new distinctly economic meanings into certain places. These changes to meaning of place were brought about by the attention given by both Warlpiri people and the wider Australian society to places such as The Granites (Yartulu Yartulu) and Tanami (Jarnami). For the colonisers these places that possessed gold deposits became significant in what was, for them, the vast background emptiness of the Tanami Desert. A place, or rather, space devoid of any other meaning or interest. Yet The Granites and Tanami were two places of religious and social significance among thousands for Warlpiri. The Granites had many named places associated with a number of jukurrpa, the most locally important of which was Janganpa (Possum). The Tanami was associated with Ngatijiri (Budgerigar) and Wawultja (Incestuous Man) and also held a reliable water supply. For Warlpiri The Granites and Tanami became centres of resources by virtue of the permanent wells which were established by the miners and government and the accessibility of highly desirable new goods such as tobacco, flour, blankets, tools, tinned meat and tea. These places became famous throughout the rest of Australia because they held the romantic and financial attraction of gold. The Granites and Tanami were placed 'on the map' as it were. What did this extraordinary moment in history, these events that Jangala and Braudel refer to in the head of the chapter, occasion for Warlpiri?

Historians such as Manning Clark (see also Rowley 1974) writing from a Eurocentric point of view of the encounter between Aboriginal peoples and the colonisers were content to merely chart the demise of Aboriginal societies across Australia. He believed, as many other commentators of his period, that the Aborigines were unable to protect their own culture in the face of European arrival because their failure “to emerge from a state of barbarism deprived them of the material resources with which to resist an invader” (Clark 1962:5). This dismissal of Aboriginal culture as having any capacity to continue hinged upon an assessment that focused only on its comparatively limited level of technological sophistication. The criteria for such an assessment was based on an ideology that placed value and importance only on the advancement of European scientific and economic rationality. However, the complexities of this encounter with the invader and the enormous changes to Warlpiri society which the encounter engendered demands more than a crude balance sheet of cultural value.

The discovery of gold in the Tanami Desert in 1900 marked the beginning of a fifty year process that fundamentally altered the demographic pattern of Warlpiri land occupation.
Materialistic anthropology probably envisages precontact Australia as a continent pulsing with demographic patterning of resource foragers. Because mining, pastoralism, massacre and disease have altered the demography and dispersed or despoiled the material resources, it must regard the contemporary situation as archaic fragments, remnants of a strategy no longer adaptive (Michaels 1985:509).

It was characteristic of Eric Michaels’ writing to make sweeping, unsubstantiated statements such as the one quoted above when it came to his engagement with anthropology. Nonetheless his implied point regarding the adaptive strategy of people is an important one. Aboriginal societies such as the Warlpiri’s continue to flourish despite the ominous and pessimistic tones of Clark who typified the intellectual tenor of commentators concerned with the position of Aborigines in Australian society up until the 1970s.

Norman Long (1996:37-9) noted that the forces of globalisation and their impact on societies is certainly not uniform and he recommended that the assessment of such impacts may begin to be analysed with respect to categories such as production, work and economic life, the nature of the state and new socio-political identities. The current setting of place as a contested ground between Western and Warlpiri institutions needs to be approached with a background understanding of how the landscape of the Tanami Desert has changed since colonisation. The change in the dominant economic mode of production in the Tanami Desert from one of hunting and gathering to one which was dependent on the instruments of welfare and colonialism also affected not just the history of place in the Tanami Desert but also its reproduction. As Lefebvre (1991:46) clearly indicated: “the passage from one mode of production to another is of the highest theoretical importance... for it results from contradictions in the social relations of production which cannot fail to leave their mark on space and indeed to revolutionize it."

This chapter will follow an orthodox approach to the history of changes to Warlpiri places through time brought about by exploration contact, mineral prospecting and the establishment of cattle stations on the fringes of the desert. This focus on place will further serve to highlight the importance that place, and competing cultural conceptions of place, have in functioning as a reference of social history and as a site through which history can be read: “Histories, structures and meanings not only are all multiple but are also contested by historical actors” (Ohnuki-Tierney 1990:23).

Placement of the Tanami Desert

The first encounters between Warlpiri and explorers and prospectors in the Tanami Desert were characterised by the efforts of the intruders to locate water, grasslands or significant
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mineral deposits, or hopefully in their minds a combination of all three. In 1855-6 Augustus Gregory (1884) explored the areas within the vicinity of the Victoria river to the north of present day Lajamanu. At that time, the area would have had few, if any, Warlpiri residents. John McDouall Stuart (1865) was almost certainly the first European to encounter Warlpiri during two expeditions in 1861 when he followed the Hanson River and again in 1862 at which time he travelled as far westward as the Arthur Hills. Both of these areas are acknowledged Warlpiri land, the Arthur Hills lying immediately west of present day Willowra and as close as 60 kilometres to the extreme eastern edge of the study area. However, as Stuart’s travels were attempts to cross Australia from south to north, he only passed on the outskirts of Warlpiri country.

In the respective appendices of the Warlpiri and Kartangarurru-Kurintji (Peterson et al. 1978) and the Chilla Well (Stead 1985) land claim submissions the authors have carefully documented the encounters and sightings of Warlpiri people in the Tanami Desert area between 1862 and 1945. The sources which are the first written recordings of Warlpiri people are: Stuart (1865), Colonel Peter Egerton Warburton (1875), R. Maurice (1902), Allan Davidson (1905), Lionel Gee (1911), Michael Terry (1934), F. Eric Baume (1933), Pink (n.d.), Laurie Reece (n.d.) and Gordon Sweeney (1945). Given the reconnaissance nature of most of these expeditions and the language barriers that existed there was little information recorded that detailed any significant information on Warlpiri culture with the notable exceptions of Pink (n.d.) and, to a lesser extent, Davidson (1905).

These historical records reveal some important information regarding the occupation and use of the land by Warlpiri at the time and the extent of their interactions with the first explorers, prospectors and geologists. There is abundant evidence that referred to the many Warlpiri places encountered. They were described as native wells or soaks, old quarries, rocks with drawings and paintings, soakages that had been recently dug or timbered for easier access to water. However, there was very little information collected which detailed either the names of these places or their local significance. Nevertheless, abundant evidence was found indicating the permanent occupation of the Tanami Desert by Warlpiri in the form of camps either actual, recent or abandoned, hut-like shelters and windbreaks thatched with spinifex and covered with sand, bark windbreaks, yam holes, stored objects, chopped trees, burnt country and innumerable fires.

In 1873 Warburton journeyed almost as far as The Granites locality through the southern portion of the survey area and found good waters with the help of an abducted Warlpiri boy 44 km north of Mt Farewell that he named Waterloo Wells (1875:179). This example illustrates two important points in this stage of the local history of the Tanami Desert. First, places were
named by explorers only inasmuch as they were good water sources and second that little regard or interest was displayed with respect to the local inhabitants. Sometimes Warlpiri were threatened, abducted, or attacked. At other times their property (sacred boards, stones, ochre, tools) was stolen. Water was of critical importance for the explorers and ironically enough Warburton was forced to attempt to imitate Warlpiri style soakages in his desperate search for water. Of his “49 or 50” attempts to sink wells Warburton (1875:180) was successful on only one occasion.

Interaction between exploration parties and Warlpiri took many forms such as meetings and sightings of both small and large groups of people engaged in activities such as holding ceremonies, travelling, camping, digging for yams, hunting, fleeing and, also, attacking. Elsewhere in the Northern Territory a large-scale and comparatively rapid expansion of the pastoral industry was under way on the better grasslands to the north of the Tanami Desert. The South Australian Government Resident’s Reports on the Northern Territory (1887 and 1890) emphasised the strained and violent contact between Aboriginal peoples and the pastoralists and indicated (1890:9) that occupation of the land by both groups was “hopelessly irreconcilable” and wondered how could “the ‘real property’ interests of the aborigines be preserved?” The specific context of competing interests in place was played out in a different way in the Tanami Desert because of the way in which land was used by the prospectors who occupied The Granites and Tanami for over 40 years.

Initial contact in the Tanami Desert made between Warburton (1875) and Warlpiri was driven by the Colonels’ interest in finding and using Warlpiri water supplies. The primary objective of all exploration parties in deserts such as the Tanami was to assess and report on the economic resources, in particular, water, while surveying routes through the uncharted interior. The next significant exploration of the Tanami Desert was led by Davidson in 1900 who was accompanied by two prospectors, a camel tender and Aboriginal guide, nine bull camels and six months of rations. This expedition on behalf of the Central Australian Exploration Syndicate concentrated on the northern part of the survey area and named many of the places that appear on topographical maps today, including in the survey area; Wilson Creek, Ware Range, Tanami and Granite Hill (later The Granites). The lasting impact of Davidson’s expedition was the discovery of gold at both Tanami and The Granites.

The Tanami Desert took its name from the site Jarnami which the early prospectors mistakenly translated as “never dry” and it was considered significant enough to be the first recorded Aboriginal name in the Tanami Desert. Its importance was due to the fact that it lay at an intersection of two prized desert commodities sought by the explorers, water and gold. These commodities were considered attraction enough and opened the gates for a steady flow of
prospectors to the region. For their part Warlpiri continued to occupy the Tanami Desert and visit their thousands of places as they had always done. Any attachment of significance to these places by Warlpiri that was not based on water or economic potential was, of course, unlikely to be entertained by the explorers.

Prospectors, gold and place

Aboriginal people in Australia have long mined for precious materials such as the red ochre which was highly valued as a material resource used in both ritual and trade between peoples. Peterson and Ronald Lampert (1985) have reviewed much of the material written on ochre mining and have described in some detail the ochre mine at *Karrku*, in the Campbell ranges which lies to the south of the survey area in Warlpiri country. The authors estimate that by 1985 over 300 tonnes had been taken out (Peterson and Lampert 1985:2) beginning almost 30,000 years ago. Mining continues there today, a recent expedition in the mid 1990s saw ochre chipped and removed in three 20 litre flour buckets by three men over a two hour period. The ochre mine at *Karrku* is famous throughout Warlpiri territory and beyond and some of the most senior men have journeyed there in the past. *Karrku* continues to be visited and mined by those people who live nearby. The concept and activity of mining for a valued item was not an alien concept for Warlpiri.

Although Davidson reported finding gold at Tanami and The Granites, he was of the opinion that it was not in sufficient quantities to make it a viable mining proposition. Davidson’s report did not discourage numerous small parties of prospectors, many of whom had given up on the Halls Creek field over the border in Western Australia, from travelling to the area. Between 1902 and 1908 prospectors who visited both the Tanami and Granites obtained some good results and a makeshift well was sunk at Tanami in 1908. In 1908 three men found a thousand ounces (28kg) at Tanami which included 300 ounces (8.5kg) in one rock and a one pound nugget (450g) (Otter Gold Mines 2000:4). By 1909 the area had attracted interest from the South Australian Government who decided to send the geologist H. Brown to the Tanami to comment on potential gold reserves. Brown’s (1909) favourable report was followed by another small discovery by prospectors at Tanami and the combination of these factors led to a mild rush at the Tanami in that year (Cartwright 1996:65). Meggitt (1974:21) reported that William Braitling who was present at the rush told him that at one time there were 500 men on the field. The presence of such large numbers, however, was short-lived.

As a result of continued, and increasing, interest in Tanami and The Granites, Gee was appointed Mining Warden and stationed at Tanami in 1909. Little interaction with Aboriginal people was reported around Tanami and The Granites during this initial period of consolidation
by the prospectors. However, in 1910 a prospector, Stuart, was killed at a soakage near The Granites by an Aboriginal man and his equipment stolen. The alleged murderer was captured and died whilst being escorted to Darwin (Cartwright 1996:69). Meggitt (1974:21) reported this incident differently; indicating that several Warlpiri men were captured and later discharged in Darwin never to be heard from again. Despite these conflicting accounts, this incident did little to encourage more than the already limited interaction between Warlpiri and prospectors. Oral histories collected by Dick Kimber (in Stead 1985:30) indicate that the violent reprisals in the wake of the death of Stuart were far more extensive then officially reported. In discussions about the incident at The Granites Meggitt (1974:21) was informed in Lajamanu that “most of the tribe avoided the place for years to come.”

By 1911 the Warden oversaw the prospecting of about 60 men and prospecting had extended to all of the country throughout the Tanami-Granites region. The best results were obtained at The Granites and the government encouraged further development of the remote region by having wells sunk along the tracks to the Tanami Desert from both Halls Creek and Wave Hill. The Government Well was sunk at Tanami in 1911. Gee’s (1911) report on the Tanami goldfield commented that the prospectors were encouraged by the results and that they were keen to remain as long as there was water available.

Rupture of place

Interest in the Tanami-Granites region soon petered out, and, Reverend Wilkinson in 1914, reported that there were only a few prospectors scattered about the field (mainly at Tanami) and there were virtually no Aboriginal people in the area at all (Smith 1947). There can be little doubt that the violence that had occurred was a major reason for the notable absence of Aboriginal people. Other factors that contributed to their departure were related to broader demographic shifts brought on by the development of the pastoral industry. In the 1880s pastoral settlement was taken up in the Sturt Creek and the Stirling, Ord and Victoria River areas to the north and west of the study area. In this region the killings of Aboriginal people and the heavy death toll inflicted by introduced diseases produced acute shortages of labour on pastoral stations. Throughout the Northern Territory Aboriginal men and women were vital in maintaining the pastoral economy. The seasonal nature of the work pattern dictated that people leave the stations in the summer to live in the ‘bush’ and stations became focal points of a new sedentary community life for part of the year (Read 1995:278). Aboriginal people in the cattle station areas settled into close association with pastoralism and this left a population vacuum in the northern Tanami into which Warlpiri could move into to utilise resources (Peterson n.d.).
The combination of dwindling interest in the workings at Tanami and The Granites prospects, and the departure of Warlpiri’s immediate northern neighbours to pastoral stations, diverted Warlpiri’s attention from the Tanami and they continued to occupy the Tanami Desert as before.

Perhaps one of the greatest impacts of the early prospecting exploration parties who relied on camels so heavily for transport was that the parties’ camels could empty rockholes and soakages of water supplies very quickly. These water losses dramatically affected Warlpiri’s economic use of their places and the severe drought of 1924-1929 exacerbated this situation. During this period many Warlpiri were forced to leave the centre of the desert to search for food and water. Parties of Warlpiri people travelled to the cattle stations to both the north and east, increasing their contact with the pastoralists with whom, so far, they had had little contact: only providing labour for very brief periods in order to acquire goods. As far as can be ascertained it was at about this time that Warlpiri first entered into employment with the prospectors. Japanangka (1977:35) remembered walking to the Tanami when he was a little boy before the Tanami road existed:

From Yinapaka [Lake Surprise] we went west to Kurlpulunu [north of Mt Davidson] and from there to Granites. That was in the old days when there were no houses there, only bush, no roads, nothing. There were white people with camels travelling through there from Alice Springs... We didn’t know English or European ways, we were bush people. On our way we meet a few Europeans who were coming from Alice Springs to work in the mine in Tanami. We went there too, we stayed there for some time and my father worked in the mine as well, he gave them a hand... then we left again.

Warlpiri who remained in the Tanami Desert came into close contact with the few prospectors still at Tanami and The Granites. Meggitt identified this moment of sustained interaction as the critical structural break of Warlpiri from a hunting and gathering economy:

Once the drought of 1924 had forced the people to live on cattle-stations and near mines, they became too much accustomed to the new foods, warm clothes, steel axes and the like to wish to return permanently to the rigorous life in the bush. Everyone now desired these commodities, which could be regularly obtained only as long as at least some of the tribe accepted European employment (Meggitt 1974:27).

The desire for goods turned Warlpiri attention away from their hunting and gathering economy (Read and Japaljarri 1978:147-8). In the far south of the study area Ted Strehlow (in Read 1995) reported that the Ngalia Warlpiri had drifted into the ration depot in Alice Springs in 1927. It was at this time that the relatively well-watered country around the Lander River immediately to the east of the survey area was the scene of the last two punitive expeditions led
by police in central Australia. At least one hundred people were killed in the Cockatoo Creek - Lander River area. This catastrophe, and subsequent demographic impact triggered, a wholesale uprooting process that began in 1928 for Warlpiri of this area which only ended with the establishment of the communities (Strehlow 1970:106). The profound changes caused by the drought drew the majority of Warlpiri out of the Tanami Desert and into prolonged, frequently disastrous contact with pastoral and settler society on its fringes. For those who remained the resources of Tanami and The Granites which could be attained from the remaining prospectors became of even greater social and economic significance.

Stanner (1958) discussed the profound effects that the availability of new goods had for Aboriginal people across Australia. People developed intense appetites for tobacco and tea and this resulted in movement to places where these goods could be obtained. Henry Reynolds (1989) concurred with Stanner’s observation that in certain respects the movement of Aboriginal people into contact with settlement society was voluntary. For Stanner, the Aborigines’ encounter with Australians could be interpreted as an exploration of a potential of the formers’ flexible social structure characterised by interdependence and interconnexions. Nonetheless, despite the pessimistic tone of the period Stanner (1958:101-2) quite rightly concluded:

In becoming their own voyagers, the aborigines claimed, coaxed and fought an opening into an incomprehensible new world. Many died, and many others were ruined, those who survived found they could not go back; and it does not seem that many even wanted to.

As Stanner remarked, it was almost impossible for people to return to their previous pattern of economic existence. For Warlpiri it was illogical to return into the desert when the necessities of life were to be had in relative abundance at two places where previously they had utilised an entire desert to survive in.

Stanner drew attention to a principle of mutual exploitation, or what Elkin (1951) had roughly termed earlier ‘intelligent parasitism’, that was embarked upon in the Tanami Desert by both the newcomers and Warlpiri, on distinctly different cultural terms. The explorers and prospectors used and misused both Warlpiri and their places in their determined effort to wring gold out of the desert. Warlpiri for their part were intensely attracted by the new economy of goods and resources which had suddenly sprung into life around certain of their places in the central Tanami Desert; “an economy based on the circulation of goods, rather than of money, began to emerge alongside the ancient economy of hunting and gathering” (Rowse 1998:67). Tim Rowse in his analysis of central Australian history was keen to expose the power relationship between Aboriginal people and wider Australian society in the process of
distribution of rations. He concluded that colonialism was played out through the control of access to material goods and the desires they produced among Aboriginal people (Rowse 1998:33). The subsequent institutionalisation of Aboriginal people such as Warlpiri was made possible because they had lost their position in economic production (Kopytoff 1994:209). The availability of a permanent water supply and desirable new commodities sparked the demographic shift of Warlpiri into proximity with Tanami and The Granites. This signalled the beginning of a 20 year process which concentrated the majority of Warlpiri in these two areas and changed fundamentally their physical interaction with all of their other places.

Wickham's Find - A myth of gold

The interest in the search for gold in the Tanami was strongly revived by the reports of Jimmy Wickham (a prospector) and H. Ellis (a geologist), both of whom were out in the Tanami Desert in 1925. In 1927 Ellis published an overview of the prospecting and discovery of gold deposits at The Granites and another small and short-lived rush was sparked. Lack of water was a major problem throughout this time. After the wet season in 1926, the Tanami Gold Mining Company based in Perth brought the first mechanical stamp battery and gas engine by donkey teams to Tanami. It worked for only two years before the combination of lack of water to run the plant and poor results led to the closure of the stamp’s operations in 1928. Despite this lack of success by both the plant and the prospectors a constable and a Mining Warden were stationed at Tanami in 1926. This appointment was mainly due to a new influx of prospectors drawn by reports of the fabulous find made by Wickham in the central Tanami Desert. According to Terry (1934:167), Wickham “came to Wyndham in 1925 with a sugar bag full of specimens carrying such rich gold that the story book tales fade out of the picture”. A complete history of this incident and the history of prospecting and geology of the area has been documented by Paul Hynch (2000). Apparently Wickham’s find was near a billabong, and his report rapidly achieved legendary status amongst prospectors. It is ironic that this elusive gold reef could have easily been located by Warlpiri people as the site itself would no doubt have had a name as well as mythical association. Warlpiri’s profound topographical knowledge of places and their location might well have helped the prospectors to locate a place of the greatest significance to themselves. Nevertheless the myth of Wickham’s Find generated a new round of prospecting and the southern area of the Tanami Desert was opened up to the process of mapping place and the associated rigours of the exploration for gold. The most well-documented of the post-Wickham expeditions was filed by A. Thomson (1926) and the story of his expedition was run in a series of articles by the Daily News of Perth in 1935 entitled “Prospectors search for Lost Mine”.

Thomson’s (1926) expedition in search of Wickham’s find was on behalf of the Kangaroo Mining Company and he took some effort in detailing notes that were not restricted to minerals but also included soakages, rockholes and grasslands. Interest in places was measured only in regard to their potential for either cattle grazing or gold and mineral deposits, neither of which could succeed without a good water supply. The main focus of Thomson’s expedition was on locating Wickham’s find which held a magnetic appeal for both the prospectors as well as the public: “Sampling was not regarded as of the same importance as on an ordinary prospecting expedition, as the reef which was the main objective was reputed to be so rich in gold that it could be seen yards off” (Daily News 13-4-1935). Considering the fact that these news articles appeared almost ten years after the expedition and that Wickham’s Find had still not been re-discovered the poor sampling returns of the prospectors was explained away as indicating that the gold was not well distributed “a characteristic of country where very rich gold has been won” (Daily News 13-4-1935), presumably also a characteristic of country where there wasn’t any gold at all.

Thomson’s expedition named many of the places that he encountered in the survey area including Mt Marjorie (now Mt Theo) and Mt Patricia after his daughters, the Walkeley Hills after a Director of the company and Mt Bennett after a shareholder. The closest the party ever got to Wickham’s Find was to locate some trees marked by the man himself, interestingly these trees were found by Warlpiri guides. Thomson (1926) reported that all of the “natives” encountered were friendly and his party made frequent use of Warlpiri assistance: one man was given a tomahawk for helping to find water (Daily News 23-3-1935) and on another occasion men were given tobacco for demonstrating the use of a bullroarer (Daily News 6-4-1935). Apparently, by the late 1920s Warlpiri were very familiar with the intruders’ obsession with gold by this time and Thomson’s party was encouraged to head south and were informed that “white phella catchem gold one time”. As one of the party observed, this comment was most likely a reference to wolfram mining on Mt Doreen because “blacks always associated anything in the prospecting line with gold” (Daily News 23-3-1935).

Thomson’s expedition was the first of many in search of Wickham’s Find which were all to end in failure. At The Granites, Thomson met Terry and both men concluded that the Tanami-Granites area needed extensive prospecting and bulk sampling. A short time later, in 1930, Terry made the original Tanami Road between Halls Creek and Alice Springs through Tanami and The Granites. Older Warlpiri men at Lajamanu who remember this time refer to the Tanami Road as the “white man’s dreaming track” a double meaning because the track linked up their major places, the towns and the minefields. The track assisted the opening up of cattle
stations to the south of the survey area; notably Braithing took up and occupied Mt Doreen pastoral lease in 1932.

The Granites gold rush

The drought finally broke in 1929-1930 and with the assistance of the new track and the continually circulating reports of Wickham’s Find there was an increase in the number of prospectors working both Tanami and The Granites. Despite a few good finds, by 1932 there was only a small number of men left. In mid 1932 at The Granites one shaft suddenly produced very high returns and this led to The Granites rush which swelled the number of people on the field to over 200 men. The Granites rush attracted for the second time in the Tanami Desert a serious large-scale venture: this one led by Gordon Chapman from Queensland (Goodall 1972). A geologist, Cecil Madigan arrived with the journalist Baume who extensively documented their experiences of The Granites rush, although Madigan (1936) was not impressed by the potential of the field. Baume’s (1933 and 1934-5) accounts of the Tanami Desert were popularised in a book and a series of articles that recounted stories of prospecting, tragedy, adventure, life in the desert, encounters with Aboriginal people, and most importantly for the wider Australian public, the search for gold.

Notwithstanding this flurry of activity The Granites rush like the previous gold rushes in the Tanami Desert was soon over. There were two important distinguishing features of this rush. First, the availability of water was not cited as a major problem because a government well had already been sunk at The Granites. Second, the social context of The Granites rush brought the first official government policy that addressed the presence of Warlpiri in the Tanami Desert. The circumstances surrounding the Coniston Massacre (Hartwig 1960) and the actions of Warlpiri on the fringes of pastoral settlement during the drought in the 1920s meant that they were now feared as violent and unpredictable cattle spearsers (Baume 1933). It was also reported that many of Warlpiri were now suffering from introduced venereal disease (Baume 1933 and Meggitt 1974) suggesting that sex may have been exchanged for access to goods and rations. For such reasons as these Warlpiri were officially required to remain at least 10 miles from the miners’ camps (Meggitt 1974:25). Up until this time there had been very limited involvement of Warlpiri in the gold fields of Tanami and The Granites, and interaction between the miners and Warlpiri had been confined to a limited exchange of goods for their labour.

The Granites rush and the effects of the drought engendered increased contact between the prospectors and Warlpiri and despite selectively enforced official segregation relations deteriorated further when a Warlpiri man was shot dead and others wounded at The Granites for attempting to steal provisions (Meggitt 1974:25). The fact that there was no official record
of this incident suggests that open hostility was only narrowly avoided owing to the brief duration of the rush. The impact of The Granites rush on Warlpiri and their places was profound. The policemen stationed there at the time pursued a policy of open harassment of particular groups of Warlpiri that they did not like (Baume 1933:56). The prospectors who were having little luck at The Granites wandered throughout the Tanami-Granites region and emptied many of Warlpiri’s valuable water supplies in order to maintain their prospecting activities (Baume 1933:134, Madigan 1944:240). Warlpiri were increasingly resentful of this tremendous disruption of the fragile economy of the Tanami Desert and it is clearly documented that they were under the impression that they had been invaded and that it was high time for the interlopers to depart (Baume 1933:134, Terry 1934:233).

Warlpiri at Tanami and The Granites

By 1933 only the Harris and Chapman families and a handful of other prospectors remained after The Granites gold rush working among approximately 1000 Warlpiri people in the Tanami Desert. It was during the decade after The Granites rush that Warlpiri of the central Tanami Desert were finally to congregate in such numbers that the Federal Government was forced to intervene. Warlpiri had become increasingly desirous of the goods that could be obtained and the safety net offered by the permanent water supplies that were found at Tanami and The Granites. The void left by the departure of the majority of prospectors and other administrative personnel opened up employment opportunities for Warlpiri which were taken up quite willingly. Doubtless, the diseases and reports of violence which accompanied such association were discouraging, yet there was a subtle shift in attitude by younger Warlpiri men as the following quotation from Abie Jangala suggests. He described leaving the company of his father and going:

to Granites, to have look again at those white people and what they were doing. Some of my people were working in the mine and they were given food for that... For about one and a half years I worked in the mine in Granites, and then I went east, to the bush again to see my father, going off on my own, coming back again. I learned more about our business and then I was a real man, around 21 years old. Again I went to Granites to work in the mine and I had a look in Tanami too. But I didn’t like Tanami, after a few days I was back in Granites again where I worked for another few weeks before returning to the bush (Jangala 1977:2).

Jangala indicated there were both advantages and disadvantages in the Warlpiri encounter with miners. His attitude may be contrasted with the circumspect curiosity displayed by older Warlpiri such as his father who were reluctant to remain in close contact with the prospectors and preferred to live in the desert. Abie’s personal history portrays a picture of intermittent work that was punctuated by visits to his family in the bush.
The current eldest generation of Warlpiri remember moving to the Granites to work as miners. Victor Simon Jupurrurla’s father, Pilala Jakamarra, was encouraged by Chapman to bring Warlpiri people in to stay at The Granites and work. Warlpiri exchanged their labour for goods such as flour, tea, clothes and tobacco and established permanent camps next to both The Granites and Tanami mining operations. Men such as Henry Anderson Jakamarra and Abie Jangala recall a life of hard work in the mines interspersed with long visits to their relatives who preferred to remain in the desert (Bryson 2000). In summertime the men would take tobacco and other commodities out to their families and then participate in ceremonial cycles before returning once more to The Granites or Tanami in order to work digging for gold, gathering wood and carting water in order to accumulate more goods. Although Warlpiri worked hard for new commodities they had little idea what the purpose of extracting gold actually meant as Ronnie Lawson Jakamarra (Elias 2001 forthcoming) explained:

They cooked gold in a fire and made it square like they cooked bread. We couldn’t understand, what is that one? Are they going to eat it? We didn’t understand gold in the early days, we know now. I worked right up until dawn, I don’t know what for, just for tucker, trousers and shirt, no money, we worked flat out, people on both sides, Granites and Tanami. We never understood the kardiya (white) law, he never told us - see this is gold, we really like it - Chapman and Harris, they never told us like that.

Another reason for the fostering of this closer relationship between Warlpiri and the prospectors was the amendment of the 1918 Aboriginals Ordinance in 1933. This ordinance aimed at protecting the welfare and employment of Aboriginal people in the Northern Territory with respect to minimum wages for maintaining a person and their dependents (in Rowse 1998:57). It also addressed health and moral issues. In the area under consideration in the central Tanami Desert, permits to employ Warlpiri at The Granites had been issued to prospectors in 1933. Chapman, who finally left The Granites in 1953, reported in his newspaper that during his period of 21 years at The Granites he had used mainly “native” labour (Centralian Advocate 10-4-1953). The use of Warlpiri labour was overseen by Patrol Officers of the Aborigines Branch, which was later to become the Native Affairs Branch.

The post-Granites rush period served to increase the day to day interdependence, in gold production, between Warlpiri and the miners at Tanami and The Granites. During this period there was also a pronounced movement of Warlpiri from the fringes of the Tanami Desert to pastoral stations. In the north people travelled to Wave Hill and Birrundudu stations where some remained as employees (Berndt and Berndt 1987:17) and in the south people congregated around the wolfram mines and the newly opened cattle station at Mt Doreen. In the survey area a pattern of sporadic local employment for Warlpiri in the Tanami and The Granites
working with very small populations of prospectors and miners was established and settled into for almost a decade. There was a dramatic decline in the number of prospectors moving through the Tanami Desert although a drilling program was conducted by the government at both fields and some pits were excavated near Tanami by a private venture. In 1937 aerial surveys were undertaken and overviews of the results were published (Hossfeld 1940a and 1940b). Whilst it appears that interest in the region’s capacity to yield mineable gold deposits was diminishing the attachment of Warlpiri to Tanami and The Granites was steadily increasing.

The movements of Warlpiri on the fringes of the desert drew the attention of the authorities to the plight of Warlpiri people who remained in the central Tanami Desert. In the decade following the central Australian drought, the Ngalia Warlpiri were moving southward and concerns were raised about their welfare. Serious representations were made to the government about the necessity of creating a reserve area in the southern Tanami Desert for Warlpiri. The earliest of these were from Patrol Officer Strehlow and in 1935 Pink lobbied the Australian and New Zealand Association for the Advancement of Science who wrote to the Prime Minister (Strehlow, Pink and ANZAAS in Stead 1985:34). The Minister for Interior requested J. B. Cleland, Chairman of the Board for Anthropological Research at the University of Adelaide, to investigate the need for a reserve for people in The Granites region. In 1936 Cleland estimated that approximately 150 people came into regular contact with the mining operations there, and he observed 50 men women and children living there permanently (Patterson 1936 in Stead 1985:36). Despite the concerns raised and the report submitted to the Federal Government by Cleland no firm decisions were taken by the authorities. The congregation of Warlpiri people around Tanami and The Granites continued and in 1943 Sweeney observed 47 people at The Granites and 53 at Tanami (Sweeney 1943 in Peterson et al. 1978:13) with other Warlpiri people visiting periodically to see relatives and to try to obtain whatever goods were available.

Permits to employ Warlpiri people at Tanami and The Granites had been issued to miners and prospectors from 1933, and part of the Patrol Officers’ brief was to inspect the employment and welfare conditions of the Aboriginal employees. Strehlow’s and Sweeney’s patrols regularly noted that there were often excessive abuses by the miners regarding the proper issue of rations in return for labour in the Tanami Desert. Strehlow (1941) commented that Warlpiri people could not be employed at award rates because that would have forced the closure of the mining activities. These activities were heavily labour intensive and the paradox was that despite the exploitative nature of the relationship, which weighed heavily in favour of the miners, Warlpiri nevertheless wanted them to remain in place because of the rations and water
supply that could be had. Sweeney’s 1944 patrol observed about 100 Warlpiri living in the Tanami-Granites region and noted that with respect to the Tanami Desert the younger Warlpiri wanted to stay and “have no desire to return - they speak of it as “hungry country”; the older people are still drawn to their old tribal hunting grounds when seasons are good” (Sweeney in Rowse 1990). It was this patrol by Sweeney that recommended rations be issued by the Harris family, who were still working at Tanami to the 42 Warlpiri who were permanent residents there. The issuing of rations by the government proved to be the catalyst which set in motion a chain of events resulting in the forced removal of Warlpiri from the Tanami Desert to permanent settlements on its fringes.

The Harris family distributed rations at the Tanami for approximately one year, once they had left the Tanami Desert in 1945 these duties were taken over by Patrol Officer Frank McGarry of the Native Affairs Department who had arrived to find 60 people at The Granites and 52 at Tanami. This administrative decision was in part due to the government’s wider understanding that the demographic shifts of desert Aboriginal populations had become even more pronounced during the years of World War Two (Read 1995). McGarry found Warlpiri people living at Tanami in “appalling conditions” and he predicted that his issuing of rations would attract up to 250 people whose demands would outstrip the resources of the local area (O’Grady 1977). Almost immediately McGarry distributed rations and the number of Warlpiri people gathered at Tanami swelled to 163 putting severe pressure on the water supply. McGarry, frightened of losing the water supply, soon moved all Warlpiri in his care to The Granites and its more reliable bore. This relocation resulted in an influx of Warlpiri to The Granites. The simultaneous and competing demands on the water supply by the miners and Warlpiri meant that both interests could be not be accommodated. This proved to be a definitive moment of history in the Tanami Desert and for Warlpiri:

Their stay at The Granites was not long. The water supply at the camp was poor, so McGarry arranged for water to be obtained from the mine. Then the mine owner presented McGarry, the Protector of Aborigines, with an ultimatum: if Aboriginal men were not supplied as labour at the mine the water would be cut off. McGarry noted that this happened at a time when gold to the value of two thousand pounds had been extracted from the mine in three days yet, the Aboriginal workers were being paid only eight pence per day. McGarry notified the Branch and their response to this attempt at blackmail was the safe one: avoid conflict with the miners, move the people again (McClay 1988:102).

In 1946 all Warlpiri living at The Granites were moved to Yuendumu which began with an initial population of 377 people with another large group of people living at Mt Doreen station. The economics of the situation were clear enough to the government. It was decided that the miners, who required only the water supply and needed little management, could remain in the
Tanami Desert where they were producing gold. Warlpiri on the other hand supplied only labour and their occupation of the desert produced nothing of economic value, further, they now required food and medical care. These supplies could only be provided on the southern fringe of the Tanami Desert where the people would be closer to services and a more reliable water supply. The physical dislocation of Warlpiri people from their places in the Tanami Desert was completed. Within the space of 50 years, people who had occupied, travelled and lived in an area of nearly 100,000 square kilometres among hundreds of places were now all located together in one place, on the extreme southern edge of their land.

The arrival and establishment of non-Aboriginal people and their economic interests (centred on the extraction of gold) in the Tanami Desert created two major sites in the landscape. Tanami and The Granites were infused with unanticipated economic potential for Warlpiri (in the form of new goods and rations acquired principally through the exchange of labour) on a scale that was not only unprecedented but most likely inconceivable as well. These places assumed positions of extraordinary prominence in local histories and mythologies for both Euro-Australians and Warlpiri people alike. The realities of the new economy in the Tanami Desert orbited around the extraction of gold and the goods that were required by Euro-Australians to remain in place in order to produce gold.

The establishment of Yuendumu and Lajamanu (Hooker Creek)

The submissions of Pastor Albrecht of the Lutheran Finke River Mission among others to the Federal Minister of the Interior, the Administrator of the Northern Territory and the Chief Protector of Aboriginals (later the Directorate of Native Affairs) eventually persuaded the Government to open the ration depot at Yuendumu (Rowse 1990). Unlike their Pintupi neighbours to the west whose movement into ration depots could be interpreted as an extension of a classic tradition of maintaining and extending ritual and personal links (Long 1989:40-1), the history of Warlpiri’s removal from the Tanami Desert was a complex one involving a whole range of contacts stemming from the competition for land brought about by encroaching interests.

The separation of Warlpiri from their places was not easy and there were enormous social problems that resulted from their living in such close proximity to one another. After almost five years the violence in the community rose to such a level that the government was obliged to try and relocate part of Yuendumu community to Catfish (later the site was changed to Hooker Creek) at the opposite end of the Tanami Desert. Jangala recalled accompanying a road grader driver almost as far as the site of the proposed new community but he ended up abandoning the driver: “It was country I didn’t know and it made me sad to be away from my
own place. I wanted to go back to my country" (Jangala 1977:3). Jangala and his companion left the grader driver and walked back to The Granites, worked in the mine for a week or so and then continued walking to Yuendumu. Soon afterwards the officials at Yuendumu selected 20 people including Jangala who were moved to Hooker Creek (Lajamanu) to begin building up the community. After a year and a half, Jangala returned to Yuendumu:

the Government decided to take the first group of people they wanted to move, to Hooker Creek. About 200 people were collected by truck, and again nobody was asked if they wanted to go, they were just told. I went with them back to Hooker Creek, where they had to start a new life. But after two months some people started to drift back. This was not our country, this was Gurinji country, we didn’t have our dreaming sites here, and especially the old people were not happy. So they simply walked back, all the way, to Yuendumu [a distance of almost 600 km by road] (Jangala 1977:4).

Despite a constant flow of people walking back through the Tanami Desert along the road the established regime of work for rations and the food and goods offered at the settlements of Lajamanu and Yuendumu finally prevailed over Warlpiri’s desire to drift back into the desert and ensured that people remained at the settlements. The settlements, later to be called communities, were initially set up under the government’s policy of protection toward Aboriginal people aimed at alleviating the considerable problems they faced in their encounter with wider Australian society. Shortly afterwards in the late 1950s The Granites and Tanami were finally deserted by the miners and prospectors after half a century of almost uninterrupted occupation. New places were established in the Tanami Desert in 1963 in the form of the granted pastoral leases Mongrel Downs, Suplejjack (a grazing licence) and Chilla Well (now abandoned), and in 1970 the roadhouse at Rabbit Flat was opened. Warlpiri had little interaction with the cattle stations and the change in government policy with respect to Aboriginal people from protection to assimilation focused the economic and social aspects of Warlpiri peoples lives in Lajamanu and Yuendumu.

What where the effects of the physical and social dislocation brought about by the abandonment of the desert through the movement of Warlpiri people to cattle stations, the mines, ration depots and, finally, welfare settlements? These processes rendered the Tanami Desert empty of Aboriginal people, and by implication, empty of places of significance (as far as non-Aboriginal people were concerned). However, memory, experience and the continued vitality of religious and social activity meant that place, whilst physically submerged, remained central to Warlpiri conceptions of their lived experience of the world. Developments that occurred in the political and economic positioning of Aboriginal people within Australian society have culminated in a partial re-appropriation of place in the Tanami Desert, if not specifically on Warlpiri terms. The introduction of people to the cash economy,
access to vehicles and the passing of the critical legislation of the Land Rights Act combined to afford Warlpiri enhanced opportunity to visit and live on their land once more after a separation of 30 years.

The post-war development of settlements such as Yuendumu and Lajamanu were part of the government’s wider project to control the drift of Aboriginal people to the towns of the Northern Territory, to provide health services, and ultimately to develop the economic potential of Aboriginal reserves as resources of both land and people (Long 1970:199). In 1965, the government settlements of Yuendumu and Lajamanu (Hooker Creek) had grown steadily and had populations of 758 and 311 people respectively (Long 1970:200) and these had increased by 1971 to 916 and 469 people (Rowse 1998:148). The government had succeeded in ensuring that people remained in place on settlements by the rationing policy and isolation from the cash economy. Nevertheless, the establishment of settlements had some unintended effects which actually fostered the perpetuation of cultural difference; difference that the authorities had presumed would disappear because of the drastic alteration to the traditional economic lifestyle of Aboriginal people. Long (1964) noted that in Papunya an assured food and water supply actually worked to favour continuing ritual traditions and culture by allowing ceremonies to be held more frequently and for longer periods of time. Such benefits were also enjoyed at Yuendumu and Lajamanu as Meggitt (1974) so precisely documented in his ethnography. Rowse (1998:202) convincingly argued that rationing in the context of the Aboriginal community not only had the unintended effect of perpetuating cultural difference, it also reproduced the continuing social and religious attachment of people to place in spite of their dislocation. In this vein, Rowse (1998:211-12) commented:

... well before governments acknowledged ‘land rights’ the Administration was taking more notice of something which long-staying missionaries and pastoralists had known for some time... that Indigenous people continued to be bonded to particular tracts of country.

There is no doubt that sedentary settlement life for Warlpiri engendered a richer ceremonial life for women who were afforded more opportunities to display and learn designs, songs and dances for jukurrpa than would have been at the disposal of people pre-contact (Glowczewski 1991, Laughren 1993). It is concluded that the physical separation from place experienced by Warlpiri served to heighten the emphasis of other kinds of links with place with respect to ceremony and identity. However, the intervening period of time marked by their absence from the land meant that the ability of Warlpiri to locate accurately the entire complement of their places was declining. To some extent, however, this situation was reversed by the change of policy of the state and the subsequent re-introduction of people to place through the processes
of the Land Rights Act and a new period of intense gold exploration and mining in the Tanami Desert.

**State policy, cultural difference and the re-emergence of place**

The key factor that would ultimately enable Warlpiri to have more access to their places in the Tanami Desert was signalled by the shift of government policy from assimilation to self-determination, although the latter policy was not clearly articulated until the early 1970s. The culture of dependence and rationing which had been the hallmarks of institutionalisation of Aboriginal people in the Northern Territory was altered radically in 1968 when they were incorporated into the wider cash economy through direct welfare payments. Prior to this time Warlpiri experience of the capitalist economy had been restricted to acquiring commodities in exchange for labour in mines and on pastoral leases. Even though people were encouraged to work in the settlements they were not fully participating in the wider economy of the nation. Peterson (1985) argued that one of the major reasons that countries like Australia, Canada and the United States addressed the problems of poverty and cultural difference amongst indigenous populations was that the transnational mineral boom sweeping the world during the 1960s took development into remote areas and highlighted the embarrassing fact that these peoples were isolated from the mainstream economy. Miners and resource developers needed security of tenure in projects and in their attempt to secure this the underlying issues of tenure were brought to the fore and created a focus for political and social action and awareness.

The incorporation of Aboriginal people into the cash economy actually served to further disengage people from the state (Peterson 1985) and was yet another unintended effect of government policy. Citing the work of Sahlins (1972) Peterson (1991a:2, 1999:849-50) argued that the introduction of cash welfare payments maintained people's dependence on the state and had no immediate direct impact on Warlpiri's economy of limited objectives. This economy continued to be constituted and reproduced by Warlpiri social relations of production and value systems in a context where they had no need to sell their labour in the absence of consumer dependency. David Martin (1995:13) analysed how cash has been incorporated into Aboriginal society on differentiated terms of autonomy versus relatedness. Essentially, the availability of cash to a limited extent transformed certain social, political and economic relationships within Aboriginal society yet critically it also had profound implications for reproducing Aboriginal society. The efforts of the state to encourage the participation of Warlpiri in the economy was only partially successful and when this fact is considered against the background of the continued vitality of Warlpiri culture the stage was set for the
government to allow Aboriginal people more power to direct their own lives through the policy of self determination.

The vaguely articulated policy of self determination at least carried a more tangible and material weight in the form of increased power and finances made available to Aboriginal people to dispose of on projects that they identified as important. Amongst Warlpiri the funds made available under the policy resulted in an immediate attempt to move back to their land in the Tanami Desert through the birth of the outstation movement. Nugget Coombs and Stanner (1974:20) were sent by the government to report on this phenomenon amongst Warlpiri in Yuendumu and Lajamanu and they observed that the movement indicated a clear rejection of the European lifestyle which was eschewed in favour of increasing Warlpiri access to country and, in particular, to renew association with their sacred places (Coombs and Stanner 1974:20). Myers (1988:61) also discussed this broader movement beginning in the 1970s from government settlements to smaller communities closer to their homelands as a focal point of a struggle for Aboriginal social and cultural integrity which sought to escape from the problems and pressure of adopting a more European lifestyle engendered by the cash economy.

During this period a number of other influences combined to focus both national and international attention on the plight of marginalised indigenous minorities within resource rich nation states such as Australia. Perhaps of most immediate significance were the upheavals in Australian intellectual and political society caused by the change of government after a long period of conservative rule and the involvement of Australia in the Vietnam War. It was within this political climate that the Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act 1976 was forged within a broader agenda of advancing Australia’s national image by addressing concerns involving justice for those people deprived of land without either consent or compensation. This removed a legitimate grievance against the state and simultaneously provided an economic base for Aboriginal people by recognising their particular spiritual links to their land and places (Peterson 1985). Nevertheless, this beneficial legislation only assisted those Aboriginal people living in the Northern Territory because the Federal Parliament was the sovereign parliament of the Northern Territory. Importantly for Warlpiri of the Tanami Desert this legislation was passed during a period of renewed and intense interest in developing Australia’s mineral resource base during the late 1970s which drew attention of large mining companies back to the remote areas of Australia such as the Tanami Desert.

The Land Rights Act marked an opportunity for Aboriginal people in the Northern Territory to maximise their own broader cultural objectives and Peterson (1991a:14) concluded that:
Nowhere does the moral economy of the encapsulating society more dramatically result in patent contradictions. The rights of citizens and the assumptions of the welfare state, meet the economy of limited production objectives and in the process the logic of a capitalist economy is subverted. Inalienable rights to land, statutory indigenes, neo-traditional practices and the frequently realised possibility of a life unstructured by work, perpetuate difference at the moment the state is seeking to dissolve it.

There were three major policies enacted by the Australian government concerning Aboriginal people in the Northern Territory which, although conceived and delivered on quite different ideological grounds, combined to have the unintended effects of increasing the autonomy of people such as Warlpiri. The establishment of settlements, the incorporation of Aboriginal people into the cash economy and the enactment of the Land Rights legislation were all large scale policy attempts to absorb people into the mainstream economy. Nevertheless, Aboriginal people managed to maintain their cultural identity and continued to focus resources and attention on the maintenance of their own social processes, kinship, identity and other cultural imperatives of which increasing their ability to access their land and places remained a fundamental objective. The Land Rights Act recognised the nature of Aboriginal people’s links to their territory and their rights, as part of their social identity, to be decision makers over the fate of their places. The development of such cultural politics for marginalised indigenous peoples in other first world nation states have likewise tended to hinge on veto rights over development, claims to a revenue stream, influence over decision-making and special status for traditional owners in resource rich areas (Howitt, Connell and Hirsch 1996:2-3).

The chapter has indicated that the encounter with Euro-Australians in the Tanami Desert completely disrupted Warlpiri’s occupation of place. It can be seen in the Tanami Desert that the new relations of production, technology, knowledge and labour rendered the Tanami Desert as empty space in the sense that there were only two places of significance Tanami and The Granites. Conversely Warlpiri society continued to produce many places of significance and little space (Lefebvre 1991:46). Change within Aboriginal society prior to contact was probably limited to two factors according to Berndt (1982:1), religion and the natural environment. This altered in the face of the European encounter because places such as Tanami and The Granites were now accorded new meanings by virtue of the role (as sources of water and gold) they had in the new economy (Sahlins 1976).

Place has emerged as a window into the broader historical scene of the Tanami Desert in order to approach a question of cultural change versus stability (Ohnuki-Tierney 1990:23). With respect to the major upheavals in Warlpiri society the historical cultural order of place has been altered. The question concerning how such a change relates to other cultural categories was
posed in the introduction with respect to structural transformation (Sahlins 1985:vii). In order to begin to answer this question the events of local history in the Tanami Desert have been placed in their local cultural orders to examine and isolate what kind of social and cultural change happened, or is happening in the Tanami Desert. The different cultures of Euro-Australians and Warlpiri have separate historicities (Sahlins 1985:x), place is common to both and has been competed for physically. Merlan (1998:215) concluded that “anthropology is not satisfied with the naturalism of the permanence of places but also seeks understanding of how Aboriginal feelings for permanence are reproduced even as the meanings of places are both socially sustained and altered.” In the Tanami Desert the meanings of place changed as there were two groups of people in the same place at the same time, groups which had radically different perceptions of what constituted place.

Place has so far been examined with respect to how it has been understood and received within western historical, political and intellectual frameworks. Yet to come to terms with the current relations between Warlpiri people and place in the context of gold mining and royalty payments requires detailed consideration of how Warlpiri symbolically sustain and reproduce their relations to place. The following chapters are intimately concerned with the question of what is Warlpiri place and how it informs and is constituted by people’s sociocultural concepts.
Chapter Four

From Site to Place in the Tanami Desert

To return to hordes “estates”; no one who has not experienced it can appreciate the vivid reality of the partially historic myths. The whole country through which we passed was apparently only mulga scrub, a few gum trees, creeks, a low or high range here and there, or some open plains, yet it is made a scene of much activity by aboriginal history embodied in myths, such as the journeys of “dream-time” people (Pink 1936:282).

By the beginning of the 1970s anthropologists working in Aboriginal Australia had already commenced the re-assessment of the complexity of links tying people to place. For example, Berndt (1970:1) noted that an outstanding feature of Australian Aboriginal socio-cultural life was the intimate and meaningful relationship of persons to their country and specific sites within it. Importantly, the complex social relationships of Aboriginal people were cast within a symbolic framework that reinforced ties to the land. Myers (1986:20) argued that it was within the wider practical social relations, which existed between individuals and their society, that space was defined and conceptualised for Pintupi: Aboriginal people organised space conceptually (Rapoport 1994:461).

This chapter is concerned with the analysis of the physical environment of the Tanami Desert, and the nature and distribution of the places of significance for Warlpiri. Related to this discussion will be the illustration of the nuanced meanings of site and place. Further, it will be demonstrated that what has commonly been referred to as the ‘site’ in the landscape must be differentiated from ‘place’. Intrinsic to this distinction is the recognition that place has social and metaphysical properties which lie well beyond any visible physical boundary. Place and space in the Tanami Desert must be engaged as phenomena that entail complex social and conceptual dimensions as compared with sites that are confined to a position in the landscape. The discussion of this distinction begins with the illustration of the relationship of the physical features of place and the ontology of jukurrpa and the capacity of place to serve as a sign for Warlpiri to interpret events, designs and objects which are related through the stories of the jukurrpa. The explanation of the ways in which the jukurrpa imposes an order on the physical landscape is the basis for an understanding of how it transmits a template of meaning and potential for action in Warlpiri social and mental landscapes and their reproduction of the jukurrpa as a master concept.
The study area

The area of land comprising the basis of this ethnographic study lies within the Tanami Desert of the Northern Territory, adjacent to the border with Western Australia. The investigation is limited to an area roughly rectangular in shape, the perimeter of which is defined by five 1:250,000 topographical map sheets (Tanami, The Granites, Mount Solitaire, Highland Rocks and Mount Theo). The study area totals approximately 85,250 square kilometres, representing over 20% of the land area of the Tanami Desert. Significantly, the study area is confined to the central western portion of the Tanami Desert and centred on an arena of intense activity as far as the exploration, and mining, of gold are concerned.

There are three major settlements, at the edge of this study area of the Tanami Desert, Yuendumu and Willowra to the south, and Lajamanu to the north as well as the mines at Tanami and The Granites and the fuel station at Rabbit Flat. Yuendumu and Lajamanu have permanent Aboriginal populations numbering between 800 and 1000 people each, whereas the population of Willowra fluctuates between two and four hundred people. There are also a number of outstation communities that are inhabited sporadically throughout the year with populations ranging from zero to 50 persons. The outstations within the area of this study include; Talbot Well, Picanniny Bore, Tanami Downs, Mount Davidson, The Granites, Mount Theo and Chilla Well.
Map 4.1 - 1:250,000 Mapsheets covering study area
The Physical Environment of the Tanami Desert

Climate

The climate of the Tanami Desert is semi-arid, with monsoonal influences during the wet season (November-March). According to Meggitt (1974:1), the majority of the Tanami Desert "lies within the five to ten-inch rain belt, although the northern (Hooker Creek) region enters the fifteen-inch belt. Annual rainfalls vary considerably throughout the area." This observation corroborates those made earlier by the explorer Charles Chewings (1930) who travelled through the region and estimated that if rainfall was averaging between 10 and 12 inches per year then the annual evaporation rate would be approximately 12 feet. The average temperatures ensure that there is a high evaporation rate allowing little surface water to remain after rainfall. Temperatures vary considerably during the course of the year with mean monthly minimums in July of six degrees Celsius at Yuendumu (some areas of the southern Tanami actually drop to freezing point), rising to a scorching average high of 39 degrees Celsius at Rabbit Flat in the centre of the desert during January (Gibson 1986). There are no conventional seasons of spring or autumn as such.

The climatic conditions within which Warlpiri lived could only be characterised as harsh. The desert is subject to temperature extremes through the course of the year and rainfall, when it occurs, provided only temporary relief from the predominantly hot, dry and inhospitable environment. The timing of rainfall is critical for the growth of vegetation. Peter Latz (1995:3) noted that a small amount of rain in the winter could have a more positive effect on overall growth patterns than falls of twice the volume in summer. The reason for this is that herb growth is restricted to the winter months (June-August) whereas grasses have a growing period from November to March corresponding to the monsoonal rains. The difficult climatic conditions combined with the topography and vegetation of the terrain, further emphasise the arid nature of the Tanami region in general.

Topography

Most of the Tanami Desert is characterised by flat sandplains consisting of poor soils. The only major range, the Truer Range, lies north-west of Yuendumu in the extreme south of the Tanami Desert. Other ranges, however, are to be found beyond the desert's northern boundary. Considering that major rivers usually exist in close proximity to ranges it comes as no surprise that such watercourses are unusual in the Tanami Desert (Latz 1995). The obvious exception
to this is the Lander River (Yarlalinji) which actually drains water into Lake Surprise (Yinapaka) in the Tanami Desert from higher ranges to the south.

Rayden Perry (1978) noted a strong correlation between the topography, soils and vegetation of the broad and flat basin and range structures of central Australia. He distinguished between five general topographical divisions on the basis of their relative heights above sea level and these serve as a useful introduction to a consideration of environment and place in the Tanami Desert. Perry (1978:73) ranked these divisions in terms of elevation from the highest to the lowest. First, the highest points are the mountains and hills that typically have rocky slopes and produce considerable rates of water run-off. The next zone adjacent to mountains are the foothills and floodplains which exist in conjunction with watercourses. They contain the majority of natural waterholes and springs and support the bulk of woodlands and grasslands due to their comparatively fertile soils and clays. Then next are found the plains which may be divided into two types. The first of these contains laterite plains characterised by red clayey soils and are most often dominated by mulga trees and ephemeral water sources. The second type of ‘flat’ country contains the spinifex plains and dunes restricted to the lower basin areas which are dominated by spinifex grass communities on deep infertile sand with no surface waters available. Finally, at the lowest level of Perry’s topographical divisions occur the salt lakes at the bottom of the basin which are usually dry, except after heavy rains.

Perry (1978) also commented that although groundwater was shallow and of good quality close to hills it only had a low storage capacity in these areas. As one moves further away from the hills, groundwater was to be found at increasing depth, becoming more shallow towards the basin, attended by a considerable drop in quality. Perry’s divisions are valuable because they attempted to synthesise topographical features, vegetation and soil in order to provide an overall picture of the central Australian environment. Like Perry, Latz (1995:8) divided the land systems into six general types that distinguished between regions based on topography/soil and plant communities: spinifex hills, grassy foothills, woodland fans and mulga flats, spinifex sand plains and sand dunes, and salt lakes. The only notable difference between the descriptive systems developed by the two observers was that Latz preferred to make a distinction between woodland fans and mulga flats. This is a critical qualification with respect to the Tanami Desert because of the different micro-environments that the two kinds of woodlands fostered, this point will be developed further shortly.

For the purposes of this study, the work of David Gibson (1986) provides the most relevant and thorough biological analysis of the area. He undertook a comprehensive study of the Tanami Desert and identified seven distinct physiographic zones through which the mini-environments of the Tanami may be distinguished:
• Sandplains - Gently undulating sandplains are the dominant feature of the Tanami and they become more eroded at the surface toward the north of the desert. This may, in part, be due to the higher rainfall and subsequent runoff.

• Sand Dunes - Within the study area of the thesis the major complexes of sand dunes are found to the south of Tanami Downs and to the north-east of Mount Davidson. Smaller regions of sand dunes are scattered throughout the Tanami Desert and vary considerably with regard to their size, shape and density. Dunes may range in length from two to 15 kilometres, two to 12 metres in height, and swale widths vary between 50 metres and several kilometres.

• Ranges, Low Rises, Pediments and Rock Outcrops - These include both sandstone and granite outcrops as well as the rubbled remnants of hills.

• Salt and Freshwater Lakes - Most lakes in the Tanami Desert are ephemeral and usually occur in the floodouts of rivers or in depressions in the landscape. There are also many claypans, both isolated and in systems and may be comprised of sand, silt or clay.

• Drainage Systems - Paleo-drainage channels divert rainfall and are marked by huge termite mounds, saline soils and little swamps which are nearly always dry. The major systems are located around The Granites and Rabbit Flat.

• Calcrete Areas - These are rubbly mounds with sand and sinkholes and are usually found in conjunction with salt lake systems.

• Watercourses - These are nearly always dry, although some waterholes are long-lasting. They are accompanied by adjacent woodland, siltplains and floodouts.

For Warlpiri, the Tanami Desert represented a vast array of complex mini-environments which they distinguished and described with criteria that elucidated not just types of terrain but, also, their states as well. They used combinations of descriptive words that reflected, to a considerable extent, the different kinds of divisions worked by Perry, Gibson and Latz. Nash noted that much of Warlpiri spatial and topographic terminology is readily translatable into English. He distinguished five categories within which Warlpiri topographical terms may be cast in order to most accurately describe the mini-environments of the Tanami Desert (Nash 1998:14). These categories were landmarks, vegetation mixes, soil and kinds of rock, relief in terms of relative heights and, finally, the directions of floodwaters and their catchments.
Flora and fauna

Overall, the Tanami Desert is characterised by sparse tree density, hummock grasses and shrubs, smaller localised plant habitats, spinifex grass and some mulga woodlands. Meggitt (1974:3) noted that: “to the superficial gaze, the local bush is a dreary monotony of drably-coloured spinifex-grass and stunted trees, studded with innumerable termite mounds... closer examination reveals a great variety of floral forms, most of which Warlpiri exploit.” There are, in fact, quite diverse plant communities and habitats in the Tanami Desert. The vegetation is closely linked to the topographical local environment, particularly in regions dominated by paleo-drainage channels, sand dunes, rocky outcrops and areas of limestone and calcrite.

The most common vegetation community found in the Tanami Desert is dominated by spinifex grasses and shrubs growing in the poor soils and is characteristic of two-thirds of the central Australian environment (Gibson 1986, Latz 1995). Smaller habitat types may be distinguished which are broadly categorised as dune summits, watercourses with woodlands, drainage depression systems with shrubs and some trees, shrub communities on rock outcrops and limestone outcropping which can support grasses as well as a variety of discontinuous shrub communities including mulga. As noted in the preceding section, there were no significant additions made by Latz (1995) to the earlier study by Gibson (1986). However, Latz distinguished between vegetation types based on soil types, whereas Gibson placed more emphasis on the availability of water, potential or otherwise. Effectively, these two emphases amount to the same thing since there is a close correlation between water availability and soil quality in the Tanami Desert. The study area is dominated by arid zone floral and faunal species although its most extreme northern border lies adjacent to the sub-tropical zone.

Warlpiri made extensive use of the resources provided by their environment as has been documented in articles discussing the uses and names of plants by John Cleland and Harvey Johnson (1939) and Sweeney (1947) on Aboriginal food use in Tanami. Meggitt (1974) provided a table detailing the uses of one hundred and three species of flora as food, raw material for implements (shafts, ropes, twines, resins), medicines, narcotics, blankets and coverings. By far the most important floral species for Warlpiri was the Mulga tree, *Acacia aneura*, *(Manja)* which Donald Thomson (1962:12) observed being used for digging sticks, vessels, shovels, scoops, boomerangs, throwing sticks and spear shafts. Added to this is the fact that besides being the most abundant tree species in the Tanami, Mulga also provides the best wood for cooking and warmth and is also a food source in itself. Meggitt (1974) provided an additional table that noted the uses of fauna in the Tanami; a list that he admitted was far from complete or exhaustive. The uses he noted for one hundred and thirty-seven species contained comments on their relative food value to Warlpiri. Latz (1995:44-72) provided a
thorough catalogue of the flora of central Australia and identified the vegetation types used by Aboriginal people as plants, fruits, seeds, tubers, greens, honey, insects, gums, saps and mushrooms. These types of vegetation had wide applications in all aspects of secular and profane Warlpiri life as medicines, drugs, water sources, implements, weapons and adhesives. They were used, also, for the capture of game, as ritual objects, as art, as ornaments, as decoration and for recreation purposes.

During the course of Gibson's various surveys between 1981 and 1983, people related to him their reasons for absent animal species in a variety of ways which emphasised that both animals and people relied upon each other in the desert for their survival. In one account it was proposed to Gibson (1986:69) that the disappearance of some of the major animal species coincided with the departure of Warlpiri from the Tanami Desert to lead a more sedentary existence in communities. Warlpiri were no longer moving through the country singing songs of increase for the animals, or caring for sites. Latz (1995) suggested that another explanation may lie in the fact that Warlpiri had ceased maintaining the country by lighting fires necessary for the regeneration of vegetation within such a mosaic habitat. Latz and Griffin (1978:78) concluded:

When survival depended on knowing that food of particular types and quantity would almost certainly be available following rain on a distant patch of burnt country then it is clear that, consciously or not, Aborigines were managing the land with fire to maximise food production.

Clearly, Warlpiri had an intimate relationship with a fragile and marginally productive environment in which their participation had a marked effect. Their departure from the central Tanami Desert obviously had consequences that can only be speculated upon here. The most important point to be emphasised is that existence in the Tanami Desert was, for all forms of life, dependent on the availability of water. Within the study area it is estimated, based on the data presented later in this chapter, that there were between 800 and 1000 named soakages, or 'native wells' as they were referred to by the early explorers such as Colonel Warburton (1875:147), upon which Warlpiri relied for their existence. The loss of these waters through the silting up of soakages is, perhaps, the most recent environmental change in the Tanami Desert as a result of Aboriginal people no longer moving through the country hunting and gathering and maintaining the water supplies.

**Availability of water**

By far the most outstanding feature of the Tanami Desert influencing the day to day lifestyle of Warlpiri was the lack of permanent water supplies. As already mentioned rain generally fell
only during the monsoonal period (November-March). This resulted in a virtual absence of
surface water available for people to utilise. In fact, permanent surface water was only found
in the study area in the isolated billabongs of Wilson Creek, the most notable of which is the
celebrated Kartata (Meggit 1966). The absence of creeks or rivers throughout the remainder
of the region meant that permanent reliable water was restricted to the following rockholes and
springs: Kamira - Coomarie Spring, Milwayi, Jarnami - Tanami Rockhole (from which the
Tanami Desert takes its name), Yumurrpa - Newlands Cave Soak and Pirita Pirita - Thomson’s
Rockhole. Given the size of the study area, this meant that Warlpiri had one permanent water
supply per 7,000 square kilometres. Considering the climatic conditions and scant resources it
seems surprising that people would be able to survive in such adverse circumstances. In the
central western Tanami Desert Meggitt (1974:48) commented that the land was:

some of the poorest and most desolate country in the Northern Territory. There are
few reliable wells and soaks, and only in the wet season could the small population
safely range far from the camp sites at Rabbit Flat Well [Wartala], the Granites
[Palakiki, Yarutula Yarutula], Thompson’s Rockhole [Pirita Pirita], or the Newland
Cave Soak [Yumurrpa].

An appreciation of how Warlpiri were able to successfully manage the scarcity of water in their
environment is assisted by a ranking of the relative importance of different kinds of water
sources; first, in terms of reliability and, second, with regard to availability. The best sources
of water were obviously the permanent springs named above. Then, in order of descending
importance, soakages, large rockholes, long-lasting waters such as lakes and billabongs, creeks,
smaller rockholes and clefts, claypans and trees.

Peterson (1978:26) ranked the water sources of the Tanami Desert in ascending order, from the
least to the most important. Firstly, the ephemeral supplies included claypans (after rains), tree
hollows, water-bearing roots, water-bearing frogs and dew. The second least reliable water
sources were the rockholes which were found in most outcrops and were exposed to a high
evaporation rate. Next were the waterholes that could often be comparatively long-lasting,
perhaps for as long as several years. They were located in creekbeds and depended on
supplementary rain for replenishment. Peterson recognised the soakages existing in sandy
areas or watercourses as the second most important source of water for Warlpiri because they
allowed use of country in the absence of surface water. Finally, of most importance were the
permanent waters and springs. The justification for elevating the permanent supplies above the
soakages was due to their use when all other sources had failed. They represented the ‘fall
back’ position for the people of the desert during the worst periods of drought.
Most importantly, it was the sub-surface water supply in the form of hundreds of soakages that were critical in order for Warlpiri to survive and maximise their use of the desert resources. Meggitt (1974:3) remarked:

the lack of dependable surface waters for most of the year presents a real obstacle to travel. The Aborigines overcame this in part by digging for soaks in suitable places in creek beds and by remembering the locations of tiny rock-holes and rock-seepages. The desert is latticed with native tracks following the lines of such waters.

Soakages make up well over one third of the sites surveyed. These soakages were visited frequently and dug out whenever people travelled to them. Later, when people returned the soakages needed to be re-dug only a little in order for water in drinkable quantities to trickle in over a few hours. Thomson (1962:271) recorded that in one soakage which lay in a depression between hills the water table was about three feet below the surface. Perhaps a more representative site, Kunjarri, was described by Thomson (1962:10) thus:

It is typical of thewaters on which the desert nomads have depended for so long. A great sheet of granite rock outcropped on the surface, in the centre of which was a deep fissure 17 yards in length with a maximum width of 5 feet. This cleft had gradually become filled with sand and silt, which was now packed tightly into the cavity in the centre of the rock. Into this matrix of sand and silt, three separate wells had been sunk down to the underlying impervious layer, each of which therefore formed a separate well, now at a depth of about 11 feet.

Ted Evans and Jeremy Long (1965:320) detailed similar findings in an area shared by both Warlpiri and Pintupi peoples. They reported another rockhole a mile and a half from Kunjarri that had a well about 12 feet deep, and another place that also had a soakage 12 feet deep. They also reported finding water in clefts. Thomson (1962:46) described Kimai as characteristic of the type of soakage that had been dug straight into the ground: “Kimai is a well or rock hole, 8 or 9 feet deep, sunk through bedded limestone and fed by a spring issuing through fissures in the stratified rock.” Obviously, the water table would rise and fall at different periods and soakages were maintained at whatever depth which was required in order to be serviceable. If they were not cared for then over time they would gradually be filled in by the forces of nature. Evans and Long (1965:329) predicted that “when the last Aboriginals leave, the location of most of the hundreds of native wells in the area will probably before long be forgotten”. It is more relevant, and accurate, to observe that the wells would be difficult to relocate after long periods of absence if they were not maintained. When Kimai and Kunjarri were visited in 1994 they were both about five feet deep and so were not difficult to find. However, the ease of locating these sites prove to be exceptions to the rule. In contrast the soakage at Rdartala is a more representative example, it had been searched for on at least six
separate occasions before the remnants could be identified. In the majority of cases the possibility of locating soakages that are not in close proximity to significant features or landmarks is remote.

The following table provides details of the sites of the Tanami Desert in terms of their association with water sources. The table is organised in descending order in terms of numbers of sites only. It does not reflect importance in terms of frequency of use, water quality or, for that matter, storage capacity.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Water Source</th>
<th>Number of Sites</th>
<th>Percentage of Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No water source</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>23.89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Soakage - (in plain or claypan)</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>22.79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Soakage - (in creeks or next to hills)</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>20.22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ephemeral - (claypan or small lake)</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>14.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rockhole - (also found in creeks)</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>13.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Permanent Spring</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1.83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Large Rockhole</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1.83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lake</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Waterhole</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>272</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.1 - Water supplies of sites in the Tanami Desert

Two hundred and fifty seven sites have been analysed in the survey area. However there are 15 that have counted twice in Table 4.1 because they were significant water sources which were soakages existing in conjunction with either claypans or rockholes.

It is clear that the abundance of soakages was instrumental in allowing Warlpiri to utilise the resources of the Tanami Desert effectively. Admittedly, a single soakage was of minor importance in terms of its size, storage capacity, reliability or frequency of use when compared to the other water sources that were available. However, as foreshadowed earlier, there were considerably more soakages existing in the Tanami Desert than are documented in this study. The sheer weight of numbers of soakages, and their distribution throughout the landscape, set the scene for the pattern of land use by Warlpiri more than other type of water resource.

Latz (1995) proposed that the land use pattern was best understood in terms of the availability of water. He believed that the areas supplying the greatest bulk and range of foods were located at the intersection of three or more different plant communities coinciding with a
reliable watersource. Both Latz and Perry (1978) believed that these abundantly resourced regions usually corresponded with the location of the major concentration of sacred sites and served as sanctuaries due to totemic prohibitions on certain food resources. This is not correct. The data presented here clearly demonstrates that there is no correlation between reliable water sources and a numerical concentration of sites; in fact, it shows quite the opposite. According to the table above, without taking into account rockholes, 60% of the sites are either ephemeral or soakages. Clearly the sites of the Tanami Desert do not necessarily coexist with water sources at all. Nonetheless the table does support the position that Latz (1995:22), like Peterson (1978) earlier, was correct in his ranking of land use types based on the availability of permanent water. Consideration of the location and abundance of water supplies is the most effective means of coming to terms with the people's use, occupation, and movement through land in the Tanami Desert.

**Land use pattern**

Meggitt (1974:32) estimated that prior to European arrival in the Tanami Desert, Warlpiri numbered around 1000 people over an area of approximately 35 000 square miles giving an average of one person per 35 sq. miles (90.64 sq. kms). In his discussion of the pattern of land use in which Warlpiri organised their hunting and gathering activities Meggitt (1974:49) distinguished between two kinds of seasons that are better conceptualised as cycles. The first cycle began at the end of both the summer rains (March) and the major ritual season. Water sources were replenished and vegetable foods and game gradually became more readily available. People scattered widely after heavy rains in order to use the ephemeral sources for as long as they would last (Peterson 1978:26). It was a combination of water and movement that determined how the Tanami Desert was occupied. Subsistence was strongly influenced by both the availability and abundance of water. Warlpiri people joined together in large groups hunting and moving from one water source to the next comparatively easily. In the south of the Tanami Desert, which received less rainfall than the north, it appears that the large groups would disperse somewhat more rapidly than their northern counterparts.

Before European settlement the Aborigines were heavily dependent on the foothills, piedmont plains and floodplains. Almost all of their reliable water supplies and most of their dreaming sites are in this landscape. Aboriginal use of the lateritic plains and spinifex sandplains was probably limited to periods following rain when they would be able to take advantage of short-term surface waters and move out into these landscapes. As the surface waters dried up the Aborigines would have retracted back to the foothills and piedmont plains (Perry 1978:74).
This characterisation of the land use pattern is the most accurate in terms of cycles of land use although Perry, like Latz, mistakenly argued that major sites were concentrated in areas of permanent water supplies. The analysis of site data illustrates the flaws in their assumptions. Meggitt identified the second cycle of the land use pattern of Warlpiri as marked by the period that could be roughly described as springtime (September-November). As the weather began to heat up again, the large groups of Warlpiri splintered into smaller foraging units because food and water resources could no longer accommodate people in great numbers. In regard to the extreme south-west of the Tanami Desert, Evans and Long (1965:328) observed that “most of the inhabitants of the area... had been together during the hot summer months and had scattered not long before when rain had fallen.” People would tend to fall back to the best waters only when all of the other sources were exhausted or failing. This fall back to good waters in times of duress was particularly characteristic of the south-western Tanami. Thomson encountered 42 people at an everlasting water, Labbi-labbi on the north of Lake Mackay however it would appear from the documented evidence that smaller foraging groups were the norm. In 1957, Evans and Long (1965) met 17 people at Kimayi and whilst on patrol near Lake Mackay, Long (1989) reported meeting two groups of people, one numbering 20 and the other 22 individuals. Peterson and Long (1986:135) referred to the records of 39 groups in the immediate region of the study area and concluded that the numbers of people in foraging units ranged from four to 28 with a mean of 13.6. At the end of the spring cycle the smaller foraging groups would again slowly coalesce into larger bodies to begin the major ceremonies and to await the coming rains.

As Peterson et al. (1978:9) have concluded the land use strategy of Warlpiri could be summed up as the exploitation of the poorest areas in good times and the best areas during the most difficult periods when food and water were not readily available. It is evident that, during the course of the seasons, the combined effects of the rains and the subsequent availability of water and food were instrumental in dictating the size of Warlpiri foraging groups as they moved through the landscape. The largest gatherings at ceremonial times, such as the one observed of 150 people recorded by Gee (1911:20), would have been unlikely to last for more than a few weeks because of the obvious strain that they would have placed on the immediate resources of an area.

In this broad reconstruction of land use the picture conveyed commences with a group moving from place to place utilising the available water and resources. This movement was influenced, and constrained, to a certain extent by the local knowledge of the members of the group itself as well as the activities of neighbouring foraging units. In this manner sites served not only as geographic and navigational foci, but also as the nodal points from which day to day
subsistence activities were launched. Semi-permanent camps were made for short periods of time and from these people undertook brief forays, hunting and gathering the produce within the immediate vicinity. When Warlpiri left a site or camp to travel they would often leave material behind indicating their intention to return. Evans and Long (1965:320) reported arriving at a dry soak where they found weapons, tools and vegetable foods stored in the mulga scrub. Thomson (1962:12) emphasised the significance of the discovery of reserves of prepared and desiccated vegetable foods was “of much interest, particularly in a drought year and in face of the belief that is widely held that the Australian aborigines live from hand to mouth and make no attempt to conserve food.”

The composition of the band included families as well as single men from the same community. The group usually functioned as a unit, yet at other times it did not. Peterson and Long (1986:32-3) argued that any one individual’s range could not be equated with that of the band because of a variety of factors which influenced residence. These reasons included marriage, initiation and ceremonial duties. Furthermore, because kin could also be found in neighbouring ‘bands’ options for individual residence were enhanced allowing for greater fluidity. In terms of the land use pattern foraging groups would be in relatively close contact with one another. This was due, in part, to the reliance upon seasonally abundant resources which necessitated a working knowledge of what other foraging groups were doing so as to avoid areas that had already been exploited. The micro-political environment of the band did not subsume individual interests, nor did it confine residence or group composition along strictly patrilineal lines. Meggitt (1974:64) observed:

Thus although Djangangulangu at Yuendumu is regarded as djabaljaridi-jungarai country, members of these subsections do not reside there exclusively. Indeed, this would not be possible, for there is no water and little vegetation on or near the hill. Nor are these people the only ones who may visit the place. Any Ngalia man has the right to camp in this country and to hunt over it, and he may extend the privilege to members of any subsection who are visiting from another Walbiri community.

The composition of the foraging groups as ‘hordes’ was described by both Meggitt (1974:71) and Thomson (1962), neither of whom supported the Radcliffe-Brownian view of them as interchangeable with a patrilineal and patrilocal band. Meggitt believed that ties of kinship were the most important determining factor in the composition of foraging groups which could vary widely depending on season and other factors. Meggitt’s opinion must be accepted with caution since his conclusions were never based on any direct observations in the field. The crucial point Meggitt wanted to make was that the group was generally formed by members from the same community. Support for Meggitt’s view may be found in Thomson’s (1962:113) observations which led him to conclude that the camp sites he encountered “had
been used by a small group of the status of a horde, about two or three families and probably a single men’s camp, where the unmarried men and the young boys awaiting initiation slept and cooked their food.” Thomson, however, never followed the travels of any one group long enough to observe changes to membership over time. Given that a reconstruction of land use patterns for Warlpiri is severely constrained due to the absence of any dense or complete historical sources, it is prudent to refer to the long oral accounts recorded by Meggitt (1966). These oral accounts by Warlpiri people evoke a fluid image of the utilisation of land and group composition by their constant reference to individuals and households visiting one another and coming into contact with a wide range of social groups: potential spouses, in-laws (through bride service), parents, siblings, extended family members, co-initiates and friends. In addition, broader ceremonial gatherings, brought people together in large numbers, and often for extended periods of time.

Strehlow (1970:101) concluded that geography and climate were among the main factors that determined both the size of the smaller structural units, or local groups, and the long-range economic and political relationships that existed between the larger, geographically joined units such as ‘tribal’ subgroups and whole ‘tribes’. The brief analysis of the physical environment of the Tanami Desert has been necessary to establish that sites were of critical importance in establishing a close connection of people to land in the Tanami Desert in terms of resource acquisition and land use. However, the role of sites in Warlpiri peoples’ lives cannot be contained within a utilitarian dimension only, the mythic associations of sites also helped to facilitate the memory of where water could be found (Rose 1987:61) by serving as a topographical-religious map. Yet this argument ignores the depth of cultural meanings that sites carried in terms of their capacity to simultaneously relate people, places and jukurrpa to each other.

**Site Data of the Tanami Desert**

There are 257 sites which have been accurately located within the 85,250 square kilometres of the study area. This produces an approximate mean of one site located per 331 square kilometres. Up to this point the chapter has aimed to illustrate some of the physical and locational aspects of these sites and to discuss them in a broader context of resources and land use. Yet to come to terms with the significance of sites to Warlpiri people requires investigation of how such physical sites are culturally constructed and ordered as places. The knowledge of the spatial organisation of sites is primarily coded in song cycles, and materially manifested in sacred paraphernalia and associated designs (Meggitt 1966, Munn 1986). This knowledge is also passed on through sand mapping and drawings (Munn 1986, Nash 1998).
Prior to their removal from the Tanami Desert much of the learning of spatial organisation for Warlpiri would have also been based on personal observation and experience. The cultural structuring of the landscape involves Warlpiri understanding of how places came into existence, the resulting classification of place and the naming of place as a result of this, and the linking of places to each other.

**Estimated number of sites**

There are 45 dreamings (see Appendix One) associated with the 257 mapped sites. It is estimated that these sites represent approximately only one quarter of the sites that can be named through the entire repertoire of Warlpiri knowledge. There are two difficulties with the estimation. First, not all of the sites have been able to be physically located. Second, the recording of all of the site names for the *jukurrpa* identified within the survey area has not been completed. However, this does not preclude an informed estimate of the number of sites that may exist, or have existed, within the survey area.

The estimate of the total likely number of sites in the area as known to people at the beginning of the 20th century is based on the thorough recording of five of the major travelling *jukurrpa* through the Tanami Desert. These are: *Ngapa* (Rain) (Meggitt 1966, Peterson et al. 1978), *Wampana-Jardiwarnpa* (Hare Wallaby) (Peterson et al. 1978, Mountford 1968, Lander 1993), *Marliyararragarra* (Two initiated men) (Stead 1985), *Walkirdi* (Snake) (Stead 1985), and *Mala* (Rufous Hare Wallaby) (Peterson et al. 1978, Stead 1985).

In the case of *Ngapa* (Rain) *jukurrpa* the information collected would indicate that the number of sites from *Puyurrur* in the south to *Kamira* and *Jalangapurlu* in the north would amount to approximately 80 sites, of which 43 have been mapped. This example cannot be considered as representative because the track has multiple sections, and it has been very well mapped due to the fact that the most knowledgeable informants were owners of that dreaming.

Through the illustration of several examples it will be argued here that, in the case of most *jukurrpa* in the survey area, only one in four sites have been located. In the case of the *Wampana* (Hare Wallaby) dreaming followed from *Warntapari* in the south to *Pawala* in the north there are approximately 40 named sites, of which only 14 have been located. Peterson et al. (1978:2) reported a similar finding for this dreaming, and the authors noted that they were only able to physically locate three of 17 sites. Another illustration recorded in the Tanami Desert is the *Mala* (Rufous Hare Wallaby) *jukurrpa*. In this example there are three located sites recorded in the data. Yet the information gathered indicates that there are a total of 14 sites associated with this track between *Jila* and *Warralya*, a distance of 191 kilometres. This
*jukurrpa* continues on to *Uluru* (Ayers Rock) in Pitjantjatjara country. These two dreamings give an approximate average of one located site per every four recorded sites.

A final example involves the other extreme case where the names of the sites associated with the *jukurrpa* have all been recorded, but very few of the sites have actually been physically located. An excellent illustration of this situation is found in the case of the *Marliyarrajarr* (Two Initiated Men) dreaming track that was documented as involving two sites in the Chilla Well land claim (Stead 1985:79-80). He noted that it appeared to be a localised dreaming centred on *Warrajinp* (Lone Rock). Information gathered in this ethnography recorded the names of 16 sites associated with this *jukurrpa* and that this dreaming actually travels a distance of about 80 kilometres and links 16 separate sites of which only two were recorded by Stead (1985).

Not all of the dreaming tracks in the Tanami Desert are as long as the *Ngapa* (Rain) *jukurrpa*, or so markedly localised as in the case of *Mirrirri* which is associated with only one site. These extreme instances prove to be exceptions to the rule. Establishing an informed estimate of the number of sites in the Tanami Desert requires omitting these non-representative examples. The survey has established an important point that, on average, only one quarter of the sites have been located for each *jukurrpa*. By taking into account these two factors, as well as the recorded information on site names, it is estimated that, prior to the disruption of Warlpiri life in the Tanami Desert brought about by the incursions of Europeans, there were approximately 1000 sites that could have been named and located within the survey area.

**Sites as physical features**

At first glance, one is immediately struck by the correlation between the sites and features of the terrain noted on 1:250,000 maps and indeed the first characteristic of a site to note is that it is a physical feature of some kind. According to the *Concise Oxford Dictionary* (Sykes 1976), a feature is a distinctive or characteristic part of a thing, the part that arrests attention. I argue that a site is a position in the landscape that exists in isolation from other features. The features of the terrain indicated by *yapa* as sites of significance encompass all manner of incarnate aspects of the landscape including combinations of the following; trees, groves of shrubs, stone arrangements, quarries, caves, outcrops, lakes, billabongs, claypans, gorges, ravines, mountains (as named on maps), ranges, hills, rockholes, soakages, creeks, rivers, waterholes, sandhills, termite mounds and sinkholes. All of these sites of significance are named, and seen as having been created by the travels of one or more *jukurrpa*. Berndt (1970:6) noted that there was a similar variety of Aboriginal sites in Arnhem Land although he cautioned:
It is not a matter of all, or any, such features being regarded as living evidence of a spiritual and contemporarily significant power solely because of its unique shape. Some kind of selection has always been involved, although the basis for selecting one geographical possibility rather than another is not always immediately clear.

Whilst that may have been the case in Arnhem Land it is extremely rare that a major physiographic feature encountered in the Tanami Desert is not a Warlpiri site. In the few such instances of a distinctive feature not being named senior informants were always reluctant to rule out the possibly that a major feature was a site. They always insisted on discussing the feature in question with other knowledgeable people back in their communities. In particular, if any feature was encountered that appeared to be the remnants of a soakage or a potential water supply that was not able to be immediately identified as a nameable site, Warlpiri informants would identify it as a place of significance, but not necessarily a new place (cf. Merlan), neatly illustrating the intersection of both Warlpiri and Western frameworks concerning the importance of water supplies.

The vast majority of the located sites of significance are linked to prominent physiographical features because they are easily described and remembered as indicated by the features listed in Table 4.2. Soakages, on the other hand, are often not visible until one is almost on top of them, especially if they have not been dug out or cleaned for some time and prevented from silting up. Ninety of the sites located in the research area of the Tanami Desert included soakages. An important feature of the mapped soakages is that nearly all of them existed in conjunction with a topographical or physical feature. For example it may have lain close to a ridge or outcrop. At other times a soakage may have been located in a thick stand of trees, most often yirminti (Bean Tree - *Erythrina vespertilio*). In the present survey most of the named sites which have been recorded in the case of the Ngapa (Rain) and Wampana (Hare Wallaby) jukurrpa have not been located. These missing sites are soakages that are not in close proximity to obvious physiographical features and thus easily identified.
Table 4.2 - Sites of the Tanami Desert by feature

Although the survey took into account the details of 257 sites 27 have been counted twice in the above table. As noted previously, the explanation for this lies in the fact that soakages are often found in conjunction with other features, and both may be held to be equally important by yapä. Therefore, a site may be a composite set of different kinds of physiographical features, the elements of which combine to comprise the site. Certainly there are more sites that could have been counted twice but those that were counted twice here were exceptional cases where the site was seen to contain two major distinct features neither of which could be identified by informants to be more important than the other, whereas others were more easily identified as the defining feature and were listed above. In order to appreciate why this is so requires an understanding of how a site, and its features, became imbued with significance and the relationship between physical features as sites and as places in the ontology of jukurrpa.

Site names

All Warlpiri sites of significance have their own particular name. Munn (1984:59) has remarked that for Warlpiri:

The initial naming of ancestral sites is attributed to the ancestors, just as is their physical creation. Indeed the one tends to imply the other... The object world is both verbally and visually constituted: ancestral naming and transformation create a determinate, fixed phenomenal reality grounded in the specificity of form and verbal sign (proper names).
The accurate recording of the names of sites has several difficulties. Depending on the dialect of Warlpiri speaker there are often marked differences in the suffixes emphasised, and sometimes there are different names altogether. Another obstacle to obtaining consistency in site names is that different names are employed, depending on the age or gender of the speaker and their audience. When a site is visited for the first time after a period of considerable absence the most important task for those present is to confirm the name of the site amongst themselves. These discussions are based on their combined knowledge of the jukurrpa in the region and the constellation of other sites in the immediate vicinity. Another difficulty posed for consistency occurs when people change the emphasis of words in a name, or give the name of an activity or interaction with another jukurrpa encounter at the site. For example, in the case of the recorded site names associated with the Warrapirrapirra (Small yellow snake) jukurrpa, Stead (1985:80) documented 10 different site names and the data analysis has gathered 11. Although these sites are listed in essentially the same order (except one), only six of the names correspond. When a senior man was questioned about this, he said that both lists were correct and he explained that the discrepancies were due to differences in the emphasis on the activity of the jukurrpa at the site. This point shall be returned to at the end of the chapter.

The name of a site refers to the particular transformation of the landscape involving the jukurrpa which is its focal point. This does not necessarily preclude the existence of various named sites at the same location. The nature of the activities and interactions of different ancestral heroes often created sites in close proximity. However, all have their own specific name or toponym. In his ethnosemantic analysis of Warlpiri toponyms, Nash (1998:15) acknowledged the work of Eugene Hunn (1996) and noted some similarities between Warlpiri and certain native North American groups involving:

frequency of places named from a plant or animal association, including mythical associations, the naming of locations along a river (rather than one name for the entire river), and the lack of ‘biographical’ toponyms (places named after historical individuals).

The following table classifies Warlpiri toponyms into categories based on the meaning of the site name itself.
Table 4.3 - Categories of site names

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Site Name Category</th>
<th>Number of Sites</th>
<th>Percentage of Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>182</td>
<td>70.81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fauna Link</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>9.72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activity Link</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>7.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Human Link</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>6.61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flora Link</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>3.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feature Link</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1.55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Element Link</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>257</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Clearly the majority of site names, over 70%, are esoteric. They are just names, have no translatable meaning and are specific to a certain location. With respect to Warlpiri site names Nash (1998:16) noted:

A toponym is often equated to a song word, that is a 'word' in a particular verse of the songs of the Dreaming to which the place is affiliated. This is notably true of toponyms which are 'just names', i.e. do not have some other sense, e.g. as a common noun.

There are sites that have been mapped the names of which refer directly to the floral or faunal dreaming track to which they are related. For example, there are sites known as 'Frog' (Jarjii), 'Bandicoot' (Pakurr) and Ngarlwanu (Sweet Grevillea Flower). Often the names of these sites include the attachment of a suffix such as kurlangu (belonging) or jankga (from) that further confirm their direct relationship to certain jukurrpa. There are other sites that actually describe some kind of activity of an ancestor that is part of the jukurrpa, but not the ancestor with which the dreaming track is associated. For example the site Lungkardajarra translates as 'Two Blue Tongue Lizards', yet this site is in fact part of the Ngapa (Rain) dreaming. The site receives its name from the role the Lizards play in the story, and serves to mark the geographic location where they were involved with the Rain ancestors. A related example also involves the Ngapa (Rain) jukurrpa at the opposite end of the Tanami Desert in the case of the site Milwayi (Common Bandy-Bandy snake, Vermicella annulata). There are still other sites such as Yartulu Yartulu, The Granites, where the name of a site is the translation of its dominant topographical feature, granite rocks, these are feature named sites of which there are four in the study area. Finally, there are site names that refer to specific anthropomorphic qualities of the ancestor itself, human beings or the cultural categories of Warlpiri. As Nash (1998:16) observed:
A toponym may also be a personal name, typically inherited across two generations. The form of such a name is in turn related to an element of the related Dreaming and song; similarly some names involve a subsection (‘skin’) name.

There is an extremely close connection between a person whose name is taken from a site and that site itself. The naming of sites suggests further linkages between Warlpiri and the historical and religious significance of sites in the Tanami Desert. It must be emphasised that it is not the feature of a site per se that is of importance for Warlpiri, rather it is the social and cultural meanings, symbols, histories and attachments with which it is associated. This is the underlying reason why it is so difficult to ask Warlpiri to abstractly conceptualise parts of the landscape as regions, because their comprehension of the land must be understood as a social map which can only be interpreted in a localised geographical context. It is virtually impossible for people to produce a map in the conventionalised Western sense that encompasses all of the given sites of significance in any given area. Part of the reason for this lies in the division of knowledge and authority over sites between semimoieties, or more properly, local descent groups through which the rights of kirda as owners are transferred.

Sites and Jukurrpa

*Jukurrpa* is the categorical name for the ancestral heroes and the paths that they travelled and also the name of the creative period in which they took part (Munn 1962:972, Dussart 2000). It was the time of the foundation of Warlpiri history and cosmology. Prior to the emergence of the ancestral heroes, the earth was conceived of as a featureless mass. The earth and sky existed as given, in the Aboriginal world view and the Dreaming as an ontological concept gave the world its current form, a form that may also be transformed in the future (Elkin 1969:87). It was the activities of *jukurrpa* that created not only the physiographic features of the land but also the floral and faunal species, including human beings. The events of the *jukurrpa* literally gave the world, and everything in it, form and significance. These events encompassed a complicated and interwoven range of human and supernatural actions by the ancestral heroes that transformed the landscape.

These beings were responsible for the origin of customs and social institutions. They moved across the land in the Dreamtime period, from place to place, or camp to camp, having adventures, performing various rites, and meeting others of their own kind; and they left behind them part of their own sacred essence, which is still present at certain sites (Berndt 1970:2).

The significance of the activities performed by the heroes are the cornerstone of Warlpiri cultural practices and social relations. Their spiritual essence remains at the sites that were created, and as Sutton (1988:19) remarked: “there is no geography without meaning or without
history”. Indeed, history is incorporated into the features of the physical world and creates enduring relationships and identities for both people and places (Myers 1986:68-9) but also allows for negotiations of those very meanings, identities and relationships.

The ancestral transformations of the jukurrpa which produced the major features of the country were divided by Munn (1984:58) into three categories; metamorphosis, imprinting and externalisation. These categories of transformations were differentiated according to the kind of interaction that took place between the jukurrpa and the land to create sites in the landscape. In others words, the ancestral heroes “took on or produced material forms consubstantial with themselves” (Peterson et al. 1978:6). Metamorphosis occurred when the hero became part of the landscape. Imprinting involved the jukurrpa doing something to the land with their body or some kind of tool or object. Transformations characterised by externalisation were events in which the ancestor left part of their body, regardless of whether the action was intended or not.

“The totemic beings have marked the sites by both naming them and by leaving signs of their passage” (Glowczewski 1991:28) «Les êtes totémiques ont marqué les lieux à la fois en les nommant et en y laissant des signes de leur passage». Warlpiri stories of jukurrpa contain very clear descriptions of these ancestral transformations and the accounts translated by Peggy Rockman Napaljarri and Lee Cataldi (1994) present some excellent examples. Aboriginal people read their cosmology in the landscape as Tim Ingold (1994:338) argued. The following short examples assist in explaining the manner in which imprinting, metamorphosis and externalisation are thought to have taken place.

The Ngapa (Rain) jukurrpa is a story rich in detail revolving around a variety of interrelated activities concerning not only rain and thunderclouds, but also frogs, lightning, fire, animal increase and the famous Rainbow Snake (Warnayarra) (Hiatt 1984b). The rainfall in this northernmost area, where much of the action is centred, is very high compared to the rest of the Tanami Desert and is subjected to the most flooding. The region lies at the juncture of the monsoonal influence of the north and the drier interior of the continent. Furthermore, the way in which the number of places and the actual paths of the dreaming track themselves continually split and rejoin is evocative of the frenetic activity of the storms and floods which visit the area during the wet season. The activity described in the Ngapa jukurrpa is transferred onto the physical landscape primarily through the violent strikes of lightning and accompanying deluges. These literally rend the earth, the geological and geographical features which they leave behind being testament to the creative and transformative powers of the Ngapa dreaming, these places are examples of imprinting. The transformative effect of the jukurrpa is augmented by the thrashing, bursting travel of the Rainbow Snake leaving water related features in the wake of his tumultuous journey through sky, cloud and earth. The sites
Nyirntijiwalkari and Jiwaranpa are at a huge lake that may be full of water, or dry, depending on the course of the seasonal cycles. This is the site where Warnayarra came crashing to the earth after release from the huge thunderheads that were made by the men sitting down and singing to the south at Kulpurnu (Elias 1998). Warnayarra fell and thrashed on the ground, its movements creating the lake where the snake may potentially dwell, this site is an example of metamorphosis.

Sites that are created by the process of externalisation are generally highly restricted places in terms of access and knowledge given the often violent and sexually explicit nature of the transformation involved which leaves part of the jukurrpa being behind in the landscape. Externalisation sites are universally masked by the provision of an ‘inside’ and ‘outside’ story in order to maintain knowledge restrictions based on age, sex and authority. How Warlpiri order sites in terms of access to knowledge and significance of the story shall be returned to shortly.

To a limited extent, then, there is a link between the physical nature of the sites and the jukurrpa with which they are associated. An investigation of the links between sites and jukurrpa is necessary in order to understand not only how topographical features come to symbolise and invoke the activities of the dreamtime ancestors but, also, the ordering and connection of sites of significance. This analysis will be crucial for the examination of the ways in which sites are spatially and culturally ordered in terms of individual and collective rights in later chapters. Sutton (1988:18) has pointed out that jukurrpa are “centrally concerned with underpinning the rights of particular groups to specific areas of land, and they often symbolise relationships of alliance or political disjunction between territorial groups, especially in the case of travelling myths”.

Initially, jukurrpa can be divided into two categories reflecting the degree to which they extend or ‘travel’ across, through, above or under the landscape. Those jukurrpa that are restricted to one or a handful of sites in a strictly limited geographical area may be termed ‘localised’. More common in the Tanami Desert are sites connected to jukurrpa which travel over a long distance, linking a string of widely spaced sites together. These ‘travelling’ jukurrpa may begin and end within the same territory or travel across several territories. The ‘type’ of jukurrpa has significance in itself as Sutton (1995:57) has commented: “At certain points in the landscape, Dreamings of all these types may intersect, so that a single place has multiple connections to distinct but overlapping sets of people.”

Moreover, the travelling jukurrpa may be further divided into four types that are based on the actual forms of the creative ancestor themselves and this may also have an effect on the extent
to which people may be related to a place given the extent of influence it exerts. This is illustrated by analysing the different physical correlatives of jukurrpa as Sutton (1995:57) noted in the Tanami Desert:

Rain Dreamings typically move in swathes kilometres wide, as do Bushfire Dreamings, often sweeping off in sidetracks, as the natural phenomena they figure also do. A Euro Dreaming may, by contrast, hop in a fine line and one direction. Such differences may also spell differences of social inclusiveness, as the lands of families are joined more comprehensively by one than another.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Jukurrpa</th>
<th>Number of Jukurrpa</th>
<th>Number of Sites</th>
<th>Percentage of Site Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Travelling Fauna</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>32.86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Travelling Elemental</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>23.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Travelling Human</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>21.40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Travelling Flora</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>16.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Localised Fauna</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2.72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Localised Human</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1.94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ceremonial Complex</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>45</strong></td>
<td><strong>257</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.4 - Jukurrpa of the Tanami Desert classified by movement

The analysis of jukurrpa classified by movement will help to open up how Warlipiri categories of the importance of places are ranked, contrasted and maintained.

**Localised jukurrpa**

Localised dreamings are those that are associated with a single site or a number of sites within a limited geographical vicinity. Whilst the sites of localised jukurrpa may involve other jukurrpa, their primary distinguishing feature is that they do not travel across the land to any great extent. They are confined to one site or perhaps several, in close spatial proximity. The jukurrpa may dwell in the one physical location. An example of this kind of localised jukurrpa is Mirrirri, a lizard dreaming described as an old man who sits down at that place by himself. Here is another example of Munn’s (1984) second transformative category of metamorphosis. On the other hand, an example of a localised jukurrpa featuring a number of sites in a limited area is the Wankuru (Crow) consisting of two hills in close proximity.
Significantly, the localised *jukurrpa* only concern the activities of human, floral and faunal ancestral heroes they do not incorporate *jukurrpa* involving forces of nature. As Sutton noted *jukurrpa* such as Rain (*Ngapa*) and Fire (*Warlu*) are huge dreaming tracks in the Tanami Desert encompassing large geographical areas as do the natural elemental phenomenon with which they are connected. As a result such *jukurrpa* cannot be classified as localised, not only on physical grounds but also because the extent of their travels actually connect up different social groups and this is an important distinguishing feature between travelling and localised *jukurrpa*.

**Travelling elemental *jukurrpa***

Some of the most celebrated Warlpiri *jukurrpa* involve ancestral heroes who represent, or rather embody, forces of nature. In this thesis they will be referred to as elemental. According to the definition in the *Oxford Dictionary* (1976) elemental refers to a power of nature, and also has the connotation of entity or force manifested by occult means. The *New Shorter Oxford English Dictionary* (1993) adds that such a power may also personify a phenomenon or aspect of nature. The most famous example of the elemental *jukurrpa* is the *Ngapa* (Rain) *jukurrpa* that has already been introduced. This dreaming has numerous branches which disengage and re-connect in various locations, reflecting the activities and exploits described in the story. As has been indicated the metaphorical significance of the elemental *jukurrpa* is often quite striking. The Rain dreaming travels some 500 kilometres through the Tanami Desert unifying and incorporating a host of interrelated sites and *jukurrpa*. This metaphysical path is evocative of the seasonal weather pattern typified by the huge white clouds (*Milpirri*) and dark thunderheads (*Mangkardu*) which build at the beginning and end of the wet season in the south of the Tanami Desert. These storms travel swiftly northward into the desert, as does the dreaming track. In a similarly suggestive manner the storms coming into the desert from the Victoria River District on the northern end of the Tanami Desert also evoke a close connection between the paths of the dreaming tracks and the shifting storms themselves.

A different kind of link between an elemental *jukurrpa* and the landscape is encountered when the story and sites of the *Warlu* (Fire) *jukurrpa* which travels eastward across Tanami Downs Station is considered. The combination of the *Warlu* sites mark the passage of the fire dreaming as it burnt the land during the *jukurrpa*. The physical manifestations of this conflagration include a wide variety of features (hills, billabongs, lakes and soakages). In explicit contrast to those sites in the Rain dreaming, the Fire sites are clustered in a close band together. In this case, there are 13 located sites within an area measuring approximately 50 by 25 kilometres. This averages a site every 100 square kilometres for the *Warlu jukurrpa* as
opposed to the average of located sites of one every 250 square kilometres for the Ngapa jukurrpa. The proximity of the Fire sites metaphorically links them together in a manner that is evocative of the image of a fire moving along like a wall consuming all in its path. Not only is this how the jukurrpa is told, the story also conjures up the image of how fire actually burns through the spinifex plains of the desert.

**Travelling fauna jukurrpa**

Similar to the travelling elemental jukurrpa, this category of dreaming track is also strongly evocative in terms of the metaphorical links between sites in the landscape and the characteristic features of the animal itself. These jukurrpa also often traverse the entire length of the Tanami Desert with neither a beginning nor an end, such as the Marlujarra (Two Kangaroos) jukurrpa which is tracked in an erratic manner much like the way real Kangaroo tracks are encountered on the surface of the earth. Perhaps even more evocative, is the swirling motion of the flight of birds and subsequent links established between far-flung sites such as those recounted in the Ngatijirri (Budgerigar) jukurrpa that was introduced in Chapter One.

Significantly, the anthropomorphic characteristics of fauna jukurrpa are very pronounced, and there are few that are not described at least during some phase of the story of their travels as men or women. The primary reason why they are characterised here as fauna jukurrpa, rather than human jukurrpa, is that in the latter category the ancestral heroes always retain a human form, albeit 'superhuman' at times.

**Travelling flora jukurrpa**

Jukurrpa such as the Yarla (Bush Potato), Watiyawarnu (Two Nangalas gathering Acacia seeds) and Ngarlhwuny (Sweet Grevillea Flower) are often far travelling jukurrpa traversing many sites. However, they are often less suggestive in terms of metaphorical linkages which can be drawn between the mythical and the physical qualities of sites than either the elemental or fauna jukurrpa. The notable exception to this is the Yarla (Bush Potato) jukurrpa that includes many low hump-like hills, described as the Potatoes themselves, which move through, and push up, the earth in their burrowing travels.

**Travelling human jukurrpa**

Jukurrpa that evoke the travels of human ancestors are often the most important because they concern activities defining major yapa life cycle events. These include circumcision, higher
levels of initiatory revelation as well as both secular men’s and women’s ceremonies. Human *jukurrpa* most commonly involve transformations of the landscape that fall under Munn’s (1984) final transformative category of externalisation. These transformations usually concern activities involving sexual exploits or extreme violence, as in the case of the *Mamingirri* (Two Devils) who left the bones of their deceased victims as sites.

**Ceremonial complex *jukurrpa***

For Warlpiri, as a group, there is only one *jukurrpa* that can be said to be of equal importance to everyone. *Kajirri* is, indisputably, “really dear and number one”. The importance of this *jukurrpa* has been extensively analysed by Meggitt (1966). For the purposes of analysis in this thesis the *Kajirri jukurrpa* deserves its own category because although the two heroes of the *jukurrpa* travel widely the emphasis of the dreaming is at a complex of highly restricted sites. It is, in a sense, a ceremony of ceremonies. It unifies aspects of many *jukurrpa* and draws them together. There is, admittedly, a fairly confined geographic area that is said to be the heart of the *jukurrpa* containing the major site complex. However, many other sites in the Tanami Desert, spread throughout the survey area and beyond, are described as related to *Kajirri* and emphasise the relatedness of these geographically separate regions and serves to highlight the capacity of this *jukurrpa* to unify large numbers of important sites.

The *Wirntiki* (Ibis Men) *jukurrpa* is also a major ceremonial site complex (Myers and Clark 1983, Myers 1986) for the western and southern neighbours of Warlpiri (Kukatja, Ngardi and Pintupi) as well as Warlpiri themselves. However, the *Wirntiki* has not been included as a major ceremonial complex because it differs in two fundamental ways from *Kajirri* that reaffirm the special significance of the latter. First, the *Wirntiki* has a specific track upon which its sites are located and, second, it involves only one *jukurrpa*.

The following section will commence the exploration of the ways in which Warlpiri structure their socio-geographical environment in terms of differentiating between space and place.

**Gradations of site significance***

Certain authors have cautioned against the division of the Aboriginal landscape into regions based on the notion of sacredness (Berndt 1970:7, Peterson et al. 1978:6). They have argued that all of the land is sacred because of the activities of the *jukurrpa* that transformed it and gave it its current form. For instance, in Arnhem Land whole stretches of country were said to have mythical significance in a general sense. Large areas of rocks and hills are taken to represent the bones of the “First People” (Berndt 1970:6). More recently, in the Kakadu region
there has been a considerable amount of research undertaken into the significance of a large block of land referred to as ‘the sickness country’ (Keen 1992). Similarly, in the Tanami Desert the sites of land connected to the *Kajirri* complex is of such importance that all of the associated region is held to be of elevated significance. However, these examples must be viewed as exceptional.

Whilst it is difficult to argue with the fundamental recognition that all of the landscape is significant because it was transformed by the *jukurrpa*, there is a critical distinction to be made between sites of significance and the rest of the landscape. This distinction is central to the clarification of the differences between place and space in the Tanami Desert. It has long been the practice of anthropological inquiry in Australia to distinguish between the category of sacred or totemic sites as opposed to other sites. This is most clearly demonstrated by an analysis of the different kinds of access available to different sets of people such as divisions based on age and sex. Implicit in this recognition is the fact that the sites themselves have, in a certain sense, varying degrees of sacredness. This characteristic of Warlpiri sites, I argue, is the basis for the substitution of the term ‘site’ with ‘place’. Sites position *jukurrpa* physically in the landscape but recognising them as places acknowledges their relational capacity to link people with each other as well as with the places themselves.

For Warlpiri certain *jukurrpa* are held to be more important than others and, in turn, this has an influence on the site or sites to which they are linked. This does not necessarily imply that all sites linked with a *jukurrpa* are equally important, rather “the importance of a site rests on what happened there in the mythical era, on what is left there, or what it symbolizes” (Berndt 1970:8). The criteria for the series of gradations indicating the comparative importance of a site is based on socio-ritual significance.

The places of the Tanami Desert are able to be divided up into categories that are most easily conceptualised in terms of the degree to which a place may be said to be either ‘open’ or ‘closed’. For Warlpiri, differential access to place is determined by various combinations of age, gender, ritual knowledge, and other markers of social identity which shall be explored more fully in the following chapter. The most restricted places are those that are closed to members of the opposite sex as well as those individuals who have not yet attained a sufficient age, level of ritual knowledge, or grade of initiation. Conversely, open places are attended by no such restrictions at all.

To a certain extent, the kinds of restrictions to sites that exist indicate something about the relative importance of place. David Biernoff (1978:97) observed knowledge, practice and ritual all combine to reinforce the observation of established protocol regarding access to the
locations of dangerous powers. These restrictions direct personal and physical conduct for activities such as walking, camping, use of resources, eating, drinking and sexual behaviour. Transgression of these cultural restrictions could involve a variety of ramifications depending on the transgressor and the nature of the place itself. These punishments could include death to the transgressor/s, their relatives, the cataclysmic destruction of all humankind, the unleashing of uncontrolled powers of concentrated life force, epidemics and natural disasters (Biernoff 1978:94-7).

The following ranking of the relative importance of places is, in descending order, from the most restricted or ‘closed’ to the most unrestricted or ‘open’. The most important places in the Tanami Desert are commonly associated with those jukurrpa that have major ceremonial importance, such as Kajirri, ‘big’ travelling dreamings like the Ngapa (Rain) and those that are of ‘trans-tribal’ (Berndt 1970:9) significance such as the Wampana (Hare Wallaby), Ngatijirri (Budgerigar), Marlujarra (Two Kangaroos) and Wirritiki (Ibis Men) dreamings. Major places also include those that have an association with several important jukurrpa. The next most important places are associated with a major event or activity on a single dreaming track. Of lesser significance are those places that signify only a minor event or ‘camp’ in the travel of a jukurrpa. The least important places are those that indicate the path that a particular dreaming took, places where instructive stories are related to children or where a minor historical incident occurred. This ranking is not meant to exclude the importance of contemporary events or to deny the fact that changes in the significance of a place may occur through time. Berndt (1970:9) demonstrated that places may become significant through contagion, the storage of objects at a place for instance, and perhaps more commonly places connected to recent life cycle events such as a death or major initiation.

**Warlpiri gradation of place**

As has been foreshadowed several times in the latter half of this chapter Warlpiri provide their own classificatory terms which grade and rank the relative significance of places in the Tanami Desert. This is of importance when people need to provide a short hand reference to orientate themselves or their audience in a region, to compare and contrast the relative weights of places in terms of significance in areas where many places are located, and to assist in identifying key decision makers in land related matters. Nash (1998:16) has commented: “The name of a prominent hill applies also to the surrounding country from where it is dominantly visible. Further away from any dominant feature, open plains country may fall under more than one adjacent site name.” The way that Warlpiri grade and speak about the significance of a place enables them to identify seemingly empty regions of space as connected with one jukurrpa as
opposed to another. The first three categories are divided on the basis of a depth ontology where categories are contrasted in terms of the level of secrecy and importance of jukurrpa based on a vertical scale of meaning.

- **Yukaka, Kaninjarra, Kanunju** - (Inside, below). These are the most important places that are at the intersection of jukurrpa activities that pierce, break, absorb, explode, erupt and emerge from the surface of the earth.

- **Yaninika-wurna** - (Along the ground). Places created by jukurrpa that travel along the ground are generally ranked as secondary in importance although some places that are found in between two surface-breaking events of the previous category can also be of extreme importance.

- **Kankarlu** - (Over the top, outside, above). These places also involve non-earth bound places and celestial objects, the jukurrpa involved can be extremely important particular when they impact with the earth’s surface. However, of least importance are those jukurrpa that leave the surface of the earth to fly and land at another place. Although Warlpiri often point out areas of land where a jukurrpa travels overhead, they do not invest it with any significance in terms of the land itself.

These three categories are also affected by considerations of not just the dimension of the jukurrpa involved but the activity involved as well and as such Warlpiri will clarify the importance of a place in one of two ways depending on whether the jukurrpa was (a) ngunaja - travelling, camping, eating, moving or (b) ngurrjumanu - performing ceremony or doing something of greater significance usually associated with a design, object or song. Therefore, consideration of what activity transpired at a certain place is just as important as the dimension, or depth, of the jukurrpa at a place.

With regard to places in the Tanami Desert, Glowczewski (1991:29) concluded that “when two or three itineraries go through the same site, in general one of them is considered more important for that place”. «Lorsque deux ou trois itinéraires passent par un même site, en général l'un d'eux est jugé plus important pour cet endroit,...». Warlpiri continually differentiate between sites in terms of their significance based on their association with major jukurrpa. Equally important is the weight accorded to those jukurrpa by Warlpiri observers in reference to their own individual or personal significance. Place implies reference to other bodies, whereas a site, according to the definition may only be self-referential. At the same time, place also implies that the areas between places are, if not of no significance, then at least of lesser significance.
Conclusion: site and place

The discussion of the cultural significance of Warlpiri sites in the Tanami Desert is assisted by a distinction between the terms 'site' and 'place'. In this regard some references taken from the *Concise Oxford Dictionary* (Sykes 1976), *The New Shorter Oxford English Dictionary* (Brown 1993) and the *Cambridge International Dictionary of English* (Procter 1995) are useful.

*Site*: a place where some activity is or has been conducted (Sykes 1976); an area set apart for a specified purpose; a place where some activity is or has been conducted (Brown 1993); a place where something happened (Procter 1995).

*Place*: a particular part of space; part of space occupied by person or thing; an area devoted to a specified purpose (Sykes 1976); a particular part or portion of space or of a surface, whether occupied or not; a position or situation in space or with reference to other bodies (Brown 1993).

*Space*: continuous extension viewed with or without reference to the existence of objects within it, an interval between points or objects viewed as having one, two, or three dimensions (Sykes 1976); metaphysical definition, continuous, unbounded, or unlimited extension in every direction, regarded as void of, or without reference to, matter (Brown 1993).

The use of the term site in this thesis, as well as its use in earlier anthropological literature, was justified on the grounds that they are indeed focal points where the activities of the *jukurrpa* occurred. Two important points to be made regarding the definitions of place are, first, that the definitions make reference to places being part of space as a necessary condition and, second, that place implies reference to other such bodies. In essence, to understand the meanings of Warlpiri place requires an appreciation of, or reference to, space, as well as other places. The relational aspects of sites are lost by not referring to them as places that have significance beyond mere physical locations and boundaries. Michel de Certeau's (1984:117) discussion of the relationship between space and place is of relevance although his definition of place more closely accords with a definition of site. Nevertheless he argued that space is a practised place, I maintain that in the Warlpiri case it is actually the reverse which holds true: place is a practised space in the sense that places are where the activities of the *jukurrpa* occurred and continue to celebrated. In this sense the notion of place as a marker of the boundaries of space from physical, sociocultural and political perspectives will be continued and developed through analysis of the data.
Place, then, is contained within space. It has been clearly demonstrated earlier that place for Warlpiri has the characteristic of being an element of two kinds of space, physical and social/mental space. The analysis of the characteristics of sites in this chapter has shown that, in the words of Amos Rapoport (1994:483), mythic space, geographic space and social space all coincide in the physiography of the Tanami Desert. Glowczewski (1989:228) concluded:

The fundamental preoccupation of Aboriginal societies seems to be to redefine the territorial eligibility of every individual and group. To this end, it is necessary to link people to the space-time reference of the Dreaming, that is, to totems and consequently to ritual and the corresponding sites.

The separation of the terms site and place allows attention to move from the totemic and physical properties of sites to the social dimensions of how *yapa* articulate relationships to, and between, place. The complexities of the paths and activities of the *jukurra* has resulted in the necessity for Warlpiri to structure and order their landscape by differentiating between places based on a variety of cultural bases which the following chapter will begin to explore. The implication of this differentiation reveals that Warlpiri must create and maintain boundaries (Rapoport 1994:481) not only between different kinds of places, but between different ways of knowing, talking about and expressing claims of connection to place through kinship. Morphy (1995:199) illustrated that mapping kinship onto landscape was achieved through the sociocentric mapping that appears to flow from the ancestral grid, *jukurra*, and the egocentric mapping that uses the sociocentric map as a background and transforms it. This is a useful distinction and the following chapters analyse these two different kinds mapping of relatedness of people and place.

Warlpiri places connect people to land in the Tanami Desert as well as other places. They also connect people to each other. These characteristics, or capacities, of place are intimately entwined as Edward Soja (1989:25) observed: “The spatial order of human existence arises from the (social) production of space, the construction of human geographies that both reflect and configure being in the world”. Different rights that people have in place will be analysed in more depth in the following chapter. These rights will be explored in the context of how they are ordered, ranked and weighed given the historical changes to the occupation of the Tanami Desert by Warlpiri.
Chapter Five

The Cultural Order of Rights in Place

There is nowhere a single dimension in terms of which a roster of people may be defined with finality in relation to an area and, in fact, the character of Aboriginal modes of land tenure lies in the multiplicity and specific kinds of relationships, their use and relativisation to each other in practice, and the development of a vivacious politics around all of this (Merlan 1996:166).

The issue to be examined in this chapter concerns the cultural ordering of rights in place by Warlpiri and their relationship to land tenure over time. This requires that attention be paid to the specificities of the local context of the articulation of rights to place in the central Tanami Desert to ascertain the extent to which place remains central to yapa conceptions of ownership. The understanding of how people relate their potential as an ‘owner’ of place is a complicated matter which can only be appreciated by understanding the historical and political context of the issue that requires such a definition of their rights.

The land claim process has made issues concerning the Warlpiri cultural order of place in terms of ownership more explicit and formal in addition to demanding that people reach and negotiate consensus much more quickly than in the past. In an unpublished paper Peterson (n.d.) discussed a case of a Warlpiri man (Jangala), now deceased, who was put forward as a senior traditional owner for three widely spaced ‘estates’, in a series of adjacent land claims [Warlpiri and Kartanganurrur-Kurintji (1978), Western Desert (1989) and Tanami Downs (1990)]. Jangala and his descendants were listed as primary traditional owners of three distinct estates. Importantly, all of these estates had as their focus major site complexes that were the responsibility of owners from the Nj/Jangala-Nj/Jampijinpa semimioity. A straight line drawn between the focal places of these three separate estates measures exactly 210 kilometres. The situation caused considerable consternation in the latter two land claims’ legal proceedings given the Land Rights Act’s bias towards residence and patrilineally inherited rights in estates as the basis of traditional ownership. How could a man claim to enjoy primary spiritual responsibility (to use the term as defined by the Land Rights Act) in three estates which were obviously not to be found within a regular living space? In order to explain the development of such a situation Peterson elaborated on the history of Jangala’s acquisition of ownership rights to place summarised below.
The Cultural Order of Rights in Place

Jangala’s father, Jampijinpa, was originally from Puyurru where he was recognised as kirda for the Ngapa (Rain) jukurrpa in that area. When European prospectors arrived in the Tanami Desert at the turn of the century looking for gold Jampijinpa, like many other Warlpiri moved northward to the Tanami-Granites region. Warlpiri were attracted by the availability of new commodities such as tobacco, axes and blankets as well as permanent water supplies as discussed in Chapter Three. As a result of his relocation to the northern region of the desert Jampijinpa’s son, Jangala (the man in question), was conceived at a Warlu (Fire) place, Marajilpirli. This site was also held by his classificatory fathers and brothers of the local decent group owners from the N/Jangala-N/Jampijinpa semimoioyey. With the passing away of his father while he was still young, Jangala was adopted in by his classificatory fathers and grew up learning the business, and participating in the ceremonial life, associated with both the Warlu and Malikijarra-Jarnijuwarra (Two Dogs) jukurrpa (Jangala 1994). The latter jukurrpa was in the immediate vicinity of the Warlu jukurrpa and the kirda for this jukurrpa were in both instances N/Jangala-N/Jampijinpa.

In addition to acquiring knowledge and instruction in the Warlu (Fire) and Malikijarra-Jarnijuwarra (Two Dogs) jukurrpa, Jangala was also taught the Ngapa (Rain) business from Puyurru, his father’s country. The men from the Warlu estate were able to impart this knowledge to Jangala because the physical extent of Ngapa jukurrpa through the Tanami carried responsibility, and thus knowledge, for all members of the N/Jangala-N/Jampijinpa semimoioyey for at least some sections of its tracks. Later, as a young man along with many other Warlpiri people Jangala was relocated to Lajamanu from the central Tanami Desert by the Government authorities at the end of WWII. In Lajamanu he learned even more of the ceremonial business for the Ngapa jukurrpa because of the relative proximity of the major Ngapa site Kamira whose senior custodians were now his co-residents in the new context of institutionalised settlement.

In effect, Jangala acquired rights to widely scattered places and jukurrpa associated with his semimoioyey via rights and credentials that could be traced through linkages to place variously transmitted, attained and activated by patrilineal descent and inheritance, conception, adoption and knowledge. It is these kinds of multiple links to places that characterise the majority of older individual Warlpiri life histories. The social identification of place demands the consideration of contingent rights that may confer ownership or possession. Jangala was said to ‘own’ each of these countries in accordance with the claims of other traditional owners. The cultural ordering of rights to place considered in this chapter will reveal that the claims of Jangala to each of these estates are not viewed by Warlpiri as of the same order of strength.
The ownership of place

Advancing the analysis of mapped places and the ways in which *yapa* distinguish between different groups of people and their responsibilities for *jukurrpa* requires a brief return to the symbolic function of place. Munn (1984:77) in her essay on the transformation of subjects into objects discussed ritual practices and paraphernalia in terms of ‘collective symbols’:

The material world as ‘collective symbol’ stands over and apart from the self because it is a socialised phenomenon stabilizing within it the authority and precedence of ‘other selves’. As long as an individual can anchor his own identity in ancestral transformations, this anchorage binds him to the authority of previous generations, and hence to the wider group.

Munn discerned that the process of identification with *jukurrpa* as ancestral transformations had the capacity to link people both socially to one another and, ultimately, physically and spiritually to places in the landscape. It is through the capacity of *jukurrpa* to bind people socially that a person has their social identity confirmed. Ownership of places has been described in the anthropological literature as usually, but not necessarily, consisting of exclusive rights to certain material and ideological manifestations of the *jukurrpa* associated with those places. Stanner (1965) defined the ownership of named places as consisting of rights to ritual, objects and stories associated with place. Stanner’s view of such rights to ownership in place may be considered as the classical version and has been repeatedly affirmed (Myers 1982, Layton 1986, Tonkinson 1998). In slight contrast to Stanner, Berndt (1959:101) placed more emphasis on the re-enactment of ancestral activities at places that were manifested through the display of objects and performance of ceremonies. The songs and designs that were employed symbolically articulated the actions and places involved in the unfolding events of *jukurrpa*. The implications of more performance-based expression of ownership and identity in place has been documented amongst Warlpiri by anthropologists working in such contexts as designs (Munn 1986, Biddle 1996a), songs (Wild 1987) and ritual (Dussart 1988, Glowczewski 1991).

More recently with respect to work in Arnhem Land Howard Morphy (1990:313, 1995:197) commented that power and rights in place are transferred through paintings, songs, sacred objects, big names and clan dances. The power that Morphy referred to was reinforced and maintained by rights of ownership and involved punishment for transgression of the access restrictions that surround both place and its associated knowledge (Peterson 1972, Bern 1979, Keen 1994, Williams 1999). Peterson (1972:24) indicated that rites and rights in place relate different kinds of people to place, spatially, ideologically and socially. It is suggested here that knowledge and control of songs and ceremonies have the potential to confer attachment and rights to place in the event of an absence of descent or other links.
Discussion of how rights in place are manifested prove to be most fruitful when they take into account aspects of their transmission with regard to both power and individual action. Glowczewski (1991) emphasised that relations to place are manifested through participation in rituals involving song, dance and design. She also detailed the invisible aspects of totems in terms of dreams that further create links between individuals and jukurrpa, the complementary role of this invisible to the visible (physical place, objects) aspect of ancestral transformation which constantly informs people's relationships to place. Glowczewski (1991) further argued that the exercise of rights is also contingent upon ritual competence, age, knowledge grading and social status achieved through parenthood. In contrast to the situation noted by Williams (1986) in Arnhem Land, rights to place in the Tanami Desert, regardless of whether they are transmitted via descent or other kinds of linkages, must also be activated and maintained; they are not simply awarded.

The transmission of rights in place must be contextualised within the dimension of the wider social group by considering which people ultimately make decisions about places. To use a distinction made by Sutton (1999b:5) it is important to distinguish between people who are speaking for country as opposed to those who are speaking about country. With respect to the data analysed in the thesis, consideration of place turns attention to those people of the latter category who Sutton (1999a:29) designated as having a stewardship role, core rights as opposed to contingent ones, which are at the heart of owning country. There are of course other individuals who have interests but they are not the same as ownership in terms of decision making over place. In a slight modification of Sutton (1999a:32-33), the core rights that owners enjoy in terms of exclusive possession in place for Warlpiri are: the right to make lawful claims over a place, and to speak for it with unconstrained authority; further, such owners transmit these rights to their descendants along with the knowledge and rightful use of associated ceremonies, objects, songs and designs; finally, these owners hold, exercise and assert the fullest level of responsibility for place.

Sutton (1999b) recognised that there are a wide group of people who have interests in countries and estates, more generally through social relationships, residential association, economic and other use rights and attendant privileges, but they must be clearly distinguished from people who have rights to speak about and make decisions over places, as opposed to country. The consideration of the order of rights in place imposes a frame that must take into account historical and political process as well as the context within which claims are being made. This theme will be returned to in the closing chapters.
Claims to place over time

There is little ambiguity in the Australian anthropological literature about the importance of the role of patrilineal descent as one of the primary claims made by Aboriginal people for attachment to place. Indeed, much of the classic analysis in Australian anthropology has tended to divide rights to place into two categories the first of which are rights that are based on patrilineal descent through F and FF. Within the second category are the other rights to place that are acquired personally under special circumstances and include particular religious commitments acquired through certain maternally derived kin relations (such as Warlpiri *kurdungurlu*), descent traced to the grandparental generations, and place of birth and/or conception (Berndt 1982:5). Peterson, Keen and Sansom (1977) distinguished these two different categories as ‘primary’ and ‘secondary’ rights in place. Primary rights in place were inherited through patrilineal descent. Secondary rights could be divided into six different types of linkages: place of conception, place of birth, place of death or burial of a close relative, kinship linkages to place, company relationships between different clans and estates, and finally, links to place derived from the mother’s patrilineally inherited country.

The contrast of linkages to place in the categories of primary and secondary rights exposes the fact that within the latter division there are interests through ritual relationships, kinship ties, generation levels as well as individual ties. Consequently commentators such as Merlan (1982:150) preferred to conceptualise the relationships between Aboriginal people and land as linkages derived from several social levels: those found within individual relationships, those at the level of the patriline inherited through agnatic connection, and at the level of entire semimoieties. Merlan’s contribution lies in her emphasis that affiliation to place should also be analysed at the level of social transmission in addition to the ways in which they were acquired as noted by Peterson, Keen and Sansom (1977). Such a recognition is useful in understanding the articulation of rights in situations where the question of succession to an estate arises. Transmission of rights becomes particularly important in cases where there is an absence of persons who have primary genealogical connections to an estate, a common occurrence in Australia where descent groups have been extinguished through numerical decline. A related problem for ensuring continued possession of the knowledge of country by the wider social group lies in the shallowness of genealogical memory for ordering country based on descent (Keen 1997). Keen (1997:89) noted that when there were breakages to continuity in holding rights to place through blood connection, *jukurrpa* or subsection ties then other kinds of links such as relatedness through holding ritual objects, ceremonial and religious knowledge, conception became important. These were cases where there was the potential conversion of rights from the secondary category to the primary category.
Both Keen and Merlan indicated that conversions of secondary rights to primary rights over estates and their constituent places may have occurred at one of several social levels. The more inclusive levels where succession to country may have taken place were based on the identification with the descent group, subsection, patrimoiety or an even wider regional level. To a certain extent succession to place and country made at these levels was more straightforward than those claims to place or succession made on an individual basis. It is instructive to return to Myers’ earlier contention with respect to land tenure amongst Pintupi: that rights in place are negotiable and politically motivated at the individual level. Does this perspective of fluidity in the acquisition and transmission of rights also apply to Warlpiri, Pintupi’s north-eastern neighbours?

Morphy (1990:326) commented that Myers portrayed Pintupi as lacking a strong system of clan organisation in comparison to other Aboriginal peoples in Australia. Myers indicated that the primary linkages to place amongst Pintupi were fundamentally based on a person’s conception site as opposed to membership of a patrilineal descent group (1986:129-30). Furthermore, as discussed earlier, their favour of site of conception above any other form of affiliation to land resulted in a more pronounced focus on the individual constellation of ties to land than had been encountered in other areas of Aboriginal Australia. The fluidity of land tenure among Pintupi meant that groups of owners were constantly emerging and transforming in terms of their membership and thus re-allocating people to place. There was an absence of closed corporations and claims to places were pitched to the owners who ‘held’ places.

Keen (1997) and McConvell (1998) both commented that there has been a marked tendency in the Australian anthropological literature to contrast individualistic, flexible styles of social organisation and relations to country with more prescriptive structures. This placed the Pintupi of the Western Desert region at the fluid end of a spectrum which relates people to place with the stabilised clans of Arnhem Land at the other, Warlpiri presumably lying somewhere between the two extremes (Sutton and Rigsby 1982). This kind of scaled differentiation had limited use outside the realms of describing access to resources prior to European arrival and the spectrum does not help to understand the circumstances of Jangala’s ownership of three widely spaced estates. It fails to take into account critical considerations regarding the circumstances of the transmission of rights such as rights that are claimed to places and estates and the wider social and political context within which the claims are being made. The cultural order of place cannot be simply subsumed under models of rights that characterise them as patrilineal, flexible or inclusive.

In 1962 Hiatt warned his colleagues that in the 20th century all of the descriptions that attempted to account for the dynamic aspects of local organisation were reconstructions of an
imagined past. It is important to re-emphasise here that the temporal dimension of discussing rights in place is an equally important component of the context as any other factor. It is also necessary to pay particular attention to time when discussing rights to place. To what extent is there an attempt to reconstruct the past? What are the dynamics and tensions of the moment? Finally, what may be the implications for the future expression of such rights with respect to other claims to place? Through Jangala’s lifetime it was apparent that there were considerable changes in his personal constellation of rights and the different manner in which they were acquired. His example introduces issues surrounding the transmission of his rights to his descendants and how their claims to place could be weighed and ranked.

McConvell (1998) discussed issues that arose from a comment made by N. Waterloo, a senior Aboriginal man, who was living in the Victoria River District (VRD) which lies on the northern border of Warlpiri, Pirlangima and Kartantarurrru country. This man firmly stated that there were no rights to country that could be forged through either place of birth (conception) or residence. According to Mr. Waterloo people who claimed such rights were in flagrant violation of Aboriginal Law and may have been exposed to severe punishment. He emphasised that the only proper rights that were justifiably established for the ownership of place were those acquired through patrilineal inheritance. McConvell (1998) posed an interesting question about this assertion. Was Mr. Waterloo’s formulation of ownership one that was borrowed from a land claim context that focused on patrilineal rights of ownership? McConvell encouraged a line of inquiry that attempted to elucidate what could be considered tradition as opposed to cultural reconstruction in how people talked about land ownership. In order to be able to make such a judgment he advocated looking at traditional continuities within regional populations and proceeded to contrast different beliefs about conception rights held by two neighbouring Aboriginal regional systems, the Kimberley and the VRD regions. McConvell clearly demonstrated that rights of ownership between these two groups of people were different before European contact and remain so today and he warned against the dangers of overplaying those politics of reconstruction that work to impose the same cultural order of rights to place over different Aboriginal groups. The approach employed here shares not only this approach but also McConvell’s concerns regarding the need to be sensitive to diachronic developments involving the cultural order of rights to place within a regional system of Aboriginal land tenure.
The Warlpiri order of rights to place

Patrilineal descent

With respect to rights in land in traditional terms within the Australia-wide context Berndt (1982:5) concluded that they were foremost attributed to people who were related by patrilineal descent and conferred what he called ‘primary responsibility’. The ranks of membership to such patrilineal descent groups are effectively closed, although in certain circumstances may be opened to persons who are adopted in. Warlpiri data corroborates this broad generalisation. In a much earlier work Berndt (1959:96) noted that within the entire region of the Western Desert there was a pronounced bias toward patrilineal descent as the basis of claiming rights to land. In marked contrast, Myers (1982:189) observed that his data for Pintupi showed a core group of people with primary claims to land although he placed an emphasis on political negotiation as the foundation of his countryman model of land tenure.

The jukurrpa claimed by any one individual as part of their patrilineally inherited estate is most commonly referred to as ‘father’ (wapirra) or ‘grandfather’ (warringiyi). In this vein Munn (1962:972) observed that “rights over Dreamings are held by patrilineages, each of which has jurisdiction over a number of different species and over the designs (and other objects) associated with them.” Ritual and associated paraphernalia were centred on places in the landscape with the land itself representing in Berndt’s (1959:98) words “the most obvious, most enduring, and most consistently visible, tangible focus.” The ritual ties that bind people to place are transferred via the patrilineal descent groups and are of similar importance for the separate ceremonies held by women (Bell 1983 and Glowczewski 1983). In the context of the Tanami Desert Munn (1986:227) recorded: “women were very explicit that the patrilineal descent groups and subsection categories held the ancestral dreamings, and that as members of these groups they were landholders as well”. It is the kirda (members of a patrilineal descent group or less often an entire semimoiet) who perform the appropriate business, paintings, songs and dances in their proper ceremonial context. These functions may be carried out with members of the same patrimoiet depending on the circumstance through the close relationship with the kirda’s MMB (Stead 1985:20).

Within the patriline rests the ultimate authority in terms of the ritual transmission of knowledge without which people cannot become full social persons (Meggitt 1974:212). In this respect Meggitt argued that the patrilineal land owning group may be characterised as a corporate unit bestowing an identity to its members which generates a linkage between people and place both ritually and socially. Meggitt never went as far as saying that people owned the land as such, but he did comment that knowledge of ritual and its performance served to increase the
economic products of the territory (1974:212). However, Meggitt noted elsewhere that patrilineal groups held the elaborate ground paintings that were the maps of the dreaming countries (Meggitt 1974:223) and that the songs related to *jukurrpa* with respect to the temporal and spatial order of place. A material aspect of ownership could also be found in the sacred boards owned by the patriline that detailed the maps of country which when added together formed the composite title of the community (Meggitt 1974:288). It has already been highlighted that Meggitt never collected data about place within the Tanami Desert itself and this is a fundamental difference compared with the data presented in this ethnography. It is of little value to criticise Meggitt’s work on this point but it is essential to examine the extent to which identity with place is conflated within contemporary Warlpiri life with notions of ownership.

Glowczewski (1991) noted that within the context of contemporary life, patrilineal clan members may never reside or visit places due to their lifestyle and demographic circumstances. However, the escalation of gold exploration and mining within the study area of the Tanami Desert has opened up opportunities for Warlpiri people to visit their places. In the field, places are always named and referenced to the semimoiety as a shorthand reference to their patrilifial owners in conjunction with the names of the most senior men and women of the relevant patriline(s). Depending on those who are present, often comments were made regarding conception, identity of *kurdungurlu*, stories of life histories that connect to place such as birth and death of individuals. One semimoiety was always emphasised as the correct category from which the owners of the place under discussion were drawn. It was the people identified as owners from that semimoiety who made decisions about place and the rights to assert ownership in the context of mining exploration were competed for by those persons. Warlpiri stressed time and again that places were F and FF *jukurrpa* and that their identities were embedded in place. Typical comments were: “My father used to run around here”; “He was the boss”; “He was the leader”; “My father told me that this was mine”; “My father was number one”, “He looked after it”, “He really knew, not so and so (from the same semimoiety) his father was from another place they used to meet up at ceremony time”. Warlpiri emphasise that ownership is ultimately proven by those who hold the knowledge of place through ritual, designs and songs that have been received through patrilineal instruction and association. In 1996 one man from Yuendumu expressed a typical collective sentiment in discussing how people can demonstrate their connection to place by:

> doing it in the Aboriginal way, the cultural way telling them and letting them know where do they come into these ceremonial dances and the songs. What we would like to see happen with the old people and these traditional owners who they think they know everything what the ways that they been learning by books and by
hearing from other people we like them to see by getting proof from them, by letting them do a dance of their exact traditional sites and songs and then telling us the stories after, what their dance and their song meant. Was it a meaning with their traditional land, or the site, or was it something else within other communities?

There can be no doubt that the primacy of the rights to place conferred through patrilineal possession remains unchallenged up until the present time. In reference to country the relationship that any individual has through their father (\textit{wapi\textipa{ra}}) and/or their paternal grandfather (\textit{warrin\textipa{gyi}}) is the basis from which all other claims to affinity are compared and assessed. I maintain that for Warlpiri, like the vast majority of Aboriginal peoples in the Northern Territory, the patriline was, and remains, the minimal landholding group or basic landholding unit (Merlan 1982:160). Meggitt (1974:206) recorded approximately 40 patrilineages associated with between 30-40 lodges that he distinguished on the basis that each lodge had one major and several minor \textit{jukurampa} to which the members were entitled on the basis of patrilineal descent. Unfortunately Meggitt did not expand on this data which raised two related issues. What were the actual genealogical connections between men at the upper level of the generation in which he defined his patrilineages? Why was there not an exact correlation between the number of patrilineages and lodges? It is proposed here that there is one simple answer to both of these questions: Warlpiri continue to have a shallow genealogical memory. At the upper level of most land claim genealogies men are classified as close or actual brothers. The example of Jangala in the introduction of this chapter illustrated that there existed a kind of fluid potential for an individual’s affiliation with different ‘lodges’ held by his semimoiety. The maintenance of the corpus of ritual knowledge concerning place was transferred through a mechanism of patrilineal descent, yet over the space of several generations the composition of a group of persons claiming primary responsibility for a place may change quite radically. Furthermore, declining numbers in a descent group brought about by demographic changes may require that knowledge is consciously transferred within the semimoiety which would lead to a fluctuation in the number of identifiable ‘lodges’.

Meggitt’s ethnography failed to consider the existence of a certain freedom of association between patrilineages and \textit{jukurampa} held by or affiliated with their semimoiety. Within the Tanami Desert it was repeatedly observed that at certain places and on certain ritual occasions the primary ownership of land may be extended to include several patrilineages which are united within the same semimoiety. This situation bears a striking resemblance to one reported by Merlan (1982:148) for the Mangarrayi people of the Katherine region who “express relationships to land in terms of semimoieties, a mode of speaking that disguises the existence of patrilineages within the overarching semimoiety categories.” The holding of the relevant rights over ritual and its associated knowledge and responsibilities constitutes, in part, the title of the
ownership of a place. The fact that there is a certain degree of flexibility within a semimoiety as to which actual patrilineal group holds the primary rights of ownership in place warrants examination of the strength of attachment to place that is held by the semimoiety category.

The ‘company’ relationship

Peterson et al. (1978:11), Laughren (1993:75-9) and Glowczewski (1991) have all noted that in the Tanami Desert clans (in the sense of one or more patriline from the same semimoiety) may hold different sections of a contiguous jukurrpa or dreaming track. The members of these clans, being of the same semimoiety, share a considerable amount of ritual knowledge and responsibility, songs, designs, objects and places that are referenced to one another. In such instances, Warlpiri explain that a ‘company’ relationship exists between the different patrilineal descent groups belonging to the same semimoiety because they potentially share an interest in the same jukurrpa. The existence of a company relationship is not only a regional phenomenon restricted to the Tanami Desert and Merlan has noted that it also operated in the Katherine region on similar kinship principles that link an individual with the same subsection pair as their MMB, that is within the same patrimoieties. Such company relationships that operate to unite the two semimoieties of a patrimoiety also exist in the Tanami although they are less common. In discussion of company relationships in the Tanami Desert it is crucial to distinguish the type of relationship being referred to. The term company relationship can also be employed by yapa as inclusive for all members of the two moieties as in the case of very large regional ceremonies such as Gadjari (Kajirri) (Megitt 1966) yet this is an isolated case and as such is a significant exception. The company relationship is also used to refer to other levels of inclusiveness. To the south-west of Warlpiri Myers (1982:190) observed for Pintupi people all countries on a jukurrpa path were thought to be one country and that the owners of different segments were considered as one countryman. As reported earlier Jangala was an owner of a section of the Ngapa (Rain) jukurrpa, one of the longest and largest company relationships in the Tanami Desert. As a result of a demographic shift that ended with him living with people with whom he was in such a relationship Jangala’s prolonged residence lead to his inclusion within the local group, a principle of connection to place recognised in this region by Myers and Clark (1983).

The term company relationship in the Tanami Desert is also used by Warlpiri to refer to the associations between the semimoiety pairings within each of the two patrimoiety divisions. That is, on the one hand the semimoiety pairing of N/Jangala, N/Jampijinpa and N/Jakamarra, Na/Jupurrurla and on the other N/Jungarrayi, N/Japaljarrri and N/Japanangka, N/Japangardi. Here the company relationship has a crucial social role in organising associations between
people, place and each other on a regional level. These relationships effect linkages among
different companies or groups by organising the exchanges of wives and objects, as well as
from neighbouring countries named each other as their main kurdungurlu given that their
patrmoiety affiliations were opposite and also that there was an extensive amount of
intermarriage between the two. In this instance the term company relationship arose because
the people of the two patrimoieties did not claim affiliation to the same place.

The company relationship which distinguishes between different patrilineal descent groups
within the same semimioiety who hand over responsibility for jukurrpa at certain places is the
most common company relationship that people refer to in the Tanami Desert and is described
as ‘clean’. The relationship refers to the close ceremonial connection between geographically
contiguous estate groups held by the same or, less commonly, different semimioieties within the
same patrimoiey. Such connections are forged by virtue of custodianship of the same
jukurrpa that travels across both estates and unites the two distinct patrilineal groups at broader
regional and sociocultural levels. As a result the ceremonies that are held for those particular
jukurrpa will often necessitate a collaboration, emphasising a strong social connection and a
conjunction of rights to claim ownership of place.

In visits to place in the Tanami Desert the company relationship was referred to in several
different kinds of situations. There are the references, to ritual and regional groupings
mentioned above, however, it was also alluded to when informants were uncertain about the
appropriate allocation of semimioiety affiliation to a specific place. More common was the
designation of the relevant patrimoiey in circumstances where the emphasis of one patricouple
over the other would be inappropriate for ceremonial or other reasons. The company
relationship was given as the appropriate landholding group at approximately 5% of the places
surveyed in the Tanami Desert. In these instances it was made clear by informants that they
were very reluctant to privilege the authority of one semimioiety to place over the interests of
another semimioiety. There was also the extraordinary case of company relationships
encountered at two places that united semimioieties from opposite patrimoieties. At a place
near Rabbit Flat the primary rights of ownership transfer from N/Jakamarra and Na/Jupurrurla
to N/Japanangka and N/Japangardi. Of related interest is the fact that the path the jukurrpa
travelled was through the air and alighted at the hand-over place. Social and ritual ties that are
distinct between the patrimoieties were reinforced metaphysically by virtue of the fact that the
jukurrpa travelled above the land not through it, thus neatly avoiding any overlap of claims to
land on the ground.
All of the company relationships in the Tanami Desert had in common the shared ownership of ritual, but not always place, and the individuals who were entitled to be included in such relationships were able to do so via the principles of patrilineal descent or matrilineation. The ownership of ritual has previously been identified as the fundamental element that confers ownership as Peterson and Long (1986:62) commented with respect to patrilineal rights throughout Australia:

it appears to confer, on active knowledgeable adults, an authority which gives them precedence over others in most matters to do with the estate. This is clearest in ritual affairs where it is the senior members of the descent group who are in acknowledged control of the clan’s religious property; it is they who authorise its use, the making of ritual objects and the holding of ceremonies.

The ownership of place in the Tanami Desert is central to establishing rights in land and likewise, yet from a different trajectory, confirms the above observation concerning the duality of the ownership ritual and place. In the consideration of links to place afforded by patrilineal descent and the company relationship I argue that ritual knowledge and its conferring of authority and identity to place through patrilineal descent is commensurate with ownership. If this position is taken the question is then raised of the ritual role of kurdungurlu and the rights it confers to place given that it has been advanced as part of the land owning unit in certain land claims for Warlpiri.

Matrilineation and kurdungurlu

Linkages between Warlpiri people and place that are traced via principles of matrilineation are of great significance. In an Australia-wide context Berndt (1982:5) recognised that non-primary (non-patrilineal) rights in place were open to certain kin of the primary owners through their mothers most notably MB and MMB. Amongst Warlpiri such maternally traced connections to place are more properly classed as those through MF and the children of the women of the patriline who may be potentially referred to as kurdungurlu by the kirda of the patriline. In land claim research for McLaren Creek in eastern Warlpiri country Keen (1997:81) noted:

filiation or descent did not predict very well who would be called on or put themselves forward as kurtungurlu in relation to particular people, places or ceremonies, for the term has a variety of senses not all based on filiation or descent.

I argue that the rights of kurdungurlu over place have a personal, rather than collective, quality and lack the corporate nature observed in ownership of place of those people related by patrilineal descent who claim primary rights as owners. Further, I maintain that rights in place
that may be acquired through matriliation should not be considered as primary in terms of possession, a position previously adopted by Berndt (1982:5). One of the main arguments for adopting this stance with respect to Warlpiri begins with the fact that the rights of **kurdungurlu** are most prominent in ritual and social affairs. Those persons who have rights as **kurdungurlu** acquired through matriliation have reciprocal responsibilities with the **kirda** of the patrilineal group in major lifecycle phases such as initiation, marriage and death and these responsibilities extend to rights and obligations for the ritual property, performance and management of places. The **kurdungurlu** relationship operates for both men’s and women’s ceremonial and social roles and is variously translated into English by Warlpiri using terms and phrases such as ‘caretaking’, ‘backup’, ‘helper’, ‘manager’, ‘policeman’, and ‘on the side’. The ritual and ceremonial roles of **kirda** ‘owner’ cannot be discharged without the participation, direction and support of those knowledgeable people who stand in relationship to them as **kurdungurlu**.

Within the context of the land claims prepared in the Tanami Desert discussed in Chapter Two it was noted in the Willowra claim (Wafer and Wafer 1979) that **kurdungurlu** were advanced jointly with **kirda** as traditional owners of land. It is agreed, under the definitions of the Land Rights Act that such a position is appropriate. However, the discussion of the cultural order of place requires that some distinction is maintained between a model produced for the purposes of a land claim under the Land Rights Act and a model based on the analysis of ethnographic data collected within the contemporary context of gold exploration and mining. The analysis of land ownership couched within a regional system must take into consideration the role that cognatic descent plays in its reproduction and maintenance (Stead 1985, Myers 1986, Langton 1998). However, the purpose of this study is primarily concerned with place. The rights of ownership in place that may be claimed via the principles of matrification and patrilineal descent are of a fundamentally different order and they must be distinguished from one another.

Initially the role of **kurdungurlu** may be contrasted with that of **kirda** on the basis of how the respective roles are activated and maintained, this can be done in terms of the acquisition of knowledge. The induction of an individual into the corpus of ritual knowledge of their patriline or semimoiety commences at a young age and for men their status as **kirda** begins to be acquired during initiation. There are no corresponding rites of induction or passage for the ritual transmission of knowledge through matriliation as **kurdungurlu**. The role of **kurdungurlu** is only confirmed socially when the individual man or woman has attained an intimate and detailed knowledge of the appropriate place and **jukurrpa** as well as maturity. There is a distinction made between being a person who may have an as yet unrealised potential as **kurdungurlu** through descent, and an individual who is able to actively carry out
such an important duty. The status of *kurdungurlu* is attained only when there is a personal conversion of such a right as opposed to a transmission via initiation (a lifelong process of stages) of the rights of *kirda*. For this reason I maintain that the rights of *kurdungurlu* are better understood as matrifilial, as opposed to matrilineally prescribed rights, because they are primarily exercised by knowledgeable persons of certain kin relations. Such a role may even be discharged by a person who does not stand in an idealised relationship though descent via the women of a patriline.

The *kurdungurlu* of the Tanami Desert are integral for the proper conduct of rites and ceremonies for *jukurrpa*, particularly so when there are delicate matters at stake such as the correct protocols involved in performance of ceremonies or the handling of objects. The *kurdungurlu* also have an important role to play during those occasions which arise when there is a passing away of the responsible patriline. This leads to negotiations for succession, or a caretaking role to be exercised, over a particular estate which is bereft of primary owners or *kirda*.

In field visits to place certain considerations regarding the knowledge and status of appropriate *kurdungurlu* were taken into account for decisions concerning identifying who were the appropriate persons who could make accurate identification and decisions regarding place. This reflected the fact that persons of senior *kurdungurlu* status are acknowledged by *kirda* to have key responsibilities regarding place. Part of the function of their knowledge is apparent during visits to places, particularly those of major ceremonial importance, in the way that *kurdungurlu* direct and manage the approach of the *kirda*. In the physical approach to place *kurdungurlu* join in with the *kirda* in the singing of the relevant stanzas of song cycles and admonish the owners to demonstrate correct behaviour and observe relevant protocols. The role, status and knowledge of *kurdungurlu* is demonstrated in the way that they audibly stress the connections of *kirda* to place as the latter come into contact with place. These activities serve to reinforce the identity of the owners with place while simultaneously emphasising the role of *kurdungurlu* as managers. For their part *kirda* call the place FF and announce their patrilineal genealogical connection to it. This is also repeated at night when camping at a place. At these times the *kirda* call out their names and identity as well as those who are present, a kind of address to the ancestors of a place known as *wintaru*. This is done in order to stress their good intentions as well as their right to be at that place. This speech is given by *kirda* most often when they are not sure that they will be recognised by the ancestors. This could be due to a variety of reasons including: it may be the first visit for some *kirda* present, there has been a prolonged absence by people, a senior owner may have recently passed away or the place itself is recognised as particularly dangerous or powerful.
Within the contemporary context of exploration and mining in the Tanami Desert kirda make decisions about place. Consultations with kurdungurlu are preferred but not essential with respect to decisions about place and there is a clear separation of the weight and authority of who may speak and within what kind of context. Importantly, there are circumstances when men of considerable status as kurdungurlu may be deferred to in order to arbitrate, or make, decisions. Critically however, they may never do so independently of kirda. On the bases of personal status, activation and attendant considerations of the acquisition and discharge of responsibilities over place the matrifilially acquired rights of kurdungurlu cannot be said to be of equal importance to those acquired patrilineally by kirda. The knowledge and authority held by an individual is not just confined to ritual and social spheres but also must be extended to the familiarity with the physical location and importance of a particular place. The extent to which the actual knowledge of place and its relevance in the order of cultural rights requires further attention.

Knowledge of place

Nowhere has the connection between knowledge, ownership and identity in place been more clearly expressed than by Berndt (1982:6-7):

Traditionally, and in all cases over the years where questions of land ownership have been discussed, sites are considered to be pivotal features in defining specific areas of land and, in so doing, indicating by their mythic associations the kinds of persons who should primarily belong to that land. Ownership, therefore, is not ratified simply by making a claim to land, even though substantiating genealogical information may be available. A major issue is knowing that particular land - knowing about the sites, their songs and rituals. Knowledge of such sites and territory traditionally constituted the basis of an Aboriginal’s primary identity. Further, there is the question of tending that land, of ‘looking after it’.

Berndt has indicated a critical point in the above passage that has been a recurrent theme in the analysis of the cultural order of rights in place: Knowledge must be acquired, activated and maintained in order to uphold a claim of ownership over a place.

In the Tanami Desert knowledge of places, their location and significance is of great importance to men and women as individuals, they have a personal interest. In the precontact situation this was especially so in terms of navigation through the desert and the utilisation of economic resources. The personal prestige associated with a profound understanding of the extent and affiliation of place has retained political currency for Warlpiri because of the exigencies of mineral exploration and development on their land. However, this economy of knowledge has become less accessible and transferable between people over time because they
no longer live among the places of the study area. This does not necessarily imply that people no longer know of the names of places, their features or significance. Rather it can be said that the combined corpus of place knowledge for Warlpiri reduces substantially with the passing of each generation in the sense of physically knowing exact location of places. Indeed for almost 80% of the study area the knowledge of the accurate location of place is now restricted to only the elderly generation of Warlpiri and is keenly sought after by younger people. For example of 185 places in the northern section of the survey area of the Tanami Desert that have been authoritatively identified, 103 or over 55% have been located and identified by just five different men. The areas that remain well known are those close to roads, mining tracks, outstations and mines. The number of knowledgeable men and women remaining who have the capacity to authoritatively identify places in the Tanami Desert is declining rapidly. However, this situation is being redressed somewhat by the increasing numbers of Warlpiri who take part in mining work area clearances in the Tanami Desert.

It remains that the knowledge concerning the location, significance and affiliation of places is actively pursued by both men and women for several reasons. Men, perhaps more so than women, have a very keen interest in the ‘religious’ sector of production in order to exercise control of sacred places and the associated custodianship of the symbolic designs, paraphernalia, knowledge of ceremonies and songs that mediate the power of those very places (Hamilton 1998). The religious knowledge of men in these circumstances was in her view complemented by the greater social and historical consciousness of women concerning people, descent and place. Knowledge of place can be seen to combine on a variety of levels used by both men and women in order to ensure that access and maintenance of places is ensured over time. However, there is also a political dimension operating here inasmuch as men are able to freely pursue their own course for the purposes of increasing their personal power and prestige. Knowledge of place is a category where rights to place may be converted or asserted in the absence of other links although, as Robert Tonkinson (1988) observed, such knowledge cannot be realised as a permanent condition enhancing individual authority. Knowledge of place cannot be transferred between generations via descent unless there has been a conversion of a secondary to a primary right such as in the case of succession to an estate.

With reference to succession of land during those periods when there is an absence of patrilineally descended owners (linked to a place, places or *jukurrpa*) there may exist opportunities for senior Warlpiri men and women to put forward and negotiate claims based on their individual knowledge of place. These may be based on different kinds of linkages to place in order to gain control over the religious property, knowledge and contingent rights associated with a place (Peterson 1983:139). This kind of claim to place based on knowledge
is a political process that may involve individuals or groups of men regardless of whether they are of the correct semimoiety or not. In such cases the decisions of relevant kurdungurlu are of importance. To this end people are knowledgeable about each other's estates and places for a very practical reason enabling them, as Sutton (1996:16) explained, “to maintain a regional, rather than estate-bound, common system of constituting the cultural and ecological content of estates and of how they should be used, spoken for, and otherwise dealt with lawfully.” If knowledge of place is elevated in importance for the negotiation of ownership in instances where the question of succession arises then the cultural order of place must be examined under such circumstances.

Succession

The examination of descent-based rights in place examined in the chapter so far accounts for socially prescribed links that are generated through the combination of ritual and knowledge that are ideally passed on between successive generations. Importantly questions must be asked about what happens when there is a rupture in this process. The implication of questions regarding succession eluded Meggitt (1974:212) who lamented:

Whenever I pursued the question of who would take over the duties of an extinct lodge, the only answers I received were bewildered stares. The men simply could not believe that a lodge might disappear completely, and there was obviously no explicit provision made for this eventuality.

The fundamental reason for Meggitt not being able to discover any explicit principles of succession in the ownership of place from his informants was simply because they don’t exist. Or perhaps more to the point such principles were of a political nature that were negotiated over some considerable amount of time and so not readily observable. During such a period many factors may come into play, in essence the very dynamics of the social and cultural order of place. A blunt question, as pitched by Meggitt, would have required a level of abstraction that would have made little sense to Warlpiri. Nonetheless, Meggitt did offer a principle of succession which was based on conception affiliation by a group of the same semimoiety, shared jukurrpa and geographical proximity (Morphy and Morphy 1984:53).

Sutton (1999:9) commented that there are two kinds of succession: group succession by people who are familiar with the local area, people and history, or individual succession, which involves the upgrading and activation of other non-primary links to place. In the Warlpiri context it is proposed that the elevation of a claim on an individual basis to one of primary ownership would be extremely difficult and at loggerheads with the ideology of the regional system. In the case of the demise of a landholding group their knowledge of jukurrpa and
rights over associated ritual, objects, songs, designs and places are passed on to another group or less commonly, and usually temporarily, an individual. The person is often the most knowledgeable *kurdungurlu* because the relevant knowledge is already held by them and does not need to be passed on or learned.

There were two examples of succession processes witnessed within the survey area over the last ten years in the Tanami Desert. In the first case an individual man, Jakamarra, who was the last surviving member of his patrilineal group was widely known to be transferring his rights over a small localised dreaming of two places to people of the same semimoiyt (N/Jakamarra-Na/Jupurrula). This group were the owners of a massive site complex in a large geographic area to the south with whom he shared ritual links already. Yet this transfer was not being passed to an entire semimoiyt but rather a distinct patrilineal descent group of that semimoiyt. The apical male ancestor of this descent group had been both a co-resident and co-initiate of Jakamarra and it was for these reasons they had been singled out in particular. As Jakamarra is still alive and given the often long gaps between the performance of ceremonies it has yet to be revealed whether authority over the localised dreaming will transfer to the descent group itself or be absorbed within the broader ceremonial repertoire and responsibilities of the entire semimoiyt. It is difficult for succession to an estate to be passed exclusively to a single patriline because the right to assert primary responsibility and authority over *jukurrpa* and associated objects is fiercely contested between individuals and patrilines within a semimoiyt. I hypothesise here that although the ownership of the ritual and places was intended to be transferred to a single patrilineal descent group the decisions over place in the contemporary setting of gold exploration and mining usually dictates that such authority would be transferred to more than one patriline. The question of political negotiations over the responsibility of place and the relations between patrilineal descent groups and broader semimoieties is a deferred discussion that will be engaged in Chapter Seven and Eight.

In another example illustrating the temporary holding of an area, a small group of people (N/Japanangka-N/Japangardi) were acknowledged to hold a large estate of fifteen places on behalf of the other semimoiyt within their patrimoiyt (N/Japaljarri-N/Jungarrayi). This temporary arrangement eventuated because the two eldest surviving patrilineal members of the N/Japaljarri-N/Jungarrayi local descent group were considered incapable, for various personal circumstances, of holding the estate any longer. Furthermore none of their few descendants were considered capable either. Negotiations were taking place to ascertain who the estate could be transferred to within the context of first a land claim and soon afterwards intensive mineral exploration. After some years had passed a patrilineal descent group from a nearby *jukurrpa* who were in a company relationship with the declining descent group and of the same
semimoiety (*N/Japaljarri-N/Jungarrayi*) were invested with the title of the estate. These *kirda* were handed the ceremonies and responsibility for the places within the estate during a ceremonial cycle that was overseen by the caretakers from within their patrimoiety (*N/Japanangka-N/Japangardi*) and two *kurdungurlu* of regional distinction. The formal nature of the transfer of this estate was handled in a deliberately cautious manner over an extended period of time in order to ensure that all claims to the estate were able to be addressed and that the succeeding *kirda* were acknowledged and accepted within the regional system.

Succession in the Tanami Desert involves numerous factors involving residually based links, kin links to place, or places, under question and politics as well. The realities of succession to place and *jukurrpa* by people may be based on a combination of a variety of possibilities that may be called upon and negotiated in a political atmosphere. Places are couched in a net of relationships uniting people which assures that they retain an enduring character. The analysis of succession to ownership of land reveals that places continue to be part of a dynamic social process and the individuals who are able to demonstrate linkages, or have rights to them, can change over time. Sutton (1996:8) rightly concluded that land under customary law cannot be treated as an alienable commodity: “the people, rather than the land, might be regarded as alienable.” This does not preclude the fact that land could be alienated from one group of people and transferred to another group albeit over a long period of time. The cultural order of succession to place is critical for maintaining the regional framework of ownership and relations between people, place and *jukurrpa*.

It was remarked earlier that in terms of succession there was little possibility for an individual to upgrade a personal interest to an acknowledged claim of ownership. The reasons for this can be seen, to a large extent, to lie in the fact that it fails to involve a transfer of ritual knowledge and the maintenance of identity of individuals and groups with place. Perhaps even more important is the fact that the ability of any one individual to claim personally based rights over place have been dwindling considerably more over time and continue to do so.

**Residential and personal rights**

The examination of the cultural order of place has so far considered links between Warlpiri people and place in the Tanami Desert which have been based on the acquisition and demonstration of ritual knowledge and associated rights in place. These connections form the basis of a person’s identity and as such may be generated by two means: genealogical descent
and detailed knowledge of place. However, there are other linkages to place, generated from the land, that may confer personal identity for Warlpiri individuals and attachment to place. These individual rights to place are related to associations that are forged by occupation or residence in place and also include conception, birth, death, initiation and burial.

Personal links to place correspond with the major life history phases and events that further inscribe personal aspects of identity in place. Importantly these are residentially based personal rights and, in contrast to the other rights discussed so far, they appear to have been non-transferable to descendants prior to European contact. However, a clarification is required here that places an emphasis on the fact that residence refers to the physical movement through, and occupation of, the desert at a time prior to Warlpiri’s relocation to settlement in communities. This does not necessarily imply that residentially based affiliation to place is no longer applicable. Comments will be provided on ways in which these residential affiliations have actually become more complicated in the contemporary setting of community settlements.

**Place of conception**

*(Kurdu miyalu palka parrija)*

The classic Australian anthropological literature on spirit child conception beliefs focused primarily on questions related to the weight accorded to parenting roles by Aboriginal people as human copulation versus the intervention of the *jukurrpa* (Ashley-Montagu 1937). Meggitt (1974:272) recorded that Warlpiri men and women believed that both frequent sexual intercourse and the entry of *kurruwarri*, which he translated as “spirit entity”, were necessary pre-conditions for child birth, although Meggitt’s male informants emphasised the latter role whereas women stressed that copulation was the more important of the two. Munn’s explanation of *kurruwarri* (1986:28) is more helpful than Meggitt’s and she concluded that it was best understood as being both an invisible and visible form of ancestral potency. As Munn (1984:65) noted place of conception had implications for an individual’s personal identity:

> an individual identifies himself with the ancestors of the site where he or she is believed to have been conceived. A person is thought to have the ancestral powers (guruwari) of that ancestor inside him, and those powers are also thought to have entered his or her mother at that place.

Place of conception is significant to Warlpiri because it was deemed to be the place where the spirit of a *jukurrpa*, in the form of *kurruwarri* (force, law, seminal power or design of a dreaming), first animated a person. How this animation is achieved has been explained by Peterson, Munn and Glowczewski as through the *kurruwalpa*, a kind of spirit-child essence or
being, that enters the mother at a place. Peterson (1972:22) understood that the kurrawalpa enters the foot or navel of the mother of the child, and when the mother first became aware of her pregnancy then she will try remember where she has been in order to ascertain the place of conception. Glowczewski (1991:38–42) observed that there are a number of different ways that the identity of the kurrawalpa may be revealed. These reasons included such occurrences as a certain kind of food eaten that was linked to a specific jukurrpa, the dreams of the mother or other kin about the identity of the unborn child or perhaps a place where the father or someone else had recently killed an animal. Place of conception then and the deposit of a particular essence from the jukurrpa into a child is not a straightforward matter. The designation of place of conception is also influenced by deliberate human agency. McConvell (1998:185) commented that it has been common in the anthropological literature to emphasise that a father will often try to manipulate the conception place of his child to ensure that it is at a place within his own patrilineally inherited country, thus reaffirming the child’s identity. Critically in terms of this discussion the jukurrpa place of conception is not necessarily one that belongs to the semimoiety of the father.

Merlan (1986:474) was one of the first anthropologists to clearly tackle the question of what kind of rights do people have over their place of conception. She advocated a departure from the classic debate because it ignored two key issues: Conception beliefs are part of an ideological strand of socio-territorial orders that construct attachments of people to place and totemic entities. Beliefs as rights to place confer differences between individuals within these orders. It has been argued so far the primary links to places of FF country and contingent territorial affiliation lie in continuity through descent and kin ties. Merlan (1986:486) contrasted these linkages based on lineal succession with conception place where attachment was forged by virtue of a fortuitous emergence and subsequent ‘finding’ at a place, a distinctive element of individual identity through attachment to place. Most importantly, conception links could cut across sameness or to differentiate between close siblings, to give related kin widely spaced interests in places (Merlan 1986:488). It was observed earlier in the comparison between patrilineally and matrilineally inherited rights to place that their different bases affected their relative cultural ordering in terms of responsibility, authority, and knowledge of place. A similar line of inquiry needs to assess the personally acquired linkages and identity to place afforded by conception and how strong a basis for claim of ownership is conception.

There is a strong attachment for Warlpiri individuals in terms of sentiment to their place of conception because it anchors them to both the physical and spiritual world via the jukurrpa. This anchorage also has broader social implications in terms of ritual responsibilities.
Individuals who share the same conception site or *jukurrpa* are also able to exercise rights over the property of the associated estate in a similar manner to those who have rights to the same place accorded by patrilineal or matrilineal descent. In the Chilla Well claim book Stead (1985:21) stated that “there is a strong sense of closeness or relatedness between people who have descent based claims to an estate and those who have conception sites within the estate.” Similarly Meggitt (1974) observed earlier that one of the connotations of the word countryman as used by Warlpiri was in reference to people with conception dreams within a close geographic area, around an important spring for example. Bonds that exist between such people are ones of sentimental attachment and spiritual relatedness. However, people who share closely related conception places constitute no formal grouping that is of any social, economic or religious significance (Meggitt 1974:67). Munn (1986:28) also observed that there was no ritual corpus of knowledge and rights for place of conception. Those people who have conception links to certain places may be included in the exercise of *kirda* or *kurdungurlu* duties depending upon their patrimoity but this tends to rely upon acceptance by those people in the former categories. Spencer and Gillen (1899) noted that an (Aranda) Arrernte man from central Australia would never become a major leader for a ceremony if his affiliation to the *jukurrpa* was based on place of conception only. Among Warlpiri such a statement must be qualified. In circumstances of succession the knowledge of place held by a person with conception links to a place may be forwarded by an individual as a contention for possible conversion to a primary claim in the absence of those people with patrilineally descended links or a company relationship. Even in such a circumstance the claim would need to be negotiated with other groups holding knowledge and attachment to the place in question via matrifiliation or other links.

In visits to the field Warlpiri people do not hesitate to name those individuals who were conceived at places encountered. In particular those people who were conceived on one of their patrilineally affiliated dreaming tracks were said to have extraordinarily strong claims to places associated with *jukurrpa*. One man who is a senior *kirda* for the *Marlujaarra* (Two Kangaroos) *jukurrpa* was both conceived and born at a major place and he was recognised as having unrivalled responsibility and authority over decisions for the *jukurrpa* and associated places within the entire survey area. In another example a man’s status as *kurdungurlu* was considerably enhanced because his conception at a single place for which he was *kirda* was geographically centred within a large number of places where he exercised the responsibility of *kurdungurlu*. He was regularly consulted on decisions that people made in the immediate area, but that privilege did not extend to a right for the decisions made over the surrounding places for which he was *kurdungurlu*. The role he exercised remained firmly in the ritual sphere and was not viewed as a right of ownership in itself.
Instances of having a double connection do not necessarily mean that those individuals had more authority when it came to making decisions over places because such people always deferred to yapu who held the most knowledge and authority through patrilineal connection. It is estimated that only about 5% of places in the survey area were connected to individuals in terms of conception, importantly these individuals were in the eldest generation. Of these places only The Granites and Tanami were known as places where many individuals were conceived. Significantly these people are in the middle and eldest generations. The explanation for this lies in the profound change to Warlpiri residential pattern which was brought about by contact with Euro-Australians at these places. This is most obvious in differences between different Warlpiri generations and place of conception.

There has been a dramatic decrease in the number of Warlpiri people who have been conceived in the survey area. This phenomena has been noted for some time in the Tanami Desert: “In 1966 there were no Aborigines alive who had been conceived at Ruguri because the people had stopped living in the area nearly forty years ago but the totemic lodge was still flourishing” (Peterson 1972:23). Nevertheless, the fact that people are no longer conceived in places throughout the Tanami Desert does not appear to have had any detrimental effect on the corpus of Warlpiri ritual knowledge and activity. In the current context of community settlement it is extremely common for children’s conceptions site to be the community in which their mother resides. As a result there is a strong sentimental attachment to the home community and the younger Warlpiri have a sound knowledge of the jukurrpa and places within the immediate vicinity. This knowledge becomes more detailed as the individual goes through the various lifecycle events, such as initiation, and participation in gender related and community ceremonies. The knowledge becomes more detailed as the individual becomes more intimate with the cultural geography of their home. Nonetheless there are still Warlpiri people being conceived at places in the Tanami Desert because of the occupation of outstations and the considerable movement of people between communities as well as other events such as dreams or events that are connected to the time when a mother first becomes aware of her pregnancy. These connections are more likely to correspond to jukurrpa rather than an actual place itself.

The eldest generation of Warlpiri recall their specific conception places with ease whilst for the individuals in the generation below them, many offer the old places of camps at The Granites and Tanami mines as their place of conception. This of course, coincides with the places where their parents first gathered at the time of arrival of Euro-Australians in the Tanami Desert. The underlying principle of connection with the jukurrpa of one’s conception site remains important for all Warlpiri, however, due to shifts in residential patterns, it is clear that there is a more uniform set or pattern established between individuals of similar generations.
than that which was common in the past. With respect to life in Warlpiri settlements such as Lajamanu Meggitt (1974:73) commented that because Warlpiri individuals of the same generation were sharing a small number of conception dreamings that:

The emergence of such diacritical features is likely to sharpen the definition of a settlement as a country or community, even though the geographical grouping of conception-dreamings is not, in traditional Warlpiri theory, reflected in formal social groupings.

It is agreed that Warlpiri individuals have Lajamanu and associated local *jukurrpa* as a conception place, yet the difficulty that this poses is that it is not traditional Warlpiri country on the basis of the patrilineal inheritance of rights as *kirda*. Glowczewski (1991:38-9) recorded that people born in Lajamanu are likely to have *Wampana* (Hare Wallaby) as a conception dreaming that gives them rights in the municipality in addition to their other patrilineal rights over places to the south in the Tanami Desert. McConvell (1998) noted that for their part Gurindji people reject that such a connection to place through conception confers rights to Warlpiri as traditional owners as it is Gurindji land through patrilineal inheritance. McConvell (1998:187) observed that in the regional land tenure system in which Lajamanu is located place of birth or conception for rights to place are not considered as meaningful as they are by Warlpiri. Here is a superb illustration of differences between rights and their relative weights in regional systems of cultural ordering of rights in place afforded by conception. For Gurindji it has relatively little meaning, for Warlpiri it has great personal meaning but cannot be said to be a primary right in itself.

The changing nature of residential and individual linkages and affiliation to place such as those afforded through place of conception has been dramatically affected by settlement life and contemporary issues surrounding the politics of land ownership. A change has occurred in the reproduction of the cultural order of rights in place.

**Place of birth**

(*Ngurrangka* *palka parrija*)

Place of birth for an individual in the Western Desert region of Australia has been identified as the primary claim to place. Hamilton (1998:101) reported that the most important Western Desert affiliation was with a place or waterhole near, or at, the site of birth. As she noted, this is highly unlikely to correspond with the father's country birthplace. As such in the Western Desert rights are, in the first instance, conferred not from father but rather from place of birth. Berndt (1959:96) observed that there was an active desire that a child was born near a certain
site or sites with which the father was associated in order to strengthen and facilitate inheritance of his rights. This interference by human agency in the place of birth is similar to one practiced for conception.

Amongst Pintupi and Luritja people who occupy the regional territory between Warlpiri and the peoples of the Western Desert, Myers (1986:136) and Sarah Holcombe (1998) have noted respectively that there is a certain amount of ambiguity in the way that people discuss places of birth and conception, and that their informants did not distinguish clearly between the two. Stead (1985:20) also noted this situation among Warlpiri where younger people often spoke of their place of conception as where they were born. Warlpiri have no trouble distinguishing between place of conception or being ‘found’ and place of birth in terms of rights to place however. Place of birth is not as important to Warlpiri for establishing affiliation with *jukurrpa* and place as is their place of conception. There are two reasons for this, first, there is no particular spiritual connection made between an individual and the *jukurrpa* of their birth place and, second, these people are not recognised as having rights and responsibilities by those people who are *kirda* or *kurdungurlu* precisely because of the first reason.

The contemporary situation of community life has to a certain extent removed the surprise element in terms of births occurring in places outside of communities or towns. Attachment to place through birth has undergone changes with the advent of relocation to communities and a similar pattern emerges for this kind of linkage to place as has been outlined in the examination of place of conception in the cultural order of place. Most of the eldest generation of Warlpiri remember their site of birth which does not carry the same symbolic function and rights as that conferred by conception. Notwithstanding this fact, as noted above by Berndt for the Western Desert and in the previous consideration of linkages to place, a link by birth to places associated with those that are inherited patrilineally does give an individual enhanced and noteworthy status amongst their peers but does not result in more authority.

Many of the middle aged generation of Warlpiri were born at the two old mining sites at The Granites and Tanami as well as having them as their place of conception. Changes over time tend to confirm that linkages to place of birth are essentially sentimental in character. Current birthing practices amongst Aboriginal people in the Northern Territory result in children being born in hospital and in the case of Warlpiri expectant mothers almost invariably give birth to infants in Alice Springs, Katherine or Darwin. Most interestingly for the middle generation of Warlpiri many people were born in their community and this attachment carries considerable sentimental attachment and identification. In the generations born after them there is a reversal of this pattern because these individuals have little sense of attachment to the towns where they were born because, in most cases, they return soon after to their communities with their
mothers. These intriguing differences serve to illustrate the fact that regardless of generation, or whether one considers place of conception or birth, there is a distinct emergence of a powerful sentimental attachment to the home community. In an interesting development certain younger Warlpiri people actively record the places of conception and birth of their grandparental generations and this is incorporated into their own sense of personal history that serves to preserve a sentimental attachment to places of residence.

**Place of burial**

*Ngurrangka parrija pintamanu/yurringka - buried in tree*

*Jakulyupuyu/milyinkayirranu rdarkungka - buried in ground*

The close relationship between people and places engendered by residential rights have been previously reported in Australian ethnography. Elkin (1969:96) for example observed that Aboriginal people wanted to die in their own country so as not to be lost, (from the dreaming/jukurrpa), in order to ensure that their spirit remained in the land from where it was generated again. Such an observation highlights the fact that Aboriginal people see their identity as forever bound in the places associated with their country. Peterson (1975) discussed notions relating to the birth and death of individuals as sentimental attachments between people and place. He characterised such attachments as having important implications that supported a heartland model of land tenure on the basis of the following argument: old men wanted to die in their own country (their patrilineal estate) and as they became increasingly infirm they were the focus of residential bands who formed around them as support. Peterson argued that the ideology of clan totemism worked to space people out in terms of land tenure based on the primary rights of *kirda*.

There is little evidence regarding the capacity of place of burial among Warlpiri to afford links to place for relatives of the deceased. From the information gathered visiting places where informants’ relatives had passed away it was apparent that the memory of place of burial of a close relative was not retained for long in the Tanami Desert. Meggitt reported that tree platform burials were still common during the 1950s at Lajamanu as well as burials in graves. At that time Meggitt was more concerned with practices surrounding burial, obviously the site of burial was restricted to the immediate environment of the community because of people’s limited access to vehicles and the considerable distance to their traditional lands. The practice of burying people with their heads pointing toward their father’s country is still favoured and the organisation of burials remains in the hands of the maternal relatives of the deceased. Meggitt (1974:321) noted the distinction that “a man’s head is oriented to his lodge-dreaming
country and a woman’s to her conception-dreaming country”. Changes to place of conception for people since that time may have altered this situation. Place of burial is perhaps better understood as a confirmation of the deceased’s affiliation to *jukurrpa* and place. Prior to their removal from the Tanami Desert Warlpiri people desired to pass away in the land where they had rights as *kirda*.

The contemporary significance of linkages to place of burial of a deceased person is maintained in the way that people talk about where their relatives passed away, and that the essence, explained as a manifestation of *jukurrpa*, of those who have passed away is concentrated in places. This has been reported amongst Warlpiri of Chilla Well by Stead (1985:22) as well as more generally commented upon by Peterson and Long (1986:61) who observed that “it is also a widespread practice to refer to people by the site at which a close relative of theirs is buried with the consequence of perpetuating a link and identification with that area, which must have often been outside the patrilineal estate.” Many burials today are in community graveyards, or in religious cemeteries in towns in the Northern Territory, however, there are areas within the survey area that are increasingly being used as burial areas because they are becoming more accessible as roads and tracks are made and improved. Significantly the places chosen for burial are in the immediate vicinity of the most important place for which the deceased person had patrilineally inherited rights as *kirda*.

**Place of initiation**

The circumcision of novices continues to remain one the most important of all ceremonies for Warlpiri, not simply because it marks the commencement of a lifelong religious education. This lifecycle event brings the broadest social gathering together for the initiate and includes all of the members of his own patriline, matriline, those related to his patrilineal estates as well as the family of his future wife (Meggitt 1974:281). Circumcision ceremonies, since the inception of settlement life, have been held in designated areas in, or adjacent to, the community. There is no specific linkage to place engendered by initiation although older Warlpiri men relate that it was not uncommon for them to have been initiated at the major place of their most important patrilineally inherited *jukurrpa* in smaller ceremonies than those witnessed today. In consideration of the knowledge surrounding linkages to place, initiation is obviously of great importance but not to the place of initiation. It is at the time of initiation that the novice is introduced to a considerable amount of information regarding *jukurrpa* that ultimately emphasise knowledge of his country which he inherits as *kirda*. The obligatory learning tour which forms part of the ceremony is now conducted between settlement communities rather than the estates themselves. Nevertheless the focus remains on learning about the significance
of place in terms of physical and metaphysical manifestations of *jukurrpa*. However, the importance of place of initiation in and of itself does not entail any rights that may be activated by an individual. What is most important is that place of initiation additionally fosters and emphasises links to the home community of an individual. Place of initiation was the site of an individual's passage to manhood, a link to place that requires the maintenance of distance rather than proximity and association.

Place of initiation is a sentimental link of affiliation to place that cannot be regarded as either a primary or secondary right which could ever be called upon in cases of succession and has probably been of no importance at any stage in relating people to place. In support of this conclusion Peterson and Long (1986:61) observed:

> in the Tanami desert area people frequently point out where they were circumcised, indicating at the very least that they have some sentimental attachment to the area, even if there is no evidence for it being the basis for a claim to involvement in the religious life of the estate.

**New places**

Recently Glowczewski (1989 and 1991), Sylvie Poirier (1992), Munn (1996) and Merlan (1998) have all described how new places can gain significance to Aboriginal people in contemporary settings. Glowczewski and Poirier discuss respectively the power of places to incorporate contemporary individual dreams concerning *jukurrpa* and localise the relevance of exchanged ritual. Although in neither case do such events involve the transfer of rights to other places associated with those *jukurrpa*. They are links existing at a regional level which emphasise relatedness rather than ownership. In a different way, Munn has pointed out that places that had no prior significance may acquire added, albeit temporary, significance through recent events such as localities where a major ceremony was held. Finally, Merlan has discussed the discovery of new places or the rediscovery of forgotten places in terms of how the encounter with them may spark negotiation between people to ascertain the significance of these new places in terms of meaning, rights and affiliation.

Munn (1996) and Merlan (1998) have published excellent studies on the emergence of new places as well as changes to their significance through personal and social histories. Munn (1996:465) cautioned that "if we understand space simply as referring to culturally meaningful terrestrial places or regions, we disarticulate the dynamic relations between spatial regions and moving spatial fields." She was concerned with the exploration of how Warlpiri individuals conceive of their own patchwork of regions in which boundaries in space for *yapa* are described through the use of the expression 'room' (Munn 1996:448). In her work amongst the
Mangarrayi of Mataranka in the Northern Territory Merlan (1982:147) disclosed that she came to comprehend more of the meanings and functions of places as signs other than just as natural objects, and she used words such as ‘locality’ and ‘place’ more often than ‘site’. Merlan (1982:155) was interested in how people treated and used places not just in ritual or ideological contexts but also in how they approached, talked and named them. She delved into the ways in which the landscape was personalised by places as signs that link totems, people and the land. These recent works on new places indicate the vitality of the production and reproduction of the social significance of place that remains a dynamic dimension of Warlpiri sociocultural processes and negotiations.

In the survey area there have been several places encountered that may be termed new, in the sense that these places were not named or considered significant by previous generations of Warlpiri. These places have been produced by residential association. Places may be incorporated into the *jukurrpa* due to their ability to relate current events or recent experiences. There are many examples of this within the survey area of the Tanami Desert and one of the most common concerns the process through which certain trees, in particular, *Marrangki* (Marrawaji) - *(Owenia reticulata* - Desert Walnut), and *Wapurnungku* - *(Eucalyptus papuanas* - Ghost Gum), can become associated with certain individuals when they pass away via a process of marking and association (see also Jackson 1995). These trees as new places received the personal names of people who have passed away in the area and are closely identified with by the immediate family as well as those who have rights to the appropriate *jukurrpa* through rights of *kirda* and *kurungurlu*. Most importantly the majority of the new places that are named are associated with the same *jukurrpa* and semimoiety of the person (sometimes living) after whom they are named.

New places such as these trees demonstrate the complexity of interaction between contemporary history, rights traced through descent and personal affiliation and identity. Significant changes to the relationship between people and places have been brought about as a result of the forced removal of Warlpiri from the survey area and their subsequent resettlement in communities on the outskirts of the Tanami Desert. An effective grasp of the current intricacies of people’s relation to place through the cultural order of rights in place compels us to analyse these dynamics that arise from not only ruptures to Warlpiri history but the negotiated character of the cultural order itself.

**Conclusion**

Meggitt (1974) accurately predicted that there would be considerable changes to the composition of the traditional Warlpiri ‘community’ brought about by the movement to
permanent settlements. However, the substance of his predictions have been erroneous in terms of the effect of these changes. For instance, Meggitt (1974:72) anticipated that the communities in which Warlpiri children were born would become the foci of new 'community' divisions after "the death of the men who can still remember clearly the boundaries, dreaming-sites, and other features of the old countries". Meggitt also believed that conception would have a similar effect in fostering a new kind of 'community' identity. In a similar misreading of the future Woodward (1974:para86) in his assessment of legislative changes to the Land Rights Act in the Northern Territory commented:

I believe that the most likely development over the next fifty years or so will be the gradual weakening of links with specific areas and sites and the strengthening of community identity with larger tracts of land. If this occurs, community ownership would be appropriate.

Woodward's comment is better understood in light of the fact that at the time of the Land Rights Commission there was no outstation movement or visiting of country because of poor access to vehicles for Aboriginal people in the Northern Territory. This situation was redressed with the advent of the land claim process and the restructuring of Aboriginal people's relations to the state and their land under the Land Rights Act in conjunction with their incorporation into the cash economy through the payment of social security entitlements. In the Tanami Desert the development of gold exploration and mining has had precisely the opposite effect to that anticipated by Meggitt and Woodward. On one level the residentially based linkages to place, such as birth, conception and burial have combined to forge strong social and sentimental attachments between individuals and their communities. Nevertheless they have in no way superseded or replaced those kinds of attachments to place that are traced through patrilineal descent or the acquisition of knowledge. The continued practice of the younger Warlpiri of both genders to be inducted into the religious knowledge and rights associated with their responsibilities as both *kirda* and *kurdungurlu* has signified no substitution of the primary importance of descent based linkages in conferring attachment to place to the identification of primary rights as being held at the level of community.

The assessment of cultural order of place in the Tanami Desert demonstrated that places continue to be of critical importance in contemporary Warlpiri life despite the fact that many have not been visited for half a century or more and are often hundreds of kilometres from communities. The analysis of the Warlpiri ordering of their cultural rights in place in the Tanami Desert considered the principles used by *yapa* to establish connection between both individuals and groups of people and the ownership of place with its contingent responsibilities, power and obligations. The cultural order of place needs to take into account the specificities of politics with reference to individual and regional histories. In the case of
Jangala, his claims to different estates were elevated to the status of primary owner at that time and for the purpose of a land claim. Ranking claims to place involves a comparison of their weight with respect to other claims.

The consideration of Warlpiri’s cultural ordering of rights in place indicated that people have the potential to have widely spaced rights and there have been changes in the configuration of these rights through time. It was increasingly apparent that Warlpiri patrification continues to emerge as the most important link to place that confers primary ownership to land. The following chapter introduces a second body of data on patrification and place that returns to the earlier themes of a land tenure model for the Tanami Desert by analysing how Warlpiri people organise their affiliation to place. It will address the implication of patrification to place as well as other possible models of Warlpiri land tenure in the light of the contemporary of cultural rights to place in the Tanami Desert.
Chapter Six

The Social Classification of Place

I have marked on my map only the approximate locations of the boundaries of the countries, for I was unable to visit all of them while I was in the desert. The older Walbiri men, however, have no difficulty in defining the limits of their own countries fairly precisely, although they may be less sure of the more distant boundaries of other countries. The positions of the boundaries are fixed, validated and remembered through the agency of religious myths. These stories not only plot the totemic tracks and centres but also specify the points at which the custody of the songs, rituals and decorations associated with them should change hands as the tracks pass from one country to another. An investigator able to spend long enough in the field could produce from such data a detailed map of the borders of the four countries (Meggitt 1974:48-9).

Meggitt believed that the four community boundaries of Warlpiri in the Tanami Desert could be determined after totemic centres (places) and totemic tracks (jukurrpa) had been accurately located. This chapter presents the most comprehensive record of mapped places in the Tanami Desert and has been compiled from material stretching over 20 years. Through the presentation of this place data Meggitt’s community model of Warlpiri land tenure, as well as other models and hypotheses discussed so far, will be tested and analysed. In addition other dimensions that may account for the relationship between people and place in terms of the demarcation of boundaries informing land tenure will be addressed including ecology, estates and ranges, ranking of place and the cultural order of rights in place. These dimensions will be considered in the light of changes over time brought on by demographic change and other social and political processes.

The Mapsheet Data

The data presented in this chapter are a composition of the store of Warlpiri knowledge of place in the Tanami Desert that has been gathered with dual reference to the identification of place in terms of affiliation with specific jukurrpa and associated semimoieties. A note on the frame and context of period of time within which the data was collected is important considering the fact that Warlpiri people themselves hold that the patrification of place does not change over time and was set down during the jukurrpa as an unchanging reference of social identity in the landscape.
The data displays a very high level of reproducability over time and in none of the available published sources are there conflicting details. Glowczewski (1991:132) formulated a table that detailed how Lajamanu Warlpiri divide the affiliation of semimoieties to 47 different jukurrpa based on her research that for the most part collected data within the confines of the community. The data here are presented in a different format because the information of patrifiliation to place was gathered in the field and has been divided into five different sections corresponding to the relevant 1:250,000 topographical mapsheets (refer to Map 4.1) and then divided further into categories of jukurrpa (see Appendix) and patrimoieties. Both Glowczewski’s work and the data presented are attempts to elicit the patrifiliation of place from Warlpiri data and exhibit remarkable correlation.

The places documented here can by no means be considered as a complete record of Warlpiri knowledge of places in the Tanami Desert. Knowledge of place, however, is being increasingly solidified by two major factors. First, as has been already indicated, the number of knowledgeable informants who can accurately locate and identify previously unrecorded places is steadily declining. Second, the work of the CLC over the last two decades has continued to record the location and affiliation of place within the context of land claim research and management of mining and exploration projects.

During the process of the mapping of place knowledgeable informants are usually most keen to visit places that are the most important ritually and those to which they may claim rights as kirda. This means that as data are compiled on place affiliation a picture emerges that is heavily influenced by the knowledge of the informants who were present at the time that places were inspected. This is precisely the reason why there is a dominance of places associated with the Wampana (Hare Wallaby) (12 places out of 49) and Ngapa (Rain) jukurrpa (12 places out of 49) in Mapsheet Three. The data collected in the region were based on the combined efforts of two very knowledgeable informants who had resided in the region as young men and who were keen to follow up the places associated with their respective rights as kirda. If an even clearer illustration exists then this may be found in the case of the Warlu (Fire) jukurrpa (13 places out of 77) on Mapsheet Four. Here, the key informant was able to locate almost the entire complement of places affiliated with the jukurrpa. This extraordinary feat was due to an unusual combination of factors: the man concerned had lived in the area until the 1940s, he had a widely acknowledged exceptional memory and the multiple visits afforded by land claim work in the area enabled him to identify an uncommonly high proportion of places. The work of knowledgeable informants was crucial in establishing the parameters of the study area where multiple visits over recent decades have afforded the collection of the most accurately mapped place data.
The places that have been counted in this survey are restricted to those that have been accurately located and recorded. Each body of data for the five mapsheets are detailed separately below. The place data for each mapsheet have been organised into a table indicating three categories detailing broader semimoiety affiliation, *jukurrpa* and the number of places associated with each. The data presented for each mapsheet also includes a diagram that indicates the distribution of places according to their broader semimoiety affiliation. The area of land covered by each mapsheet is considerable and measures approximately 155 by 110 kilometres or 17,050 square kilometres. In the short discussion accompanying each table and diagram observations are included that address the distribution of place, patrilineal and connection to specific *jukurrpa*. These comments will not preclude the analysis of other processes that may be at work that explain Warlpiri land tenure.

**Mapsheets One**

The area of land covered by Mapsheet One (Diagram 6.1) has been the subject of comparatively limited mineral exploration and little land claim research compared to other parts of the Tanami Desert. At first glance one is immediately struck by the fact that the entire central region of Mapsheet One is apparently devoid of located, named places. Further to this the majority of places that have been identified so far lie on the southern, northern and western boundaries. The initial explanation that can be offered for this situation is that the central area of the mapsheet corresponds to a region that is, for the most part, devoid of any significant topographical features marked on the map and, as a result, easily located places are noticeably absent and have eluded surveys.

With reference to the number of places on Mapsheet One (see Table 6.1), it has the fewest of the five mapsheet areas that are analysed: 29 out a total of 257 representing only 11% of places (opposed to an average of 51.4 places per mapsheet) that have been recorded in the survey region. In terms of patrilineal and place it is interesting to observe that the majority of places (12 or 41% of places) are affiliated with *N/Japanangka* and *N/Japangardi* in contrast to the *N/Jangala* and *N/Jampijinpa* semimoiety that claim the fewest places (3 or 10%).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Semimoiety Affiliation</th>
<th>Jukurrpa</th>
<th>Number of Places</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>N/Jangala-N/Jampijinpa</td>
<td>Janganpa - Possum</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pirntina - Quiet Snake</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ngapa - Rain</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N/Jakamarra-Na/Jupurrula</td>
<td>Wirntiki - Ibis Men</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pitilala - Bush Bean</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Marlujarra - Two Kangaroos</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N/Japaljarri-N/Jungarray</td>
<td>Wawultja - Incestuous Man</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pakarru - Bandicoot</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pakajirri</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N/Japanangka-N/Japangardi</td>
<td>Wanakiji - Bush Tomato</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Warlawurru - Eaglehawk</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Munga Munga - Dancing Women</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Minkirri - Lizard</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6.1 - Patrilifiation of places on Mapsheet One (29 Places)

The *Munga Munga* (Dancing Women) *jukurrpa* belonging to *N/Japanangka* and *N/Japangardi* is by far the most represented *jukurrpa* in terms of numbers of associated places and accounts for 9 or 31% of places within Mapsheet One. In terms of the distribution of places a case could be made that in the southern portion of Mapsheet One there is a dominance of one *jukurrpa* and semimoiety that may support an estate or heartland model in the sense that there is a pronounced clustering of places in a limited geographical region. The remainder of the data recorded in the case of Mapsheet One are inconclusive with respect to the corroboration of an estate or heartland model and indicates a degree of interpenetration between places that are associated with each of the four semimoieties.
1 - *N/Jangala* and *N/Jampijinpa*

2 - *N/Jakamarra* and *Na/Jupurrurla*

3 - *N/Japaljarri* and *N/Jungarrayi*

4 - *N/Japanangka* and *N/Japangardi*

Diagram 6.1 - Distribution of places on Mapsheet One (29 Places)

**Mapsheet Two**

The area of land covered by Mapsheet Two (Diagram 6.2) has been the subject of considerably more land claim research and mining exploration than in the previous example yet this has not necessitated a significantly higher yield of located places when compared to the case of Mapsheet One (32 as opposed to 29). However, Mapsheet Two shares a number of similar characteristics to the first example with respect to the fact that there are a large number of open spaces where no places have been located up to the present time.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Semimoiety Affiliation</th>
<th>Jukurrpa</th>
<th>Number of Places</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>N/Jangala-N/Jampijinpa</td>
<td>Ngapa - Rain</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pirnitina - Quiet Snake</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Marukuru - Pigeon</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N/Jakamarra-Na/Jupurrula</td>
<td>Marljajarra - Two Kangaroos</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Yarla - Bush Potato</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Wampana - Hare Wallaby</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Marliyarajarra - Two Initiated Men</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N/Japaljarri-N/Jungharri</td>
<td>Warlawurru - Eaglehawk</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Wawultja - Incestuous Man</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Watijarra - Two Men</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mala - Rat Kangaroo</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Karnta Karnta - Women</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Jungynpa - Mouse</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Marlu - Kangaroo</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N/Japanangka-N/Japangardi</td>
<td>Jarnpa - Kurdaitcha Man</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Warna - Snake</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Wanakiji - Bush Tomato</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Munga Munga - Dancing Women</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6.2 - Patrifiliation of places on Mapsheet Two (32 Places)

In terms of patrifiliation there are similar numbers of places affiliated with three of the semimoieties, however, as in the case of Mapsheet One there are noticeably fewer places belonging to the N/Jangala and N/Jampijinpa semimoiety (see Table 6.2). No single jukurrpa can be seen to be dominant in terms of numbers of places when compared to those associated with the other jukurrpa. As was the case of Mapsheet One in one section of the mapsheet there can, be discerned a marked cluster of places belonging to N/Japanangka and N/Japangardi at the expense of places associated with any other semimoiety. Further, all of the places associated with the N/Jakamarra and Na/Jupurrula semimoiety appear to be found within a limited geographic area yet in this case there are also to be found places associated with the other three semimoieties, once again illustrating a degree of interpenetration between differently patrifiliated places.
1 - *N/Jangala* and *N/Jampijinpa*

2 - *N/Jakamarra* and *Na/Jupurrurla*

3 - *N/Japaljarri* and *N/Jungarrayi*

4 - *N/Japanangka* and *N/Japangardi*

Diagram 6.2 - Distribution of places on Mapsheet Two (32 Places)

**Mapsheet Three**

Similar to the previous two mapsheets analysed there are two sections of Mapsheet Three where there is a noticeable absence of places. However, Mapsheet Three has considerably more places in total than either of the two mapsheets considered so far (see Table 6.3), one reason for this lies in the fact that the area has been the subject of considerably more detailed mining exploration and, therefore, detailed mapping. Within the area of Mapsheet Three there
is a pronounced dominance of places affiliated with the *N/Jangala* and *N/Jampijinpa* and *N/Jakamarra* and *Na/Jupurrumpa* patrimoieties with 36 places or over 75% of the total of 49 places located on the mapsheet.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Semimoieties Affiliation</th>
<th><em>Jukurrpa</em></th>
<th>Number of Places</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>N/Jangala-N/Jampijinpa</em></td>
<td>Ngapa - Rain</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Jarnpa - Kurdaicha Man</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Watiyawaru - Women and Acacia Seeds</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>N/Jakamarra-Na/Jupurrumpa</em></td>
<td>Warna - Snake</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Kanarri - Lizard</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Wampana - Hare Wallaby</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Warlu - Fire</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Miya Miya - Seed</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mala - Rat Kangaroo</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ngapa - Rain</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>N/Jpaljarri-N/Jungarrayi</em></td>
<td>Watajarra - Two Men</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Kalijirri - Spinifex Pigeon</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ngatijirri - Budgerigar</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>N/Japanangka-N/Japangardi</em></td>
<td>Wanakiji - Bush Tomato</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Jarnpa - Kurdaicha Man</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Yarla - Bush Potato</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mamingirri - Two Devils</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6.3 - Patrification of places on Mapsheet Three (49 Places)

The dominance of one patrification is explained by the fact that the owners from each of the semimoieties both claim ownership of *jukurrpa* that are associated with numerous places. In the case of *N/Jangala* and *N/Jampijinpa* it is the Ngapa (Rain) *jukurrpa* that has 13 places and there are 12 places associated with the Wampana (Hare Wallaby) *jukurrpa* held by *N/Jakamarra* and *Na/Jupurrumpa*. In terms of distribution of places the two *jukurrpa* reveal two interesting new facts. In the case of the Ngapa (Rain) *jukurrpa* places they do not so much appear to cluster but rather exist in a clearly defined linear band extending upon a north-south axis. With respect to the Wampana (Hare Wallaby) *jukurrpa* there is a cluster of sites that appear on the eastern edge of the mapsheet. However, the sheer number of places associated with the *N/Jakamarra* and *Na/Jupurrumpa* semimoieties once more indicates that places affiliated with a semimoieties are distributed randomly across the landscape and continue to display a high degree of interpenetration with regard to differently patrified places. Notwithstanding this
fact, in the northern and southern central sections there remain two sections that are devoid of located places.

\[
\begin{array}{cccccccc}
3 & 3 & 2 & 4 & 2 & 4 & 2 & 4 \\
1 & 1 & 1 & 2 & 1 & 1 & 2 & 1 \\
& 1 & 2 & & 4 & & & \\
& & & & & & & \\
& & & & & & & \\
& & & & & & & \\
& & & & & & & \\
\end{array}
\]

1 - \textit{N/Jangala and N/Jampijinpa}

2 - \textit{N/Jakamarra and Na/Jupurrurla}

3 - \textit{N/Japaljarri and N/Jungarrayi}

4 - \textit{N/Japanangka and N/Japangardi}

Diagram 6.3 - Distribution of places on Mapsheet Three (49 Places)

\textbf{Mapsheet Four}

Mapsheet Four (Diagram 6.4) is the most densely populated mapsheet in the survey region in terms of numbers of places with 87 or 34% of the combined total of 257 places located within the thesis survey area. Given this fact and taking into account that the area has been the subject of considerable research for land claims and mining exploration over a long period of time I argue that Mapsheet Four ideally contains the best indication of the relationship between the distribution of place, patrilineation for the analysis and extrapolation of land tenure models for the Tanami Desert.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Semimoiety Affiliation</th>
<th>Jukurrpa</th>
<th>Number of Places</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>N/Jangala-N/Jampijinpa</td>
<td>Ngapa - Rain</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Warlu - Fire</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Malikijarra - Two Dogs</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Jajirti - Native Cat</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N/Jakamarra-Na/Jupurrurla</td>
<td>Warna - Snake</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Wirntiki - Ibis Men</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Malikipatu - Many Dogs</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Marlujarra - Two Kangaroos</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Janganpa - Possum</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N/Japaljarri-N/Jungarray</td>
<td>Ngarluwuny - Sweet Grevillea</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ngatijirri - Budgerigar</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pakarru - Bandicoot</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Warlawurru - Eaglehawk</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Wawultja - Incestuous Man</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Watijarra - Two Men</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Warna - Snake</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Warnajarra - Two Snakes</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N/Japanangka-N/Japangardi</td>
<td>Wirntiki - Ibis Men</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Yarla - Bush Potato</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mamingirri - Two Devils</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Wanakiji - Bush Tomato</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6.4 - Patrification of places on Mapsheet Four (87 Places)

It can be seen that there is only a small area of land where no places have been located and this corresponds with the encroachment of a considerable sand dune complex within the area covered by the mapsheet. Each semimoiety is well represented in terms of numbers of places to which they claim primary affiliation as well as being associated with a minimum of four different jukurrpa within the mapsheet area (see Table 6.4). Further, there are certain areas within the mapsheet where the dominance of places associated with each semimoiety may be distinguished. For example in the north-west of the mapsheet are found a large number of N/Japaljarri and N/Jungarrayi affiliated places, immediately to the south there appears a cluster of N/Jangala and N/Jampijinpa places. In a similar vein if a line was drawn bisecting the mapsheet from the south-west to north-east corner then in the lower half the majority of places associated with the N/Jakamarra and N/Jupurrurla and N/Japanangka and N/Japangardi semimoieties can be found. Again, however, unless a very fine line is drawn
around these clusters of places associated with each single semimoioety the data continues to indicate a high level of interpenetration in terms of the distribution of differently patrifiliated places.

<table>
<thead>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1 - N/Jangala and N/Jampijinpa

2 - N/Jakamarra and N/Jupurrurla

3 - N/Japaljarri and N/Jungarrayi

4 - N/Japanangka and N/Japangardi

Diagram 6.4 - Distribution of places on Mapsheet Four (87 Places)
Mapsheet Five

Mapsheet Five is the second most densely populated mapsheet (Diagram 6.5) with respect to numbers of places totaling 60 or over 23% of the total number of places surveyed within the study area. Similar to the case of Mapsheet Four the area covered by this mapsheet has borne witness to a substantial amount of land claim research and mineral exploration over the last 20 years. In terms of details of place location there are two remarkable facts that warrant attention. The first is that there are only two places affiliated with the *N/Jakamarra-Na/Jupurrurla* semimoiety accounting for a mere 3.33% of places within the mapsheet (see Table 6.5). This is of particular significance when compared to the fact that 30 or 50% of the places within the area of Mapsheet Five are the responsibility of *N/Jangala-N/Jampijinpa* and that the *Ngapa* (Rain) places belonging to *N/Jangala-N/Jampijinpa* account for almost half of the places themselves.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Semimoiety Affiliation</th>
<th>Jukurrpa</th>
<th>Number of Places</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>N/Jangala-N/Jampijinpa</em></td>
<td><em>Ngapa</em> - Rain</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>Wirnpa</em> - Lightning</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>Jarlji</em> - Frog</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>N/Jakamarra-Na/Jupurrurla</em></td>
<td><em>Yarla</em> - Bush Potato</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>Jajiwuny</em> - Euro</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>N/Japaljarri-N/Jungarrayi</em></td>
<td><em>Warlu</em> - Fire</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>Ngarluwuny</em> - Sweet Grevillea</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>Ngatijirri</em> - Budgerigar</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>Mala</em> - Rat Kangaroo</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>Jungynpa</em> - Mouse</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>Yaparanji</em> - Uninitiated Boys</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>Yarla</em> - Bush Potato</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>Pakarru</em> - Bandicoot</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>N/Japanangka-N/Japangardi</em></td>
<td><em>Wankurru</em> - Crow</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>Kakalyalya</em> - Cockatoo</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>Warlawurru</em> - Eaglehawk</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>Yinkardudaku</em> - Night Jar Bird</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>Kajirri</em> - Ceremonial Complex</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>Mirkirri</em> - Thorny Devil</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>Wirntiki</em> - Ibis Men</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6.5 - Patrifiliation of places on Mapsheet Five (60 Places)
Moreover, the other three places and jukurrpa belonging to the *kirda* from this semimoiety are closely affiliated with the *Ngapa* (Rain) *jukurrpa* in any event. These observations indicate that in the central region of the mapsheet it appears that a solid case could be argued that the country could be assumed to be a *Ngapa jukurrpa* estate. The northern area of the mapsheet indicates once more that there exists a high level of interpenetration of places associated with all four semimoieties even with regard to the fact that there are only two places associated with the *N/Jakamarra* and *Na/Jupurrurla* semimoiety.

1 - *N/Jangala* and *N/Jampijinpa*

2 - *N/Jakamarra* and *Na/Jupurrurla*

3 - *N/Japaljarri* and *N/Jungarrayi*

4 - *N/Japanangka* and *N/Japangardi*

Diagram 6.5 - Distribution of places on Mapsheet Five (60 Places)
Summary

The first observation to make is that places associated with each of the four semimoieties are distributed throughout the survey area and are roughly equal in number: *N/Jangala* and *N/Jampijinpa* (77 places); *N/Jakamarra* and *Na/Jupurrula* (62 places); *N/Japaljarri* and *N/Jungarrayi* (60 places); and, finally, *N/Japanangka* and *N/Japangardi* (58 places). It must be borne in mind that the study area does not cover all of the land held by Warlpiri and that the imposition of its boundaries have been dictated by the research and preparation of land claims as well as mapping processes involved in subsequent gold exploration and mining. It has been noted that there is a direct relationship between the amount of land claim research and exploration undertaken in an area and the number of places that have been recorded. This observation comes as little surprise as the more opportunities that *yapa* are afforded to visit country results in a greater likelihood that places will be relocated and mapped. Conversely the long absence of people from the Tanami Desert and the demographic process that drew people into the centre around Tanami and The Granites has contributed to the fact that knowledge of more remote areas has been declining for a longer period of time. The contrast between Mappoint One and Mappoint Four neatly illustrates this point regarding contemporary Warlpiri familiarity with place location. Mappoint One has been the least visited of mappoint regions within the survey area and contains the least number of located places in contrast to Mappoint Four that has been the most intensively scrutinised and holds the greatest number of located places. For this reason it is again emphasised that Mappoint Four is taken as the most indicative of all mappoints when considering the distribution of place in the Tanami Desert.

The data of Mappoint Four, in common with the other four mappoints, illustrates a telling point regarding the distribution of place within the survey area. The glaring absence of places in the southern area of Mappoint Four coincided with the physiographical dominance of sand dune complexes. The nature of such an environment obscures the appearance of more noticeable landmarks that lend themselves more easily to identification and subsequent orientation. Places that are associated with obvious physical features are always the first to be identified in any visit to country. In regions that have only comparatively recently been the subjects of intense mapping most of the places that have been identified and located are those that are found in conjunction with major topographical features.

Soakages that exist in isolation are the most difficult places to locate and it may be concluded (in keeping with the evidence presented in Chapter Four) that areas of apparent emptiness are highly likely to contain soakages and that many of these are major sites such as *Kulpulurnu* (Elias 1998) yet to be located. Even though all of the places known to Warlpiri within the survey area have not been identified and located these places remain known through song
sequences and sacred objects (Berndt 1976:142). The bulk of soakages that have long since fallen from use are well nigh impossible to locate. It is contended that there is enough information available on the location of place to provide informed comment on the existence of discrete boundaries that may exist between estates, clusters or heartlands of patrilineally owned places and jukurrpa.

The final point to be drawn from the presentation of place data is of greatest relevance to the analysis of the existence of definitive boundaries that can be drawn between people and place in terms of the occupation and ownership of land in the Tanami Desert. To varying degrees each of the mapsheets within the survey area indicate the existence of clusters of places that were affiliated with specific semimoieties yet throughout the survey region the place data consistently indicated a high level of interpenetration, that is each semimoiety had affiliated places that were interspersed with one another in no discernible pattern. This apparent absence of clusters or estates associated with a single semimoiety is not enough to dispense with an estate model from the outset if some allowance is made for the existence of other patrilineally associated places within its boundaries or area of influence. In effect, much of the analysis is concerned with the criteria employed to demarcate the boundaries, or to be more exact, clusters of places and draws together the material presented in the earlier chapters. In conjunction with the diagrams already introduced in the chapter two others (6.6 and 6.7) will be referred to extensively. These diagrams indicate the distribution of patrilineal clusters of places (or what has been termed estates or heartlands) and permanent water supplies within the study area.
Small ellipses - Clusters of five-seven places
Medium size circles - Clusters of seven-twelve places
Large ellipses - Clusters of over twelve places

Diagram 6.6 - Distribution of patrilineal clusters of places
One - *N/Jangala* and *N/Jampijinpa*
Two - *N/Jakamarra* and *Na/Jupurrurla*
Three - *N/Japaljarri* and *N/Jungarrayi*
Four - *N/Japanangka* and *N/Japangardi*

Diagram 6.7 - Distribution of permanent water supplies and patrililial clusters of places
Semimoiety affiliation of places

The absence of places in association with features such as sand dune complexes has been noted. Diagram 6.6 also reveals another topographical impediment to the existence of Warlpiri place this time the ancient paleo-drainage channel that accounts for the lack of places in the lower centre of the diagram. Prior to the assessment of the data it is worth noting that the composite picture of the five mapsheets of the study area indicates that there exists a number of clusters of places that are associated with, or at least heavily dominated by, a single semimoiety. Diagram 6.6 details the distribution of patrilateral clusters of places with reference to semimoiety affiliation and relative size in terms of numbers of places. There are seven areas where there is a very pronounced clustering of places numbering 11 or more that are associated with a single semimoiety. Further, there are four more areas where there are obvious clusters of places numbering between seven and 11 places. Finally, there are eight smaller clusters of places where there are between five and seven places. The total number of places that can be said to be located within clusters in the Tanami Desert is 181 or 70.4% of the total of 257 places. The region of Mt Theo has been included as a large cluster in the diagram because of the large number of places known to exist there, however the estimated numbers were not included in the percentage just given. The analysis that follows will directly engage with the existence of these clusters in terms of how they have been, and may be, variously explained.

Land occupation

The first considerations of the relationship between the demarcation of boundaries relating people to clusters of place are those determined by the physical environment. First and foremost this includes the acquisition of resources, the most critical of which was access to a permanent water supply, the most precious commodity in the desert environment. Table 4.1 indicated that there were very few permanent water supplies available to yapa in the study area. Diagram 6.7 indicates the distribution of the five permanent springs Kamira, Milwayi, Jarnami, Mary Spring and Yumurrpa. In addition, two other areas, Mount Theo and Thomson’s Rockhole have been included as permanent water supplies because considerable reserves of water in the form of rockholes and large soakages that have been observed would have been ensured and maintained prior to the establishment of Tanami and The Granites. Of these seven places, all with the exception of Mary Spring are located within areas where there is a major cluster of places affiliated with one semimoiety. The jukurrpa and semimoiety affiliation of Mary Spring has yet to be determined. Diagram 6.7 indicates that there are permanent water supplies associated with each of the four semimoieties, in the case of N/Jjangala and N/Jampijinpa there are three supplies. It appears then that there were five heartland areas that
existed in the central Tanami Desert that could have supported a core of people during the
driest periods of the year. However, to argue that these would have been exclusively occupied
only by those persons of the semimoity that was affiliated with the cluster of places is another
consideration altogether.

It was argued in Chapter Four that the use of land in terms of resource acquisition would have
precluded the permanent occupation of land belonging solely to the kirda from one’s own
semimoity. Residential and demographic factors such as marriage, disputes, ceremonies and
initiation meant that people were not only fluid in terms of moving through the landscape but
also that the composition of foraging groups was fluid as well. Further to this the acquisition of
food and water required that Warlpiri fan out through the landscape in order to survive so as
not to exhaust local supplies. There are other considerations relating to Warlpiri movement
through the Tanami Desert beyond local subsistence, visiting in between foraging groups and
long distance travel for marriage, initiation, learning and exchanging different business
knowledge. The arrival of Euro-Australians put into effect a wholesale uprooting process that
drew people into Tanami and The Granites. A neat illustration of this point is found in an
account of desert travel by Napaljarri at the beginning of Yuendumu Doors (Warlukurlangu
Artists 1987:4-5). She indicated the sequence of places encountered by yapa as they moved
toward and away from different places within the study area including from Jilpirli in the north
via Kamira, Warlala, Yartulu Yartulu, Lungkardajarra, Puyurru, Purrparlarla and finally to
Jila, a distance of some 330 kilometres. At the time to which she referred people were moving
between the pastoral stations to the north and south of the Tanami Desert through the mining
areas.

The facts of day to day existence in the Tanami Desert do not support a simple version of
Radcliffe-Brown’s model which contended that people only inhabited those areas where there
was a dominance of places exclusively held by their own local descent group. Sociocultural,
physical and historical factors combined to produce a picture of fluid movement through the
study area that does not support a model that proposed that clusters of places in terms of land
ownership were demarcated by either the presence or the lack of water.

Radcliffe-Brown and the patrilineal estate

The key feature of the land tenure model proposed by Radcliffe-Brown was that proprietial,
religious and resource-use rights converged in discrete patrilineally owned and occupied
parcels of land. Radcliffe-Brown’s model unified ideological and economic interest in land
that effectively rendered an image of Aboriginal Australia as blanketed in a patchwork
comprised of the bounded patrilineal estates of hordes (see Diagram 2.1). These estates were
later grouped together to indicate ‘tribal’ territories as they were conceived by Norman Tindale (1940:150-1). Radcliffe-Brown’s patrilineal estate model proposed that patrilineal hordes made exclusive economic use of the land wherein their major places were contained. If in the Tanami Desert a band only needed a tiny area to exist then his model could easily apply. However, the reality of the Tanami Desert environment meant that people had to travel widely in search of food and water. The question to consider is whether there were regions that existed that could be claimed exclusively by kirda from one semimioiety as opposed to the others in terms of property rights, as opposed to economic use rights.

The overall regional picture of the survey area of the Tanami Desert reveals an intricate intertwining of interests in land that distributes the patrilineally inherited rights of kirda of the four different semimioieties throughout the landscape. This situation was evident in all five mapsheets and was most readily apparent in the case of Mapsheet Four. This mapsheet has been advanced as the most thoroughly mapped, and thus representative area of the survey area in terms of assessment of land tenure models. The patrililial distribution of place emphasises the interpenetration of the interests of semimioieties.

It would be easy to reject the Radcliffe-Brown model out of hand on this basis alone if a narrow interpretation were made of exclusive association of all places to one semimioiety alone within any given cluster. If an allowance is made for a slight degree of interpenetration of different patrifiliaclly associated places then a case could be made out for the apparent existence of regionalised patrilineal estates in the Tanami Desert that may corroborate the patrilineal estate model advanced by Radcliffe-Brown. The analysis of Mapsheet Five made a strong case to support the Radcliffe-Brown model in view of the fact that the region is dominated primarily by places affiliated with a single jukurrpa, Ngapa (Rain), belonging to the kirda from the Nhangan-Nhampijinpa semimioiety. Mapsheet Four reveals three major clusters of places affiliated with three different semimioieties. Finally, each of the remaining mapsheets contain one major cluster of places, except Mapsheet One which is the least well mapped of the five regions of the survey area. However, there is a distinct chance that if a few more places were found the two smaller clusters could easily be argued to merge into one large cluster.

If the clusters are viewed as heartlands or estates that do not entail exclusive proprietal rights then a more complicated but not dissimilar version of the Radcliffe-Brown patrilineal estate model does appear to cover a considerable portion of the survey area. Notwithstanding this fact the position taken by Radcliffe-Brown that people physically occupied estates that were associated with their own semimioiety remains untenable.
The analysis of the place data will return to the question of boundaries of clusters of places as estates or heartlands and their implications for Warlpiri land tenure. Up to this point attention has focussed solely on the role of the semimoiety affiliation of place to demarcate boundaries between different land owning groups of kirda. It is also necessary to discuss how jukurrpa also contribute to demarcating boundaries between people and place in the Tanami Desert particularly in light of the fact that the clusters identified may contain places that are claimed by kirda from more than one semimoiety. To understand how people distinguish between different places and jukurrpa requires a return to the earlier considerations raised in Chapter Four concerning the concepts of space and place and the ranking of the relative importance of places by Warlpiri.

**Boundaries and jukurrpa**

Chapter Seven and Eight both introduce a number of practical examples that will neatly demonstrate the difficulties of accurately plotting place and jukurrpa under a mining model of land tenure. If anything jukurrpa is even more difficult to plot through the landscape than place. Jukurrpa is more properly understood with respect to its ability to relate and negotiate historical and sociocultural meanings and values that are keenly contested in contemporary Warlpiri relations to place. It is inappropriate for both sociocultural and political reasons of privacy and confidentiality for the data on jukurrpa to be detailed further or taken to another level of analysis.

Meggitt (1974:64) observed that within a 20 mile radius of Yuendumu there were 14 separate dreaming tracks representing affiliation with all four semimoieties. Such an observation can also be repeated in numerous instances within the study area where there are localised regions of dense activity involving numerous jukurrpa. There is an important distinction that must be made between the mapping of place and the mapping of jukurrpa that adds another level of complexity in terms of the demarcation of boundaries in the Tanami Desert. This complexity revolves around the considerations of the path, meaning and the regional significance of different jukurrpa. The site (as a physical feature or point) in the landscape has already been distinguished from place. Place implies relational values to both jukurrpa and other places and attempting to map place involves Warlpiri scales of meanings that rank the localised importance of place and dreamings. For this reason, although places can provisionally be mapped as sites, jukurrpa cannot. This section will illustrate why the demarcation of place boundaries and their affiliated semimoieties can only be a partially successful project because they cannot account for Warlpiri sociocultural concepts of jukurrpa that lie beyond a two dimensional map.
The mapping of *jukurrpa* has been attempted in a number of land claims in the Tanami Desert yet their success in conveying an adequate picture of affiliation of the landscape has been considerably flawed. Attempts to map *jukurrpa* tend to mistakenly suggest that the size, width or extent of *jukurrpa* are measurable and they fail to take into account the transformations of *jukurrpa* at different places. The Marlujarra (Two Kangaroos) *jukurrpa* is an excellent example that illustrates the difficulty of attempting to reduce the sequence of places associated with a dreaming track to an ordered itinerary. The travels of the Two Kangaroos move in an erratic manner doubling back on their own tracks on the surface of the earth. In order to indicate how the kangaroos as *jukurrpa* travel *kirda* will often show areas between mulga trees where the tracks of real kangaroos can be seen in the earth going in many different directions, twisting and turning; an effect likened to marks left on a football ground after a match leading everywhere and nowhere. The movement of so many *jukurrpa* like the Marlujarra are not only contained on the surface of the earth, they move through the sky as well as in and out of the subterranean world defying any attempt to map meaning and direction of movement.

The question arises of where does a place end and empty space begin. A mountain is a place that is large in area as compared to a tree, a place that is relatively small. Yet the size or influence of a place is not reducible to its features only. There are no areas of Warlpiri land that are empty in mythic terms; they are all potentially owned (Berndt 1976:142). Space, or more properly, areas in the Tanami Desert where there are no places are always related to *jukurrpa*. The influence of powerful places can extend over large areas of land. The regions of Mt Theo and Yumurrpa are prime examples of major places that serve as reference points for very large regions that nevertheless contain places associated with a host of other places and *jukurrpa* linked to the other three semimoieties. The influence of *jukurrpa* that travel through the clusters of places mapped in Diagram 6.6 serve to break up the regional influence of the clusters. For instance on Mapsheet Three, there are two clusters (*N(Jangala and *N(Jampijinpa, *N(Jakamarra and *Na(Jupurrurla) that do not influence the ownership of the region as much as their apparent sizes may suggest. This is explained by the presence of a travelling *jukurrpa* belonging to *N(Japanangka and *N(Japangardi that allows the *kirda* of the semimoiet to exert considerable influence and authority over decisions made in the area which is otherwise dominated by places owned by the opposite patrimoiet.

At the close of Chapter Four the Warlpiri order or ranking of the relative importance of place was detailed and this must be considered in order to understand not only the distribution of place but whether *jukurrpa* contribute to boundaries between different semimoieties, or a definitive model of land tenure. The local and regional context of the Warlpiri cultural order of place and *jukurrpa* severely undermines the application of prescriptive models that attempt to
account for the landscape as bounded parcels of exclusively possessed land held by *kirda* from single semimoieties in the Tanami Desert.

**Meggitt and the community model**

Meggitt foreshadowed that detailed mapping research would reveal clear definitions of countries, or communities, of the four Warlpiri sub-groups. Further, he believed that these communities could then be distinguished from one another by mapping boundaries of interest defined by the ownership of places that were fixed, remembered and validated through myth. The first observation to draw out prior to the assessment of the community model is, as he admitted in the opening quote of the chapter, that Meggitt was never able to visit and map boundaries of the countries or divisions given by Warlpiri people in the field itself. The information he collected was recorded in Lajamanu (Hooker Creek) through discussions with informants about land. Meggitt’s recordings of information about country were initially based on an attempt to determine boundaries in order to construct and elaborate upon a wider regional context within which he gathered his information. Suffice it to say at this stage that Meggitt was always discussing Warlpiri country in absentia as it were, he was rarely able to visit places in situ, nor for that matter were Warlpiri themselves who provided him with his information. If Meggitt had been able to travel through the Tanami Desert for a prolonged period then it is contended here that he may have placed less emphasis on community affiliation of people to place than was the case in his writing. From the outset the community model proposed by Meggitt to account for affiliation to place on a regional level was deficient.

Similar to Radcliffe-Brown, Meggitt also produced a model of land tenure that advanced clear boundaries that marked the difference between the territories of Aboriginal groups. However, in the case of Warlpiri Meggitt substituted a model of community in place of Radcliffe-Brown’s patrilineal unit. Meggitt’s (1974:48-9) discussion of countries within the Tanami Desert suggested that there were clear boundaries that could be established between each of the four Warlpiri sub-groups: Warnayaka, Manyangarnpa (Yalpiri), Ngalia and the Warrmarla as indicated earlier in Map 2.1. These boundaries also served to differentiate between other tribal and/or linguistic groups. This position was similar to one taken by Hamilton (1998:99) with reference to the work of Berndt (1959) and Tindale (1972). She commented that these two authors were markedly different in respect of their theoretical orientations yet shared similar findings regarding the close relationship between language and territory, as did Elkin (1954) and later Meggitt (1974).

In the field *yapa* referred to more exclusive regions of country in terms of language divisions and would discuss land beyond the central area of the survey region in terms of such language
groupings as Jaru, Nyininy, Ngardi, Pirlinjama-Kartanganurr and Pintupi peoples. Such labelling was in marked contrast to making any distinction between Warlpiri regions or communities when referring to the patrilineal or broader ownership of place. It is common practice for *yapa* to call the name of a major place as a short-hand reference for all the country, places and dreamings around that particular place. The tendency of a person to use one place name as opposed to another can provide some kind of orientation to the speaker yet it is often just as likely to be influenced by the status and knowledge of the listener. The point has been laboured already that place is referred to exclusively in the first instance as associated with *kirda* from a single semimoiety. Often this statement will be qualified with reference to a senior man or men (sometimes a woman) or a family name. The interest for Warlpiri in dreaming tracks supersedes that of ‘estates’ although they can define more extensive blocks as a reference to regional significance. The fact remains that it is difficult to define regions, estates or countries in which Warlpiri are able to isolate clusters of places and which they can safely call country ‘X’ as opposed to country ‘Y’ and there are no ‘estate names’ as such that exist for parcels of Warlpiri land. People do however use terms centred on major places and *jukurrpa* that end with the suffixes *wardingki* (from) or *kurlangu* (belonging) yet in these instances the composite terms are used more to identify social groups rather than territorial boundaries as such and often are interchanged with the Aboriginal English suffix of ‘mob’.

Semimoiety affiliation is used exclusively by Warlpiri informants to designate the primary rights of ownership of a local descent group with respect to place. The information volunteered by informants would refer to a broader country or community association (in terms of Meggitt’s four subgroups) only in certain instances. This was particularly the case when a place under consideration was of major importance in the handover of ceremonial responsibilities between markedly different social categories, for example, different semimoieties or tribal groups. It is unheard of for *yapa* to term the land as one division of country as opposed to another in terms of communities as in the position advocated by Meggitt. Historical factors and personal histories were much more important in defining the classification of patrilineality and place in the field. Discussion held back in the communities after visits to place also focused on the genealogical connections of people to places rather than any reference to Warlpiri divisions.

The community model of land tenure in the Tanami Desert propounded by Meggitt, despite its shortcomings, has nevertheless continued to influence other observers interested in the relation of people and place. However, it will be seen that these commentators compounded the inadequacies of Meggitt’s model by infusing it with a political dimension that was absent from the original as he conceived it. Gumbert (1982:116-117) has argued that ownership of land can
only be comprehended when there is a recognition of the convergence of ideological and economic rights in place. He held that this can only occur at the ‘community’ level because of the multiple range of rights available to any one individual. In a similar manner, this equation of politics and territory was taken to the extreme by Stephen Davis and John Prescott (1992). These two political geographers portrayed a picture of Aboriginal Australia that divided the continent into a territorial patchwork based on a corporate political identity where a territory is an area for which a particular named Aboriginal group has political responsibility. These authors, unlike Meggitt, never advanced any criteria by which these territories were distinguished other than politics. This position of Davis and Prescott has been extensively criticised and refuted by Sutton (1995:41), who opined that their most heinous errors created a “false impression that Aboriginal land tenure is overwhelmingly a matter of politics, rather than being a matter of identity, right, religious attachment, cultural practice - and politics as well.”

Of most immediate concern for Warlpiri however are the recent comments of John Reeves in The Review of the Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act 1976 who sought to relocate the power of the Northern Territory Land Councils to regionalised local Aboriginal political authorities. One of Reeves major concerns was that the focus on traditional owners within the Land Rights Act did not reflect either the reality of Aboriginal control of land or anthropological understanding because it does not address dynamics of relationship between localised groups and wider regional populations (Reeves 1998:119). Reeves, like Gumbert, and Davis and Prescott before him was justifiably concerned with the enormously complex issues of political representation for Aboriginal people in the Northern Territory. Unfortunately, he perpetuated the same mistake of locating the processes of regulating rights to place as though they were maintained at maximal inclusive levels of the population that are variously described as regions, territories and communities. The fundamental mistake that these observers shared was the attempt to confine power, authority and knowledge at a corporate level, as though this could account for rights in place, a confusion that was never advanced by Meggitt in his community model. The views held by Gumbert, Davis and Prescott and Reeves precluded the recognition that it is at the local level where rights to place are negotiated and acted out by individuals.

Meggitt advocated an inquiry into ownership of place that was orientated toward discerning the handover points of responsibility on each dreaming track in order to determine the extent of the four Warlpiri communities. Whilst in theory this could perhaps have been done, in practice there are serious impediments for realising such a project that have been already outlined. The major reason being the difficulty of locating each and every handover place associated with all of the *jukurrpa* that exist within the Tanami Desert as many major places are soakages that are
now impossible to find. Furthermore, discussion of affiliation of place to one of the four communities, more often than not, highlighted the fact that such handover points are not as ‘fixed’ as Meggitt had imagined. In reality they are contested by individuals and groups who appeal to other kinds of links and rights to place, other than community, of which knowledge appears to be the most crucial. Moreover, it could be also said that such handover points serve to forge further links between groups of people, and actually erase boundaries, by virtue or their capacities to unify different kinds of rights and interests in place.

The heartland and estate models

Robert Layton (1986:22) has argued that the land claims held within the Northern Territory Land clearly demonstrated that clans (based on patrilineation) have rights in defined areas with respect to exclusive access and responsibility for sites. It is agreed that primary responsibility for places may be isolated with certain semimoieties or descent groups, or clans in Layton’s words. However, it is evident from the argument so far that the data refutes Layton’s claims concerning the exclusive access enjoyed to those places or his implication that they may be combined to form bounded estates.

The Warlpiri and Kartantarurr-Kurintji (1979) land claim forwarded a model of land tenure based on estate heartlands that connected different groups of people to place. The claim book listed categories of owners (taken from semimoieties) and matched them to *jukurrpa* for which they were recognised as responsible as *kirda*. The criteria for membership of these groups was based on patrilineation. Given the massive area of the claim the heartland estate model was probably the most suitable way of marshalling and categorising the claims of the people involved. The data presented in this chapter accords closely with a heartland model where there have been found seven major heartlands or clusters, five of which were associated with permanent water supplies.

The central argument against the heartland and estate models involves consideration of place and *jukurrpa*. Although a heartland may be an area of high density of places associated with a particular semimoietiy it cannot be said to contain the majority of places held by any group of *kirda*. Places associated with any particular *jukurrpa* may be widely scattered through the landscape. Further, regarding the relative importance of a place may not necessarily mean that the most important places associated with a *jukurrpa* are in an area of high place density. This is true in many cases of the major *jukurrpa* of the survey area, *Ngapa* (Rain), *Marljajarra* (Two Kangaroos), *Munga Munga* (Dancing Women) as well the Mt Theo complex. The data have also revealed that all of the semimoieties have multiple *jukurrpa* to which they assert primary rights and this makes it impossible to define an area of land ‘an estate’ based on trying to map
the extent of its influence. The heartland and estate models cannot be accepted as sufficient either because together they shared a similar fault and failed to recognise the intertwined nature of the *jukurrpa* that cross-cut and interconnect all patrilineal groups. These models are useful only as a guide to land tenure. The rights of people to place cannot be said to be exclusively possessed by a single social grouping based on descent, or physically circumscribed, in the Tanami Desert.

The concepts of the heartland and estate remain of use in terms of their power to illustrate clusters of places and/or localised interests particularly when dealing with areas that have not been visited for long periods of time. That is in effect to merge the idea of a heartland and an estate model that dispenses with the notion of strict boundaries. Peterson and Long (1986:55) remarked that estates are more usefully envisaged as clusters of points in arid regions and this is undeniably the case in the Tanami Desert. The interest of both individuals and groups are far more likely to focus on dreaming tracks and places rather than bounded areas. Perhaps this approach to affiliation to an enclave area that includes a broader range of people is the most useful way of understanding how Warlpiri people refer to the tenure and association of land. Peterson and Long (1986:59) reported that estates “are sometimes reported as encompassing enclave areas of widely varying size belonging to other groups, and may sometimes be split into discontinuous sections.” In the area immediately to the north-east of the Tanami Desert Peter Sutton, Petronella Morel and David Nash (1993:46-7) commented upon a similar situation:

The heart of the Aboriginal land tenure system in the Muckaty region thus lies not within the cell-like structures of the countries but in the local clustering of shared rights and interests in country, both agnicl and uterine, that provide the cultural, religious and political context for these apparent ‘units’. They are not so much units, or self-existent territorial entities, as the bones of the system which, when articulated, make up the body of the system.

The adjustments to the estate model offered by authors such as Peterson and Sutton dissolve the sharp edges of boundaries of estate models and are the closest to the information gathered here. It is important to note that these authors privilege different kinds of interests and their articulation over notions of boundedness and exclusive possessory rights when they talk about people and place. It is now necessary to return to the examination of the cultural order of rights in place available for any particular individual’s “constellation of rights” (to use Myers expression), an approach to place that is best understood as forging relatedness between people.
Individual agency and negotiation of rights in place

The work of Myers on individual rights and their negotiability in the expression of interests in land is probably the most outstanding contribution to the theory of local organisation in the Australian desert. This contribution may be located within Myers’ wider perspective of approaching elements of social life with respect to land as a site of confluence of shared identities that served to bind individuals together. Myers demonstrated that the fluidity of political and individual expressions of identity with and affiliation to place highlighted the unwieldiness of the application of any strict, prescriptive model of land tenure for desert people.

Like most of his predecessors, Myers flagged the importance of commencing discussion of land ownership by identifying the primacy of the estate. In the case of Pintupi, who are the south-western neighbours of Warlpiri, Myers (1982:182) understood they were able to define certain resource or sociocentric regions centred upon named permanent or semi-permanent water sources. This approach considered place as a resource that was emphasised as having social and political significance in itself. Myers’ treatment of place was a radical departure from the classical land tenure models and was fostered by an approach to the sacred estate of land that treated it as an objectified token. Through this process of objectification of place people were able to ensure their survival from day to day to satisfy their needs. Further, it assisted in the reproduction of their society in terms of transferring the corpus of ritual and ideology from generation to generation. It appears that Myers’ approach found its impetus in Stanner’s earlier essay on totemism published in 1965. Stanner (1984:158) believed that totemism was “expressed by symbolic devices and maintained by rules, between living persons, whether as individuals or groups”. As a result, totemism within Aboriginal society contributed to an understanding reliant upon “order and continuity on maintaining the identities and associations which exemplify the connection” between people and totems (jukurrpa) and places in the landscape (Stanner 1984:158).

Warlpiri land ownership and the negotiation of rights in place is an ongoing, dynamic process of social identification between people and places. However, it is not possible to treat different kinds of rights to place as though they are all of the same value or merit and confer the same responsibilities, knowledge and obligations. This is certainly not the case in the Tanami Desert where the semimoiety affiliation of people to place is elevated as the only way to clearly establish the primary sets of owners, as decision makers, within the contemporary context of gold mining, exploration and development.
The work of Myers illustrated that in order to appreciate the subtleties of Warlpiri relationships to place entailed a consideration of a cultural order of rights that are contextually relevant and couched within a much broader set of personal, social and religious relationships than anticipated by the estate models. The expansion of the different concepts of land and country clearly demonstrate that land tenure must be understood with regard to the intersection of physical, historical, religious and political criteria. The distinction between these criteria for the modelling of Warlpiri land tenure lies within these grounds upon which such rights are expressed and negotiated on political and sociocultural bases.

Conclusion

The analysis of the place data in the Tanami Desert has considered a variety of perspectives in order to come to terms with the various ways that Warlpiri differentiate and demarcate boundaries between different groups of people and place within the study area. It is apparent that no single approach can adequately account for these clusters that may be variously defined on bases such as access to water, semimoietoy and community affiliation, regional names or heartlands and estates. In fact each of the criteria used to produce models are seen to be disrupted by a variety of factors including the ranking and ordering of the weights of relative importance of place and *jukurrpa* as well other political processes.

The conception of country in terms of land tenure for Warlpiri is mediated by three critical considerations. First, the land to which an individual or sociocultural group is associated is not reducible to a geographically contiguous, or discretely bounded, tract of land. Second, the concept of the estate remains viable only in circumstances that consider that there are localised differences between the ways that individuals, patriline and semimoieties articulate their rights and interests. Foremost among these are claims to ownership contingent on rights that are derived via patrilineal descent or broader patrifiliation to place. Finally, *jukurrpa* and the relational aspects of place combine to work against the strict definition of the boundaries as will be clearly illustrated in the following chapters. Knowledge, history, the physical locations of places and other social and political processes are all identified as forces at work that deny the application of clear demarcations of boundaries between people and place that are reproducible over time. The consideration of people and place eludes definition by any prescriptive model and in this vein Keen (1997:85) concluded:

To the extent that people of a regional network agree about the significance of places there is an objective matrix of ancestral country. However, several aspects of identity produce conflicts over the assignment of people to places. One is the mosaic character of the ancestral significance of country and cross-cutting ancestral
journeys. Another is the tension between an individual’s relations to particular places and shared identity in relation to a broader swathe of country. A third is potential divisions among a group through individual connections to other groups - through subsection identity, responsibility for places with ancestral connections to other groups, and personal links to other groups.

Keen acknowledged that his approach was influenced by Sutton's idea of "local clustering" of shared rights and interests in patri-countries which exist within a wider set of relations" (1997:73). In effect, the current complexities of land tenure in the Tanami Desert can only be understood by illustrating how personal identity, place, the cultural order of rights and history are all part of a complex regional system in the Tanami Desert where they are called upon to resolve, negotiate and determine claims of affiliation. An approach to Warlpiri land tenure that takes as its starting point the local clustering of rights within such a complex regional system is advocated here as the most enlightening way to understand how Warlpiri demarcate boundaries between place, people and one another.

The mapping of place is a process that has a marked effect on the understanding of land tenure in the Tanami Desert and has become increasingly relevant in the context of gold exploration, mining and royalty payments. The research area has borne witness to mineral exploration for gold to varying degrees and also contains four major mines, two at Tanami, one at The Granites and one at Dead Bullock Soak as well as a number of prospective areas. The combined effect of all of these activities has served to heighten attention on places of significance. The escalation of development interests and the recent history of the Tanami Desert itself have combined to focus a wide variety of interests on Warlpiri places, their significance, location and extent, and their meanings. The data analysed in the following chapters will serve to highlight the fact that contemporary issues surrounding the identification and mapping of place exert a considerable influence on the relationship between people and place in the Tanami Desert and the demarcation of boundaries between people and place.

Warlpiri maintain reflexive sociocultural relationships to land precisely at a moment when the development interests on their land would appear to erase them. In the atmosphere of gold mining, exploration and royalty payments the competitive assertion of affiliation to jukurrpa and place will be distinguished as those of claims between different descent groups within a semimoiety, semimoieties and individuals and those claims concerning affiliation to spaces between places and how this is done.
Chapter Seven

The Measurement of Dreams

A social space cannot be adequately accounted for either by nature (climate, site) or by its previous history. Nor does the growth of the forces of production give rise in any direct causal fashion to a particular space or a particular time. Mediations and mediators, have to be taken into consideration: the action of groups, factors within knowledge, within ideology, or within the domains of representations (Lefebvre 1991:77).

The processes of bounding and binding people and place in the Tanami Desert have so far been examined places in terms of their historical orders as both natural and sociocultural phenomenon. To a certain extent the cultural ordering of place by Warlpiri was open to negotiation between people based on politicking in order to establish claims of identity and connection. This chapter continues the analysis of the social and historical reproduction of people’s relation to place by delving further into the context of the definition of place. The definition of place is becoming increasingly solidified as a site that is contested by a number of different agents and in a wide array of political processes. It is necessary to draw out the specific character of the different domains of representations, as Lefebvre (1991) refers to them, which have been at work in this situation of complex cultural contact. This project engages with place in terms that account for history and changes to people’s relationships to place since European settlement (Merlan 1998:211,239). The chapter will specifically address the demarcation of space and place and the ways in which the Warlpiri landscape is cut up by gold exploration and mining, a complicated development that dominates the current modelling of relationships between people and place in the Tanami Desert.

The CLC’s submission to the Reeves Review noted that the Land Rights Act reversed a long process that had denied recognition of Aboriginal owners rights and responsibilities for their land and that as a result “for the first time since contact between Aboriginal people and non-Aboriginal people, the balance of power between Aboriginal landowners and mining interests has shifted” (Reeves 1998:519). The Land Rights Act has afforded the greatest opportunity for Warlpiri to once more access their places in the Tanami Desert. First, by the land claim process and second, under the processes and decision-making role over access to place under the mining provisions of the Land Rights Act (s.42 in particular). These provisions have given Warlpiri people control of their places in the face of the intense pressure for economic development in the form of gold exploration and mining in the Tanami Desert. These
provisions were vigorously contested in some quarters within the submissions to the Reeves Review and the debate revolved around the extent to which Aboriginal people will be able to have a meaningful say in the development of economic interests over their land and places (Reeves 1998:520).

The competition for the right to control access to Aboriginal Land is one that is now familiar in recent Australian history. In the context of the two most famous cases of disputes between government, the mining industry and Aborigines, Noonkanbah (Hawke and Gallagher 1989) and Coronation Hill (Merlan 1991, Keen 1992, Brunton 1992), Merlan (1991:341) observed:

Such disputes highlight the problems which arise from contradiction between direct governmental support for Aborigines as a traditional and socio-culturally distinctive ‘type’, and support from the private sector (thus also indirectly, from government) for them to become and to see themselves as modernizing facilitators of economic development. Conflict between these two paths realizes itself partly in conflict over space, and its material and symbolic definition.

How the conflict over the production of space has been manifested in the Tanami Desert is of direct concern. The data presented in the earlier chapters considered the way that Warlpiri places were natural, material phenomena that are imbued with symbolic and practical characteristics to demarcate and orientate social space within which myths and stories were attached (Lefebvre 1991:192-193). The ethnographic data have revealed that places are culturally ordered by Warlpiri in terms of the way that they restricted access by people. Such restrictions are based primarily on categories of age, gender and knowledge, and with respect to the different bases upon which people could claim identity with them as both individuals and social groups.

The cultural order of place that was explored in Chapters Five and Six illustrated the manner in which “every social space... once duly demarcated and oriented, implies a superimposition of certain relations upon networks of named places” (Lefebvre 1991:193). As the previous chapter demonstrated the demarcation of place implies the imposition of boundaries, boundaries that are in the first instance physical, and later social. In the context of Lefebvre’s argument a Warlpiri person “does not envisage himself in space as one point among others in an abstract milieu. That is a type of perception belonging to a much later period, and is contemporaneous with the space of ‘plans’ and maps” (Lefebvre 1991:194).

The current experience of place for both Warlpiri and development interests is one in which the project of mapping is of paramount importance. At the present time Warlpiri places are at the centre of interests that seek to determine their location and physical boundaries. This determination is of great significance for mining companies and the conservative Federal and
Northern Territory Governments who want to maximise their ability to access space in order to ascertain the extent of mineral reserves. The Land Rights Act legislation recognises the right of Warlpiri to exercise a considerable amount of power over access to their land. Here is the source of conflict over the material and symbolic definition of place that Merlan referred to earlier, which is most simply explained by the fact that boundaries have different meanings in different societies (Lefebvre 1991). The process of mapping in the Tanami Desert will be shown to have had profound effects on the definition of place and space and Warlpiri conceptions of them both physically and socially in terms of the imposition of boundaries between people and place.

The land claim process

There are three primary uses of land within the region of the study area; gold mining, mineral exploration and cattle grazing that take place on Aboriginal Land Trusts. The majority of these trusts were created after lands were won back by Aboriginal people under the land claim process (Peterson et al. 1978, Myers and Clark 1983, Stead 1985, Peterson et al. 1989, Stead et al. 1990). These freehold title Aboriginal Land Trusts are Yingualyala, Mount Frederick, Western Desert North, Western Desert South, Central Desert, Mala, Yiningarra and Mangkururrpa (see Map 2.2). There is also one other trust, Lake Mackay, lying within the study area that was automatically scheduled (Schedule 1 Land) as a freehold title Aboriginal Land Trust with the passing of the Land Rights Act. As a result the area of Lake Mackay was not subjected to the same level of scrutiny as Warlpiri relationships to places in the region were in the land claim process that preceded the granting of the other Land Trusts. Hence little information had been recorded on place and jukurrpa prior to the advent of mineral exploration in the Lake Mackay region. To a certain extent places in the region have remained submerged for a considerable period of time. This is in marked contrast to the remainder of land in the study area where places were explicitly named, mapped and discussed in connection to land owning groups. However, the detail of place mapping varied considerably over time due to the changing contexts of each subsequent land claim heard over a period of almost 20 years.

Land claim hearings in the Tanami Desert commenced with the Warlpiri and Kartangarurr-Kurintji claim (Peterson et al. 1978) lodged in 1978 and the first heard by the Aboriginal Land Commissioner in the Central Australian region. The claim itself involved a huge area of land that included most of the land discussed in this ethnographic study and encompassed a number of 'tribal'/linguistic groups including the Gurindji, Kartangarurr, Pirlingarna, Kukatja, Ngardi, Nyininy and all of the Warlpiri subgroups. The Warlpiri and Kartangarurr-Kurintji claim was prepared from the outset to focus discussion of land ownership based on the model of the
patrilineal clan that involved the identification of peoples association with corresponding
groups of places related to jakurrpa. The presentation of evidence for the early land claims
placed more emphasis upon social affiliation stemming from relations coded within the land,
rather than existing in the land itself as places. The authors of the claim book explained some
of the more practical reasons for this situation:

The least satisfactory aspect is the accuracy of place location on the maps. The
principal reasons for this are the extent of the area involved, the lack of roads in the
area, the general difficulties of travel and the fact that we have not visited the
remoter parts of the Tanami Desert. We have, however, surveyed the area from a
light plane in company with a small group of traditional owners. Even where places
have been visited the practical difficulties of accurately locating a soakage or other
place in an undulating plain or thick stand of mulga are considerable. In
consequence only the major places have been shown on the maps where the location
has been visited or can be confidently located. This means that many hundreds of
names are not included although they are well known to the people and their order
along the song lines is known to us (Peterson et al. 1978:2).

Clearly when the Central Desert Land Trust was granted very little was known about the
location of most major places of significance except those that were easily identified as
topographical features. These places were discussed through the claim hearing but the
establishment of the burden of proof for a successful claim was not reliant on the
demonstration of the knowledge of the location of places of significance to discuss the links of
traditional owners to the land. This situation was repeated in the Warlpiri, Kukatja and Ngarti
claim (Myers and Clark 1982) where hardly any evidence was heard on the claim area at all
and the mapping and presentation of located places was virtually non-existent.

The demand for the accurate location and identification of place was stepped up by the Land
Commissioners (under considerable political pressure) in subsequent land claims beginning
with the Chilla Well claim (Stead 1985). The first reason for this was that the accurate
mapping of places was made possible because of a combination of factors including; more
financial and logistical support for research, the fact that a shorter time had elapsed since yapa
had worked and lived on the land, and the political climate of the time. This climate was
created by the establishment of self-government in the Northern Territory in 1978 (that has
remained conservative through to the present time) and most notably, the subsequent
development of gold exploration and mining in the Tanami Desert. The combination of these
influences placed a pronounced emphasis on the importance of identifying Warlpiri places of
significance. There continues to be enormous pressure applied to Aboriginal land owners and
the Land Councils by industry and government not to hinder economic development by
‘locking’ up land. These interests have identified the sacred site or place as a ‘bogey man’, its mythical status is argued to be a hindrance to a modern, economically responsible country.

The preparation of the Western Desert and Tanami Downs land claims witnessed the injection of more funds for research by the CLC and involved numerous trips undertaken to identify the location of places. This necessitated taking traditional owners on extended country visits mapping different dreaming tracks. During this kind of research the knowledge of senior people who had walked through these areas before being moved to settlements was crucial in order that those places encountered could be authoritatively identified. Maps were produced that accurately recorded locations of places to illustrate how claimed areas of land were ‘full’ of places that were of significance to yapa.

The development of the Northern Territory’s mineral base has long been identified as a key priority of the ruling Country Liberal Party’s agenda. The government’s opposition to land claims by Aboriginal people was a stance taken in order to remove what they perceived as an unnecessary obstacle to the development of economic infrastructure. For the government the defeat of Aboriginal land claims would have allowed mining and exploration to go ahead unimpeded. Not only did the government fail in this respect, its vehement contest of land claims actually assisted yapa to relocate places of significance thus strengthening the Warlpiri position. Warlpiri, through the CLC, quickly established a number of agreements with mining companies and through the procedures of exploration and contingent ‘site clearances’ provided for in these agreements people were rediscovering and locating many of their places. As more exploration tracks were made in remote areas they provided the means for people to more easily access their places. This process facilitated the preparation of subsequent land claims as people travelled through country more frequently. However, there is a critical distinction to be drawn between the mapping and recording of place data for a land claim and the mapping and recording of place data for mineral exploration. The exigencies of gold exploration and mining require that boundaries be allocated to located places in order for development to proceed with surety. This situation introduced a new dimension to place that had not been previously conceived by Warlpiri or institutional anthropology.

The mining provisions

Part IV (s. 41 and s. 42) of the Land Rights Act clearly spells out the procedures for consultations and negotiation between Aboriginal owners, defined as ‘traditional owners’, other interested or affected Aboriginal people, and mining companies. The first meetings that take place are known as ‘consent to negotiate’ meetings and in the Tanami Desert are convened by the CLC. The CLC is responsible for identifying and bringing together the correct groups of
traditional owners as defined by the Land Rights Act to consider the mining company’s exploration licence application or EL(A). The blocks of land that are the subject of such EL(A)s are determined by the Northern Territory Government and subsequently offered to one applicant mining company under the Northern Territory Mining Act 1980. The “consent to negotiate” meeting is the point at which Aboriginal people exercise the power of veto over an application. They may reject outright the proposal of a company to explore over a certain application for any number of reasons that do not necessarily have to be disclosed. If an application is approved by traditional owners, and the vast majority are in the Tanami Desert, an exploration licence (EL) is granted and an agreement is forged between the CLC on behalf of Warlpiri and the applicant mining company. Such agreements include stipulations regarding protection of Warlpiri land interests (places), financial compensation in the form of royalties, infrastructure development, provision of employment opportunities, and a realistic environmental protection program (Ireland 1996:2, CLC 1998a). A separate agreement is concluded if the stage where actual mining can proceed and be profitable is reached.

The right of veto through the procedure of consent to negotiate is the key element of the mining provisions of the Land Rights Act that enables Warlpiri people to regulate access and potential developments on their land and places. The right of veto was identified by Woodward (1974) during the Aboriginal Land Rights Commission as the means by which Aboriginal people could be given realistic control over their land and to help them establish a meaningful economic base by the subsequent negotiation of royalties and rentals from development on their land. The right of veto has been consistently contested by the majority of the mining industry and in some political quarters on the grounds that it potentially locked up resources and that royalties paid to Aboriginal people would shorten mine life and adversely affect the national economic interest (Altman and Peterson 1984). The record of gold exploration and mining in the Tanami Desert has clearly disproved such a contention.

There have been significant social and economic benefits that have flowed to both traditional owners and the mining industry through the CLC’s operation of the statutory processes of the Land Rights Act in the Northern Territory. In particular, this process has been assisted by the more progressive mining companies that recognise the special nature of the link between Aboriginal people and the land (CLC 1998a:49). From the more enlightened industry perspective, the success of the agreements made between mining companies and Warlpiri people in the Tanami Desert hinges on a company’s acceptance and respect of this special link and is the foundation of a workable and mutually beneficial relationship (Ireland 1996:1). Such a position adopted by certain elements in the mining industry is based on the opposite premise upon which gold mining was first introduced to the Tanami Desert.
Within the Northern Territory Ian Manning (1997:26) noted that during the last decade there has been a dramatic increase in the sum area of exploration licences. This has been primarily due to negotiations over land in advance and the establishment of protocols between Land Councils and mining companies that have combined to speed up and streamline processes involved in making agreements. Whilst this observation indicates the familiarity that Aboriginal people have developed with the procedures of access to exploration on their lands it is clear that a comfortable relationship did not develop overnight. The relative ease of gaining access to Aboriginal land for mining companies is in contrast to the operational difficulties experienced by both Warlpiri and mining companies that have been encountered in the actual day to day workings of agreements. The process of finding a balance between Warlpiri interests in identifying and protecting their places and the desire of mining companies to maximise the amount of land at their disposal for gold exploration was a difficult one. The physical re-introduction of both mining companies and Warlpiri to each other and the Tanami Desert has thrown up intriguing questions as to the contemporary definitions of place, space and jukurrpa for Warlpiri that will be examined after foregrounding the return of mining interests to Warlpiri land.

**Gold mining returns to the Tanami Desert**

The steady process of the transfer of land claimed and won back to Warlpiri hands was followed closely by the rising interest in gold and mineral exploration that gathered momentum during the 1980s. By the early part of the next decade, the central area of the Tanami Desert was literally being held under the microscope. Both Normandy NFM (previously North Flinders Mines - NFM) and Tanami Joint Venture (TJV) were allocated exploration licences over The Granites and Tanami respectively that had lain dormant during the 1970s. An exploration licence was granted to NFM in 1975 with subsequent mineral leases offered by the Northern Territory Department of Mines and Energy in 1980 and an agreement was finally reached between the CLC and NFM in 1983. This agreement was necessary because of the need for NFM to secure more land outside of the licence in order to set up its processing plant and other requirements for the proposed mine at The Granites including a large and steady water supply. In 1987 mining recommenced at Tanami and by 1991 control of the mine passed to Zapopan. Zapopan held the exploration licences negotiated with the traditional owners and the CLC around the original TJV mine site at Tanami where the gold deposits within the existing lease were soon exhausted. By 1995, further deposits were found in close proximity to the mine and Central Desert Joint Venture (CDJV) was formed by Otter Gold Mines Ltd. and Acacia Resources.
The continuing attraction that the Tanami Desert region holds for gold exploration has been buoyed by the success of NFM in the discovery of a remarkable deposit west of The Granites. The effect of the considerable high grade gold reserves at Callie-Dead Bullock Soak was the catalyst for a dramatic intensification of exploration licence applications that cover the entire area of the survey area: “The 1992 discovery of Normandy Mining Ltd.’s 3 million ounce Callie gold deposit transformed the Northern Territory’s Tanami region into a sexy exploration address” (Bell 1998:65). From the early 1990s Warlpiri of the Tanami Desert have been involved in day to day consultations regarding access to places that have been prompted by the post-Callie landrush which is widely considered to be “one of the great modern-day Australian gold discoveries” (Bell 1998:67). The total capital expenditure on Callie up until 1998 was $76 million. Normandy NFM’s Callie deposit is by far the greatest reserve of gold so far discovered in the Tanami Desert, and is the first gold mine in Australia that has been developed with the consultation and permission of the Aboriginal owners. In 1999 Normandy NFM were completing a feasibility study on the possibility of a new treatment plant yet as of late 2000 there was no separate mill or treatment plant at Callie and ore is transported to the mine at The Granites for processing via a haul road.

The Land Rights Act has certainly not restricted the access of mining interests to Aboriginal land in the Tanami Desert in recent years since its inception in 1976. In 20 years annual exploration expenditure in the Northern Territory has gone from $1 million to $40 million and is showing little sign of slowing (Ireland 1996:2). Total expenditure on gold exploration in the Tanami Desert alone was in excess of $12 million in 1997 (CLC 1998b:6). As of the beginning of the year 2000 there were over 100 exploration licences in the Tanami Desert awaiting consideration; over 160 have been already granted within 53 agreements between the CLC and various mining companies and there are currently seven mining leases.

The Federal and Northern Territory Governments’ programs for the economic development of Aboriginal people in remote areas have met with little success. In contrast mining companies have been active in exploiting the few opportunities in remote Australia particularly in the Tanami Desert. Of great significance is the return of mining to this region because of the mutually beneficial relationship it affords. The mining companies benefit through the extraction of gold on Warlpiri terms, and the Warlpiri benefit by receiving considerable financial benefits through royalty payments as well as regional and community development and employment (Manning 1997:33).

The mining industry has returned with a vengeance to the Tanami Desert after an absence of almost 30 years. There are, however, important points of difference between the mining situation as it currently exists and the mining as it occurred earlier in the Tanami Desert. The
fact that the majority of Warlpiri now live in the communities of Yuendumu and Lajamanu means that there is a minimum of day to day physical interaction between them and the miners in contrast to their closer physical association in the past. However a closer working relationship has developed in which respect for Warlpiri relationships to place plays a role in determining access to land as much as the exigencies of mineral exploration itself through surveying and sampling.

*The Measurement of Dreams*

Places, or sites of significance as they are often referred to, have become highly topical through a diverse variety of historical agents and processes. Conservative ideology has consistently argued that the Australian landscape should not be divided into categories of sacred/profane on the basis that Aboriginal places are empty and devoid of significance because Aborigines no longer live a ‘traditional way of life’. Countering this narrow view have been the realities of the Land Rights Act, continuing academic research into Aboriginal social and cultural life, and the increase of Aboriginal political representation that have all combined to raise public awareness that Aboriginal places and land have profound meanings that cannot be simply dismissed as irrelevant.

The project of mapping places in the Tanami Desert attempts to link the eternal Aboriginal ‘dreamtime’ or *jukurrpa* to the landscape. Places have been widely conceptualised as the interface between the human and cosmological present. The process involved in exploration and mining has served to give boundary and shape to place. The mapping project results in the demarcation of the ‘sacred’ and the subsequent division of Aboriginal peoples’ relations to land into categories of places. The identification of places that are sacred tends to render the remnant of the land as meaningless place. This division of space from place is termed the “grounding of significance” and can be seen as part of a wider intellectual process where “Places are marked, noted, named. Between them, within the ‘holes in the net’, are blank or marginal spaces” (Lefebvre 1991:118). I maintain that the physical demarcation of the extent of influence of a place or *jukurrpa* cannot be reduced to a simple process of two dimensional mapping.

The consideration of the practicalities of how exploration and mining proceed on Aboriginal land in the Tanami Desert will reveal how these interests require Warlpiri people to physically delimit and impose boundaries on places. Such processes present both *yapa* and resource developers with considerable practical and intellectual difficulties that arise from the fact that to identify areas of land that are ‘no-go areas’ is an alien concept to both the mining industry and Aboriginal perspectives. Essentially the mining industry, long used to treating the
landscape as a potential economic resource, has been forced to recognise that land has other sociocultural values. However, the realities of the process of exploration in the Northern Territory and particularly in the Tanami Desert has also revealed something else that is intriguing: Aboriginal places have been infused with a previously absent economic dimension because place is imbued with new meanings when it is identified by the mining companies as being of cultural value. Place becomes valued and commodified as a kind of cultural real estate. It is the complexities informing this infusion of economic value emerging from the division of the landscape into place and space that will be examined in the remainder of the chapter. The implications of this alteration of the meaning of place for Warlpiri are compounded by the payment of royalty monies in the form of rent and compensation for gold mining exploration and development in proximity to Warlpiri places. The first question to consider is the manner in which place becomes bounded and the land becomes divided into the sacred and economically significant. This renders the remainder of the landscape empty of any relevant meaning, to be subsequently explored and perhaps mined with impunity.

**Mining and the creation of blocks**

For Warlpiri one of the most difficult problems initially faced in coming to terms with the exploration process is the fact that they are forced to consider exploration licence applications that have abstract boundaries of linear lines and angles defined by latitude and longitude and the aeromagnetic grid. The borders of these blocks cut across Warlpiri places and dreaming tracks in a haphazard way that is devoid of any meaning or logic readily accessible to *yapa*. From the outset, Warlpiri are forced to abstract their interests in place to a level that has no correspondence with their understanding and experience of place and land tenure. As Glowczewski (1999:5) noted “the institutional structures which are proposed in Australia rarely give control to the Aboriginals in such a way as to allow them to develop what is specific to them in their spiritual relationship with the environment.” Before examining the initial cross-cultural problems brought about by conflicting frames of reference it is useful to briefly describe how exploration licence blocks are created and offered to companies by the Northern Territory Government.

The state owns minerals such as gold that lie in the ground. It is considered that mining of such resources should benefit all citizens as well as the government through the royalties. In order to maximise potential economic development and benefits for the nation the state desires that the exploration and mining processes be as rapid and thorough as possible. This ideal is achieved by fostering healthy competition amongst interested parties and in areas of known reserves this results in a large number of applicants applying for licences. The choice of
licensee is based on the assessment of exploration proposals that are submitted to the Department of Mines and Energy. There are a number of mechanisms in place that ensure that the licences issued to explorers are used as productively as possible.

Exploration for gold usually commences with very little knowledge of an area and relies heavily on published geological data (if available), geological maps and aeromagnetic surveys that assist in identifying anomalies that indicate possible sites of gold-bearing deposits. It is up to the licence holder to design an exploration program involving sampling and drilling in order to identify potential deposits. This process may take some time and is intensive in terms of effort as well as expensive. Competition between explorers could not occur if original licence holders occupied their ground for indefinite periods; this would in effect tie up the land and prevent further exploration. To overcome this problem the size of exploration licences areas issued in the Tanami Desert became increasingly smaller over time in order to maximise the use of space available for competitive exploration. This was achieved rather simply. The risk taker must not hold up the process of exploration unnecessarily and accordingly they must drop part of their licence each year (approximately 50%) in order not to tie up land unnecessarily. As a result licences are applied for that are larger than really needed so that the risk taker can drop off areas each year that are not considered prospective. Through this process the government achieves its objective of a dual operation of technical judgment and economic imperative (Trevor Ireland pers. comm., 2000).

Maps 7.1 and 7.2 indicate the extent of the composite boundaries of exploration licences and applications which change radically over short periods of time, in this case the two years between 1996 and 1998. The maps indicate that exploration is carried out over the entire study area and beyond and as ground is relinquished by one company one year there is always another company waiting to apply. For Warlpiri this means that there are a bewildering amount of meetings and inspections to be carried out in the central Tanami Desert year round in order to keep abreast of the activities of the mining companies and process their work programs. Interest in exploration in the Tanami Desert has yet to indicate clear signs of slowing. This is in part explained by the development and application of new exploration techniques that can now penetrate through up to 30 metres of ground cover. As a result mining companies continue to apply for land that has previously been thought to have been thoroughly explored (Simon Henderson pers. comm., 2000). Exploration for gold in the Tanami Desert is informed by another dual imperative: the location of sizeable gold reserves and the location and avoidance of Warlpiri places of significance. It is at this precise moment involving the measurement of dreams that a model of land tenure driven by the interests of exploration and mining can be identified. This model of land tenure requires yapu to identify and locate their
places of significance and to rank and weigh their cultural order of rights in, and affiliation to, place in order for mining to proceed. The remainder of the chapter will explore the manner in which the mining model of land tenure cuts up the landscape of the Tanami Desert into abstract parcels within which Warlpiri identify places and *jukurrpa*, and ultimately, negotiate their relationships with these and each other.
Map 7.1 - Exploration Licences and Applications in the Tanami Desert 1996
Map 7.2 - Exploration Licences and Applications in the Tanami Desert 1998
Diagram 7.1 - Exploration licence and location of places - Year One

Diagram 7.2 - Exploration licence and location of places - Year Two

1a and 1b - Places claimed by N/Jangala and N/Jampijinpa
2a and 2b - Places claimed by N/Jakamarra and Na/Jupurrurla
3 - Place claimed by N/Japaljarri and N/Jungarrayi
4 - Place claimed by N/Japanangka and N/Japangardi
Each new year in the Tanami Desert brings before Warlpiri a new round of exploration licences for consideration. These areas of land are increasingly peculiar in shape, being conglomerations of ‘empty ground’ that have been discarded by companies and recycled by others as new exploration licences. Warlpiri are continually being faced with new, irregular boundaries of exploration applications and licences that make it difficult for them to keep track of which places these new boundaries are related to in terms of ownership and affiliation. The problems this situation poses for Warlpiri involves coming to terms with who can make decisions over these blocks, the places of significance they contain, and how they are to be protected are complicated. Diagram 7.1 and 7.2 will be referred to in order to illustrate just how difficult the measurement of dreams can be for both Warlpiri and mining companies under the exploration and mining model of land tenure. The definition of the Aboriginal land interests is a process beset by problems that include locating places, demarcating boundaries and ensuring that development interests do not encroach upon places of significance. A common feature of all of these problems is the speed of exploration and the impediments that are encountered trying to define the boundaries of place within the changing parameters of objectives of a mining company work program. There are two approaches that have been used to identify the boundaries of Warlpiri places in the context of gold exploration and mining in the Tanami Desert: the site clearance and the work area clearance, each of these will be examined in turn.

**The site clearance process**

Long before the shift in Federal Government policy that formed the background of the Land Rights Act legislation was a topic for consideration Stanner (1965) noted that it is no longer possible to map an Aboriginal region in terms of its full resources be they human, spiritual or economic. Nevertheless, the re-introduction of people and place in the Tanami Desert has witnessed a determined effort to map and detail Warlpiri interests in, and knowledge, of place. After traditional owners had approved an EL(A) by a company and an EL was granted by the government a site clearance process was instigated. This was the preferred method of administering development projects up until the early 1990s.

Essentially the site clearance process involved a survey by knowledgeable senior people. In the company of the CLC they travelled through the licence area recording the location of places and removing them by defining boundaries, or blocks, where a mining company was forbidden access. The site clearance procedure produced a map that detailed places of significance for the company. The exclusion of place rendered the remaining areas of land within the licence area devoid of significance, empty space as it were in which the mining company could pursue
exploration. The method of mapping of place fostered by the site clearance had the primary aim of making sure that those places that Warlpiri wished to protect remain unmolested by the exploration process. There were a host of complex problems that arose out of the site clearance process that will be briefly summarised here. The mapping project implicit in the site clearance project placed Aboriginal knowledge at the disposal of the mining company and was far from effective in detailing the sum of Warlpiri interests in land.

The mapping of the location of places after a sweeping site clearance survey by Warlpiri involved significant problems in the sense that it forced people to detail precise locations of places that were often subjected to secrecy. Of course, yapa needed to know where the general location of a highly restricted men’s place was in order that they could avoid it. But these areas have rather nebulous boundaries. A site clearance had the effect of pinpointing the exact location and features of restricted places. This caused considerable problems for senior men in particular who, aware of the location of a place, were often reluctant to reveal it due to the fact that the knowledge associated with it was available to only certain persons on the basis of such criteria as age, race, gender and semimoieties. As a result it was not uncommon for some of the most major places to remain unlocated, hence unprotected, because senior informants were not aware at that stage of the consequences that their actions may have. The mapping of Warlpiri place involved a clear transgression of sociocultural restrictions that caused considerable difficulties and pressures for those people charged with the responsibility of undertaking the site clearance in the first place.

A related problem that involved the grounding of the significance of place arose from the delineation of physical boundaries of places. Put simply, the practicalities of drawing a line around a place as though significance of place could be reduced and bounded were very difficult for Warlpiri. Chapter Four detailed the ways in which jukurrpa created and left their essence in places; this presence in the landscape was manifested in complex physical and metaphysical relationships between places. The mapping of place and the imposition of boundaries required by the site clearance process have created serious practical problems for Warlpiri in defining the location of place boundaries. For example, with respect to Diagrams 7.1 and 7.2 a comparison can be made between the places of 1a and 1b as opposed to 2a and 2b on the basis of the kind of travel of the jukurrpa related to the two different semimoieties. For arguments sake all four places are fairly important soakages in conjunction with some other topographic. The jukurrpa involved between 1a and 1b travels through the air and so there the demarcation of boundaries around these two places is relatively straightforward on the ground. However, in the case of 2a and 2b the jukurrpa ancestors are involved in a number of running battles with each other and so all of the rocks in between the two places represent the bones of
people who have been speared and killed, yet this area does not have a name and may not be considered important enough to restrict the activities of a mining company. How boundaries are demarcated by Warlpiri in such an example is a complex matter and is difficult to map for the company. Another example may involve an extremely powerful place such as one at place 4 which exerts influence around a huge area that actually includes the place at 1b, yet place 4 does not even lie within the boundary of the EL. The practicalities of issuing instructions to mining companies that effectively managed and protected Warlpiri places of significance were extremely difficult under the site clearance regime and predictably led to miscommunication.

The difficulties faced by Warlpiri in mapping the locations of place within the context of mining exploration was further compounded by the fact that there were deficiencies in the site clearance process that prevented Warlpiri from locating all of their places of interest on their own terms. The site clearance process could be characterised as one that attempted to take a ‘freeze-frame’ or ‘snapshot’ of interests in place that was reliant on the imposition of a very restricted time scale that allowed access to knowledge. Conversely, Warlpiri knowledge of place is best understood as one in which layers of knowledge of an area may be revealed slowly over time with the input of various different individuals and groups. Places are composites of knowledge that involve uncovering a vast store of layered sociocultural meanings. The site clearance process distilled only one of these layers as though it represented the entire complement of Warlpiri knowledge of places within a region.

The shortcomings of the freeze-frame methodology of the site clearance process can be effectively drawn out when compared to the way that Warlpiri people map their own interests in place. Nash (1998) investigated Warlpiri sand mapping techniques and discussed the ways that they are variously employed to indicate places in an area, the dreaming tracks crossing an area and how these may be combined. The presentation of subject material displayed in a sand map is dependent on a number of factors including scale, positioning, audience, and the context of the mapping itself. Nash (1998:3) observed that people would talk about and map jukurrpa before travelling to a region in order to open up and reinforce memories and this was a process that involved a number of talkers and drawers. Such multiple narratives emphasise the fact that the activity of mapping is carried out by individuals and groups of Warlpiri who express different links to country through their expression of rights, knowledge and experience. The themes of knowledge and authority in mapping of place and its ability to reveal patterns of interdependence between people within groups have been explored elsewhere in Australia and Canada by Biernoff (1978) and Hugh Brody (1986) respectively.

Traditionally, a site clearance was undertaken by a limited number of individuals and made no allowance for the fact that land and places contained within an exploration licence area may not
have been visited for considerable periods of time. The return to country necessitated by a site clearance demanded a re-orientation of Warlpiri people to a specific tract of land that was difficult to achieve in only one or two visits. The difficulties involved in assembling the repertoire of place knowledge stem from the fact that a considerable period of time had elapsed since people were in the region and the fact that the region itself was defined by arbitrary licence boundaries that in no way corresponded with Warlpiri conceptions of regions and meanings. A licence area may cut across land belonging to a wide number of different jukurrpa, and also therefore interested individuals and groups of people. In visiting a certain area the routes of travel undertaken may have little to do with the previous routes travelled by Warlpiri people or the directions and paths of jukurrpa. As wide a group of people as possible was needed to share information, memories, experience and knowledge of places in order to try and define the extent of places contained in a specific area within an appropriately meaningful cultural framework. The site clearance process could not take such culturally specific parameters into account. The mapping project imposed a temporal and physical boundedness on place that neglected Warlpiri ways of knowing, discussing and experiencing places on their own terms.

Ultimately, the impossibility of working with a map produced by the site clearance methodology for both the mining companies and Warlpiri came down to the fact that subsequent visits to a licence area made by Warlpiri would always reveal more places than had previously been identified. There were a number of contributing factors to this recognition that combined to emphasise the vitality of people's relationships to place that included; the contribution of knowledge and memory of different individuals, the fact that the area was widely discussed back in communities after initial visits and among other interested persons, jukurrpa and songs were sung and discussed to check the order and connections of places, the land was often burned to allow easier location of soakages later and so on. The attempt to locate and bound all Warlpiri interests in place under the site clearance process that attempted blanket coverage of a licence area simply did not work. In Diagrams 7.1 and 7.2 for example, the places that are mapped in and around the exploration licence area may have taken several visits to locate after a considerable period of time and sustained research had transpired. In addition there may yet be other places to be located such as difficult to locate soakages or other places that have not been searched for by knowledgeable informants.

It was not only Warlpiri interests that could not be clearly and definitively mapped after one survey in the site clearance process. The mining companies were also incapable of building a picture of an area in terms of its potential gold bearing locales through the gathering of information over a short period of time. Sampling, costeaging (trench ripping), drilling, camps
and access tracks changed locations quite quickly. It was difficult for both the miners and Warlpiri to keep a track of, and understand, each other's interests in place. The division of land into areas that were important and those that were not, whilst based upon different criteria, was equally difficult for Warlpiri and the mining companies. Lefebvre (1991:334) remarked that:

Space is marked out, explored, discovered and rediscovered on a colossal scale. Its potential for being occupied, filled, peopled and transformed from top to bottom is continually on the increase: the prospect, in short, is of space being produced whose nature is nothing more than raw materials suffering gradual destruction by the techniques of production.

In the case of the Tanami Desert what constituted space and place ebbed and flowed over time, particularly so when places were continually being encountered during the course of routine exploration. The production of space within the site clearance process sought to divide space into areas organised by introduced scales of economic and sociocultural meanings using Warlpiri place as the raw material of the system. The process failed to account for the manner in which people were able to identify and locate place; it was Warlpiri who were the producers of this material not the project of mapping itself. To plot a place on the surface of the land involved trying to remove or extract it from the complicated web of meanings in which it is constituted and negotiated by Warlpiri. To point to map and say “There is X at such and such hill” is to take a place and attempt to render it only in its physical dimension to confine it in form and boundary. Mapping as envisaged by the site clearance process hinged upon a distortion that did not reflect other significance of place in both physical and social landscapes. The significance of place cannot be confined to a purely physical dimension and must be understood in the local, regionalised context of other places, jukurrpa, people, affiliations and politics.

The rapid expansion of the number of exploration licences approved by Warlpiri in the Tanami Desert began escalating in the early 1990s and the site clearance process presented difficult obstacles for them as well as the mining companies. The practical difficulties encountered that prevented an effective working arrangement for both parties were considerable: how could the interests in land and its access for the stakeholders be protected? The site clearance process was unworkable and abandoned to be substituted by the work area clearance method that was designed to communicate and inform both parties of their interests in place as part of a continual working arrangement. This new approach achieved considerable success in reducing complications that had arisen from the failure of the site clearance process to effectively identify the complement of Warlpiri places and interests within a particular licence area and, most importantly, within a culturally appropriate framework of reference.
The work area clearance

The development of the work area clearance process cannot be solely attributed to the need to more effectively incorporate Warlpiri ways of knowing and identifying their places. A more successful working relationship between Aboriginal people and exploration companies also required a commitment on behalf of the latter to take a more positive approach to place. Such an approach necessitated incorporation of an understanding of Warlpiri relationships to place and simultaneously identified and attempted to accommodate the objectives and interests of mining companies. The mechanisms of the work area clearance made the production of space and place more transparent and, thus, more easily comprehensible to the stakeholders.

The underpinning philosophy of both exploration for and production of gold is straightforward. A company seeks to maximise the amount of land available for exploration in order to increase the chances of finding a prospective gold reserve that will pass on financial benefits to a company, and in turn, the shareholders. In the Tanami Desert this philosophy had to be adjusted in order to take into account the instructions of Warlpiri people who designated which land was available for exploration. The premise operating here remains the same for either the site clearance or work area clearance process as the previous exploration manager of Normandy NFM in the Tanami Desert explained: “Dilemmas are best avoided by the simple commitment to the early identification of sacred sites, and their immediate exclusion from the area subject of exploration - ‘If it’s culturally important, we don’t want to explore there’” (Ireland 1996:11). The difference between the two clearance processes lay in the manner in which the cultural importance of place was identified and incorporated into a workable relationship between yapá and mining interests.

The problems manifest in the mapping of place in the context of the site clearance have been documented, however the work area clearance process did not dispense with the idea of mapping altogether. The difference was that the attempt to map Warlpiri interests in place under the work area clearance procedure instead focused on the work program objectives of the company. In this way the area under consideration in an exploration licence was substantially reduced and the kinds of activities that were proposed were specifically detailed. The working arrangement became pro-active to the extent that Warlpiri people inspected an exploration licence area on a case by case basis. Over a more workable time period yapá were enabled to make more informed decisions and surveys, the results of which formed subsequent instructions issued to the company. The work area clearance was an approach to place that lent more reality to Warlpiri management of exploration on their land that was on their own terms and removed the impediment of designating boundaries of place. The work area clearance process also allowed different groups of people to identify their interests in places because it
provided for a number of visits over the life of the licence areas. From the perspective of the company the work area clearance reduced as much as possible the sudden identification, late in an advanced exploration program, of a place of significance that intersected with a gold deposit. This scenario would present enormous problems for both Warlpiri and the company, but was difficult to avoid in the piecemeal approach of a site clearance.

The mining model of place

An unintended effect of the implementation of the work area clearance program in the Tanami Desert was to speed up the rate of regional gold exploration. As the work area clearance process was refined more Warlpiri places were identified, people rapidly re-oriented their interests in place, more tracks were built making access easier and the exploration process itself became progressively demystified in Warlpiri eyes. Indeed exploration in the central part of the study area has become so intense that certain areas have been the subject of successful licence applications and exploration programs several times over already. The volume of interest in exploration in the Tanami Desert has forced the CLC to convene massive meetings of traditional land owners to consider multiple applications at once and in 1997 two meetings were held concerning 42 and 62 EL(A)s respectively (CLC 1998a:52).

The work area clearance approach of determining access to land was formulated with reference to the dual imperatives of both Warlpiri and mining companies' interests concerning the demarcation of space and place in the Tanami Desert. The work area clearance process replaced the flawed site clearance process and redressed the fundamental problems the latter caused
Diagram 7.3 - Exploration licence and location of places - Year One

Diagram 7.4 - Mining Lease and location of places - Year Five

1a and 1b - Places claimed by *N/Jangala* and *N/Jampijinpa*
   Connected by *jukurrpa* travelling through the sky
2a and 2b - Places claimed by *N/Jakamarra* and *Na/Jupurrurla*
   Connected by *jukurrpa* fighting through the landscape
3 - Place claimed by *N/Japaljarri* and *N/Jungarrayi*
   *Jukurrpa* travelling along a creekbed
4 - Place claimed by *N/Japanangka* and *N/Japangardi*
   Major restricted *jukurrpa*
by failing to effectively locate and identify Warlpiri places of significance. The development of gold exploration and mining has imposed a new model of land tenure in the central Tanami Desert. The first dimension of this model considered in this chapter is the way that it requires yapa to continually divide the landscape into areas of space and place. This measurement of dreams has necessitated that both Warlpiri and mining companies rank and order their interests in land to effectively manage mining related developments.

For a mining company there are a number of different activities that take place over a long period of the time which have variable impacts in terms of levels of disruption caused to the landscape and the extent to which they encroach upon Warlpiri places. In the early phases of exploration these activities include helicopter and four wheel drive surveys and sampling, camping and later drilling and costeaning. These aspects of the exploration process are relatively low impact although extensive throughout an exploration licence area. More intensive drilling on prospective areas and costeaning are usually restricted to smaller areas. Exploration requires a small number of specialist personnel and little to no development of infrastructure. If a mining stage is possible then this will not be reached until a considerable period of exploration has elapsed which allows for the identification of all places of Warlpiri interest. Mining focuses intensive attention on the location and expanse of places within a relatively limited area. The requirements of a mining venture includes the construction of infrastructure such as roads, airstrips, water borefields, pipelines, gravel pits, offices, accommodation, processing facilities, workshops, tailings and waste dumps in addition to the ore pits themselves. Exploration and mining are very different activities that variably affect the significance of the local constellation of Warlpiri places and jukurrpa. Consideration of Diagrams 7.3 and 7.4 illustrates how the interests of mining companies contract over time in order to focus intense development activity in a clearly defined area of a mineral lease. The second dimension for modelling Warlpiri land tenure under the mining regime is the determination of which places are affected by a new mine that has developed within the original exploration licence.

Warlpiri have become increasingly sophisticated in the ways in which they deal with questions determining: which places are affected by mining and exploration, how important the places are and the weight given to them in order to decide proportions of payment from royalties to the appropriate groups of owners. In the exploration example (Diagram 7.3) there are clearly four different jukurrpa (one belonging to each semimoiety) that are related to the licence area to which people affiliated with each semimoiety could argue for a role in decision making and a share of proceeds from royalties. For argument's sake all four places are fairly important soakages in conjunction with some other topographic feature to avoid unnecessary
consideration of the physical extent of a site. The most common way that Warlpiri order the interests of each group of *kirda* is as follows (in descending order of importance): 4 claimed by *Njapangka* and *Njapangardi*; 2a and 2b (*Njakamarra* and *Na/Nupurrurla*; 1a and 1b claimed by *NJangala* and *NJampijinpa*; 3 claimed by *Njapaljarri* and *Njungarrayi*. In discussion of how *yapa* arrive at such a ranking reference will be made to the Warlpiri gradation of place discussed in Chapter Four. Place 4 is deemed the most important place because it was *yukaka* or *kaninjarra* (inside or below) and is a restricted place where something of consequence was happening (*ngurrjumanu*), even though the physical centre of the site itself lies off the licence area. It is also the prime place within the local area because there is no other place associated with *jukurrpa* on that level. Places 2a and 2b could be argued to share on equal state of importance with Place 4 even though the *jukurrpa* travelled across the ground, *yaninka-wurna*, and is not as ‘deep’ literally or metaphorically in comparison. This argument would be justified on the grounds that there is an area where the ancestors emerged and fought with each other in between the two places (also *ngurrjumanu* as in the previous case) and the entire *jukurrpa* is confined within the licence area thus elevating its importance. Next in ranking of importance are Places 1a and 1b where a *jukurrpa* simply flew through the air (*kankarlku*) between two places doing nothing of great significance at either place except resting (*ngunaja*). These places are also both entirely contained within the licence area. Finally, the least important place was 3 where the *jukurrpa* is said to be affiliated with trees along a creekbed which visited (*ngunaja*) and then returned to its place of origin doing nothing else of significance. At issue in the determination of which *jukurrpa* (and semimoiety) are included within a licence area on Warlpiri terms are considerations of power or strength of *jukurrpa*, proximity of site feature, number of places and the activity of the *jukurrpa* itself. These concerns are also mediated at a broader regional political level that will be discussed further in the following chapter.

As indicated earlier a Warlpiri model of land tenure under a mining regime can change rapidly over a short period of time given that the boundary of a licence area may change according to how successful initial exploration has proved. Diagram 7.4 takes up the example five years later when a gold mine is proposed in one area of a new mineral lease and the rest of the licence has been dropped off. In this situation the case of Place 3 is straightforward. It is discarded immediately from negotiations over a role in decision making and a share of proceeds from royalties. What happens with the other places becomes much more interesting. The places associated with 1a and 1b, 2a and 4 all become of equal importance and share authority with perhaps a smaller proportion of power and authority allocated to 2b. How does this order change? In the case of place 1a and 1b the *kirda* of one patriline and *jukurrpa* become increasingly important because there are two places in close proximity to the site of the
mine and their *jukurrpa*, although travelling through the air, is still regarded as very close. Place 4 remains at the same high level of importance because it is still the most significant place in the local region. However, in the case of 2a and 2b a distinction is drawn between them because although they share the same *jukurrpa* and are from the same semimoieties a contrast is made because the patrilineal descent group associated with 2b is further distant from the mine site and is not within the mineral lease. However, 2b is still included, albeit on a lesser level, because of their close association with 2a and the fact that their *jukurrpa* is closely associated with the mine even though their place is not.

This simple example indicates that for Warlpiri the measurement of dreams in terms of *jukurrpa* and place are closely associated with both the boundaries drawn by a mining company as well as the activity which is undertaken. In reality the different combinations of *jukurrpa* and place are far more complicated than they are illustrated here. The important points to draw out are that the mapping of responsibility and authority over place is in the first instance mediated by considerations of power or strength of *jukurrpa*, proximity of site feature, number of places and the activity of the *jukurrpa* itself but also the relationships of local descent groups as well as regional considerations. In addition decisions regarding affiliation of semimoieties and *jukurrpa* in a localised region must take into account royalty payments and land tenure within a broader political context. The complex process of how Warlpiri map different kinds of affiliation of individuals and groups to place will be analysed in the following chapter is the final dimension of Warlpiri land tenure to be considered under the exploration and mining regime.

**Conclusion**

The physical re-introduction of people to place in the context of mineral exploration in the Tanami Desert has thrown up some challenges. The production of boundaries over space and place in addition to the processes of exploration and gold mining have created an enormous amount of work aimed at identifying and maintaining different kinds of boundaries that are physical, social and spatial. Under the Land Rights Act Aboriginal Land can neither be bought or sold, yet the re-introduction of people to place has nonetheless commodified not only the relationships between people and place but also between each other. Mapping was the first part of this process that drew together Warlpiri politicking over rights to places in the face of the institutional requirements of the CLC, mining industry and government in order for them to resolve questions of boundaries and ownership of place. Decisions over the identification and protection of places have, by and large, been the responsibility of senior knowledgeable persons. The identification of the appropriate owners of those places demands that Warlpiri
people map their relationships to place with respect to not only their own places and boundaries but those that are created by the development process as well.

The process of mineral exploration in the Tanami Desert requires Warlpiri to think carefully about their places within different kinds of physical and social boundaries. It has been argued that the mining model of land tenure requires that both Warlpiri and mining companies must carefully weigh how Warlpiri place is constructed with respect to an exploration or mining project. Exploration, mining and royalty payments expand the scope of politicking among Warlpiri by introducing an economic context within which they organise, negotiate and resolve competing claims of ownership and affiliation to place by different individuals and groups. The payment of substantial royalties from the exploration and mining of gold in the Tanami Desert is made to traditional owners of the places that are affected by such operations. The mining model of land tenure must be extended further in order to see how the heightened significance of place and its new economic dimension in turn informs the relationships of people to place and each other.
Chapter Eight

Place and the Division of People

In any system in which there is a posited relationship between an ancestrally created world order and the present ordering of social relations, there is an ongoing problem in ensuring continuity between the two because of the nature of demographic change and political action (Morphy 1990:313).

The separation of place and space is a product of the new context of exploration and mining in the Tanami Desert and it is on this basis that the Warlpiri land tenure model under the mining regime has been formulated. During the 1980s and 1990s yapu became increasingly sophisticated in making decisions about the physical location and boundaries of places to facilitate the access of mining companies to their land. The implication of this for Warlpiri land tenure meant that at the same time yapu were forced to make decisions about the affiliation of people to place and their own cultural order of rights in place in order to distribute monies from mining royalties. In effect, Warlpiri land tenure has become increasingly rigid as places, categories and groups of people are bounded, defined and matched to one another. The chapter will examine the tensions created in the cultural order of place for Warlpiri by addressing the continuities and discontinuities in the ascription of linkages and affiliation or ownership of place in the context of gold exploration, mining and the distribution of contingent royalties. As Morphy (1990) indicated in the opening passage, such continuities are affected by both demographic change and political action. The examination of royalty payments and their distribution by Warlpiri will illustrate the role they play in the mining model of land tenure.

Royalties and land tenure

The Aboriginal Associations Management Centre (AAMC) in Alice Springs administers the distribution of monies under section 35 of the Land Rights Act, to associations incorporated under the Aboriginal Councils and Associations Act 1976 (CLC 1998a:73). The membership of these associations may range from small family groups to those based on residence or land ownership within large geographical regions or communities. The distributions of monies are made to people, be they individuals or community groups, who according to the rules of each particular association are eligible for membership of those associations. What is commonly referred to as royalty money by Warlpiri is generated from a number of different sources each
of which must be paid to particular kinds of recipient groups, which in turn determine the rules of the respective associations themselves. The source of royalty payments range from areas affected by mining exploration, exploration licence areas as well as individual mines and prospective areas of gold-bearing deposits. Currently in excess of seven million dollars per annum are paid through the CLC and the AAMC to Warlpiri from a number of different sources that are summarised below (CLC 1998a:75,100):

1. Section 35(2) monies are required to be paid to incorporated Aboriginal Associations or Councils whose members live in, or are the traditional owners of, those areas affected by mining operations.

2. Monies received as a result of negotiated agreements between mining companies and the traditional owners of areas being mined are paid directly by mining companies to the Central Land Council and distributed pursuant to Section 35(3) of the Act.

3. Exploration compensation receipts are distributed for community purposes to the traditional landowners of exploration licence areas under Section 35 (3). This money is paid directly by the exploration companies to the Central Land Council and is compensation for disturbance due to exploration activities.

4. Other receipts from sources such as licences, leases and rental agreements are distributed pursuant to Section 35 (4).

Royalty money is a term that glosses over the fact that there is a variety of sources of income that are derived from both specific places and broader geographical regions. It is not of concern to trace which monies are generated from the Federal or Northern Territory Governments, the Aboriginal Benefits Trust Account (ABTA) or individual mining companies. Rather, it is the areas of land for which the payment is made that is of interest. Royalty payments pose a number of complex issues to be resolved by Warlpiri that revolve around determinations of which traditional owners may be included as recipients. Decisions need to be based on the accurate identification of the area of land in question, the criteria for affiliation to that area of land and the ability to reach consensus about both issues within an appropriate forum. Such a forum is necessary to ratify such a decision and to deal with any disputes or questions that may be raised at a later date regarding decisions to distribute monies to certain groups.

Section 24 of the Land Rights Act provides guidelines for the Northern Territory Land Councils to compile and maintain registers of the names of people who are traditional owners of areas of land in accordance with tradition. The difficulties of such an undertaking are considerable as ‘tradition’ refers to a variety of pathways and criteria that both individuals and groups may invoke in order to claim relationship to places. It is the context that requires
people to express this relationship that must be examined carefully. Long before the development of intense gold exploration and mining in the Tanami Desert Diane Smith (1984:86) predicted that such development would bring to the fore the complex interaction between individuals within their network of rights, responsibilities and interests in different areas of land.

Smith (1984) believed that the Land Council’s documentation of interests, consultations, reports and the production of maps of attachment and ownership would be carried out in response to external economic interests and development. This is most certainly true, however, it is her conclusion that is of most interest: “The valuation given to land is no longer an Aboriginal one, but is established by intrusive economic interests” (Smith 1984:89). Gold exploration and mining in the Tanami Desert impose an extraordinary emphasis on place by creating boundaries that force Warlpiri people to articulate and negotiate their interests and links in which mapping plays a pivotal role. However, Warlpiri are active agents on their own terms. Through the work area clearance process and the negotiations between individuals and groups over the access and distribution of royalty payments Warlpiri to a considerable extent do manage to exercise control over their re-introduction to place. However this may not entirely be on terms of their own making (James Weiner pers. comm., 1997).

Jon Altman and Diane Smith (1994:6) identified certain problems that arose through the payment of statutory royalties to councils, incorporated groups or communities whose members are traditional owners of, or residents in, areas affected by a resource development. Tensions often arise that may place traditional owners and Aboriginal residents of a community or area of land in competition with one another to distribute and access monies.

These difficulties are at the heart of many problems that have eventuated with respect to the distribution and utilisation of mining moneys in the past 15 years. It is clear that from an Aboriginal perspective, mining moneys belong primarily to traditional owners of the mine site. This is partly due to the fact that they have been required to participate in negotiations and approve agreements. But it is also due to the indigenous view that resources extracted from the land belong to the traditional land owner: Aboriginal people do not accept Crown ownership of minerals (Altman and Smith 1994:6-7).

Clearly the difficulties of distributing certain types of royalty payments in the Northern Territory is not an experience that is unique to the Tanami Desert. In the Warlpiri case it is of interest to discover who is eligible to receive payments for specifically defined and bounded tracts of land and the grounds upon which such claims of ownership and affiliation to place/s are asserted, contested and upheld. The previous chapter considered the role that place plays in the actual distribution of royalty monies. The question to consider now is how do Warlpiri
organise places according to sociocultural concepts as well as their relationships to each other in the process?

To understand what motivates Warlpiri in matching units of money to place and then to people involves looking at the royalty process not as an institution as such, but to analyse the rules that Warlpiri employ to govern the relations of distributing royalty money (Campbell 1994:27). Further, to understand money and royalties in the Tanami Desert, it is necessary to understand how it is symbolised in relation to production, consumption, circulation and exchange (Parry and Bloch 1989:1). If royalty payments are not understood within the Warlpiri sociocultural context it is difficult to make sense of the distribution process. Jonathan Parry and Maurice Bloch (1989:24) argued that money was involved in two transactional orders, one that reproduces the social and cosmic order, and the other that involved fostering of short-term individual competition. Specifically then, how do transactions involved in Warlpiri distribution of royalty monies reproduce yapana social and ideological systems over time and what is the role of the individual in these processes?

Perhaps the greatest initial difficulty in handling royalty money is for Warlpiri to deal with it on their own cultural terms as Mr. B explained:

That's very very hard for anybody even Aboriginal people to explain to not only some of the young people but to elderly people who, you know, got this thing in their mind what other people get, getting back to their old laws of the Warlpiri people, we should share whatever things that you get because artefacts, tools, weapons, food and even gifts given to you by other neighbouring tribes that was all always shared. Money is not a traditional thing in, you know in a yapana way anyway, it's an introduced thing but they are still inclined to think that it should be shared equally. But because money is not a traditional thing, it's an introduced thing people therefore grab it and do not share it with someone else. There are disputes when royalties are being payed out - there's always arguments between particular groups about who wants to receive what money (Interview with Elias 1996).

Mr. B referred to a fundamental egalitarian principle of Warlpiri society that encourages the sharing of all material goods between people. However, he also indicated that money was seen as a non-traditional item and often not subjected to the same treatment in terms of circulation as other goods. Nevertheless, royalty money is allocated and appropriated on certain principles of land tenure that allow certain groups of traditional owners for specific tracts of land to claim money generated from that area. Herein lies the paradox: royalty money can only be made sense of by Warlpiri when it is anchored to place, once this connection is made money may be claimed and distributed by those traditional owners who have the strongest attachment to the place/s. Place anchors royalty money simultaneously in the physical and cultural landscapes of Warlpiri people where it successfully unites a continuing cultural meaning to a new economic.
dimension. It is at this nexus that place can be seen as commodified in terms of the production of symbolic, cultural and economic capital (Bourdieu 1994). Place is the axis upon which claims of ownership, authority and the subsequent distribution of royalty money revolve.

The distribution of royalty money has brought issues surrounding the affiliation of people to place to the forefront of day to day Warlpiri political and social life where claims of affiliation are the subject of constant scrutiny and debate. This raises the question as to the extent that this has contributed to the demarcation of boundaries between different sets of traditional owners and upon what basis these boundaries are drawn and maintained.

At the outset of his research amongst Pintupi, Myers (1986:135) disclosed that he originally thought that by collecting individual details from people he would be able to match sets of people with places to produce a set of data upon which, ideally, all people would subsequently agree. In practice he found that this was impossible and that the nature of individual links to place claimed by people worked against a model of corporate groups for land ownership. Is the modelling of such data possible in the Tanami Desert in order to arrive at the definition of discrete corporate groups? Given the context of Warlpiri’s now considerable experience in dealing with the formation of land owner associations in the context of gold mining this is a critical question. In his work amongst the Foi and Fasu people of the Kutubu oil project area of Papua New Guinea, James Weiner (1998:19) noted:

Contemporary, representative organisations such as political and land owner associations are not as subject to fragmentation as more traditional land- and genealogical-based social units such as clans. This is because such associations are founded on a commonality of interest.

The example detailed below takes up these questions of fragmentation, interest and land ownership and indicates how Warlpiri structure divisions between themselves in order to resolve questions of land tenure and affiliation to place.

A royalty distribution case study

In the case of Diagram 8.1, there are 15 places associated with a localised dreaming belonging to _Njapanangka_ and _Njapangardi_ surrounding the gold mine, this group will be called 4A. From now on each group of _kirda_ associated with different places will be labelled in a similar manner in order to avoid confusion. There are two other major places in close proximity to the gold mine, one is a travelling _jukurrpa_ held by patriline (2A) and the other is also a travelling _jukurrpa_ place conjointly owned by members of patriline (2B) and patriline (1A) the latter of which are from a different semimoiety altogether. Groups 2A and 2B are distinguished on the
basis that they are held by different patrilineal descent groups. The complex of places held by 4A is by far the most numerically dominant jukurrpa in the area and is connected to another complex of places associated with the same semimoiy, but a different collection of patrilineal descent groups (4B), that lies some 300 kms away. There are no places or jukurrpa claimed by members of the N/Japaljarri and N/Jungarrayi semimoiy.

There are many important stories associated with the jukurrpa at 4A that involve restricted business as well as transformations both through, under and above the earth. The jukurrpa held by group 2A travels into the region of the gold mine where it camps and then continues on its journey; it is the least important jukurrpa within the area. The other travelling jukurrpa held by 2B and 1A, although the same jukurrpa as that held by 2A, is not connected in any way either in terms of ceremonial or religious affiliation or in terms of common genealogical descent with consideration to the fact that groups 2A and 2B are the same semimoiy. Another important distinction between the jukurrpa at 2A and the jukurrpa claimed by 2B and 1A places is that the latter is much more important in Warlpiri eyes because of the significance of the actions of the jukurrpa in that place as well as also being a long travelling jukurrpa and claimed by the patrimoiy as opposed to kirda from within one semimoiy only.
1 - N/Jangala and N/Jampijinpa
2 - N/Jakamarra and Na/Jupurrurla
4 - N/Japanangka and N/Japangardi
X - Other areas of major places

Diagram 8.1 - Spatial relations of jukurrpa, place and a gold mine
The Warlpiri order of the significance of place was outlined at the close of Chapter Four and is critical in understanding how places are first isolated from the surrounding jukurrpa of the region in terms not only based on physical proximity but depth of meaning as well. The inclusion of a jukurrpa or place as eligible for recognition in terms of decision making and royalty payments involved in gold mining is dependent on comprehension of the localised cosmological matrix within which mining occurs. It is the groups of Warlpiri who are kirda for those jukurrpa and places that are identified as being the primary owners of any given exploration or mining area. What then of the other links of people to place that were discussed in detail in Chapter Five that could be appealed to in order for people to claim connections other than patrilineal to an area of mining or exploration?

The area around the gold mine was a region where many of the middle and older generations of Warlpiri were conceived and/or born or had worked and lived. On these bases many other individuals claimed a share of royalties. At first these claims were recognised by the major land owning groups. However, within a short period of time the majority of the other claims were dismissed by them on the grounds that they did not confer the same strength of attachment in terms of identity, responsibility and knowledge of places and jukurrpa around the site of the mine. There are a number of important reasons for the rejection of non-patrilineal claims to place that are most easily exposed by a chronological treatment of the events.

The area around the gold mine was one of the first areas to generate royalty payments from mining in the Tanami Desert. As such a number of different ideas concerning distribution were advanced that attempted to identify those people who were eligible to claim traditional ownership of places and jukurrpa. Given the excitement surrounding the mining development many Warlpiri were of the opinion that the distribution should be inclusive of all connections that people could claim to the area. It became readily apparent that an enormous number of people including many who were not Warlpiri could establish such connections to place including not only those that have been detailed in Chapter Five but also links through descent from any number of relatives, marriage, residence within the Tanami Desert and knowledge or affiliation to jukurrpa not only in the region of the gold mine but to Warlpiri country in general. The settlement of such a diverse array of often tenuous claims of attachment to place put a considerable amount of pressure on yapa to resolve who was to be paid and the basis upon which it was justified. Often such resolution was based on a personal level that owed more to political acumen, status and gender than anything else. The difficulties involved during this initial period of distribution were also experienced in other parts of the Tanami Desert as well. This situation of uncertainty regarding the validity and weight of different claims to place was to be short lived as Warlpiri moved quickly to focus attention back onto
place in order to make decisions. When gold exploration and mining spread rapidly through the survey area and more money became available in a number of regions place was consolidated as the true marker of ownership and interest in land as opposed to more broader regional connections that were increasingly dismissed as spurious. Warlpiri isolated the identification of patrilineation of place and the patrilineally inherited rights as *kirda* as the only means to legitimately claim ownership of place in the Tanami Desert. It was emphasised that the rights of *kirda* were the only ones that could simultaneously bind an individual to place as well as the broader social category of owners and this principle remains vigorously enforced to the present time. The isolation of the principle of patrilineation enables the identification of which broad groups are affiliated to an area and it establishes boundaries between certain social categories based on semimoieties affiliation. Of equal, or perhaps greater, importance is how membership within those categories is ascribed and how each group of *kirda* are ranked in terms of the distribution and apportionment of royalty payments.

All five of the groups that were identified earlier have continued to be recipients of royalty payments from the gold mine since they commenced. Of course, the proportion of the payment received fluctuated markedly as various tenuous claims of other individuals and groups were either withdrawn or refused. Yet even in these times the relative weight of importance attached to each group remained the same. That is the recipient groups have always been ranked in the following order in descending order of the size of their share of payments 4A, 4B, 2A and 2B and 1A. This does not quite reflect the order of weight accorded to each group in terms of importance of their respective places and *jukurrpa* in the area of the gold mine. Group 2A is elevated above groups 2B and 1A even though the travelling dreaming for which they are responsible is not considered as important as the *jukurrpa* held by 2B and 1A. There are several reasons why group 2A is more favourably ranked. It is numerically smaller than the sum of persons within 2B and 1A, its members have a long history of intermarriage with those in the most powerful group (4A) and, most importantly, group 2A has a large number of other places and *jukurrpa* within the localised region of the gold mine as opposed to group 2B and 1A who are responsible for major places over 200 km away. In contrast, group 4B, who also have their major places far from the site of the mine, are not disadvantaged in ranking of importance in the distribution. This is due to the fact that they have very close ceremonial connections and responsibilities for the same *jukurrpa* as well as being very closely related in terms of patrilineal descent. Place of current residence emerges as a consideration in distribution because close family can be scattered in different communities or towns. A consideration of demography introduces a political and logistical dimension in terms of administering and negotiating the distribution of royalty money and making other decisions. The negotiation of power and authority within the semimoieties from which the *kirda* who own
places are drawn, is keenly contested by *yapa*. In their attempts to decide which patrilineal
descent groups can claim primary rights over place Warlpiri are forced to look at the relations
of their F and FF to land as a subjective historical object. This creates considerable problems
because there are now very few people left who experienced day to day life in the Tanami
Desert prior to European contact. Most Warlpiri grew up together at the mines or on pastoral
leases. The payment of royalties encourages people to impose a time frame of their own
relations to place in order to model their own history of relationships to place. The difficulties
this causes is understandable when it is remembered that people once travelled and lived
widely throughout the Tanami Desert in order to survive.

At the outset of mining it is obvious that large amounts of royalty payments are pending and
this results in a large number of people putting forward claims to ownership of place. There
are a number of very important points of consequence to be drawn from this case study that
impact upon the effective modelling of Warlpiri land tenure at the beginning of the 21st
century. These concern how Warlpiri patriline are constituted and how rights to place are
ranked and negotiated.

**The incorporation of Warlpiri patriline**

In distributions of royalties as well as determination of affiliation to place FF is the preferred
operative dimension of relating people to place as owners. The data on place, the cultural order
of rights to place and the distribution of royalties between different associations of Warlpiri
clearly indicate a patrilineal bias in terms of modelling relationships between people and place.
The following table (8.1) details the composition of 35 separate groups that have been formed
by *yapa* in order to distribute royalties in the Tanami Desert. The number of people associated
with each group can fluctuate in the cases where there are more than one patriline. The people
counted are those over the age of 18 who are eligible for membership.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group Number</th>
<th>Number of People</th>
<th>Semimoiety Affiliation</th>
<th>Notes on Attachment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>N/Japanangka, N/Japangardi</td>
<td>Patrifiliation through two patriline</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>N/Jangala, N/Jampijinpa</td>
<td>Single patriline</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>N/Jangala, N/Jampijinpa</td>
<td>Patrifiliation through three patriline</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>N/Jangala, N/Jampijinpa</td>
<td>Patrifiliation through three patriline</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>140</td>
<td>N/Jakamarra, Na/Jupurrurla</td>
<td>Patrifiliation through more than four patriline</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>N/Japaljarri, N/Jungarrayi</td>
<td>Patrifiliation through more than three patriline</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>N/Japaljarri, N/Jungarrayi</td>
<td>Patrifiliation through three patriline</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>N/Japaljarri, N/Jungarrayi</td>
<td>Patrifiliation through two patriline</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>N/Jangala, N/Jampijinpa</td>
<td>Single patriline</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>N/Japanangka, N/Japangardi</td>
<td>Single patriline</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>N/Japanangka, N/Japangardi</td>
<td>Single patriline</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>N/Jakamarra, Na/Jupurrurla</td>
<td>Single patriline</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>N/Jakamarra, Na/Jupurrurla</td>
<td>Combined group of six patriline</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>N/Japaljarri, N/Jungarrayi</td>
<td>Patrifiliation through two patriline</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>N/Jakamarra, Na/Jupurrurla</td>
<td>Patrifiliation through three patriline</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>N/Jakamarra, Na/Jupurrurla</td>
<td>Patrifiliation through two patriline</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>N/Japaljarri, N/Jungarrayi</td>
<td>Single patriline</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>N/Japaljarri, N/Jungarrayi</td>
<td>Single patriline</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>N/Jakamarra, Na/Jupurrurla</td>
<td>Patrifiliation through two patriline</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>N/Jakamarra, Na/Jupurrurla</td>
<td>Patrifiliation through two patriline</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| 21 | 50 | *N/Japanangka, N/Japangardi* | Single patriline  
| 22 | 25 | *N/Japanangka, N/Japangardi* | Single patriline  
| 23 | 15 | *N/Jakamarra, Na/Jupurrurla* | Single patriline  
| 24 | 30 | *N/Japanangka, N/Japangardi* | Single patriline  
| 25 | 30 | *N/Jangala, N/Jampijinpa* | Patrifiliation through two patrines  
| 26 | 30 | *N/Jangala, N/Jampijinpa* | Patrifiliation through two patrines  
| 27 | 30 | *N/Jakamarra, Na/Jupurrurla* | Patrifiliation through two patrines  
| 28 | 150 | *N/Japaljarri, N/Jungarrayi* | Patrifiliation through more than four patrines  
| 29 | 40 | *N/Jakamarra, Na/Jupurrurla* | Patrifiliation through two patrines  
| 30 | 25 | *N/Jangala, N/Jampijinpa* | Single patriline  
| 31 | 70 | *N/Jangala, N/Jampijinpa* | Patrifiliation through three patrines  
| 32 | 20 | *N/Japaljarri, N/Jungarrayi* | Single patriline  
| 33 | 50 | *N/Japaljarri, N/Jungarrayi*  
* *N/Jakamarra, Na/Jupurrurla* | Combined group through two patrines  
| 34 | 30 | *N/Japaljarri, N/Jungarrayi* | Single patriline  
| 35 | 25 | *N/Jangala, N/Jampijinpa* | Single patriline  

Table 8.1 - The incorporation of Warlpiri patrines

Meggitt (1974:206) documented the major *jukurrpa* listed by his informants in Lajamanu and matched them to what he identified as 30-40 major patrilodges who were the adult males of the patrines. Using a similar approach that collapsed the patrilodges and major *jukurrpa* into estate heartlands the Exhibit 172C of the Warlpiri and Kartangerurru-Kurintji land claim hearing distinguished 24 groups in the Tanami Desert within the area that concerns this thesis. These groups also corresponded neatly with Stead’s (1985) subsequent research in the Chilla Well land claim that isolated five primary landholding groups in that area. More recent land claim research in both the cases of Tanami Downs and Western Desert have done nothing to dispel the conclusion that attempts to define the number and extent of the core landowning groups in the Tanami Desert has shown a very high level of reproducibility over time.

The data outlined in Table 8.1 corroborates the numbers of landholding groups identified in previous investigations and accords well considering that these separate findings took place
within a period of time spanning over four decades. The data reveals approximately 35 groups based on incorporation for royalty distribution that can be equated with patriclans or local descent groups because they share the same qualities of in-group and out-group distinctions based on shared descent from (very) closely related brothers. The connections made between these individuals are at the generation levels of FF and FFF. Given the amount of detailed genealogical documentation already recorded for Warlpiri this depth will naturally increase as the information is reproduced over time.

There are over 67 separate patrilineal groups detailed in Table 8.1 and this finding warrants further comment on how patrilineal groups are distinguished, united and split in the circumstances of royalty payments. The key to understanding how this is done involves shifting focus away from land for a moment and back to the communities in which people live and relate to one another on a daily basis. In her fieldwork at Yuendumu Dussart (1988:72) observed that she could distinguish six different basic kin groups that lived with each other in sustained contact and interaction. Dussart’s observation is interesting because it refers to links between people within a single community rather than data oriented towards land in the context of claims. Her information is of a slightly different order from the research based on affiliation to place presented here which documents the incorporation of groups on the basis of links of land to people living within nine separate communities, Kalkaringi, Daguragu, Lajamanu, Ringers Soak, Balgo, Tennant Creek, Willowra, Yuendumu and Nyirripi.

Holcombe (1998) has contended that groups of ‘traditional owners’ such as those detailed in Table 8.1 are artificial constructions and that the requirements of the Land Rights Act actively creates divisions within the community group. She maintained that the process of group formation creates considerable pressure amongst Aboriginal people to bureaucratisse processes of knowing the land which are then lent the weight of legal and anthropological authority. Whilst there may be some truth in her position, the thesis has striven to outline the conditions under which such group constructions are demanded and maintained. However, there is another distinction that must be drawn out of the data that shows that Warlpiri people are active agents in the process of group formation. Definitions of membership criteria and subsequent politicking between different groups of people are not merely the responses of Warlpiri as passive observers of the objectification of their social relations and cultural concepts by the requirements of the Land Rights Act.

The groups detailed in Table 8.1 have been formed by negotiations and decisions made by Warlpiri over a period of 15 years and range in size from one to six patrilineal groups. At one extreme is Group 13 which involves six separate patrilineal groups from opposite moieties and at the other extreme there are 15 groups that are related to single patrilineal. In between these are 18 groups
that are formed by two or more patrilineal groups joined together from the same semimoiety. There is the final case of Group 33 that involves two patrilineal groups from opposite moieties, a situation similar to that found for Group 13. In the case of all groups membership is made up of people who live in the same community. What helps to explain the difference in sizes and groupings of semimoieties documented in Table 8.1?

Groups 13 and 33 are obviously the odd cases out yet examination of their particular circumstances illustrates that the principles involved in their definition are consistent with those for the other groups. Group 13 remains the core group of Warlpiri who were amongst the first to receive royalty payments in the Tanami Desert, this group has remained intact through time because of a number of factors. These are the rules of their particular association, the physical proximity and links of the different semimoieties respective jukurrpa to the same localised area and the necessity for their different kirda to support one another against the claims of other groups over a long period of time. Group 33 is in fact a subset of Group 13. Group 33 is a more recent incorporation that receives payments of monies from exploration as it has expanded over the last decade. The membership has preferred to remain together because of long term residential and marriage links. Why then did the other patrilineal groups split from Group 13, and from other larger groups which have dissolved already? The answer to this lies in the fact that as time went on in the Tanami Desert mining and gold exploration increased as did royalty payments. As more money became available from an increasing number of places a situation was created that allowed broader patrilineally related groups or estates to break down further and further to single patrilineal and family groups. This fracturing was necessary in order to avoid disputes and manage money more effectively. Group 33 is the only example where this fracturing of larger groups has not occurred. The speed at which the larger groups tend to break up is of course heavily related to the generation of money from different places. Of greatest interest here is the fact that once given the opportunity Warlpiri people will define and order themselves socially to place on the basis of patrilineal descent.

There is another factor to consider that assists in understanding how different groups are formed and maintained over time. First, there are noticeable differences in the number of groups and patrilineal groups involved in royalty distributions between cases of exploration as opposed to mining. As the prospect of mining increases the numbers of different patrilineal groups with a semimoiety and jukurrpa will swell. Close connections between people who share strong ceremonial ties over a jukurrpa will join together. Whether all of those people will be included as members of an association is not assured. Factors including the past histories of payments, community of residence, the presence of powerful individuals, numbers of people
involved and relations with other semimoieties may all combine to influence which groups of
owners are included as members of an association set to receive royalty payments.

Contrary to the models that were formulated for the Land Rights Act, Myers (1982:187-8)
observed that land ownership was not patrilineally based, individuals belonged to more than
just one group, individuals had a variety of ways to claim identification with country at their
disposal, and groups were not closed or bounded. Most important of all, different individuals
had different constellations of rights. The specific claims to identification with and rights over
country could rely on appeal to, and establishment of, a variety of criteria and credentials
including place of conception and its connection with other places and dreamings, place of
birth, place of initiation, conception place of relatives, residence and place of death of a close
relative (Myers 1990:27).

An attempt to model personally acquired rights over the land as system would be of limited
value because it could only map egocentric interests. In a similar manner other personally
based residential rights such as those accrued through birth and conception or through initiation
and accumulation of religious knowledge are also individually based. However, understanding
how such rights affect the status and influence of older persons who were born and grew up in
the desert is of assistance, as was noted earlier in the case of Jangala, in understanding how
people can have much more widely spaced claims to affiliation that is available to younger
generations. This is due to the fact that the residential connections of successive generations
have tended to concentrate residentially based rights first around Tanami and The Granites and
later the communities where people now reside. The shift in focus of residential rights that has
been charted throughout the thesis has not produced a community based model that can replace
those models that have focussed on the relationship between patrilineally inherited rights of
kirda and those places to which they may claim ownership through jukurrpa. The
consideration of residential rights does however reveal that there continues to be scope for the
political negotiation of rights in place particularly with respect to the different context of those
rights between different generations of Warlpiri.

The negotiation of group affiliation to place

Ken Liberman (1985) completed an intensive study of day to day interaction and politicking in
central Australian Aboriginal society and identified certain principles adhered to by people in
arenas where strong feelings on subjects were negotiated. These prescribed behaviours
included the expression of one’s feelings in such a way as to avoid "direct confrontation with
anyone" or to embarrass others so that all individuals generally "remain very tolerant and will
avoid making public criticism" (Liberman 1985:4-5). In the context of negotiations over the
distribution of royalties in the Tanami Desert it is apparent that the prescribed behaviours identified by Liberman are not universally followed. In the passage below Mr. C, a prominent bicultural Warlpiri man from Yuendumu discusses some of the issues involved in making decisions about the correct allocation of monies to the appropriate groups of traditional owners.

We've got a number of kinds of people here. We've got the people who just open their mouths and let the words fly out. Like talking to anthropologists and telling them that they own the land and they are the traditional owners, the kind of people that know that they can talk to a kardinya person. The other are the people who sort of know the country and really know where their grandfather came from but who don't "talk up". Yet they sort of talk it over with other people and telling them "No, that bloke is just telling them that he knows because he can see that there is a dollar sign". We've got very smart people who think they know where their grandfathers are buried, where their immediate families come from and they say that they know exactly where their dreaming routes go from and go to. Old people listen to these young people who talk straight through a kardinya person, from the land council, lawyers or anthropologists, telling them "No - they are not the real traditional owners, I am or, we are". That's where all the problems start because they know there is going to be a mine around the sacred site, or around the traditional area of country, and these people are coming in and putting their names and their family and the grandfather and the dreaming into that area. So that's been very hard and complicated for those old people who don't understand what the land council are on about. They know that it's their country yet they don't listen because there is another person in between who is pushing them aside and telling them that it's his grandfather's country. Old people know that it don't belong to him but old people are sort of quiet and don't usually get up and say. Old people are sort of intimidated by his hard language that he or she can't understand. That's where there is a sort of barrier, a blockage between the traditional owners and the anthropologists and land council (Interview with Elias 1996).

In this passage several critical points are raised that reveal some of the ways in which power may be appropriated by Warlpiri individuals. Mr. C describes how barriers may be formed between traditional owners and the CLC who act upon the instructions that they receive from Warlpiri at public meetings to discuss royalties. It is clearly indicated time and again both in the above passage as well as daily discussions in the communities of the Tanami Desert that acceptable claims to affiliation with place are made through the grandfather (FF) and his jukurrpa. The difficulty that arises in detailing these relationships is that claims may be asserted, often by younger people, who may not actually know the exact itinerary and location of places of particular jukurrpa. Yet, their ability to speak and debate in English in a public forum gives them some advantage over other people in influencing decisions that are made regarding the affiliation of people and place.

The passage contrasts sharply with Liberman's generalisations as well as other established orthodox anthropological views regarding power in Aboriginal society as resting with older
knowledgable people. This older knowledgeable group has been called by Sutton (1996:17) "the senior jural public" and he says that it is inconceivable that they would not have had the major role in settling serious land tenure issues in pre-contact Australia. Stanner (1998:237) emphasised the indivisibility of certain elements of Aboriginal society that worked together to maintain the primacy of the elder generations in decision making: "Power, authority, influence, age, status, knowledge, all run together and, in some sense, are the same kind of thing." How then has marked tension between younger and elder generations of Warlpiri people, of which people themselves are keenly aware, arisen in the decision making forum concerning the affiliation of people and place?

Questions regarding issues of affiliation of people and place have been brought into the public arena under the broader political policy backgrounds of openness, accountability and self-determination which do not accord particularly well, or fit unproblematically, with 'traditional' authority structures. The distribution of royalties and questions of land tenure involve detailed religious knowledge of business, jukurrpa and symbolic meanings that are only open to those men and women who have achieved the required grades of initiation and induction where such knowledge is accumulated. The forum of decision making in open 'community-style' meetings that constitute the day to day decision making processes of communities in the Tanami Desert presents a considerable obstacle to a cultural tradition where valued knowledge and authority were never open to public scrutiny and debate. Keen (1994:300) remarked that Aboriginal men's power underwent profound change from the mid 1970s where their ability to control production, distribution and consumption through religious means became increasingly irrelevant:

With the move to a welfare economy centred on settlements, and new resources such as positions in settlement administration (and control of budgets), mining royalties and leases, other arenas of power replaced to an extent the connection between marriage, political support, and control of economic and religious resources. Control of religious knowledge had been a key element in the political economy of marriage, country, and ceremony. There was a direct link between religious prerogatives and power, namely through the sacralization of forces of production, producers, and the product itself.

The payment of royalties is directly related to the control of religious knowledge because it is precisely on those sociocultural concepts involved in organising land tenure that payments are based. The division of royalties has become a highly contested arena where more recently entrenched mechanisms of power are set in direct competition with those that have been traditionally based on religious affiliation and knowledge. Smith (1984:96) noted the adoption of the term 'traditional owner' actively pursued by Aboriginal middlemen who seek to harness these last remaining areas of traditional authority in order to control access to resources. On a
similar note Hiatt (1998:193) remarked that the status of traditional owner under the Land Right Act assisted in magnifying the importance of dominant men who distribute wealth by virtue of the fact that mechanisms that would have once constrained their ability to acquire new power are no longer in place. The arena in which the competition for control over the definition of people’s relationships to place has shifted markedly. Warlpiri are confronted with problems and issues requiring resolution where traditional authority and knowledge is increasingly threatened by being bypassed under the guise of political expediency and ‘democratic’ processes that work to erase the sociocultural values of Warlpiri place.

Tacit negotiation and decisions made by hidden consensus that were the hallmarks of Aboriginal politicking as identified by Liberman (1985:16) are far removed from the reality of the complex negotiation and argument that characterise decisions over contemporary issues of land tenure in the Tanami Desert. Warlpiri people must reflect on the meanings and issues at stake in the negotiation of land tenure and display considerable capacities to relate the developments of royalties to enduring concepts of themselves, a point that has been underplayed in recent anthropological writings on Warlpiri (Niblett 1992, Burke 1998). The process of royalty payments offers Aboriginal people an opportunity to develop their own power structures to manage and organise relations between people, as Bill Edwards (1998:179) pointed out. Anderson has commented that persons of achieved high status, often also referred to as middlemen or brokers, play a significant role that can be seen “in patterns of changing traditions where forces for change occur and operate primarily via such individuals. They are the reinterpreters of tradition and the ‘editors’ of history” (1998:208). The question is whether these individuals have succeeded in elevating new community based power structures over the traditional authority of religious knowledge in determining the key questions of ownership and rights of people to place in the Tanami Desert.

Senior Warlpiri men who exercise considerable authority in resolving questions of the contemporary affiliation of people to place reflect on current issues in negotiations over their own cultural ordering of these relationships on distinctly Warlpiri terms. These men are part of a group that closely approximates Anderson’s “interpreters of tradition” and they occupy a position that mediates the intersection of new and traditional arenas of power that compete to organise the affiliation of people to place and the subsequent distribution of royalty monies in the Tanami Desert. Several passages will be presented that illustrate the ways in which Warlpiri are engaging with the realities of their complex interaction with place and mining in the Tanami Desert and the dimensions within which people have acquired reflexivities dealing with their local history and sociocultural concepts. The first passage concerns the requirement that a group of people must be able to prove their religious attachment to, and knowledge of, a
place that has a depth in terms of continuity of patrilígal attachment over time as well as a store of considerable symbolic meaning.

When we have these mining companies coming out having a meeting with the traditional owners of where the mining company would like to explore we get these family groups talking about it and we get these other people all listening and then coming in and telling people that their dreaming comes through there, or their great grandparents had been travelling around that area, or must have stayed there one night passing through in a soakage. We have always been asking at these meetings, especially with the men inside, that if they want to prove being a traditional owner, that their dreaming is coming past or travelling through, to find out if we can have the traditional ceremonies about this certain area, doing it out in the bush and to prove to the other people who belongs to this ceremony or this area. Old people know how to organise these ceremonies and they know how to dance that way. They know if these other people are not involved with that ceremony and are not the ones who are supposed to be registering little sites or soakages, or a tree that stands. It could be someone else's, it could be ours. They don't have any proof. What they are trying to do is just coming in and wanting to sneak in by getting these soakage, the dreaming site where their dreamings have just passed through, or flew over. That don't prove anything but if they get out to ceremony held in the bush to prove where do they stand with all these dances, the songs, who is allowed to dance and who is not. So it is very important that these ceremonies should be held before or after these meetings to find out who are the real traditional owners of that area (Interview with Elias 1996).

Clearly Warlpiri are keen to re-establish a forum in which the resolution of contesting claims of affiliation to place is placed firmly in the hands of senior people. It is their knowledge of religious ceremonies that enables them to assume their proper role as the recognised arbiters of affiliation to place on the basis of continued recognition of the principles of ownership and knowledge of the appropriate ceremonies held by semimoieties for places under consideration. In 1995, the year before the passages presented here were recorded, the first of a series of large meetings was held by senior traditional owners of the Tanami Desert in Tennant Creek and a video recording was made for people back in the communities (CLC 1995). The disputes that arise over claims to place be they falsified deliberately or simply mistaken, are common in the Tanami Desert yet they are resolved by Warlpiri themselves to their own satisfaction:

A lot of people have spoken hard on these other people who have been making noises and telling them this is my father's country you don't touch it because my father never knew your father or your grandfather. So these arguments have been going and will go on. The only way [to sort them out] is going and finding out through ceremonies out in the bush with the old people (Interview with Elias 1996).

If the process of resolution based on traditional knowledge and authority addresses the issue of establishing the correct affiliation of specific semimoieties and patrilines to place there is a
related issue involved. How are claims over a place or a number of places resolved in cases where there are a number of jukurrpa owned by different semimoieties within a localised area? In the previous chapter Diagrams 7.3 and 7.4 illustrated how jukurrpa were weighed and compared whereas the concern now is to consider how people are subsequently matched to those places and jukurrpa. Such questions are not completely alien to Warlpiri as Peterson and Lampert (1985:7) previously asked the question of competitive assertion of rights to control access in the case of the celebrated ochre mine at Mt Stanley. This place lies on the intersection of several dreaming tracks and there are two implied jukurrpa origins of the ochre which attribute it to different sections of the same moiety. The following passage details how such issues are conceptualised by yapa:

Is it a close relationship with us? Where does their skin group relate to our area, our sacred site and to the site we are talking about. How does the site, the soaking and our site relate? With the royalties being distributed out there is always other people coming in. Say for instance they talk about one certain area and these traditional owners know that this land or this area belongs to these group of tribes-family and they know whose dreaming comes in, whose dreaming passed here, what animal's route goes through here, if there has been a soaking, whose family has been staying there or living there. We get these people from outside telling them "my dreaming comes through theirs, so I have every right to get some royalty from it" and these other people say "no you can't because that dreaming doesn't stop, it goes past" (Interview with Elias 1996).

In such a situation Warlpiri rely upon traditional authority structures based upon the religious knowledge and status of senior people in order to rank the prominence of different jukurrpa in place. Such decisions involve complex issues that are based on the imposition of social, physical and metaphysical boundaries of places that are not possible to be discussed in open forums because of issues involving secrecy and knowledge that often involve song stanzas, designs or objects. Increasingly the decisions of weights, or cultural values, of different places and jukurrpa are related back to more pragmatic questions regarding relations between different sets of people. This also involves consideration of the regional payment of royalties where it may be important to recognise certain groups who have been at a disadvantage in accessing or claiming royalty payments. All of the secular and profane aspects of peoples' relationships to place based on semimoietiy affiliation are taken into account on distinctly Warlpiri cultural terms of political negotiation. Warlpiri have become more sophisticated in the last decade in the way that they are able to split and reform different groups of people based on the receipts of royalty payments from place. The areas from which payments are made can shift quite dramatically in the space of even a few years. There are sociocultural principles in operation already documented in previous chapters that allow Warlpiri to demonstrate a certain amount of fluidity in defining boundaries between people and places that still remains based on
rights of ownership in place. There are forces at work in the Land Rights Act solidifying the relations between patrilineal groups and a set number of places and *jukurrpa*. *Yapa* are also consciously working towards this end:

Well to overcome that particular problem I think some of us have already made a start by sort of explaining to some of our young people what where their countries lie, how far the country goes, how far their boundary goes (sorry) and how far they can go. Even if they are working with the land council anthropologists and lawyers they can only go so far so as not to sort of trespass (laughs) another tribe but family group/countries. That particular thing is explained to our young people quite a lot especially with my family I have always managed to explain to my sons and nephews how far our country lies and he can go certain ways before overlapping into other peoples home territory, other tribes/families (Interview with Elias 1996).

Warlpiri are aware that certain boundaries need to be maintained that actually relate quite closely to the estate model of landownership. Places are being imbued with heightened significance because of their location in proximity to sources of income from gold mines and younger Warlpiri are actively focusing on their idealised notions of their land or estates. Place is being continually mapped and identified by Warlpiri under a variety of conditions at a point in time where people are beginning to relate themselves to place which is recognised by them to be playing both a dynamic and integral part of their social interaction, identity and history.

**Conclusion**

Warlpiri have multiple pathways open to them in ordering claims to ownership of, and contingent rights in, place that are derived initially from authority over the associated ritual and objects of *jukurrpa* and place. Myers (1986:18) consistently argued with regard to land ownership for Pintupi that overarching group formations, be they moieties or semimoieties linked to different totemic *jukurrpa*, are not as important as those claims to place made by individuals that foster personal autonomy. In contrast Warlpiri data have consistently illustrated the opposite: kirda from specific semimoieties have been put forward in land claims, in the identification of places in the landscape as well as formation of groups to receive royalties as the enduring reference point of defining affiliation of different Warlpiri social groupings to place. These decisions are made regardless of the basis or conditions within which such definitions are demanded or constructed. This is not to say that Warlpiri no longer continue to recognise, forge and maintain other individual or residentially based links to place. The fundamental point is that the combination of demographic change, experience of gold mining, local history and state policy have all contributed to elevating and ensuring that, in the first instance, semimoietiy affiliation to place is actively advocated by Warlpiri as the arbitrator of landownership and identity in the Tanami Desert. Semimoietiy affiliation, or more correctly
the inheritance of patrilineal rights over place and *jukurrpa*, remains the only link between people and place that can be universally drawn upon by all Warlpiri individuals as members of groups.

There has been a profound change to the circumstances of Warlpiri lifestyles that has muted certain links of people to place particularly amongst the middle and younger generations who have never actually lived in the Tanami Desert itself. Links that are now less powerful in conferring attachment to place are those that relied upon residentially and individually based identification with places such as birth and conception. These rights to place have often been referred to in the Tanami Desert, particularly in the case of land claims, as secondary rights when compared to affiliation through F and FF. In his submission to the Reeves Review Peterson (1999) argued that the Land Rights Act reflected the hierarchy of rights and authority in Aboriginal society as well as facilitating decision making process by identifying those people who should be able to make decisions. However, he also noted that there are difficulties arising because rights in place are dynamic over time as well as subject to local politics. Peterson noted that there is transformation occurring because there is a rupture involving the legitimacy and ability to appeal or invoke secondary rights because of changes in Aboriginal people’s ways of life.

The specifics of Warlpiri history, land claim hearings, gold exploration and mining, site and work area clearances, mining meetings and royalty payments involve questions of establishing affiliation to place and the conditions under which they are made. These considerations force Warlpiri to engage with the notion of stability and change in their key sociocultural concepts involved in land tenure. Warlpiri people are challenged to reflect upon the ruptures to their lives in ways that other Aboriginal people such as Pintupi have not yet experienced or had to grapple with. It is clear that in the case of Warlpiri people of the Tanami Desert rights in place and the basis on which they are claimed are dynamic over time. Not only are certain secondary rights harder to argue and establish, as Peterson has observed, but other kinds of ways of arguing attachment are emerging that emphasise the relationship between people and specific places. There has been some argument (Holcombe 1998, Reeves 1998) that the communities in which Aboriginal people live may be more appropriate vessels for locating new connections between people and place. This position is simply untenable in the Tanami Desert where place continues to work against such a model. Gold mining, the granting of exploration licences, royalty payments and the ongoing identification of place in the Tanami Desert combine to keep Warlpiri affiliation to place firmly grounded in their local descent groups, semimoieties and religious life.
Chapter Nine

The Detonation of Place: a conclusion

If indeed spatial codes have existed, each characterizing a particular spatial/social practice, and if these codifications have been produced along with the space corresponding to them, then the job of theory is to elucidate their rise, their role, and their demise (Lefebvre 1991:17).

This thesis has explored the changes in Warlpiri relationships to place and returns to the question of whether these changes have also constituted a structural change in Warlpiri society. Lefebvre in his exploration of the notion of space developed the concept of ‘the detonation of place’. By this he means that place detonates with significance because it is at the juncture of ontological, social, physical and political representations of space and ways of determining boundaries between people and place. It suggests ruptures to both the physical and social meanings of place and the frameworks within which they are constructed. Consideration of the nature and extent of such changes in meaning has required that the thesis retain Warlpiri place as the central focus through which “different frames of meaning and action” could be understood and analysed (Long 1996:50). This was vital because “to argue for the reassertion of local organization and cultural patterns, the reinvention of tradition and the creation of new types of local attachment, is therefore not the same as arguing for a persisting set of local traditions” (Long 1996:50). The cultural order of Warlpiri rights in place is the ground upon which an assessment of stability versus change in key Warlpiri sociocultural concepts is made.

The intersection of new economic values and the existing cultural values of place for Warlpiri people in the context of a mining model of land tenure has opened a window that indicates that place can no longer be isolated from discussion of Warlpiri land tenure and contemporary politics or history. Place has remained a central and dynamic cultural concept for Warlpiri and its significance within the current context of ever-expanding gold mining developments has, if anything, elevated its importance in Warlpiri lifespaces. Places’ sociocultural and religious aspects combined with its new economic dimension and the processes of physically defining its boundaries means that place in the Tanami Desert has literally detonated with meaning in the last two decades. The processes of exploration and mining of gold have been central to this detonation of meanings because they have been the causal factor that first started the rupture of
the relationship of people and place in the Tanami Desert during the decades leading up to the removal of people at the close of World War II.

Warlpiri places have detonated because knowledge of the location of place and its associated store of symbolic meanings are contested and competed for as place has come to have significant new economic dimensions. Gold mining royalties that are generated in the Tanami Desert are at the centre of intense Warlpiri politicking regarding places, their cultural order and the affiliation of Warlpiri to those places. Intimately involved in these processes is the complex conversion of cultural to economic capital in the form of the values of land and associated knowledge (Friedman 1994:10) where land becomes currency (Sutton and Rigsby 1982:169). During her term of fieldwork in Lajamanu, Jennifer Biddle (1996b:23) observed:

The presence of the Central Land Council is an everyday occurrence; the processes of verifying traditional owners for royalty entitlements - trips to country, reciting of genealogies, identifying descent groups, listing sites, meetings - all constitute terms of existence in communities like Lajamanu.

Well before the payments of substantial royalties in the Tanami Desert Smith had already drawn attention to rights in land as an integral feature of “the background of intense local politicking in Aboriginal communities over valued resources” (1984:87).

Clearly the environment within which Warlpiri claim and negotiate their relationships to place has been substantially altered over time. The terms on which Warlpiri have had to make decisions and adapt how their rights to place are articulated continues to develop. It is for this precise reason that this conjuncture in the history of place has not terminated. The landscape of the Tanami Desert has been opened up to re-introduce both mining and Warlpiri to place again. Royalties from mining and exploration ebb and flow, yet it is place and the cultural practices that ensure its reproduction that continue to maintain place’s centrality within a structure that has undergone considerable transformations based on residence, economics and social relations and politics. Merlan (1998:214-5) commented that learning the meanings of place comes from a social construction of place at times where the meaning is socially objectified and shared by actors. Meanings are coded in place and they become reinforced over time, however, they may also be changed over time as they are being transmitted because of a different emphasis or a slight change of form.

Hiatt, McConvell and Smith were just a few of many commentators who noted that with respect to changes in the socio-political and legal circumstances of Aboriginal people in the Northern Territory over the last 25 years there has been a marked impact on how Aboriginal people think of, and deal with, concepts such as responsibility and traditional ownership. This
thesis has examined the changes in the relationships between people and place since contact with Europeans over 100 years ago recognising place as part of complex, social dynamics rather than as the residue of an increasingly less relevant cultural framework. In this vein with respect to relations between people and place in the Tanami Desert Peterson (1991b:85) commented that:

The consequences are that a system of land tenure derived from precolonial times has received added significance for it is in terms of these ties that people can secure access to royalty payments. This added significance is not just in respect of external relations but internal relations as well. Ties to remote areas of land, often never visited by the younger generations, that were dissolving into relationships with key places, have suddenly been revived. The preparation of land claims and consultations on land-use are playing a crucial role in the reproduction of social relations and cultural knowledge of areas that were, in some communities, on the wane.

In the formative years of exploration for gold and the payment of royalties in the mid 1980s David McClay (1988:133) observed that the relationship between Warlpiri people and their land was “now a purely spiritual one in contradiction to their growing dependence on the mining ventures that have taken over many areas of Aboriginal land in the Northern Territory”. This thesis has shown that Warlpiri’s relationships to place changed rapidly and radically with the onset of intensive gold mining and exploration and royalty payments.

In this process of change anthropologists, land councils and the policies of the state have all had a part in forming the way that Warlpiri, as well as others, have constructed and characterised their relationships to place. The current social distribution of places between the semimoieties pose problems for each of the land tenure models that have been proposed at one time or another. While the tendency for a clustering of places held by the same semimoiety in several parts of the Tanami Desert could, perhaps, be understood in terms of a disintegration of the model proposed by Radcliffe-Brown, possibly merged with a heartland model, this may not be the most useful way of conceptualising the ownership of place today. Rather the proposed ‘gold mining model of land tenure’ accounts much better for how affiliation to place has been and is being ordered and negotiated in the everyday lives of people in the Tanami Desert to produce the contemporary social classification of places.

I argue that with respect to royalty payments in the Tanami Desert Warlpiri have emphasised that cultural concepts linked with traditional notions of authority, knowledge and power have been employed as both a source and a resource in dealing with royalties. Contemporary work being done in Papua New Guinea helps to illustrate that such theoretical concerns are not restricted to royalties, land tenure or the specific situation of Aboriginal people in the Northern
The Detonation of Place: a conclusion

Territory. In following the development of Warlpiri relationships to place through time in the Tanami Desert I have tried to question if Warlpiri are sustaining their own image of the centredness of place or if that power is coming from an external source (Hirsch 1994:197). Within indigenous orders of sociocultural concepts the tensions created by the equation of culture with tradition were observed by Frederick Errington and Deborah Gewertz (1996:114) as a central determinant of both current identity and political efficacy in contexts ranging from local assertion to state certification in Papua New Guinea.

The detonation of place under the mining regime in the Tanami Desert has set the scene for new Warlpiri approaches to territoriality and placedness that nonetheless remain firmly rooted in continuing cultural concepts regarding the primacy of semimioeity links in the ownership of place. Weiner (1997) noted in his work amongst the Foi that such new approaches have implications for people’s subjective assessment and legitimation of claims to place amongst themselves. The terms and conditions within which Warlpiri are dealing with their claims to affiliation with jukurrpa and place are simultaneously on terms of, and not of, their own making. Warlpiri people are both consciously and unconsciously reproducing sets of meanings for place that are not universally adhered to. Merlan (1997:11) observed that the cultural logic involved in determining affiliation to place is a set of reasons rather than a systematic set of criteria with rule-like implications within which some bases of claims are locally argued to have greater weight.

Warlpiri are now far more conscious of the reproduction of their relationships to place as a historical process in which they are intimately involved as historical agents in that process. It is difficult to determine which event has had a more profound impact on Warlpiri social life and their relationships to place: whether it was the impact of exploration and prospecting in the area from 1900 onwards which has drawn people away from their country or the return of people to the desert in the last 20 years to facilitate mining on their own cultural terms. It is even difficult to isolate these events because in the long term it is likely that this historical conjuncture will not end until the last of the Warlpiri who grew up in the desert, who walked and lived amongst the places of the central Tanami Desert, have passed away, and gold mining is finished.

Sahlins (1985:144) concluded his analysis of Hawaiian history arguing that “culture functions as a synthesis of stability and change, past and present, diachrony and synchrony.” For Sahlins the investigation of whether there has been a change in structure begins with existing relationships of reproduction of specific cultural concepts. Change is failed reproduction, and comes about when traditional strategies are employed to deal with new phenomena that do not respond to those strategies in traditional ways (Ortner 1984:155-6). If cultural categories
acquire new values then the existing relationships between categories change and structure is
transformed (Sahlins 1985:138). In the case of Warlpiri of the Tanami Desert and their
relationships to place there has been no radical change of meanings within existing relations.
Granted there has been an infusion of a new economic dimension to Warlpiri place in the form
of royalty payments and that people’s relationships to place have become more dynamic, yet
Warlpiri continue to juggle their cultural order of rights to place, using processes of politicking
and negotiation that rely on traditional foundations. Warlpiri society and its key sociocultural
concepts regarding *jukurrpa*, place and their relations to these as well as themselves continue to
be reproduced by Warlpiri actions that have become more self-conscious as well as historically
reflexive.
# Appendix

*Jukurrpa of the Survey Area*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Class of <em>Jukurrpa</em></th>
<th>Warlpiri, English and Scientific Name</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ceremonial Complex</td>
<td><em>Kajirri</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elemental</td>
<td><em>Ngapa</em> - Rain</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>Warlu</em> - Fire</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>Wirnpa</em> - Lightning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Human</td>
<td><em>Jarnpa</em> - Kurdaitcha Man</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>Karnta</em> - Women</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>Mamingirri</em> - Two Devils</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>Marliyarrajarra</em> - Two Initiated Men</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>Munga Munga</em> - Dancing Women</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>Watijarra, Ngarrka</em> - Two Initiated Men</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>Wawultja</em> - Incestuous Man</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>Wirntiki</em> - Ibis Men</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>Yaparanji</em> - Uninitiated Boys</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flora</td>
<td><em>Ngarluwuny</em> - Sweet Grevillea Flower</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>Ngayaki, Wakanji</em> - Bush Tomato (<em>Solanum chippendalei</em>)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>Miyamiya</em> - Seed (<em>Brachychiton paradoxum?</em>)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>Pila</em> - Bush Bean</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>Watiyawarnu</em> - Acacia Seeds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>Yarla</em> - Bush Potato (<em>Ipomea costata</em>)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fauna</td>
<td><em>Jaqirti</em> - Native Cat (<em>Dasyurinus geoffroii</em>)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>Jaqiwuny</em> - Euro (<em>Macropus robustus</em>)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>Janganpa</em> - Possum (<em>Trichosurus vulpecula</em>)</td>
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<td></td>
<td><em>Jarlji</em> - Frog (<em>Limnodynastes spencerii</em>)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>Junguynpa</em> - Mouse (<em>Notomys species</em>)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class of Jukurrpa</td>
<td>Warlpiri, English and Scientific Name</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fauna continued...</td>
<td><strong>Kakalyalya</strong> - Major Mitchell Cockatoo (<em>Kakatoo leadbeateri</em>)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Kalijirri</strong> - Spinifex Pigeon (<em>Lophophaps plumifera</em>)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Kanarri</strong> - Lizard (<em>Amphibolurus reticulatus</em>)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Mala</strong> - Rufous Hare Wallaby (<em>Bettongia</em> species)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Malikjarra</strong> - Two Dogs (<em>Canis dingo, Canis familiaris</em>)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Malikpatu</strong> - Many Dogs (<em>Canis dingo, Canis familiaris</em>)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Marlu</strong> - Kangaroo (<em>Macropus rufus</em>)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Marlujarra</strong> - Two Kangaroos (<em>Macropus rufus</em>)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Marukurru</strong> - Pigeon</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Mirmirri</strong> - Thorny Devil (<em>Moloch horridus</em>)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Ngatijirri</strong> - Budgerigar (<em>Melopsittacus undulatus</em>)</td>
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<td></td>
<td><strong>Pakajirri</strong> -</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Pakurru</strong> - Bandicoot (<em>Isodon auratus</em>)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Pirntina</strong> - Snake species (<em>Aspidites ramsayi</em>)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Wampana</strong> - Hare Wallaby (<em>Largocheles conspicillatus</em>)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Wankuru</strong> - Crow (<em>Corvus</em> species)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Warlawurru</strong> - Eaglehawk (<em>Uroaetus audax</em>)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Warna</strong> - Snake generic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Warnajarra</strong> - Two Snakes generic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Yinkardudaku</strong> - Nightjar (<em>Eurostopodus guttatus</em>)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Certain long travelling *jukurrpa* and others with complex stories involving a number of different ancestors incorporate a number of different dreamings that are not listed separately in the above table. *Ngapa* (Rain), for example, involves other *jukurrpa* such as *Lungkarda* (Blue Tongue Lizard) and the *Marliyarrajarra* (Two Initiated men) also make a number of objects including *Warlkurru* (Axe) and *Pili* (Shovel).
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