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WARLPIRI SOCIALITY.
AN ETHNOGRAPHY OF THE SPATIAL AND TEMPORAL
DIMENSIONS OF EVERYDAY LIFE IN A CENTRAL
AUSTRALIAN ABORIGINAL SETTLEMENT.

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Except where cited in the text,
this work is the result of research carried out by the author.

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PREFACE & ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The anthropologist Michael Young once said to me after a seminar I presented: “Your papers are like soap operas. Afterwards I wonder, did Clive end up married to Nangala, and what happened to Lillie?” One cannot be a hundred percent sure whether it was a compliment, but I took it as one in any case. In this thesis, I have focussed on the dramas of everyday life and striven to portray them in as spirited a way as I could muster. I have done so by heeding the advice of three most inspiring anthropologists I was lucky enough to be taught by:

- “anthropology is about people”
- “anthropology is about ideas”
- “anthropology needs to be grounded in solid data”

This mantra (people, ideas, data) sustained and guided me through my fieldwork and the writing up stage. It led to my focus on the everyday, the people living it, the ideas encapsulated in and expressed through it, and the mechanics of it. These seemingly mundane matters, I believe, lie at the heart of anthropology. Kinship, ritual, exchange and so forth all can be formulated in most esoteric terms but ultimately, they need to be understood as grounded in and arising out of the everyday.

The Warlipiri ‘everyday’ I am writing about is very different from the everyday of previous decades, and, it can very safely be assumed, will be different again from everyday life of the future. The ‘ethnographic present’ is important to the thesis as a slice of life, and I have therefore used the past tense and the present tense interchangeably in the descriptive parts. The past tense flags that the period of fieldwork is over, and although not in the too distant past, things have already changed since. People have passed away, children have been born, marriages have been made since or deteriorated, government policies and incomes have changed, as indeed did the physical appearance of the setting: Yuendumu in Central Australia. New houses are being built, others have fallen into disuse, humpies occur less and less often and so on. The present tense, on the other hand, is used as a tool to convey the feel of immediacy that everyday life at Yuendumu has to it, and which is one of its most vital characteristics.
Fieldwork was conducted between 1998 and 2002 and was based on living in camps with Warlpiri people, who, luckily, insisted on my incessant participation in everything they themselves were involved in. My co-residents, friends and myself did not only experience the everyday I thus describe but it was created, lived and shaped by all of us, including myself. There is no use even trying to write myself out of the thesis. While I doubt that I caused major shifts and changes my presence and participation was certainly responsible for the crystallisation of disputes that otherwise may have lain dormant, for an increase in options for certain people through access to my resources, in particular my Toyota; and so forth.

I would also like to thank Yuendumu Council and the Central Land Council for issuing the necessary permits and always being of assistance, and Yuendumu Women's Centre, Warlukurlangu Artists Aboriginal Association, Warlpiri Media Association, Yuendumu Mining Co., Yuendumu Social Club and Yuendumu Clinic for being supportive, generous and helpful in many small and some larger emergencies. At Yuendumu and Alice Springs I would like to especially thank Megan Hoy, Tristan Ray, Leanne and Ronnie Reinhardt, Sue and John Boffa, the Little Sisters, Frank and Wendy Baarda, Andrew Stojanowski (Yakajirri), David Raftery, Liam Campbell, Tara Lackey and Jo Victoria for thousands of cups of tea, stimulating conversation, encouragement, and once in while, a quiet place to stay. Lastly here, I am very grateful to Robert Hoogenraad for making available to me an electronic copy of the manuscript for the Warlpiri dictionary. Next to the anthropological literature, the Warlpiri dictionary was the most used source in this thesis, as I constantly cross- and double-checked my own data with it. As it is unedited, unpaginated and comes in a number of files at this stage, I have not been able to reference it properly. Here, I would like to remark that all elaborations on Warlpiri words in the thesis were made in accordance with it, and that the glossary (Appendix) of Warlpiri words used in the thesis draws heavily upon it.

At the Australian National University I am equally indebted. Research was financed through an ANU PhD Scholarship, an ANU Tuition Scholarship, and a Faculty of Arts fieldwork grant. For the financial and administrative support, I am deeply grateful. I was a student with the School of Archaeology and Anthropology, where I would like to thank many people for their support and friendship. Among many others, I wish to express my sincere thanks to my panel members, Professor Francesca Merlan and Dr Ian Keen for reading and discussing a number of draft chapters and always being there for me; to the administrative and technical support staff, especially Sue Fraser, Kathy Callen, Marian Robson, David McGregor and Paul Johns for fixing anything from a frozen computer screen to admin hassles quickly, efficiently and graciously; to A & A and wider ANU academic staff always supportive especially in regard to providing references, discussion and help: Dr Don Gardner, Dr Tim Rowse, Dr Andrew McWilliam, Dr Michael Young, Dr Melinda Hinkson, Dr Andrew Walker, Dr Chris Gregory, Dr Alan Runsay, and Dr Howard Morphy. A special thank you must go to ‘that CAEPR mob’: to Professor Jon Altman for co-financing my fieldwork by employing me and being a fine boss indeed, to Diane Smith, Dr Julie Finlayson, Dr David Martin, Dr John Taylor, Dr Will Sanders and Dr Anne Daly for being very supportive both of my CAEPR work and in
regard to my PhD. Lastly, many thanks to my co-students for many coffees, discussions, and providing a fun environment in which to work: Dr Sallie Anderson, Dr Derek Elias, Dr Katie Glaskin, Marcus Barber, Josephine Wright, Erik Meijaard, Paul Burke, Damon Parker, Sarinda Singh, Dr Greg Rawlings, Christine Adams, Alex Leonard, Dionisio Soares, and Dr Allon Uhlmann. I would particularly like to thank Kevin Murphy, now also at ANU, for reading what I write and commenting rigorously, listening to me develop ideas, sorting the good ones from the silly ones, and very generously putting me up on Thursday Island when I needed a place to stay to work and when on sick leave.

Sincere thanks also to my family, especially to my parents Heidi and Nazih Musharbash and my grandmother Gertrud Ott, for supporting me morally and financially and accepting my choices. Thank you also to my brother Yassin Musharbash, for the numerous overseas phone calls, and to my sister Dina Musharbash, who came to visit me at Yuendumu and shared some of the fun.

More than anybody else, 'that Jampijinpa', Dr Nicolas Peterson, deserves my gratitude. Without him, this thesis would have never been written. He first suggested a PhD to me, he assisted me coming to ANU and acquiring my scholarships, and from then onwards was the best supervisor a student could wish for. He helped me through every crisis, no matter whether at Yuendumu or Canberra, pushed me and my work when pushing was needed, always welcomed me in his office, even if it was three times in a day that I bothered him, and most generously splashed red ink over everything I ever gave him to read. Thank you very, very much for looking after me proper.
ABSTRACT

This thesis is an ethnography of contemporary Warlpiri sociality that focuses on the everyday life in a women's camp (jilimi) at Yuendumu 300 kms northwest of Alice Springs.

As a result of sedentisation and institutionalisation in the 1940s, subsequent integration into the cash economy from 1969, with the full cash payment of social security benefits directly to individual Warlpiri, and the deinstitutionalisation of Yuendumu in 1970s through the introduction of an elected Council, Warlpiri life has undergone many changes. In respect of the family, promised marriage arrangements have virtually disappeared and marriage relationships are frequently unstable and short-lived until people reach middle age. Young mothers now often have children from a succession of husbands. Shifts in the constitution of the nuclear family have led to an increase in individuals' residential mobility and to women's camps, or jilimi, taking on increased significance. Jilimi, and their older female residents, have become a central social focus for young mothers, children, as well as to men currently unmarried. Life in the jilimi is intensely social not least since the great majority of people who pass through it are unemployed and live on social security payments. People's lives are almost entirely taken up with socialising, both in the jilimi or in visiting close relatives elsewhere in Yuendumu and in other communities. The intensity of this social life leads, among other things, to outbreaks of conflict from time to time and at others is transformed by participation in ceremonial life, particularly mourning ceremonies (sorcery business).

My consideration of everyday life at Yuendumu begins with a formal analysis of the spatial organisation of Warlpiri residences, outlining the residential flux throughout Yuendumu's 'suburbs', ideas of private-public space within individual residences, and their gendered nature, as well as indicating the daily cycle of sociality within them. I then examine the nature of contemporary marriage arrangements to underline crucial changes as well as some continuities that are a feature of life today. Contemporary marriage arrangements are shown to simultaneously be the cause and the effect of an intensification of residential mobility and ensuing living situations for both children and adults. This leads to a discussion of the emergent centrality of jilimi within the contemporary settlement context as manifested in their increased number and size and complexity of residential composition. Singing out one
particular jilimi as the ethnographic centre of the thesis, I introduce its spatiality and some of its main residents as protagonists for the ensuing chapters. I then analyse the flow of people through the jilimi, categorising different types of residents, by their varied lengths and reasons for their stays, which underscores the extreme mobility that is a paramount feature of contemporary everyday life. A detailed analysis of sleeping arrangements is shown to be a sensitive index of the state of interpersonal relations within the jilimi and to provide insights into Warlpiri personhood. I then look at the activities that take place during the day outlining the movements of people in and out of the jilimi with an emphasis on those aspects to do with provisioning around the sharing of food and other resources. The contrast between the restlessness of the night and intensified social engagement during the day is brought to the fore by examining the criss-crossing paths of social engagements during the day. The intensity of interaction, along with boredom, leads to frequent outbreaks of fighting which are considered in the context of a discussion of the various temporal dimensions within which everyday life happens. These incorporate both the mundane everyday and those occasions when social life is broadened out to encompass people from other kinship networks and communities. The thesis concludes with a reflection on the reasons for and impact of this intensified sociality on Warlpiri people’s contemporary lives.
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Figure I: Research Location
CHAPTER ONE
INTRODUCTION

This thesis is an ethnography of Warlpiri sociality that focuses on the spatial and temporal dimensions of everyday life at Yuendumu, an Aboriginal settlement located 300 kms northwest of Alice Springs. It is concerned with the way women’s camps, or jilimi, have taken on a new centrality to contemporary life at Yuendumu and analyses the day-to-day social practice associated with one of these women’s camps between 1998 and 2002.

As a result of sedentisation and institutionalisation in the 1940s, subsequent integration into the cash economy from 1969, with the full cash payment of social security benefits directly to individual Warlpiri, and the deinstitutionalisation of Yuendumu in 1970s through the introduction of an elected Council, Warlpiri life has undergone many changes. In respect of the family, promised marriage arrangements have virtually disappeared, marriage relationships are frequently unstable and short-lived until people reach middle age and young mothers now often have children from a succession of husbands. These shifts have affected the constitution of the nuclear family and led to an increase in individuals’ residential mobility and to women’s camps, or jilimi, taking on increased significance. Jilimi, and their older female residents, have become a central social focus for young mothers and their children in particular. Life in the jilimi is intensely social not least since the great majority of people who pass through them are unemployed and live on social security payments. People’s lives are almost entirely taken up with socialising both in the jilimi or in visiting close relatives elsewhere in Yuendumu and in other communities. The intensity of this social life leads, among other things, to outbreaks of

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1 There are a number of spellings in use for ‘Warlpiri’ (e.g. Walbiri, Walpuri, Wailbri etc). Throughout this thesis I use the spelling as taught by IAD (Institute for Aboriginal Development), Alice Springs, and at Yuendumu School based on the orthography developed by Kenneth Hale (for pronunciation, see Hale 1990:18). A glossary of all Warlpiri words used in this thesis is provided in the Appendix.
2 Fieldwork was undertaken in and around Yuendumu between November 1988 and March 2000, as well as on a number of subsequent shorter fieldtrips undertaken in August and September 2000, in November 2000, in January and February 2001, in October 2001, and in October and November 2002.
3 Note that except for very rare exceptions, Warlpiri nouns take the same form in the singular and the plural.
conflict from time to time and at other times is transformed by joint participation in ceremonial life, particularly mourning ceremonies *(sorry business)*.

In this chapter, I begin by situating my research in the context of other Warlpiri-oriented research, which will provide both a documentation of the ethnographic ancestry to this thesis and an idea about how it differs from other research conducted in the same region, sometimes with the same people. Next I delineate the concept of the household, outlining the analytical dilemmas associated with this term. Instead of using this terminology in the thesis, I propose an analytical distinction between residential space on the one hand and of social practice relating to this space on the other. This allows for an examination of mobility through residential space and as a central feature underlying social practice.

I then describe the historical and physical setting of Yuendumu, with special emphasis on the socio-economic circumstances of its residents and its current organisational infrastructure. I conclude with an overview of Warlpiri kinship as important background to what follows and an outline of the chapters to follow.

**Warlpiri people's anthropologists and other researchers**

In 1986, seventeen years ago, Eric Michaels wrote in *The Aboriginal Invention of Television*:

>Yuendumu may be one of the best documented Aboriginal communities, and this is one of the reasons it was chosen for a site for this study. But it also means that research has itself become institutionalised here, and must be accounted for as much as the church, the school or the council (Michaels 1986a:14).

Since then, the situation has snowballed. Research with Warlpiri people, not only at Yuendumu but also Lajamanu, Willowra, Nyirrpi, various outstations and larger settlements in Central Australia such as Alice Springs and Tennant Creek (cf. Figure 1 preceding this chapter and Figure 2 below for locations of these places), today is so extensive that PhD theses are churned out annually, journal papers almost monthly. A look at David Nash's website at http://www.anu.edu.au/linguistics/nash/aust/wlp/wlp-eth-ref.html provides a "partial and non-uniform coverage" of Warlpiri non-linguistic (in the main anthropological) references that
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shows more than ten entries for each of the last ten years! This cornucopia of research also includes two literature based M.A. theses examining the anthropology of Warlpiri people (Burke 1998; Niblett 1992). Within this haze of writing I here identify some of the main theoretical streams and topical orientations to position my own work.

Figure 2: Yuendumu and surrounding settlements
INTRODUCTION

The first anthropologist to focus on Warlpiri people, conducting fieldwork in Warlpiri country, rather than just passing through it, was Olive Pink. She was based for intermittent periods from 1933 to 1945, first at Yunmaji, then at Jila, and later close to the Granites goldfields and at Thompson's Rockhole. Most of her Warlpiri material, which focussed mainly on social organisation and ceremonial life was, unfortunately, never published. Other early researchers briefly worked with Warlpiri people, particularly members of the South Australian Board for Anthropological Research who made two short expeditions to the area (to Cockatoo Creek in 1931 and the Granites in 1936, cf. Jones 1987), working mainly on physiological research and plant use. The first anthropologist to publish an ethnography based on extended work conducted with Warlpiri people was Mervyn Meggitt (1962). His book Desert People is not only the first and still the most extensive Warlpiri ethnography but a classic of structural-functionalism read by undergraduate anthropology students all over the world. While it has obvious theoretical limitations and is very much written in the style of the time, its ethnography is extremely rich and it has provided a point of reference for all anthropologists working in Warlpiri country since. Meggitt's ethnography especially covers Warlpiri 'social organisation' and provides a rich historical account of Warlpiri life at Lajamanu (then Hooker Creek) just after its establishment in the 50s. He has also published extensively on ritual, including as a number of papers (Meggitt 1966a; 1966b; 1966c; 1966d) and a monograph on the Gadjar ceremony (Kajirri) (Meggitt 1967), and on marriage and kinship (Meggitt 1964; 1965; 1968; 1987). It is on the latter, and on Desert People, that my thesis relies on heavily. Meggitt's research provides not only invaluable data about Warlpiri social organisation but is an important historical source with which to compare my own data to delineate recent changes and transformations.

Another classic, for different reasons, is Nancy Munn's Warlpiri Iconography (1973b). Based on research conducted at Yuendumu in the late 50s, it is a most elegant analysis of Warlpiri forms of graphic representation and their cultural symbolism. She published several papers on this topic (Munn 1963; 1964; 1966; 1973a), including two now classic articles on cosmology. In the first of these Munn (1970) analyses Warlpiri (and Pitjantjatjara) myths and connects mythology, place and people to each other through a series of transformations of subjects into objects. By

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4 Cf. Marcus (1993; 2001) for reasons underlying this, as well as for a susceptible portrait of Olive Pink's relations with Warlpiri people.
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demonstrating this mode of transforming to underlie conceptual processes she links the mythological order to the social. The second paper is an analysis of the representation of cosmic order by the processes of 'coming out' and 'going in' which she explicates through the multiple meanings of the circle and the line in Walpiri iconography (Munn 1973a). Munn's work has influenced this thesis particularly in regard to the notion of 'camp', and the use of iconography in so-called sandstories, which critically underlie my analyses of domestic space. Together, Munn and Meggitt laid the foundations for the next generation of Walpiri research and research interests.

In 1951 the members of the Department of Dental Sciences at the University of Adelaide began a long-term study of the growth patterns of Yuendumu people's dental and craniofacial structures that expanded into a programme of documentary film making. This in turn led to the film unit of the Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies (AIAS) as it then was, making a series of films of ceremonies in 1966 and 1967. This led to Nicolas Peterson, who had worked on these films, returning to Yuendumu to carry out a study of ritual and local organisation in 1972-3 (Peterson 1969; 1970; 1972). Subsequently he prepared the first Walpiri land claim document with assistance from Stephen Wild, Patrick McConville and Rod Hagen (Peterson, et al. 1978).

In the late 1960s the high realities of infant mortality brought Middleton and Francis to Yuendumu to look at the causes of the poor health of children (Middleton and Francis 1976). This was the beginning of researchers examining the emergent involvement of Walpiri people with institutions of the state and the economy. In the seventies, the geographer Elspeth Young (1981) came to Yuendumu (and Willowra as well as a number of outstations) to examine 'economic activity' of Aboriginal people in settlements. Young (n.d.; Young and Doohan 1989) returned in the 1980s for further research into Aboriginal mobility (cf. also Peterson 2000). While a lot of this research on mobility focussed on inter- rather than intra-settlement mobility it critically informs my own research as many of the same principles apply.

In 1986 Fred Myers published one of the most perceptive Aboriginalist ethnographies, *Pintupi Country, Pintupi Self* (1986a). Squarely anchored around the Pintupi relationship to country, Myers explored the tension between notions of autonomy and relatedness in social life. While
not a Warlpiri ethnography it deals with close neighbours to the west and like everybody else I have found his analysis crucial to any meaningful understanding of Warlpiri sociality. This thesis draws extensively on Myers’s work, especially on his understanding of the principles of Pintupi sociality and personhood (Myers 1979; 1982; 1986b; 1988a; 1988b).

Diane Bell’s work combined the land- and ritual-oriented focus of the land rights era with the newly emerging theoretical turn towards feminism in anthropology (Bell 1980a; 1980b; 1985; 1987; 1991; Bell and Nelson 1989). While based at Alekezengi (then Warrabri) and in the main concerned with Kaytej people, her book Daughters of the Dreaming (1983) touches upon issues to do with Warlpiri people as well and thus provides useful comparative data for my analyses.

Françoise Dussart’s work is based on extensive fieldwork conducted at Yuendumu in the mid 80s, as well as regular return fieldtrips since. She encapsulates a critique of Bell in her work (Dussart 1988a; 1988b; 1992b; 2000), which I turn take up. Her work focuses on issues of ritual and gender and transcends the male/female and sacred/profane dichotomies through careful examination of ethnographic realities. In her book The Politics of Ritual in an Aboriginal Settlement: Kinship, Gender, and the Currency of Knowledge (2000), she presents a convincing analysis of the ways in which men and women share ritual knowledge, and support each other and work together on the level of the kin group. While her work is concerned with ritual I focus on everyday social practice, where there are both distinct continuities and differences. The politics of negotiating relationships correspond closely in the two spheres our respective works engage in and her work has instructed my understanding of them. What differs is that relations based on land and ritual practice have much greater stability and durability. Dussart shows that the kin group is an important unit in the organisation of ritual, for which there is no parallel in everyday practice, which is structured around personal networks rather than social units.

Dussart (1988b; 1992a; 2000) also worked extensively on dreams and innovation and extended Munn’s work by exploring graphic designs in both ritual and the newly emergent art market of acrylic ‘dot’ paintings (Anderson and Dussart 1988; Dussart 1997; 1999). These themes have also been taken up by Sylvie Poirier (1992; 1996; forthcoming), working on dreams with Kukatja people, Warlpiri neighbours to the northwest at Balgo. In Lajamanu, Barbara Glowczewski (1981; 1983; 1989a; 1989b; 2001) focussed on women as well and branched out
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into dreams, kinship studies, topology and multi-media. Other published Warlpiri work of this strand combining an interest in women and land are Petronella Vaarzon-Morel's (1995) edited book of Warlpiri women's life histories with a focus on Willowra, and Gertrude Stott's (1993) thesis on gender and colonisation, fieldwork for which was conducted at an outstation north of Willowra. There have been two ethno-musicological studies conducted with Warlpiri people. There is Stephen Wild's (1975) study on music and dance in social and ritual contexts at Lajamanu and Megan Jones' (1984) research on Warlpiri dance and movement at Willowra.

Concurrently, other anthropologists followed different research agendas. Eric Michaels started the interest in cultural/media studies and anthropology at Yuendumu by examining the 'impact' of the introduction of television on Aboriginal people (Michaels 1986a). His further research engaged with vernacular media production and consumption, and issues of power and representation. Most of his essays were posthumously published in the anthology Bad Aboriginal Art (Michaels 1994). His work opened up a new field to following researchers. Melinda Hinkson (1996; 1999; 2002) made a critique of Michaels' work the main focus of her research at Yuendumu, undertaken in the mid 1990s. She followed up agendas set by him, examining Warlpiri engagements with the national and international arenas through new communications technologies. Faye Ginsburg (1991; 1994) critically engages with Michaels' work in her analyses of Aboriginality, self-representation and Indigenous Media, which include a focus on media production at Yuendumu and other central Australian settlements.

Jennifer Biddle (Biddle 1993; 1996a; 1996b) based on research at Lajamanu brought postmodernism and literary criticism to Warlpiri research. Michael Jackson (1995) explored philosophical ideas about the notion of 'home' based on Warlpiri ethnography. Christine Nicholls, who was also a teacher linguist at the Lajamanu School through the 1980s and early 90s, wrote a sociological PhD thesis (1998; see also 2000) on Warlpiri graffiti and nick-naming practices. The latest anthropological thesis produced about Warlpiri people, by Derek Elias (2001), presents a departure from these themes and a return to issues of land tenure. It focuses on place, analysing relations to land in the light of the impact of the extensive gold mining taking place in the Tanami.

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5 See also Clarsen (2002) for an analysis of a recent Warlpiri television production, Bush Mechanics.
INTRODUCTION

The late 1980s and the 1990s also produced a wealth of non-anthropological Warlpiri research, in particular, Tim Rowse’s work, situated between history and political sciences. Rowse’s work provides critical politico-historical background to the contemporary settlement context. In his book White Four, White Power (1998) he examines the colonial practice of rationing to explicate processes of colonialism in Central Australia, including the creation of the settlement of Yuendumu (and others), and the transition from rations to wages. His further work includes analyses of Aboriginal, state, and federal administration and local government (Rowse 1992; 2002), as well as critical observations about research(ers) at Yuendumu (Rowse 1990). Cathy Keys, an ethno-architect, conducted her PhD research at Yuendumu on vernacular Warlpiri architecture and contemporary and historic Warlpiri uses of domestic space, with a particular emphasis on jili mi (Keys 1999). Her research adds a spatial dimension to my examinations of life in the jili mi. Peggy Rockman Napaljarri and Lee Cataldi (1994) published a volume on Warlpiri myths, and Adam Kendon has undertaken extensive research into Aboriginal sign language, including research at Yuendumu (Kendon 1988a; 1988b; 1990). Lastly, there is an enormous wealth of linguistic research. Linguists working with Warlpiri people include the late Kenneth Hale, Robert Hoogenraad, Mary Laughtren, David Nash, and Jane Simpson (refer to http://www.anu.edu.au/linguistics/nacel/aust/wlp/wlp-Ix-ref-Iml for extensive bibliography of their works). All of them at various stages have been involved in the colossal effort of producing the Warlpiri dictionary.

This brief sketch of Warlpiri anthropological and other research should suffice to indicate the rich tapestry that constitutes the ancestry to my own work. This thesis is anchored within and heavily dependent upon previous Warlpiri research rather than standing in an argumentative position with it. What makes this thesis distinctive is the focus on what has largely been taken for granted in these other studies, the social practice of everyday life.
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Social practice, mobility and ideas of domestic space

This thesis has grown out of my puzzlement, during my pre-PhD fieldtrips to Yuendumu, at the extremely high turnover of residents in camps. I was unable to keep up with the flow of people in any camp I stayed in, nor to understand why people would need to move around so much. In making this mobility and its relationship to everyday life the focus of my PhD research it became clear to me how important it was to disentangle physical structures, domestic space and the people using them as a first step to understanding what was going on.

Central to this entanglement is the term 'household'. The term household, depending on the purpose of study, may be defined by any one of three different but usually somewhat overlapping criteria:

- households may be dwelling defined.
- households may be defined as social units
- households may be purpose defined.

The first definition takes the physical boundaries of a dwelling as the invariable and examines what happens 'inside' and who lives there. A central issue raised by this approach is whether a household in the sense of a dwelling correlates with sociologically significant units or whether such units may be dispersed across more than one dwelling. That is, are there multiple social units or parts of such units in any one dwelling? A second definition of household treats it as a socially constituted rather than spatially constituted group of people. This raises problems in relation to whether to include or exclude visitors, lodgers, and how to incorporate mobility. The third definition focuses upon the activities undertaken by households, whether socially or spatially defined and concentrates on activities such as sleeping, eating, cooking, sharing resources, pooling resources, or producing resources together. Further complexities are

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6 I had been to Yuendumu a number of times before the commencement of the PhD research: in 1994 for participation in a Warlpiri language course conducted by the IAD (Institute for Aboriginal Development), for five weeks each in 1995 and 1996 to conduct research for my M.A. degree with Freie Universität Berlin (Musharbash 1997), and in 1997 to participate in initiation rituals upon invitation.

7 This critique follows Bender (1967) and Yanagisako (1979). The latter reviewed the extensive anthropological literature on households concluding that terms such as household are "merely 'odd-job' words, which are useful in descriptive statements but unproductive tools for analysis and comparison" (Yanagisako 1979:200).
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introduced where all these activities are performed by different but overlapping groups of people in different locations.

No matter how clearly definitions may be stated in respect to either one of the three criteria (dwelling, social unit, activity), usually all three are blurred in ethnographic explorations of any kind of household. And, none of them touches upon a forth definitional aspect, that of time. Clearly, no matter which basis is taken, changes will occur through time on the basis of the domestic cycle, alone.

In Aboriginal Australia, anthropologists have grappled with the inherent dilemmas of the term household in various ways. The concept of the Aboriginal household is an issue of theoretical discussion firmly placed within post-contact, ongoing colonial and post-colonial history. Much of the discussion is underwritten by an implicit and often explicit understanding of money and access to it as being among the triggering forces behind the dynamics of the formation of households as social units. In her PhD thesis, Julie Finlayson (1991) provides detailed case studies of Kuranda, Far North Queensland, household formations stressing the mutual interdependence of mobility and financial factors (cf. also Finlayson, et al. 2000; Finlayson and Auld 1999). She investigates matrifocality, argued to be a prevailing feature of Aboriginal households, through a perspective of power relations and concludes that while some focal women may be financially advantaged through the social security system, this exposes them to pressures by dependent men (who may often live elsewhere) and results in a loss of the capacity to control goods and services. According to her ethnography, the addition of household members may strain or improve a household's financial status quo and maintaining a viable balance is difficult. Kuranda households in particular and Aboriginal households in general are portrayed as prone to cyclical changes induced by the vagaries of 'boom and bust' or 'prosperity and poverty'. 8 Tackling similar issues, Samson (1982) introduced the term 'concertina household' into the literature, used by Perth welfare workers to cover the high fluctuations common in the social composition of Aboriginal people in any particular dwelling.

8 Generally, 'demand sharing' is seen to engender fluctuations in the social composition of Aboriginal residential arrangements (for details on 'demand sharing', cf. Martin 1993; Myers 1982; Peterson 1993; 1997; Schwab 1995).
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He suggests that highly fluctuating social compositions of occupied dwellings is a crucial feature of the contemporary Aboriginal commonality.9

The Centre for Aboriginal Economic Policy Research (CAEPR), which positions itself in between the public policy arena and the ethnographic domain, from its earliest publications in 1991 has been occupied with the term household and its use in respect to Aboriginal people. In particular, CAEPR has been concerned with and criticised the household definitions used by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) (cf. among others Finlayson and Auld 1999; Martin and Taylor 1995; Musharbash 2000; 2001a; Rowse 2002; Smith 1991; 1992; Smith and Daly 1996). The ABS definitions read as follows:

1991 ABS definition
A household is a group of people who reside and eat together (in a single dwelling) [...] as a single unit in the sense that they have common housekeeping arrangements, i.e. they have some common provision for food and other essentials for living (ABS 1991:60).

1996 ABS definition
A household is defined as a group of two or more related or unrelated people who usually reside in the same dwelling, who regard themselves as a household, and who make common provisions for food and other essentials (ABS 1996: glossary).

The ABS definitions have been heavily criticised by CAEPR for ignoring the realities of Aboriginal circumstances:

(1) High mobility creates enormous fluctuations in “the people who reside and eat together”, i.e. there is no stable social unit constituted by residing and eating together.
(2) “Common housekeeping arrangements” exist across dwelling boundaries and may exclude people within one dwelling.
(3) “Usual residence in the same dwelling” excludes the Aboriginal practice of having a number of ‘home bases’.

In summary, they have focussed criticism on the compositional complexity of residents within any one dwelling, on the sharing of resources across dwellings, and on the high mobility of

9 Samson’s work on this issue is expansive (cf. also Samson 1978; 1980; 1982; 1988).
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residents through dwellings. Curiously, though, despite the problems perceived in relation to the concept most CAEPR publications continued to use the term household as a basic unit for analysis and comparison (see Rowe 2002 for a similar critique).

It is for these reasons that I prefer to avoid the term household (or similar terms such as domestic group, hearth group, and so forth). I propose instead to examine the contemporary realities of Warlpiri everyday life by examining social practice and how it relates to domestic space (situated within residential structures), relying on the wider literature on the social engagement with domestic space.

Anthropological analyses of space, particularly domestic space, benefit much from applying the ideas of Bourdieu (1977; 1990) and Giddens (1979; 1984), and conceptualising the ordering of domestic space as both product of and influence on social process. In this I follow particularly Moore (1986) and Robbens (1989). The aim of Moore’s ethnography is to shift the conventional focus of deciphering the meanings encoded in space, and their relations to social structure, to a perspective involving the creation and maintenance of such meaning. The question she asks is “How does the organisation of space come to have meaning and how are those meanings maintained through social interaction?” (Moore 1986:74). To answer this, she utilises two approaches. First, she understands (domestic) space as a text, which is continually read and interpreted by those who live in it – as well as by her as the ethnographer. Change is thus situated in a web of new readings of new and old practices and the meanings derived from those readings; not purely in the introduction of new practices (e.g. square rather than round houses). This is a particularly apt approach to analysing Warlpiri sleeping arrangements, and I utilise it extensively in Chapter 6.

Her second approach is Bourdieuan in that she asserts that and examines how social practice (above readings) produces and reproduces meaning of space. The combination of these approaches allows her to develop a multi-levelled and stimulatingly complex interpretation of space, mirrored in Robben’s work (1989). Robben explores the relationship between social practice and spatial ordering in the houses of canoe fishermen and boat fishermen in a Brazilian town. He shows that although they live in architecturally identical houses, canoe
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fishermen and boat fishermen read the spatiality of their houses in divergent ways, pointing towards the incessant appropriation of meaning through social practice. Robben elucidates:

People have to dwell in a house in order to reproduce the habitus objectified by it. How they dwell is influenced by their early childhood socialization, the architectural structure of their present living quarters, and the nature of their activities and social interaction outside the domestic world. House and society are not only produced and reproduced in domestic and societal practices through a process of structuration, but they also continually generate and regenerate one another in a structurating dynamic (Robben 1989:583).

In regard to Warlpiri uses of domestic space, this is particularly pertinent to their occupation and use of Western style houses. While residing in similar (often identical) physical structures as does the non-Indigenous population of Yuendumu, Warlpiri people use these physical structures in a distinctly different way.

In regard to this some of the contributions in *At Home: An Anthropology of Domestic Space* edited by Irene Cierad (1999a) were valuable. The main concern of the contributors is to rectify what they perceive as a curious lack: the neglect of anthropological concern with Western domestic space. They contend that Western houses and Western domestic space lend themselves equally well to anthropological analysis as do non-Western ones, despite the “silent opinion among symbolic oriented anthropologists [...] that Western people lost this precious and authentic symbolic drive somewhere in the course of the civilizing process” (Cierad 1999b:2). In turn, I apply some of their analyses to Warlpiri social practice relating to domestic space, especially Munro and Madigan’s (1999) concept of time-zoning within the house, and Rosselin’s (1999) analysis of negotiating the crossing of thresholds in Parisian apartments without entrance halls (cf. Chapters 2 and 7).

My analysis of Warlpiri social practice in regard to domestic space also utilises ideas formulated by Heidegger. In his essay *building, dwelling, thinking* (1993, first published in 1951), he brings forward an argument about the connections between being, dwelling and thinking in Western and the common etymological links of those words in Germanic languages. Based on the fact that they all stem from the same root he postulates that not only the words are linked, but the activities as well. Significantly, in order to dwell, one has to build first; i.e. one can only be within that which is built. The links and parallels between the structures within which we dwell
and those within which we think are explicit here. In the Warlpiri case, what interests me is the dialectic between Warlpiri notions of being (intricately interwoven with the verb for 'to sit' and the notion of the 'camp') linked to and in engagement with contemporary Western structures, such as the physical structures of the settlement.

Lastly, Warlpiri people's contemporary social practice in relation to domestic space needs to be understood as complexly interlinked with both the Warlpiri past and the engagement with historical and present day socio-political circumstances. The contemporary social uses of domestic space described in this thesis are substantially different from pre-settlement social practice, although not un-related. At Yuendumu, the latter time period is referred to as 'olden days', in contradistinction to 'early days' which encompasses initial settlement, and 'today' or jalangu which refers to the here and now.

'Olden days’ camps were much more stable in relation to social composition than today's residential arrangements but probably less so than has been assumed in the ethnographic literature – the mythical patri-local band as first promoted by Radcliffe-Brown (1930) probably never existed. There were never any on-the-ground reports of sightings of groups organised like this, and fieldworkers have argued extensively against it (cf. among others Hiatt 1962; 1965; 1966; 1968; Meggitt 1962; 1968; Shapiro 1973). 'Olden days' camps underwent changes in social composition according to two principles. The first one is based on the development of the domestic cycle. Peterson (1978) applied the model of the domestic cycle to residential groups in Australia and showed how the oscillation between two different principles underlies residence patterns. On the one hand, there is patri-local residence, determined by the male-centric ideal of wanting to live and die on one's own country. On the other, there is uxoripatrilocality, due to the requirement of having to validate affinal ties by providing labour for one's in-laws. In particular, Peterson's model emphasises the role of women in determining residence, thus young husbands stay with their wife's father on his country (and on their next father-in-law's country if polygamous) to move to their own country only after having served

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10 Piaget (1951; 1954; 1956) makes a similar point on the level of child development, emphasising the children’s interaction with the spatiality of the house or dwelling as significant in their social and intellectual development. This interaction between child and the spatiality of their most immediate environment influences their development of motorical, spatial, social and intellectual habitability.
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appropriate time with their in-laws. Then, when their daughters reach marriageable age, their young husbands in turn will live with them.\(^{11}\)

The second principle, more so than the first, resembles some of the contemporary reasons underlying residency patterns: the opportunities of encounter with kin. Myers (cf. Myers 1976; and 1986a, especially Chapter 3) illustrates this by detailed life histories recounting how in the ‘olden days’ people met up with each other, sometimes through arrangements, often through chance, and how they ended up travelling with each other and sharing their camps for a while upon these encounters.\(^{12}\)

While both contemporary residential arrangements and ‘olden days’ ones experienced compositional changes, this appears to be highly accelerated in contemporary times. While the realisation of personal choices underlies changes in the social composition of both, the dynamics of the domestic cycle seem to apply much more to ‘olden days’ camps. Contemporary residence patterns and mobility are based to a much larger extent on individual choice and represent the realisations of personal networks, rather than life-cycle stages, as I will show.

The contemporary high mobility is not a leftover trait from the ‘wandering past’. Now as in the past, Warlpiri people are highly mobile not because they have got ‘itchy feet’ but for specific reasons. During the ‘olden days’ mobility happened across the landscape in the pursuit of food and water, as well as for social and ritual reasons — and people ‘made camp’ wherever they stayed for a night or longer. Today, people move between residential structures, both within one settlement and between settlements. The one thing that is relatively stable in the contemporary context of Warlpiri settlements such as Yuendumu is the spatiality of physical structures, although even here there is complexity. Some forms of Warlpiri housing, the so-called humpies

\(^{11}\) Even though the role of women is central to this model, by necessity it is male centric. It does describe whose country a man lives on at which stage of his life; however, the residence patterns of women, although implied, are very different and need a separate model. Hart (1970) makes a similar point about Tiwi residence patterns. There, three issues in particular determine the differences in chronology of countries men and women will live on: (1) the large age difference between a woman and her first, much older, husband means that she will remarry (and move) on average three more times (ibid:297); (2) the occurrence of extremely high polygamy affects residence patterns; and (3) since men marry for the first time late in life, sons “follow their mothers” (ibid:298) in bachelorhood which means that their residence up until their marriage is determined by the remarriages of their mothers.

\(^{12}\) Lorimer (forthcoming) presents a susceptible account of the same principle underlying present day Cape York children’s socially patterned engagement with different places and triggering their decisions about school attendance.
or improvised structures of corrugated iron and canvas are only semi-permanent. There are temporary *sory camp*, only including windbreaks and bedding, that house people during mourning ceremonies. Moreover, even the structures associated with sleeping from day to day are usually reformed nightly (see Chapters 2 and 6).

The day-to-day composition of people who use such residential structures is highly fluid. I analyse the flow of people through residential structures, people's different purposes in regard to their presence in these spaces, the different activities performed there at different times of the day and the meanings encapsulated within these practices. The flow of people through residential structures represents a core feature of creating domestic space. It arises out of, and needs to be contextualised within, the contemporary setting where it makes sense as a way of being-in-the-world actively responding to present situations. It is to the setting of Yuendumu that I turn next.

**Yuendumu**

Many before me have discussed and described the history of Yuendumu in detail, and I therefore concentrate here on the core developments. Yuendumu was one of three Warlpiri government ration depots (the other two were Warrabri, now Alekarenge, and Hooker Creek, now Lajamanu) set up by the Native Affairs Branch in the immediate post-war period. Long describes the intended aim of such settlements:

> The post-war development of settlements was planned to control the shift of Aborigines to towns; to develop the potential of the reserves; to train the Aborigines in order that they might contribute to the development of the reserves in particular and of the country generally; and to provide health services to the Aborigines (Long 1970:199).

Yuendumu was established as such a settlement in 1946, financed through the Native Affairs Branch, but soon the management of it was given to the Baptist Mission. The latter was established at Yuendumu in 1948 and by the 50s was running a store, a school and a clinic. A

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kitchen was added for communal meals. In the mid-fifties a government supervisor took over the administration and operation of the settlement. Also around that time the Yuendumu Cattle Company came into existence under government ownership and with workers' wages paid by the Department of Aboriginal Affairs (DAA). In 1959 the Australian social security legislation was changed to include Aboriginal people and from 1966 pensions and family payments started flowing for them. However, payment was often made via third parties and unemployment payments were not generally paid in remote areas. A push to have 'direct' payments was instituted by Social Security and Aboriginal Affairs Minister, Bill Wentworth, in 1968 (cf. Sanders 1986:115-6), a year after the 1967 referendum that led to the Commonwealth Government assuming responsibility for various Aboriginal issues. At Yuendumu, direct and full payment of social security entitlements came into effect in 1969; simultaneously communal meals and the issuing of blankets ceased. In 1978 the first elected Yuendumu Council assumed responsibility for settlement administration after the withdrawal of DAA officials.

Of all these developments, the direct receipt of social security has been singled out by most social scientists as the single most significant factor determining the economic status of Aboriginal people and their relationship to the state to date. Based on research in the late 70s, Young said about Yuendumu:

> [t]he town has virtually no economic rationale. It is neither a market town, a mining centre, nor a centre for communications — functions which have been responsible for the growth of other towns in the Territory. It remains dependent on the rest of Australia for almost every cent its community spends, and every article consumed (Young 1981:56).

During Young's (1981:111) research, nineteen percent of the Indigenous population at Yuendumu received wages, eleven percent received unemployment benefits, a further eleven percent received social security (age pension, widow's pension, invalid pension, supporting mother's benefit), and 59 percent had no income (however, this includes women receiving...

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14 It was transferred and became an Aboriginal corporation, called Ngarrayikirrangu Cattle Company in 1979, and by the mid 90s had ceased operation.

15 Compared to many other remote settlements, this was relatively early. Sackett (1990:205) provides a by no means unusual example of Aboriginal people at Wiluna not receiving their full social security payments until 1974.

16 The debate around welfare and Aboriginal entanglements with the state and consequent dependency is extensive and on-going (cf. among many others Altman and Sanders 1991; Altman and Smith 1992; Beckett 1985; Daly, et al. 2002; Martin 2001; Pearson 2000; Peterson 1998; Sackett 1990; Sanders 1986; 2001).
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Child endowment). Employment was largely paid for through DAA grants, and in the main encompassed unskilled labour for the Council, the Yuendumu Housing Assoc., and the Cattle Company.

In the late 90s, while Yuendumu itself has undergone significant changes (see below), the economic situation is still one of dependency on social security. Indeed, the numbers have risen with increased access to the system. The total number of welfare recipients I could ascertain (Musharbash 2000:55) in October 1997 was 547. For a total population of between 700 and 900 residents (including up to 100 usually employed non-Indigenous persons) this is extremely high.

In 1999 I conducted interviews about incomes with a sample of 182 people living in 30 residences, which shows that Young’s ‘no-income’ category has vanished, and all people not receiving wages are on social security payments (cf. Table 1 below, adopted from Musharbash 2000:55).

Social security payments at Yuendumu are conceptionally lumped together and the term ‘pension’ is often used in a way encompassing all types of social security payments, including not only pensions for old people but ‘kids money’ (Family Allowance and Parenting Payments) and ‘UB’ (unemployment benefits, now officially called Newstart). A more ‘archaic’ term still sometimes used is ‘sit-down-money’.

If CDJIP work is included as wage labour, then combined numbers for employment in Yuendumu based on the sample are 29 percent. This stands in bleak contrast to the overall Australian employment figure, with an unemployment rate of 6.1 percent in January 2003 (cf. ABS website http://www.abs.gov.au/) as well as to the overall Aboriginal rate, which in 1986 was estimated to encompass 44 percent of non-employment income (Sanders 1994:1003).

17 For comparative figures from almost a decade earlier in the Central Reserve (southwest of Yuendumu) see Peterson (1977) and on the reasons underlying some men’s choices to engage with the labour market see Sackett (1982).
18 However, there are still significant issues needing to be solved in regard to social security service delivery (cf. Musharbash 2000:67-84). Moreover, there is anecdotal evidence by Centrelink employees about severe ‘under-servicing’, i.e. people not receiving their entitlements, in many remote Central Australian settlements.
19 On the usage of these terms at Yuendumu see Musharbash (2000:57).
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<table>
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<th>Income Source</th>
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<th>% of sample</th>
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<tr>
<td>Newstart</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Age Pension</td>
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<td>7.6</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Parenting Payments</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Carers Pension</td>
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<td>1.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sickness Benefit</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>CDEP Employment(^2)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wages</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>182</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1: Income sources for sample of 182 persons at Yuendumu, 1999

While this thesis is not concerned with the reasons underlying Yuendumu's extremely high rate of unemployment, they present a significant context for it. The lack of employment, as well as the general lack of 'things to do' is a distinguishing factor of life at Yuendumu. This is something not only expressed through statistics but, as I show throughout the thesis, manifested in the way people live their lives.

Since Yuendumu was set up in 1946 it has grown substantially, and today with a change in political climate, places like Yuendumu are not commonly referred to as 'settlements' anymore, the new term of choice being 'community'. This new term, although widely used by both Indigenous and non-Indigenous people in everyday discourse, is highly problematic if used in the context of a thesis, combining as it does the spatial with a new ideology of 'identity' (cf. among others Hinkson 1999; Holcombe 1998; Rowse 1990; 1992; Trigger 1986; 1992). In this thesis I use the term 'settlement' when referring to Yuendumu, to disentangle the socio-political dimensions the term 'community' carries. Using 'settlement' as a descriptive term

\(^2\) CDEP stands for Community Development Employment Projects, and is an ATSIC (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission) funded work-for-the-dole equivalent for Indigenous communities. See contributions in Morphy and Sanders (2001) for latest discussions of CDEP programmes around the country.
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allows me to distinguish between Yuendumu's presence as a spatial entity and the people who live in it. It also underlines its origin as a government instigated endeavour concerned to bring about social transformation. Since its beginnings, Yuendumu has acquired many administrative and organisational additions. I describe them here in the order they are numbered on Figure 3 below and then describe then physical set-up of the settlement.

(2) Yuendumu Clinic has substantially grown since first set up, today it employs a District Medical Officer, four Remote Nurses, two Trainee Nurses, and up to six Aboriginal Health Workers. It flies in a general practitioner and other medical specialists on a regular basis and the Royal Flying Doctor Service in emergencies, monitors growth and well-being of infants and children, and is open to all residents of Yuendumu.

(3) Warlpiri Media Association (WMA) was incorporated in November 1984, as an organisation concerned with Warlpiri video production, and initially also to print books for the bilingual programme at the school (see below). Since then it has grown far beyond its original purpose. Today, WMA is involved in the production of local videos, as well as films now broadcast on national television. It handles television and radio broadcasting, and operates the Broadcasting for Aboriginal Remote Communities Scheme (BRACS) at Yuendumu and surrounding settlements. WMA also has become a watchdog organisation for the handling of and access to Warlpiri film and photographic images. To film or take photographs at Yuendumu today requires a permit by WMA, which provides Warlpiri people with a tool to regulate the use of these media. Tanami Network is housed in the same building; this is an organisation that oversees the video-conferencing facility at Yuendumu. This is used for inter-settlement video-meetings, secondary and adult education, prison links, recruitment, legal hearings international cultural exchanges and so forth (cf. Hiinkson 1999: Chapter 5). Further located in the same building is Adult Education, which among others involves teachers from 'Batchelor College'.

21 This development began with the original series of Manyu-wana videos in the 1980s, a locally produced Warlpiri version of Sesame Street. They have been highly successful, screened in Warlpiri settlements as well as on national television and have taken up production again in the late 1990s. Other recent WMA productions are Bush Mechanics (1999), screened on ABC television, Mutuku Wirinyi (The Kangaroo Hunter) (1998a), and Night Patrol (Munga Warlingii-petai) (1998b).
22 Batchelor Institute Of Indigenous Tertiary Education around locations the Northern Territory including at Batchelor itself (160) kms south of Darwin, and. Warlpiri people regularly fly to Batchelor to attend courses.
Figure 3: Map of Yuendumu
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3a) The Youth Centre houses a disco, operated on up to four nights a week, has a game room with pool tables, videos, and playstations, and employs a Youth development Officer through the Commonwealth Department of Health as well as CDEP staff to organise activities, such as basketball nights, football, roller skating and so forth. It sometimes works closely with the Yuendumu Substance Misuse Programme, locally called 'Mt Theo Programme'. This is a highly success programme for petrol-sniffing children and teenagers, who are taken out of the settlement and taken to Mt Theo, an outstation about 150 kms west, where they are looked after by senior Warlpiri people until their return to Yuendumu.

(4) The Baptist Church is staffed by a Baptist Minister and is mainly run by Yuendumu residents. Sunday services are often conducted by residents, as are baptisms and funerals. The Minister and his wife also run a small second hand clothes store from their house. There are also three Catholic Nuns, called ‘Little Sisters’ based at Yuendumu, who have prayer meetings at their house on Sundays, and when the Pastor from Balgo passes through, conduct mass there. There are also a number of Pentecostals resident at Yuendumu, however, the main enclave of Pentecostal Warlpiri people is at Nyirripi. The 1996 ABS census (ABS 1998) for Yuendumu gives the following numbers for religious affiliation: 445 Baptists, 54 Lutheran, 45 Catholic, 13 Pentecostal, 7 Anglican and 47 ‘no religion or not stated’.

(5) The so-called ‘Big Shop’ is run by the Yuendumu Social Club, and is a self-serve supermarket-style store, selling food, essential items such as axes, brooms and Billy cans, as well as some clothes and blankets. It operates petrol and diesel bowser, and runs a take-away during lunchtime on weekdays. The shop operates an 'envelope system', in which the money from the pensions of a number of older people is held, as well as allocations for school children, from which they pick up $5 to buy lunch every weekday. The Yuendumu Social Club is community-owned, has an elected committee and the profits from the store are intended to flow back to the residents of Yuendumu. It makes donations to the school for annual 'country visits' (see below), as well as to the Youth Centre and often for mortuary rituals. During my research the Social Club also purchased and distributed washing machines.

(6) Warlukurlangu Aboriginal Artist Association was founded in the mid-1980s. It provides Yuendumu artists with stretched canvas and paints and buys back the paintings, distributing
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fifty percent of the sale to the artist, with the other half flowing into the running of the art centre. Much of the art sold through the art centre is of international acclaim, including many national and international exhibitions, the commissions of 'large canvas' involving the work of many artists, as well as performative installations of 'ground paintings' in national and international galleries (cf. among others Tanami Network 1998; Warlukurlangu Artists 1987).

(7) Mining Co. Garage and Store, locally called 'Mining', has grown out of the above-described Yuendumu Mining Co. Today, it runs a small over-the-counter store, a petrol and a diesel bowser, and a garage. It still undertakes occasional geological work, and also buys and sells bush foods.

(8) The CDEP Office is the administrative centre of the CDEP Programme at Yuendumu. It administers the programme and also initiates projects and training, such as landscaping, occupational health and safety training, welding courses and so forth. CDEP began at Yuendumu in March 1997 and has had a mixed history of success since (cf. Musharbash 2001b).

(9) The Council Office houses Yuendumu Council as well as the Yuendumu Post Office and Yuendumu Centrelink office. The elected Council (see above) holds its meetings there, and it is the central administration of the settlement, from where issues such as housing and (electrical) power are dealt with. It is also the location for the court sessions held at Yuendumu.

(10) Yuendumu School has substantially grown since its foundation by the first Baptist missionaries. Today there are more than 200 children enrolled for pre-school, primary, post-primary and secondary study to year 10 by correspondence. The school has 39 staff including fifteen teachers, five of which are Indigenous. It is run as a bilingual school, starting with Warlpiri as the classroom language and gradually introducing English. The bilingual programme is supported by a teacher linguist and a printery which prepares teaching materials in Warlpiri. The school offers a bus pick-up service through the School Home Liaison Officer, self-financed lunches available to children for $2 per day, and an annual one-week long 'country visit' where children are taught about by their elders in their own country about their Warlpiri heritage.
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(11) The Yuendumu Central Land Council Office is the local branch of the Central Land Council, based in Alice Springs. It has one Indigenous employee whose main responsibility is to coordinate the provision of practical expertise in consultation, research and other tasks associated with the use of Aboriginal land by traditional owners under the *Aboriginal Land Rights Act (NT) 1976* and the *Native Title Act 1993* and to liaise between the Warlpiri people in the region and the head office in Alice Springs.

(12) Yuendumu's Old People's Programme operates a meals-on-wheels programme and undertakes some home-care of old people. It's current administrative centre is housed in the Old People's Respite Centre, a building designed by Kathy Keys in collaboration with a number of women from Yuendumu and completed in 2000, which has yet to begin operation.

(13) The Women's Centre facilitates a number of programmes, such as Night Patrol, which entails patrolling the settlement and surrounds at night, to keep alcohol from being smuggled into Yuendumu, which is 'dry' zone, i.e. alcohol is not permitted. Night Patrol also intervenes in alcohol related brawls, or alerts the police to do so. It also alerts the Substance Misuse Programme Coordinator if children are found sniffing petrol (cf. Warlpiri Media Association 1996b). Yuendumu Night Patrol is one of a very few Night Patrols around the country run exclusively by women. The Women's Centre also assists with other programmes and courses, e.g. the Strong Women Strong Babies Programme, sewing courses, and courses in tandem with CAT (Centre for Appropriate Technology). Both the Old People's Programme and the Childcare centre are now independent spin-offs from the Women's Centre.

(14) The Childcare Centre was the first licensed Childcare in remote Central Australia and currently is fully subsidised. It is licensed for 22 children but usually has less to look after. It operates from 8.30 a.m. to 1 p.m. and sometimes also in the afternoon.

(15) Yuendumu's Police Station employs a sergeant and between two and three police, as well as one or two Indigenous police aids.

(16) The Council Garage looks after big machinery required for grading of roads and constructions work, as well as other Council vehicles, rather than private cars.
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(17) The Powerhouse is where the generator is kept that provides Yuendumu with electricity.

Yuendumu is situated about 300 kms northwest of Alice Springs on the Tanami Road, a mostly unsealed road connecting Alice Springs in the Northern Territory and Halls Creek in Western Australia, crossing the Tanami Desert. The turn-off from the Tanami Road leads down two kms of partially sealed road, now flanked by small African Mahogany trees planted by local CDEP workers, past the Police Station, and some occasional humpies into Yuendumu’s East Camp (I discuss the formation of Yuendumu’s ‘suburbs’ in Chapter 2). The bitumen goes through The Arch (which used to be crowned by a sign saying “Yuendumu”) towards The Park. This is a rectangular space in the middle of the settlement flanked by buildings that house some of the main organisations and institutions (see Map of Yuendumu in Figure 2). Driving west, one passes the Old People’s Programme’s Respite Centre, the buildings of the Central Land Council and the Yuendumu Council on the left. To the right are the Women’s Centre and Yuendumu School. Straight ahead lies the complex housing Warlipiri Media, Tanami Network and Adult Education. To the right from there are the Baptist Church and Big Shop (the store run by the Yuendumu Social Club), and to the left are the CDEP office, the Youth Centre and the Mining Co. Shop and Garage. The Health Clinic is a bit further west, the airstrip lies to the south-west, and other organisations further away from The Park are the Childcare Centre, the Substance Misuse Programme, Council Garage, and Warlukurlangu Artists Aboriginal Association.

The residential areas surround The Park in all directions, and are made up of an assortment of structures. Keys (1999; 2000) provides the most detailed descriptions of types and availability of houses at Yuendumu at various points in time. Here, I am more interested in what is there today rather than the history of building(s) itself. In 2000, Territory Health Services (THS) researchers counted 126 occupied houses at Yuendumu, of which 92 (73%) had Aboriginal occupants. Yuendumu also has a number of unoccupied houses, derelict houses (sometimes occupied) and improvised structures such as humpies and lean-tos. Houses come in a variety of styles and ages. Some of the old Stage 1 houses built to ‘ease the transition from a nomadic

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23 The data from this THS survey were supplied by Yuendumu Council and are discussed in more detail in Musharbash (2001a).
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Life-style to sedentary life are still standing and occupied. There are houses made of tin, houses built of brick, houses from the 50s, 60s and 70s, and the latest addition: 16 suburban style three and four bedroom houses completed in 2000.

Generally speaking, Aboriginal occupied dwellings have much higher person to bedroom rates than non-Indigenous ones at Yuendumu or the national average. A sample study of 30 residences I carried out found person to bedroom rates of 4.5 in 1999 and 3.7 in 2000 for Aboriginal occupied structures, or, on average 11 and 10 persons per dwelling in the respective years (cf. Musharbash 2001a:6). This is elaborated upon in Chapters 5 and 6 of this thesis.

Today, there are between 700 and 900 usual residents living at Yuendumu. About 100 residents are non-Indigenous, who live there and work as service providers. Census data for remote Aboriginal settlements are notoriously unreliable due to both high mobility and under-enumeration (cf. among others Martin and Taylor 1995; Taylor 1996a; 1996b; Taylor and Bell 1996). This is reflected in some recent estimates of the Yuendumu population:

- The Health Centre Population Screening List for October 1997 gives a total of 930 residents (Yuendumu Health Profile 1999).
- ATSIC's Community Housing and Infrastructure Need Survey (CHINS) indicates 875 usual residents (ATSIC 1999).
- The Territory Health Services surveys conducted in 1998 to 2000 found the following figures: In November 1998, of 818 persons living at Yuendumu, 745 were Indigenous, and 73 were non-Indigenous. In June 1999 of 721 persons living at Yuendumu, 640 were Indigenous, and 81 non-Indigenous. And in August 2000, of 901 persons living at Yuendumu, 795 were Indigenous and 106 were non-Indigenous.

Most non-Indigenous residents live to the south and the east of The Park, while the Aboriginal population is relatively evenly distributed across the settlement. Socially, culturally, and socio-

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24 See Heppel (1979) for a critique of the inefficiency of these houses both in terms of their intended purposes and as residential structures more generally.
25 This data is unpublished to date and was provided to me by Yuendumu Council.
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economically speaking, Aboriginal people, locally called ‘Yapa’, and non-Indigenous people, called ‘Kardiya’, constitute two different populations. The Warlpiri term *yapa* covers a wide range of meanings. Its most general use centres on ‘human being’ or ‘person’, as for example in bible translations. Situationally, it carries more specific meanings, ranging from referring to black people in general, e.g. a comment frequently made in connection with a World Vision ad (about Aflac) is: “*Wiŋarpa yapa*” (poor blackfella). It is also used to refer to all Australian Aborigines (in opposition to non-Indigenous Australians). In more localised contexts, it can be used to differentiate Warlpiri people (*yapa*) from for example Pitjantjatjara people (*anangu*). The term *kardiya*, supposedly from *kandiri* for white, light in colour (Hale 1990:31), means ‘whitefella’, referring to people of non-Aboriginal origin generally (whether ‘white’ or not). The this thesis, Kardiya or non-Indigenous people will be used as terms referring to local non-Aboriginal people and Yapa or Warlpiri people as the term for local Aboriginal people.

Warlpiri kinship

The Warlpiri kinship system is of the Arandic type and all Warlpiri people and known individuals with whom there is regular interaction are called by kin terms. Gradations of these kinship categories are made upon the closeness of genealogical links, distinguishing ‘actual’, ‘close’ and ‘classificatory’ relatives in the same category.

The kinship system distinguishes five generations, that of ego, and the two ascending and two descending generations. In the first ascending generation, that of ego’s parents, each parent is terminologically merged with siblings of the same sex, i.e. the same term is used for mother and mother’s sister, and for father and father’s brother. Parent’s siblings of the opposite sex are terminologically distinguished, i.e. different terms are used for mother and mother’s brother respectively, and for father and father’s sister respectively (cf. Figure 4).

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26 Another synonymous term for and actually related to the word ‘whitefella’ is the Warlpiri rendering *waypall*.

27 Figure 6 below presents a list of symbols used in the genealogies throughout this thesis.
Figure 4: Genealogy with kinship terms for ego's and first ascending generation

Following these distinctions, in ego's generation siblings and parallel cousins are merged, but distinguished by sex, i.e., the term for brother is applied to a male descendant of one's own parents, as well as of one's father's brother and mother's sister. Terminology for siblings is further distinguished by age, so that there are four terms for siblings in total, one for older brother, one for younger brother, one for older sister, and one for younger sister. There are two terms for cross cousins, i.e. the children of ego's father's sister and mother's brother, who are distinguished by sex, one for male cross cousin and one for female cross cousin.

In the second ascending generation four types of grandparents are distinguished from each other, but lumped together with their siblings regardless of their gender, i.e. there is one term for mother's mother (and her siblings), one term for mother's father (and his siblings), one term for father's mother (and her siblings), and one term for father's father (and his siblings) (cf. Figure 5 below).
In the first descending generation the situation is as follows. A man addresses his children (and the children of all people he calls brother) by one term, and the children of his sisters (including the children of all women he calls sister) by another. A woman does the same, only she uses the opposite terms, i.e. children are addressed differently by their parents. In the second descending generation, again four terminological lines of descent are recognised, distinguishing son's children from daughter's children, as well as their respective cross cousins, mirroring the second ascending generation. These are the most basic structures of the Warlpiri kinship system, which extends much further (for additional discussion cf. Glowczewski 1989a; 1989b; Laughren 1982; Meggitt 1962; 1987; Wafer 1982; Wild 1975). Dussart summarises the principles of the kinship system by saying:

There are three principal components of the Warlpiri kinship system. (1) Four terminological lines of descent are distinguished in the second ascending generation [...]. (2) The Warlpiri usually refer only to five generational levels: grandchildren, children, one's own generation, parents and grandparents. (3) There exists a rule of preferred marriage (Dussart 2000:26).
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The latter I discuss in detail in Chapter 3. A further way in which Warlpiri kinship is organised is through three moiety divisions with different purposes:

(1) Matri-moieties, reciprocally named makurna-wangu for one's own moiety, and makurna-warri for the opposite moiety. Matri-moieties are exogamous and described by Meggitt as concerned with secular issues:

Each matriline contains a score of small, unnamed, genealogically unconnected and residentially dispersed sets of people defined through matrilines of filiation. They have no ritual, totemic functions, but their members meet irregularly or contingently to deal with secular, public affairs such as betrothals, marriages, mortuary duties, inheritance of domestic equipment, and obligations of revenge (Meggitt 1987:117).

(2) Patri-moieties, reciprocally named kirda for one's own moiety and kurungurru for the opposite moiety. Patri-moieties provide the basic principle around which Warlpiri ritual and land tenure is organised. Extensive research has been undertaken into Warlpiri patri-moieties (cf. among many others Dussart 2000; Elias 2001; Glowczewski 1989a; Meggitt 1962; 1987; Nash 1982; Peterson 1969).

(3) Alternate generation moieties, reciprocally named yarpuwuy-kurlangu for one's own moiety and kuyukari for the opposite moiety. They are of particular significance in male initiation. These are endogamous and are further discussed in Chapter 3.

Warlpiri people also employ the socio-centric subsection system, which provides a short-hand within which to encompass the more complex realities of the kinship system and moiety divisions (cf. among many others Dussart 2000; Meggitt 1962; 1987). Wild summarises the principal differences between the kinship system and the subsections system by saying that

[the kinship system differentiates between consanguineal kin and affinal kin, whereas the subsection system does not, and the subsection system classifies kin in alternate generations, whereas the kinship system does not (Wild 1975:27-9).]

The subsection system is made up of eight different subsection terms, locally called skinnames, further distinguished by gender, so that subsection affiliation for males is designated by a subsection term starting with "J" and for females with "N" (so that Nakamarra is the sister of
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Jakamarra, see below). Each Warlpiri person has a subsection term, which is used as a term of reference and a term of address. Further, Warlpiri people identify relationships to people not normally encompassed in their kinship system by allocating to them a subsection term. For example non-Indigenous people living at Yuendumu and spouses of Warlpiri people from further afield are incorporated into Warlpiri sociality by receiving a subsection term, depending on how their relations to Warlpiri people are characterised. The relationship of the subsections is set out in Figure 6.

![Figure 6: Subsections
Indicating preferred marriage, and maternal descent through arrows.]

Through these terms, more complex realities such as marriage rules and moiety divisions can be summarised. Since Warlpiri people tend to avoid addressing or referring to each other by personal names, the use of kinship and subsection term an essential feature of everyday discourse. Kendon (1988b:451) says that “Aborigines interact with one another in what appears to be a very polite, indirect fashion”, and the usage of kinship and subsection terms as more oblique referencing to persons rather than using personal names is an element of this. For example, instead of saying “Look, there is Paul” people usually use more indirect options such as:

- “Look, there is Jangala” – using Paul’s subsection term.
- “Look, there is your ngamirri” – using the kinship term that relates Paul to the addressee.

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- "Look, there is Nungarrayi's husband" — describing Paul in reference to his relationship to another person, which in turn is described by a kinship term or their subsection.

All relations between people are expressed through kinship references, that is, the classificatory nature of the kinship system also operates on the level of language (this is further discussed in Chapter 9). The ways in which one person relates to another are always expressed within this terminology and other, non-kin varieties of relating to each other, are subsumed under it. I have kept the use of subsection terms to a minimum in this thesis, but especially in the chapter on marriage (Chapter 3) and in some of the case studies their utilisation was essential. I have striven to accompany case studies with genealogies, to assist visually in understanding the relationships between people. For the genealogies, I have used the following symbols:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Symbol</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>female</td>
<td>Female (circle; crossed out if deceased; in brackets if living elsewhere)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>male</td>
<td>Male (triangle; crossed out of deceased; in brackets if living elsewhere)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>person</td>
<td>Person of significance (shaded triangle or circle)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>marriage</td>
<td>Married (equal sign; when crossed out □ divorced)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>affair</td>
<td>Affair (dash; when crossed out □ ended)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>parent-child</td>
<td>Relation between parent and child (solid vertical line)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>parent-child-adopted</td>
<td>Relation between parent and adopted child (broken vertical line)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sibling</td>
<td>Relation between siblings (solid horizontal line)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sibling-classificatory</td>
<td>Relation between classificatory siblings (dotted horizontal line)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 7: Symbols used in genealogies

When describing complex genealogical connections not expressed through subsection affiliation in the remainder of the thesis I have used the standard way of abbreviating relationships with letters. The following is a list of abbreviations used:
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B = brother
Z = sister
M = mother
F = father
D = daughter
S = son
C = child

Combined they are read in the order they are written to disclose any specific relationship, so that for example MMFBD means mother's mother’s brother’s daughter’s daughter. Lastly, while not having changed people’s subsection affiliations, I have used pseudonyms instead of actual personal names for all Warlpiri people mentioned in this thesis to afford some privacy.

Chapter outline

Chapter 2 is concerned with the ordering of the physical structures that make up domestic space at Yuendumu. It provides the necessary background to understanding the ethnographic setting to follow. In particular, it describes the formation of and residential flux through Yuendumu’s ‘suburbs’, and analyses Warlpiri ideas of what a ‘camp’ is. It discusses the gendered nature of camps and their structured spatiality in terms of public/private distinctions. It concludes with a description of the daily cycle of sociality within the camps.

Chapter 3 compares data collected by Meggitt, Bell and myself on Warlpiri marriage to show the changes that the institution has undergone over the last 50 years. It elaborates on the weakening of the institution of marriage at Yuendumu and the resulting impact on sociality. This is shown to be both the cause and the effect of an intensification of residential mobility and ensuing living situations for both children and adults.

The concern of Chapter 4 arises out of the problems posed in the preceding two, namely, that women’s camps, or jilim, have risen in number, residential complexity and social significance
within the contemporary settlement context. It examines the reasons for this in more detail by contrasting contemporary data with earlier anthropological investigations of jilimi, concluding that these need to be updated. Lastly, it describes one particular jilimi and some of its main residents as the ethnographic setting and protagonists for the ensuing chapters.

Chapter 5 examines the flow of residents through this particular jilimi, categorising different types of residents by the different lengths and reasons for their stays. It makes the case that this particular example is representative of sociality at Yuendumu generally and alerts to the implications of frequent residential changes. Further, it refutes arguments about residential composition allowing for categorisations of people into social units, maintaining instead that personal networks are underlying these residential practices.

This argument is further developed in Chapter 6, which examines the relationships between jilimi residents by analysing their nightly sleeping arrangements. By describing the setting up of separate nightly sleeping rows within the jilimi it looks at both the changes people make and the reasons underlying their choices. From this it postulates sleeping arrangements to be both statements about the current state of social affairs and statements about the person.

Chapter 7, in turn, looks at sociality during the day outlining the movements of people in and out of camps and throughout the settlement. It is build around the contrast of night and day, showing how the former can be read as a summary statement about activities that took place during the latter. These activities are examined with a special view to the connections between people and how they are made, reinforced, maintained, or broken. In particular, this chapter considers the practices of damper distribution in the morning, of the paths heightened and intensified sociality take during the day, and of negotiations about firewood in the late afternoon. Social relations here are examined through the lenses of sharing and distribution.

In Chapter 8, a temporal framework is provided within which sociality as described in the preceding chapters needs to be understood to be anchored. The flows of time at Yuendumu are categorised into four different types: oscillations, compartmentalisations, regular punctuations and irregular punctuations. These are described both in terms of their 'feel' as well as in terms of the origin, being made up of Warlpiri time patterns, Western time patterns
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and settlement time patterns. Since the preceding chapters were concerned primarily with events and practices occurring in 'normality', here the ethnographic descriptions focus particularly on two kinds of irregularly occurring punctuating events, mortuary rituals and fights. These are shown to partly make up the 'normal' flows of time but to be disruptive also, temporally in that they interrupt anything else occurring at the time, and socially in that they arise out of and require further reordering of social relations. Chapter 8 concludes with an analysis of boredom.

In Chapter 9, I recapitulate the main themes of the thesis and focus on the characteristics of personal networks. Kinship is shown to be a paradigm hiding much of the finer nuances and subtleties of actual relations. These are created, achieved, negotiated, and broken in daily practice through a multitude of actions, both tacit and explicit. Engagement in these social practices creates the everyday at Yuendumu and a sociality characterised by immediacy and constancy. I conclude with an account of the effects of this social intensity on the person.
CHAPTER TWO
THE SPATIALITY OF CAMPS

Sedentisation has had an enormous impact on how Warlpiri people are distributed spatially. In pre-settlement times there were only three kinds of everyday sleeping units, yapukara, the shelter where a married couple and their children slept, jangkpyi, single men's shelters, and jiliyi, shelters for widows in mourning. Distributed among a combination of these three kinds of arrangements were the people who formed a band at any one time. With settlement, and the development of institutional and other structures, such as various forms of housing, changes have gradually taken place. This chapter discusses the present-day spatial organisation of Yuendumu.

It begins with a look at the structure of the settlement and the emergence of suburb-like entities. It examines the way in which people are distributed spatially within these suburbs, and discusses the significance of death-related avoidance practices to residential patterns. Next, by looking at the Warlpiri and Aboriginal English terms for 'house' and 'camp', it discusses the terminology used to describe residences. Based on those delineations, the chapter explores the smaller residential unit of the camp. Taking a generic camp as the starting point, the spatial properties of camps are analysed, with particular attention to public/private distinctions. This is followed by an examination of the daily cycle of life in camps to draw attention to issues of time zoning. Together, these discussions provide the foundation for the explorations of the dynamics between Warlpiri domestic spatiality and Warlpiri sociality in the ensuing chapters.

Overall layout of Yuendumu

As outlined previously, Yuendumu in was set up as a government ration station around an administrative centre still known as The Park. Initially, Warlpiri people's residential arrangements were located at some distance away from this. Hinkson (1979:18) quotes two Yuendumu men, Japanangka and Japangardi, describing early developments in settlement at Yuendumu:
... in those days, the houses were just a few and only kardiya were living in the houses. But us, we used to live out in the camps or humpies. We never used to sleep close to the houses or the settlement at that time. We used to be 1 couple of miles, or at least a fair way from the settlement and the houses. For water, the women used to come and collect water with buckets and billy cans, in the evenings and in the mornings. [...] 
... kardiya doesn't want yarpa to come in close up because they might steal something. And yarpa doesn't want to come in.

Stories I was told confirm that in the early days of settlement there was a mutually maintained separation between Warlpiri people living in 'humpies' a few miles from the settlement and white staff living in houses and working in buildings located around The Park. With the advent of provision of housing for Aboriginal people at Yuendumu these clusters or residential arrangements began to surround the central administrative area in clusters and over time these clusters became named and suburb-like entities. Munn describes the situation in the mid to late 50s thus (cf. also Meggitt 1962:55):

Mt. Doreen, Mt. Allan (and Conistan), and Vaughan Springs are areas that represent for the Warlpiri general regions in which different sections of the Yuendumu community based themselves in the recent past [...]. The camps of each segment are oriented accordingly: Mt. Doreen Ngalia camp to the west or northwest, and members of the northern community of Waneiga Warlpiri camp with them; the Mt. Allan Ngalia (also linked with Cockatoo Creek near Conistan) camp on the east or southeast of the other camps; the Vaughan Springs (and Mt. Singleton) people camp in the southeasterly clusters (Munn 1973b:11).

Originally, there were four such ‘suburbs’, named after the cardinal directions as seen from The Park: East Camp, South Camp, West Camp and North Camp. I spell Camp with a capital ‘C’ when referring to one of Yuendumu’s ‘suburbs’, and with a small ‘c’ when referring to individual residences, to be discussed below. Both Meggitt and Munn describe these four Camps to have been occupied by people from the respective geographical regions. Much has been made of this residential patterning of Yuendumu’s four Camps, and more recent ethnographies have simply perpetuated this (Michaels 1986b; 1994; Rowse 1998; Young and Doohan 1989). Jackson (1995), obviously picking up on earlier reports by Meggitt and Munn, in discussing location as an index of social identity claims that “[I]n Yuendumu, for instance, people from different parts of the country live in different quarters” (1995:19). The only
anthropologist who paid close attention to this issue is Dussart (1988b; 2000:41 esp.), who outlined six Camps, albeit slightly different from the ones I found ten years later.

By claiming that orientation to traditional country determines residency, the four Camps have effectively been presented as not only residential units but as social units based on shared country affiliations. If this was the case originally it is not the case today. Life histories reveal that most Yuendumu residents have lived in different Camps at different times of their lives, with their residential choices motivated by a multiplicity of reasons, most of which do not have anything to do with country. If one looks at the composition of any one Camp is clear that its residents come from a number of areas. Moreover, the residential compositions of Yuendumu’s Camps are in constant flux. The two interrelated issues of slow encroachment towards The Park and the splitting and growth of further new Camps propound this.

Nowadays, Warlpiri people live in and name six Camps at Yuendumu: North Camp, South Camp, East Camp, West Camp, Inner West Camp, and Kukurru Camp (cf. Figure 8 below). The last two are the most recent. West Camp and Inner West Camp are divided by a football oval and have both independently grown so much that they are now considered to be two separate ‘suburbs’, or Camps. However, Kukurru Camp is particularly pertinent to my point. Kukurru means ‘inside’ and this Camp is right adjacent to The Park. Houses in what is now called Kukurru Camp used to be occupied by non-Indigenous residents exclusively, but over the last few years Warlpiri people have moved into some of these houses, showing the process of encroachment to be continuing in the present. Significantly, it was around the time that Warlpiri people moved into this part of Yuendumu that it acquired its Warlpiri name.

A parallel development is currently taking place in Yuendumu’s southwest, in an area nicknamed Kardiaville by some of the non-Indigenous population, because it used to be exclusively populated by non-Indigenous people. Kardiaville is a cluster of staff houses owned by the Department of Education and the Yuendumu Council, and more recently also by Warlpiri Media and the Clinic. Kardiaville is located between Yuendumu’s South Camp

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28 See also Young (1981:66-9) for a description and map of Yuendumu’s Camps in the late 70s, suggestive of future developments.

29 Other ‘suburbs’ where non-Indigenous people reside are East Camp, South Camp, and Inner West Camp, however these are predominantly Warlpiri populated.
and Inner West Camp and used to constitute the border between the two. Now that more Warlpiri people have begun to live there the boundaries are in the process of becoming blurred.

Figure 8: Spatial Camp divisions at Yuendumu
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There are many reasons underlying different residential choices, many of which I will discuss in detail in the ensuing chapters, here I single out one by looking at the issue of intra-community mobility and residence patterns following a death.

Death and residence patterns

Death is a major dynamic of residence patterns at Yuendumu. Upon receiving the ‘bad news’ of a death, the deceased’s residence is vacated immediately by all residents who shared it with him or her (cf. Young 1981:69-70 for an example). From this point onwards, it is referred to as yarrkujuju by all of her or his closest relatives and former co-residents, and spatially avoided by them. Depending upon the age and standing of the deceased as well as the cause of death this avoidance may be in place for anything between a few months to many years. Avoidance in this case encompasses the following: calling the former residence yarrkujuju rather than ‘so-and-so’s place’; if resident there at the time of death moving out, first to a sorry camp, to then live somewhere else; and physically avoiding the yarrkujuju. This physical avoidance of yarrkujuju means that people take detours at all times to avoid visual contact with the yarrkujuju, or, if they are sitting in a car that for some reason has to drive past the yarrkujuju, they duck and cover while driving past it. The presence of yarrkujuju thus not only prompt people to move, but impact upon the routes people take walking and driving through the settlement.

The rule of avoidance of yarrkujuju has an enormous impact on residence patterns at Yuendumu. Since most Wadlpiri residences today are located in or next to houses (see below), each death triggers the desertion of a house by its former residents. Keys (1999:237) states that at Yuendumu houses “in the 1990s were deserted, swapped or given to appropriate relatives following a death”, and further that those houses “associated with a series of deaths were considered unsafe and will remain uninhabited despite high rainfall and cold conditions” (ibid.). These practices certainly continue today. Swapping of houses means that after an

30 Sorry camp is the vernacular term for the residential arrangements mourners stay in during, and often after, mortuary rituals are performed. Mortuary rituals are discussed further in Chapter 8.
31 The term used to announce that one cannot drive along a route one has taken because of such an avoidance having to be observed is ‘no room’. This is the same term used to warn people about the presence of their son-in-laws if female, or their mother-in-laws if male, when for example wanting to enter the shop or council building. No room is shouted in both cases and is an apt term to describe spatial avoidance rules (for more detail on mother-in-laws avoidance see among others Hiatt 1984; Merlan 1997).
appropriate time period a *yarrkujuju* is ‘opened up’ and non-related people move in, and the former residents move into those people’s former residence. This is one of the main reasons why the Camps of Yuendumu do not contain people from the cardinal directions. With over 50 years of settlement, many deaths have occurred and people have swapped and continue to swap residences when these become *yarrkujuju*. Interviewing any Yuendumu resident over 30 years of age in respect to their past residence patterns will convey that most likely they have lived in all or at least 3 or 4 of Yuendumu’s Camps at some stage of their lives and that many of the moves from one ‘suburb’ to the next were motivated through deaths. The sections below deal with units below the ‘suburb’/Camp, i.e. I now turn towards the issue of camps (with a small ‘c’).

The terms ‘*yuwarli*’, ‘camp’ and ‘*ngurra*’

Warlpiri residences at Yuendumu come in a number of shapes and structures (cf. Keys 1999). Some are simple windbreaks or lean-tos, others are humpies, made of sheets of corrugated iron, wooden posts, plastic canvas and branches. Today most residences are located in and around houses and these also come in a great variety of shapes and forms, as discussed in Chapter 1.

The Warlpiri term for the physical structure of a house is *yuwarli*. However, independent of the kind of physical structure they are located in and around, any Warlpiri residence at Yuendumu is called a camp. That is, a camp can be in a humpy or a five-bedroom brick house. It is in the sense of residence that I use the term ‘camp’ throughout this thesis. This, importantly, needs to be delineated from the other connotation the term carries.

The Warlpiri term for camp, *ngurra*, has a much more extensive range of meanings than I have conferred to the term ‘camp’, which is reserved in this thesis for the spatial set-up of a residence. The term *ngurra* radiates multiple levels of meaning, which I here briefly outline based on its semantic field and by presenting two forms of graphic representations employed by Warlpiri people. This will afford an incipient understanding of how *ngurra* is a core concept.
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in Warlpiri language and cosmology and why an analysis of the interconnection between Warlpiri residential patterns and sociality needs to be conceptually anchored around this term.

The Warlpiri dictionary gives the following meanings for ngurrara:

1. place where person lives habitually or for some time; place where person sleeps at night
2. camp, home, residence
3. place where animal dwells nest, lair, burrow
4. place with which person is associated by conception, birth, ancestry, ritual obligation, long term residence, country, land, place
5. period of 24 hours, used to designate number of days or night, day, night
6. ngurrara-jinta = people living in one camp, typically close kin; being one family, of one household, camping together, country-man, compatriot, from same place
7. ngurrara-kaninjarra = settled in, ensconced, staying put, in camp, camped
8. ngurrara-pirdi = in and around the camp, near camp, close to camp, approaching camp
9. ngurraranjija, ngurrara-wardingki = person belonging to a certain place, country-man, householder
10. ngurrara-kurlarni-ngarra (lit. camp-southside) = patrimoietry of J/Nakamarra, Jupurrurla/Napurrurla, J/Nampijina, J/Nangala subsections
11. ngurrara-jatujja-nparra = patrimoietry of J/Napanangka, J/Napangardi, J/Nungarrayi, J/Napaljarri subsections
12. ngurrara-juntuyurtu = place where many people lived for an extended period of time, large camp, long term camp
13. ngurrara = country, father-land, place, land, home

As this inventory of meanings makes abundantly clear ngurrara as a term is conceptually extensive and covers the entire spectrum between residential units and cosmological concepts. Accordingly, Warlpiri people use two different iconographic designs to denote ngurrara (cf. among others Anderson and Dussart 1988; Munn 1970; 1973a; 1973b; Peterson 1981). The two different designs reflect two different spheres of meaning, which is underscored by the fact that they are used in different contexts.
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The first design corresponds to the level of meaning denoting 'the place where a person sleeps at night', or, what I call 'camp'. Made up of a horizontal line depicting a windbreak or any kind of similar shelter, vertical lines depicting people and the asterisks depicting fireplaces, the design looks like this:

![Diagram of camp iconography](image)

Figure 9: Iconography for camp

This iconographic representation of camp is most often used in the telling of so-called 'sand stories' when describing specific camps with specific people in them, rather than in other, especially ritual, contexts. In sand stories, the design is oriented in the same way as the camp spoken about is, or was, in real space. As camps are (whenever possible) oriented so that the heads of the sleepers face east – the line depicting the windbreak usually is east of the other designs. Note also that in sand stories, when people talk about a specific camp, they make a vertical line for each person who slept in that particular camp that night in the order of their sleeping arrangements, while naming them (cf. also Watson 1997). I use this iconography to discuss the spatiality of camps below and when reproducing maps of sleeping arrangements in Chapter 6.

The second way of iconographically depicting *aguma* is done by concentric circles, is given in Figure 10 below:
Figure 10: Iconography for ngurra

The iconographic representation of *ngurra* through concentric circles has a number of levels of meanings, paralleling the linguistic meanings of the term as outlined above. When used in sand stories, sets of concentric cycles usually refer to a number of camps describing the itinerary of a journey. For example, while telling the story of a journey from Yuendumu to Balgo, a community in Western Australia, the storyteller would draw lines in the sand reflecting the direction of travel. The concentric cycles would be inserted at the cardinaly appropriate spot each time the travelling party camped for a night or two at a place. The story of this trip would thus be graphically represented by a combination of lines and concentric circles.

More significantly, sets of concentric cycles are used in ritual contexts and there incorporate the full range of meanings of the term *ngurra*. In these contexts, they are linked to Warlpiri ideas of the creation of the cosmos through the deeds of ancestral beings (*jikurruwa*) during the creation period (*jikurruwa*), depicting their travels and the meanings associated with this.\(^\text{32}\)

In this thesis, I use the Warlpiri term *ngurra* when refer to the whole range of meanings and reserve the term ‘camp’ to designate purely the residential aspects of the term, following the differential treatment of the term in Warlpiri iconography, which I further utilize in the next section.

\(^{32}\) Munn (1970) has described and analysed these notions most elaborately in her paper on the transformation of subjects into objects (and see critics and discussions thereof in Dubinskas and Trawek 1984; Morton 1987; 1989). Fred Myers (esp. 1976; 1986a) has done excellent work outlining the spiritual links between camp, country and people as expressed by the term *ngurra*. 44
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Spatial properties of camps

A main reason making the application of the term 'camp' sensible to all sorts of residential structures is the fact that their space is used, divided and named in the same way, independent of the type of the physical structure they are located in. Here I first delineate this general spatiality of camps and then look at the interplay between this and physical structures by discussing the use of houses.

Figure 11 (below) indicates the terms for the spaces and boundaries to be discussed here. The particular focus of the discussions of the terms indicated in Figure 11 is on distinctions between degrees of public and private, or, how people draw these boundaries, and how they negotiate their crossing (cf. Rosselin 1999). Figure 11 presents a fairly typical set-up for a camp but note that a camp may also be made up of more rows of sleepers, or also of one only. This section concludes by relating the spatiality of camps to that of houses in contemporary Yuendumu – where, as I said, the same terms apply.
Figure 11: The spatial terminology of camps

Yunta

In its most restricted sense, the term *yunta* is used to denote a windbreak. The Warlpiri dictionary describes *yunta* as “open living and sleeping area protected from wind by erected barrier on appropriate side” and this is also the way the term is used in this thesis. That is, a *yunta* is made up of a windbreak, the places for people to sleep sheltered by it, and, if present, fires. A *yunta* is the spatial manifestation of ‘a row of sleepers’. A camp may be made up of just one *yunta*, or a number of them.

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33 For further architectural discussion on *yunta* see Keys (1999:44-6 and 165-71).
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The windbreak itself can be anything from a ‘proper Warlpiri style’ windbreak constructed out of leafy branches, to a wall of a house, a car, a suitcase, or it may just be there symbolically. Ideally, the windbreak is oriented to the east of the sleepers’ heads, stretching from north to south, i.e. people sleep with their head to the east and their feet to the west. While often this shelters people from the prevailing winds, and moreover keeps sleepers’ heads in the shade at sunrise, environmental reasons alone seem unsatisfactory to explain this. While Warlpiri people were not forthcoming with explanations, all were adamant that this is the ideal way to sleep. I collected one story describing how, before settlement, when walking around with her husband a woman realised with shock that she forgot to check on directions when she put up their camp. She described how it had been a very long walk and she was extremely exhausted, and how she positively leapt up from her dozing state when she realised — to find by the orientation of the stars that she had set up camp ‘proper way’ without thinking.

The sleeping places in the past were indicated through moulds in the sand, one for each person. Today, sleeping positions are made up of people’s bedding, in the main swags or foam mattresses and blankets laid out on a ground sheet. A camp, however, is not only made up of yunta, but also some of the space surrounding yunta.

Yarlu

This space surrounding each yunta is called yarlu, which according to the Warlpiri dictionary means ‘place with nothing on it or over it’. It is thus a little bit like a yard, a corridor, or a garden in a suburban style Western house. It is this yarlu space, or rather the boundaries around it, which clarifies the distinction between yunta and camp. A single yunta with a bounded yarlu space is a camp, more often however, a camp is made up of a conglomerate of yunta surrounded by one yarlu space.

While commonly there is no visible boundary marking the extent of yarlu space, people are nonetheless very aware of it. It is this (normally) invisible boundary that constitutes the threshold between public space outside the camp and private space inside it. In the absence of walls, doors, doorbells, porches, halls and other similar physical markers of the threshold between public and private, rules of behaviour structure its crossing. One never walks straight
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to the location of an actual junta but waits at the outer boundary of the yaru, at an appropriate
distance, anything between 10 and 30 meters away from the closest junta, to be noticed.

In pre-contact times yaru space often was marked by a very low mound of earth around the
junta where people had scraped the ground free of spinifex grass and similar plant matter.
These days, at Yuendumu, yaru space and yard space surrounding a house are often conflated
through the introduction of fences. When I first came to Yuendumu in 1994, only some public
areas and buildings, such as the school and the clinic, and some non-Indigenous houses had
fences. Since then, fences have become immensely popular and most camps nowadays have a
fence, surrounding them in a square yard-like enclosure. Warlpiri people say they like fences
"because they keep out dogs and drunks" – while experience shows they are useless to keep
out either.\textsuperscript{34} The one thing that fences seem to achieve is awareness in non-Indigenous people
about camp boundaries.\textsuperscript{35} While the yaru boundaries previously were invisible and implicit
mostly only to Warlpiri people, today, Indigenous and non-Indigenous people alike use the
fence as the point of negotiating entry into a camp.

Entry into the yaru space is negotiated depending on degrees of closeness between people
inside the camp and persons wanting to enter. If there is a fence, one stands next to it, if not,
one stands at an appropriate distance from the closest junta within the yaru. If there is no
response from anybody inside the camp, this is equivalent to a door not opened to an
unwelcome visitor. Usually, though, people inside the camp acknowledge the presence of the
person waiting outside the yaru and negotiate the situation. Depending on the relations
between the person outside and those inside the camp, and, the often known or suspected
intentions of the visitor, there are several options. If the person is not wanted inside the camp,
or their intentions do not warrant them entering, somebody from inside the camp usually gets
up and walks over to the yaru boundary where the person is waiting, to discuss the issues at
hand. Should entry into the camp then seem desirable, they accompany the person inside and
indicate to them where to sit. Should the person be welcome into the camp without such
negotiations, then people from within the camp simply shout over to them to come in. If the
person wanting to enter is in a relatively close relationship to people inside the camp and sure

\textsuperscript{34} On 'drunken fights' throughout the night among others see Martin (1993) and Sackett (1977b).
\textsuperscript{35} Previously, I observed non-Indigenous people many times stumbling right into a camp, crossing many
invisible boundaries dividing the public from the private, without ever noticing.

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of their welcome, they generally do not wait at the invisible threshold but walk into the camp. However, while they are doing this they will be addressing people inside to announce their approach. Often, children are used to negotiate an entry of this kind. Either, if the visitor has a child with them, they talk to the child in a clearly audible manner about who is inside the camp, e.g. “look, your granny there”. In this case, people inside the camp ‘answer’ by calling out to the child, rather than the adult visitor, in a similar vein, e.g. “little Daryl is coming to visit his granny” and thus implicitly sanctioning the entry. If a person comes visiting without being accompanied by a child but there are children present inside the camp, they greet the children by singing out to them, e.g. “hello little nephew”. People inside the camp prompt the child to reply, e.g. “Paul, look, your auntie”, again thus sanctioning the passage. If people very close to the camp residents come to visit, they simply enter and sit next to the person(s) they came to see.

Yarlu space and within it yunta space again are separated by degrees of publicness and privacy (cf. also Spatial Diagram of activity areas within the yunta of Warlpiri jilimi in Keys 1999:168). Within the yarlu of a camp, the yunta presents a further level of privacy. It is only entered by people actually sleeping in it and people very close to them and others explicitly invited into that space. Entering aninvited into yunta space, even if one is inside the yarlu, is either very rude or a downright threat. Normally only people invited in, or particularly close, enter yunta space.

Yalka

Within the yunta, there is a further delineation of space. The space between the actual or symbolic windbreak and the heads of the sleepers is called yalka, which the Warlpiri dictionary translates as “close to windbreak”. If there is no windbreak, this is the space just above, or sometimes underneath, the pillow. It is used for storage of essential items, such as water bottles, matches, wallets, keys, handbags, and whatever else is important to the sleeper. Although yalka is a long strip of space between the sleepers’ heads and the windbreak, this space is divided up into personal spaces. Thus each sleeper in a row has his or her own yalka space, positioned just above his or her own head. These spaces are not physically separated from each other but there are very strong invisible boundaries along a yunta. Within the space
of a camp, the *yalka* space 'belonging' to a particular person is their most private space.\(^{36}\)

Whereas different degrees of privacy apply to all other spaces, this one is the most exclusive; one would only ever take items from the *yalka* space of another person if explicitly asked to do so.

**Kulkurr and yilipi**

Further named space, which however is not differentiated in terms of value, exists in relation to the positions sleepers take inside the *yunta*. *Kulkurr* means 'between, on the way, amid, in the middle, midway, halfway' and is used to describe the position of sleepers in the middle of a row of swags. *'Kulkurr nganaka'* thus means 'lie down in the middle!* *Yilipi* means 'edge, margin, side, outside, on the outer, periphery' and is the term denoting the positions of the sleepers on the outside of a row of swags, the ones who sleep next to the fires on the one side and the *kulkurr* sleepers on the other. *'Yilipi kurna nganami'* thus means 'I am sleeping on the side'.

Whether a person is a *yilipi* or a *kulkurr* sleeper does not carry any value connotations but depends on a number of factors. The prime one is personal disposition, some people like the outside; more, others the inside. Another factor is age, e.g. children generally sleep on the inside of rows, which are considered safer.\(^{37}\) Sleeping arrangements inside the *yunta* also depend on one’s relations to others in the same row.\(^{38}\) And sometimes they are purely practical, for example, one very old woman in a camp I stayed in was always placed *yilipi* ‘so she can make wee on the side’.

If a person positioned *kulkurr*, in the middle, leaves after the sleeping arrangements were made people close ranks. People leave often and for all sorts of reasons. For example, if a woman stayed with relatives while her husband was away and he returns late at night, she

\(^{36}\) Today other private space is found in suitcases stored in rooms, lockable cupboards, etc., see below.

\(^{37}\) The *kulkurr* position is considered safer for a number of reasons: it is further away from the fires, which, if the blankets come in contact with them can cause serious harm. It is also believed that if snakes do enter the *yunta* one is safer in the middle. There is also an emotional element to this, relating to fear of the dark and ‘spooky’ things. Especially when camping out bush, one does not quite know what is out there, both in terms of animals and people and spooky things and the *kulkurr* position quite simply feels safer.

\(^{38}\) The negotiations about sleeping arrangements in *yunta* are the focus of Chapter 6.
leaves the place she is sleeping at to move back home with her husband. Or there might be an emergency somewhere and a person leaves to help out. If on the other hand, one hopes to be picked up by a ‘loverboy’ at night, one would, if going to bed at all, sleep *yilpi*, on the outside, so one can disappear without causing a major disruption.

The swag of the person leaving, if they are not taking it with them, is put back into storage and the remaining swags are drawn together into an uninterrupted line. Most significantly, there is no concept of a single person *yunta* as a single camp on its own. Generally, people do not sleep on their own but always in close contact with others. Should most residents of a particular camp leave, say on a trip, and there is only a very small number of residents left, these will sleep elsewhere until the others return.

There are a number of different reasons for the aversion to sleeping alone, the main one being to avoid ‘loneliness’. To be without *marpa*, company, is unthinkable and to be avoided at all costs. The Warlpiri dictionary translates *marpa* as company, companion, companionship, accompanying, jointly. Dussart (2000:115-6) uses the term *marpa* to denote more specifically ‘friend’, in this thesis it is to carry the more general one of ‘sociality’ and ‘company’. I return to the term repeatedly in the ensuing chapters. Sleeping alone is an impossibility not only because the ‘lonely’ person would be unhappy but also because should something happen to that person the ones who left them without *marpa*, alone, would be the first to be blamed. This ties into what Myers (1986a) in great detail and elaboration for Pitjantjara has described as *kanyininpa* and Dussart (2000) for Warlpiri as *jinamardarni* – to hold and to look after – the principle notion underlying the character of Aboriginal relations in central Australia.

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3. There is one exception I know of, of an old widower who established his own camp after his wife’s death and although sometimes he has the company of sons, grandsons and nephews he often sleeps alone in his camp. His choice to live on his own has powerful connotations. It is a statement about the loneliness he feels and it postulates a strong appeal to his kin to look after him and care for him.

40. Another reason for close proximity at night is that it enables the sharing of dreams, see Dussart (2000: Chapter 4) for an excellent case study of the politics surrounding this practice and also Poirier (forthcoming).

41. In the context of this thesis translating *marpa* with ‘friend’ causes analytical difficulties since there already exists an Aboriginal English term ‘friend’ that at Yuendumu is reserved for relationships with non-Indigenous people. ‘Friend’ exclusively refers to a non-Indigenous person the speaker is in a relationship to based on shared past experiences which allows both parties to make demands on each other. While the same certainly also characterises most Warlpiri relationships in everyday parlance the latter are always described by kin terminology (see also Chapter 9).
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The number of *yunta*, on any one night in a particular camp depends on how many people are present and how relations are between them. The minimum is one, with an open-ended maximum, depending on occasion and location.\(^{42}\) Generally, even if relations are amicable, *yunta* considered ‘too long’ will be broken up. This may happen by placing a number of sleeping fires in between sleepers, thus effectively creating more *jiitpi* positions and thereby more *yunta*. Alternatively, a potential long row may be broken up into a number of separate *yunta* arranged parallel to each other, depending on the physical features of the terrain, e.g. when camping in a creek bed.

Camps, houses, and storage

In this thesis I use camp in the sense of ‘place where person lives habitually or for some time; place where person sleeps at night’ no matter whether attached to a house or not. However, if relevant I indicate the presence of a house whenever I present ethnographic examples. Warlpiri usage of houses differs greatly from Western usage, and this interplay between different domiciliary structures and behaviours is explored in ethnographic detail in the ensuing chapters. Here it suffices to briefly flag some of the main differences relevant to discussing issues of *yunta*.

(1) Life in houses occupied by Warlpiri people is oriented outwards rather than inwards, i.e. most ‘living activity’ takes place in the yard and on the verandah, including sleeping, cooking and eating on most days.

(2) Bedrooms, as well as other rooms, are used primarily for storage, and only secondarily for sleeping or socialising.

(3) Warlpiri occupied houses generally tend to have much less furniture in them than non-Indigenous occupied ones, as well as less decorative items.

In terms of spatiality, this means that the yard-orientedness of Warlpiri people leaves available to them the house as a space to put to other uses and purposes favoured by them. \(^{42}\) In the pre-

\(^{42}\) Thus, within Yuendumu more than six *yunta* have been observed within a single camp, while in bush camps there may be many more.
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contact past people did not have more possessions than they could carry and store in their yalka. Nowadays, Warlpiri people own many more things. The most prominent usage of houses thus is for storage.

First among people's possessions are items of bedding. Each adult person generally has his or her own swag or mattress, a ground sheet, a number of blankets, and often people have two sets, one for home and one for travelling. Bedding is stored in the rooms of houses (both 'bedrooms' and 'living rooms') and in the evenings is taken out into the yard for sleeping. Each adult person usually has at least one suitcase or large bag full of clothes, these are stored inside as well. Further items stored there are personal belongings, such as towels, pannikins, crowbars, television sets, paints, tools, and ritual paraphernalia.

Food is hardly ever stored in kitchens, except for perishable goods, which may be stored in the fridge if there is one.\(^4\) Rather than storing food, people often go shopping for each meal and keep their food close to their person where they can see it, for example on a low wall, or the roof of a shade structure. However, many people keep a small cache of 'emergency food' (mostly tinned items) hidden somewhere among their possessions.

Money is mostly stored in wallets, pockets, bras and handbags and together with other important and small belongings such as talismans, tablets, photographs, tobacco, matches and so on is carried on one's person and at night stored in the yalka place just above one's head.

Typically, further storage space is found in trees and shade structures surrounding a camp and/or house; this is where axes, shovels, rakes, spears and the like are kept. If there are shade structures with a roof, or the roof of the house itself is reachable, items are stored there as well, particularly kangaroo meat so that it is out of reach of the dogs. If there is a house, firewood is piled up next to the verandah, to keep it dry should it rain — otherwise it is left in a pile not too far from where people sleep (issues to do with firewood are discussed in more detail in Chapter 7).

\(^4\) Fridges often are considered to be personal belongings and are not used by all residents but only its owner and people close to the owner. Moreover, as fridges are often in easily accessible places, and mostly not lockable, many people do not consider it 'safe' to store food in them, as it may be taken by others.
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So far, I have focussed on the spatial differentiations within camps, next I sketch the place people take within camps. I begin with issues of gender distribution among different kinds of camps, and then look at the daily cycle focussing on activities performed inside the camps. The analysis of Warlpiri sociality in the camps at Yuendumu in the ensuing chapters will follow these delineations.

The spatiality of gendered camps

The gender and marital status of their residents further distinguish camps, i.e. this is a social not a spatial differentiation. As outlined in the previous chapter, there are three such basic kinds of camps (for detailed ethno-architectural discussion of the three types of camps, cf. Keys 1999; 2000).

These three kinds of camps are differentiated by the marital status of their adult residents, with married people sleeping in yupukarra, married people's camps. Unmarried people sleep in camps distinguished by gender, women in jilimi, women's camps, and men in jangkayi, men's camps.44 Children sleep in either yupukarra or jilimi, never in jangkayi.

Before sedentarisation the spatial ordering of these three types of camps occurred according to much stricter rules than today. Thus, when a large number of people camped together and all three types of camps where present, their order was prescribed in the following way. The married people's camps, the yupukarra, were situated in the middle, separated into individual family camps. To the west were be the single women's camp, the jilimi.45 And the single men's camp, the jangkayi, were to the east of the married people's camps. If within the same area, the jilimi and the jangkayi should be located as far from each other as possible (Keys 2000:126; Meggitt 1962:76). The iconographic depiction of an aggregation of all three types of camps in one place would look something like this Figure 12 (below). Nowadays, people try to adhere to

44 Although at Yuendumu currently a shift seems to be occurring from the former term jilimi to the term yarlukuru, which is imported from further south, in this thesis jilimi will be used to denote women's camps as the term is more prominent in the literature (on the two terms, see also Keys 1999:16-8).
45 A polite way of referring to women is karlarrwa-wardingki, 'those belonging to the west' (thanks to Derek Ellas for pointing that out), and the spatial association between the cardinal direction west and women, and the east and me features in much of Warlpiri thought as well as ritual spatial organisation.
THE SPATIALITY OF CAMPS

these rules, however there are a number of constraints. Yuendumu, as shown above, is a very large settlement currently encompassing six 'suburbs'. It is too large an aggregation of people and residences to make jangkayi in its east and jilimi in its west possible, or for that matter desirable.

← North

* | | | | | | * jangkayi (single men's camp)

yapukarra (married people's camps)

* | | | *

* | | | | *

* | | | *

* | | | | | | * jilimi (women's camp)

Figure 12: The spatiality of gendered camps

Further, the Western style houses in and around which most camps at Yuendumu are located make it hard to sustain this form of spatial ordering. When sleeping inside the house (which many people do when it is very cold or raining) orienting the head to the east may not be possible due to architectural constraints. And even though the residential separation of men, women, and married people or, of jangkayi, yapukarra, and jilimi, is always upheld, the rules of spatial orientation often cannot be maintained. Thus many single houses are either a jilimi, a jangkayi, or a yapukarra. Other houses, however, have two or all three kinds of camp located in and around them. In these cases, different gendered camps occupy different rooms, or,  

66 Keys (2000) argues that at Yuendumu houses are conceptually associated with yapukarra as this Warlpiri residential composition equates most closely to the Western nuclear family with which in mind most houses were erected. This warrants further investigation; I am not convinced this represents Warlpiri views and practice accurately.
when people are sleeping outside, are located either on different sides of the house, or, at least at some considerable distance from each other.

Camps and the daily cycle

The following general description of a typical daily cycle is based on observations of life in camps and excludes 'interruptions'. Many different occurrences truncate the flow of the daily cycle as described here. These will be discussed in Chapters 7 and 8, as in fact disruptions of the daily cycle are common.

In the description of the daily cycle I borrow the concept of time-zoning from Munro and Madigan (1999). Generally, the inside of a house is defined as private as opposed to the outside, which is public. Munro and Madigan show that private/public distinctions operate inside the house as well and not only spatially defined but temporally as well. They argue that the spatial division in Western houses into shared rooms (such as living rooms and bathrooms) with greater public access and private rooms (such as bedrooms and study) can be shown to be further extended temporally. Different people use these spaces, especially the shared ones, differently at different times. Time-zoning is thus the negotiation of relationships inside the private domain of the home by allocating space temporally to different persons and for different purposes.

An exploration of life in camps needs to pay attention to time-zoning as well, as the negotiations about the timed use of camp space tell much about the structuring of private relationships. A camp is a different place at different times of the day (or night) because different people congregate and perform different activities within them. What I am interested in are the contractions and expansions in terms of presence of people in the camp and the resulting periodisation of the 24 hours of a day. I will start the description of the daily cycle in the evening and form there work through the day.

47 For a comparative description of the daily cycle in houses and camps at Halls Creek, see Ross (1987, Chapter 4).
THE SPATIALITY OF CAMPS

Night time - munga-ngka

In the evenings yunta are put up for sleeping (the process of and negotiations evolving around this are the focus of Chapter 6). Yunta include some kind of windbreak on their eastern side, often a fire on each side of the row of sleepers, and the sleepers' bedding. Some people have swags, more often foam mattresses are used. Sleeping normally takes place on the ground, although some camps have beds in them. However, beds usually change 'owners' quickly, they also tend to move from camp to camp. Rather than using a sheet, mattresses are covered with a blanket, providing extra warmth. Depending on the season and temperatures, people use between one and as many as six or seven blankets on top of them to keep warm. Although some people sleep alone on their own mattress and underneath their own blankets, more usually, this space is shared. Couples obviously share a mattress. Women often share mattresses together and also have children sleep on the mattress with them. Children very seldomly only sleep on a mattress of their own. Men, when camping together, also often share blankets and mattresses. Usually, people do not change into sleepwear at night but keep their clothes on for extra warmth in winter, or take most of them off in the hot summer nights.

Although nowadays most camps at Yuendumu are attached to houses, people generally prefer to sleep outside. People will crowd into houses on rainy nights, or if it is very cold and the heaters are actually in working order. Most sleeping takes place in yards and on verandahs. The yunta are absent during the day, when all the bedding materials are stored inside the house, if one is present. Otherwise they are rolled up in bundles, and often stored in trees or on bushes, so that the dogs do not mess with them.

Once the yunta are set up people start retiring onto their mattresses, while continuing conversations started at dinner time, or watching television (television sets are often brought out at night and put up in front of a yunta, alternatively, people watch inside and then come outside to sleep). Unless there are disturbances, from about midnight until just after dawn the camp is a quiet place. Its residents are asleep in rows reflecting groupings into different yunta, disturbed by nothing but the occasional need to push a log further into a warm fire, and maybe a pack of dogs howling now and again.
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Morning time - mungalyuru-ria

As the sun comes up, the camp slowly comes to life. The rustling of older women starting the cooking fires announces the beginning of the day. As the women prepare tea and damper the remaining sleepers get up in their own time and congregate around the cooking fires. Many camps are attached to houses and these often have kitchens, however most are ill equipped, stoves more often than not are broken, and cooking Warlpiri style is more easily done on fires. If there is a house, cooking fires are outside in the yard, or on the verandah if cold or rainy. Otherwise they are located close to the junta.

Sitting in groups around the fire in the morning is a social activity much cherished, both for the warmth provided by the fire and for its sociality. This is the time when visitors from other camps might come over to share breakfast. Particularly sons of the older damper-making women if sleeping in a different camp, might drop in to pick up ‘their’ damper; and grandsons might stroll into the camp, sit down at their grandmother’s fire and have breakfast there. Breakfast is a sociable time, with people eating, chatting, and discussing their nightly dreams or their plans for the day.\(^{48}\)

Generally, people who sleep in one junta, eat from the same fire. If they have them, they add items to the breakfast such as butter, jam, or tin-of-meat. If relations between different junta in the same camp at different fires are amicable, butter or jam might be passed from one group to the next, or everybody congregates around the same fire. Depending on the number of residents present in a camp and the relations between them there may be anything between one and five or more cooking fires in the mornings. Often, closely related and aligned junta share one cooking fire (issues to do with breakfast are discussed in more depth in Chapter 7).

Once breakfast is finished the cooking fires are allowed to burn down, unless it is cold, when they are turned into warmth fires for the residents remaining in the camp. Those residents with a job, a hunting trip planned or any other task at hand leave the camp. Usually only the old and infirm and very young children remain in the camp, with a few people to look after them and keep them company (marlpa-ku, for company). They pass the time chatting, playing cards,

\(^{48}\) Breakfast, with a focus on damper production and distribution, is discussed in depth in Chapter 7.
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working on acrylic paintings, carvings etc. Children go to school, play in the camp or may go to find friends to play with – and often take off not to be seen again until dinner time.

Lunch time – kala-ria

Around lunchtime the camp fills up again with those people coming home for lunch. Many eat lunch away from the camp at work, or at the shop’s Take Away. For those who come home to the camp, lunch is a more individual and briefer affair than either breakfast or dinner and not normally very structured. Sometimes, a large pot of soup is made, from which everybody who comes home to the camp for lunch will serve him or herself. Again, this soup is usually cooked over a fire rather than on the stove. In order to cook it, a large pot is needed, something that is not always available. After lunch, some people return to their jobs, go hunting, or for a drive or walk around the community to see what is going on, and the remaining people stay in the camp (two practices associated with day-time sociality are ‘cruising’ and ‘hithering and thithering’, which are analysed in Chapter 7). Especially in summer when it is overpoweringly hot, a camp after lunchtime is made up of groups of people congregating on blankets in any available shaded place, sleeping, reading magazines, de-lousing each other, discussing what happened earlier in the day and gossiping.

Afternoon time – wuraj-ria

As the afternoon wears on, those people who had been elsewhere return to the camp, and others from other camps come visiting. By now there will be large groups of people sitting on blankets, socialising; this is also the time to start getting firewood. As it gets dark, most visitors leave the camp they are visiting for their own and the cooking fires are started again. Dinner is a more intimate affair of people gathering around ‘their’ cooking fires in small groups, sharing food and company. A large billy of tea is cooked on each and shared by the group of people using that particular fire. Individual women around one fire put meat they each bought (or

49 Warlipiri soup is a stock made of chicken noodle soup (or similar), with chops and/or sausages, and sometimes vegetables such as pumpkin, potatoes, onions added.
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received as gifts) on the fire and then share it with the children they are responsible for and whoever else asks for a share. Men sometimes prepare their own meat, or have it cooked for them by their wives, mothers, or grandmothers – depending on where they are eating and who is present.

Around sunset and after - wuraji-wuraji-rla

After dinner, there is again an intense period of visiting; people coming and going to visit from camp to camp for 'story time'. 'Story time' means sitting around a fire with close friends and relatives and exchanging news and gossip, remembering events from the past, planning trips, and joking. If there are groups of senior women present 'story time' often turns into singing of jinkurpa songs and telling 'olden days' or 'early days' stories (pre-contact and contact stories). Alternatively, if there is a television set (and a video recorder), or a playstation, in the camp, this provides entertainment. As it gets late, the last visitors leave, swags and bedding will be brought out and put into different jupata and then one by one people lie down to sleep as they get tired.

In a 24-hour period a camp thus experiences quiet times, such as at night when people are asleep and in the mornings after most residents have left after breakfast. Other times are intensely social, such as breakfast, latish afternoons and 'story time'. Others again are distinguished by their intimacy, like dinnertime. This time-zoning underlies the ethnographic chapters to follow. Chapter 5 distinguishes between 'residents', those people who sleep in a camp, and visitors, those who visit during the day; and look at the former. Chapter 6 focuses on relations between residents by examining the negotiations around sleeping arrangements. Chapter 7 is concerned with time-zoning within the camp during the day and looks at how individual and collective webs of sociality are spun between different locations within the settlement during the day.

Camps are rarely ever empty of people. Empty camps are considered 'spooky', especially since nobody is present to watch over what is going on and people have no idea who and what entered the camp during their absence. However, most camps contain a number of old people and young children who stay 'home' a lot of the time, and watch over the camp. Camps only
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ever are empty when all, or most, residents travel to another community, or when they get deserted because a death occurred.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have outlined the terminology, distinctions and practices that spatially structure Warlpiri camps at Yuendumu. These spatial categorisations provide the foundation on which I will build the explorations the interconnections between residential practice and sociality to follow in the ensuing chapters.

Working from the most encompassing to the most singular I have here shown that Yuendumu currently is made up of six named Camps, or 'suburb-like' clusters. Boundaries between them have shown to be fluid and open to change. Within each of those larger Camps are located the individual residences of people, often located in or around houses. These I have named camps (with a small 'c'). The spatiality of camps has been shown to be built around a number of axes.

Private/public distinctions are expressed on a number of levels, distinguishing the outside from the inside of the camp and within the camp spaces of varying degrees of publicness/privacy. Spatially, one camp is distinct from the next. However, Chapter 5 will show that the residential composition of many camps fluctuates so considerably that the spatial unit of a camp does not have a correspondingly stable social unit of residents.

Within the camp space this chapter further distinguished yunta as 'more private' — these are only entered by people belonging to the actual yunta but not by other people from the same camp. Chapter 6, by examining the negotiations around putting up yunta at night, and the relationships between people in different yunta within the one camp will show that socially, yunta are smaller social units within the larger unit of a camp, but equally as unstable as the larger residential compositions of camps. It will also look at the smallest public/private distinction within yunta by examining sleeping positions in regard to personhood.

This is spatial zoning of camps has been shown to be further compounded through the time-zoning or the divergent uses of camp space by different people at different times of the day for
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different purposes. This will be taken up in Chapters 7 and 8. Lastly, camps have been shown to be gender divided into three different types, *yupukara*, *jangkayi*, and *jilimi*. It is on the latter, *jilimi*, that the emphasis of this thesis lies. In the following chapter I analyse developments and changes to Warlpiri practices in relation to marriage, which underlie the increased importance of *jilimi* to contemporary social life at Yuendumu.
CHAPTER THREE
TRANSFORMATIONS OF MARRIAGE ARRANGEMENTS

In 1959 the Warrabri Warlpiri were, for Meggitt, characterized by a low incidence of polygamy. In 1979 I found a willingness to absorb alternate marriages into the correct category and a substantial proportion of women choosing to live in the jilimi. Will the Warlpiri ethnographer of 1999 find monogamous Warlpiri or a high incidence of bachelors? (Bell 1980b:266).

The above quote forms the conclusion to Bell's comparative paper on changes in Warlpiri marriage practices and choices (as well as anthropologist's analyses thereof) and it serves perfectly to introduce this chapter. I here outline Warlpiri marriage practices as described by Meggitt, based on his research in the 50s, and those of the 70s as described by Bell, to contrast with my own data from the late 90s. These comparisons allow me to delineate the changes Warlpiri marriage practices have undergone over the last 50 years or so, to flag some of the factors that have triggered these changes, and to formulate the description of these changes in marriage practice on contemporary Warlpiri residence patterns and sociality.

A nuclear family, i.e. a husband, wife and their children, is one of the most significant core units around which societies are built. Any individual's most immediate relationships, those between husband and wife, between children and parents, and between siblings are encapsulated within it. How these relationships are realised in actual practice is dependent upon the form marriages take. Whether a nuclear family lives residentially independently, in separate buildings, or in an extended family, whether they are financially independent or share their means of production and consumption with others, what each member's rights and responsibilities are and so forth are issues that can only be discussed once the elemental make-up is understood. The central questions underlying this chapter therefore are: What constitutes a marriage in Warlpiri eyes today? How has that changed from the past? What do these changes mean in regard to the way Warlpiri people live their lives today?

Here, I approach the question in a twofold manner. I begin with a comparison between Meggitt's data and my own, to examine continuities and changes in marriage practice over the
period between our respective fieldwork times. This comparison is supplemented by
discussions of Bell’s data, which describes the temporal midway point of the developments
described.

In the second half of this chapter, contemporary marriage is situated in and against a range of
other relationships, before turning to issues of co-residency, the place of children and the
effects of widowhood, economic rights and responsibilities and domestic violence. Thus
contextualised, a basis is provided for understanding the enormous fluidity of contemporary
Warlpiri sociality, especially among the young.

Warlpiri Marriages: Continuities and Changes

Meggitt’s ethnography is the most extensive anthropological source of issues to do with
Warlpiri marriage, and also one of the earliest. Elkin, in his foreword to Desert People
characterises Warlpiri people, based on Meggitt’s ethnography, as a virile people who “are loyal
to their social order, with 91 per cent of marriages conforming to the ideal rules; and they
believe in stable marriages, particularly in the interest of their children” (Elkin in Meggitt
1962:xii). This quote points to a number of issues that need disentangling when using Meggitt’s
data as a baseline. First and foremost is the problematic relationship between rules and beliefs
on the one hand (i.e. the normative), and social practice on the other, an unresolved tension
that underlies Meggitt’s work. Niblett (1992) has analysed the way in which Meggitt’s
ethnography is composed of two almost oppositional textual elements: the anthropological
text detailing rules and norms, and the ethnographic vignettes featuring portrayals of ‘real life’.

A sense of disjunction between text and vignette becomes particularly noticeable in the
“normality” of the discussion of marriage rules, as against the sexuality, emotion,
vigour and conflict depicted in the vignettes. The “norms” of behaviour between
husband and wife are explicated in the text; the vignettes however depict marital
relations as a site of constant struggle and disharmony. Although Meggitt asserts that
his observations confirmed that the “ideal” of “permanent, stable unions” was
generally achieved, the vignettes focus almost exclusively on the extra-marital, amatory
exploits of both men and women, suggesting that the jural realm cannot contain actual
behaviour. Issues of loyalty, jealousy, self-esteem, vengeance and passion are
highlighted as pivotal moments in the social drama of everyday life (Niblett 1992:58).
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It is important, therefore, to distinguish between and relate to each other 'the normative' and 'the real' in any discussion of Warlpiri marriage.

Related to ‘the normative’ is the second point to be kept in mind. Namely, that Warlpiri marriage rules in Meggitt’s discussion, and therefore also in the comparison between his data and mine, are separated into two analytically different areas. The first one is how to get married, and the second, who to get married to. Different rules apply to them respectively, which I will discuss separately.

A last point to be observed when engaging Meggitt’s data as a baseline is that, generally speaking, it is inherently atemporal. Warlpiri people as portrayed by Meggitt, although resident in government settlements, cattle stations and mines, seem unperturbed by any changes and to continue without faltering their adherence to the rules of pre-contact and pre-settlement life. I will not attempt to disentangle these issues but take Meggitt’s data to represent some past against which to present my data. The one exception to this is his comparison between the data about marriages at Yuendumu and Hooker Creek and that of Warlpiri people resident at Warrabri. The latter, he says, show statistically significant diversions in their marriage practices which he reads as an “index of the heavier impact of European culture” (Meggitt 1965:157).

Moreover, these people are the ones that Bell refers to in her paper on Warlpiri marriage practice in the 70s, quoted in the introductory passage of this chapter. Bell’s data, while positioned temporally between Meggitt’s and mine is thus based on research with Warlpiri people who at least during Meggitt’s time were quite distinct from Yuendumu Warlpiri.

Keeping these points in mind, in the following I present comparisons between Meggitt’s, Bell’s and my data about Warlpiri marriage by looking at the normative level first, discussing how to get married Warlpiri way, and then looking at adherence to these rules by examining who people get married to. Next, I discuss the issue of marriage stability and changes in regard to this over the same period. The results of these comparisons will be grounded within the discussion of contemporary practice in the second part of this chapter.

How to get married

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TRANSFORMATIONS OF MARRIAGE ARRANGEMENTS

According to Meggitt there were three ways for a man to legitimately acquire a wife: “through the levirate, through private negotiation with the women’s kinsmen, and as a result of being circumcised by a man who becomes his father-in-law” (1962:264). Bride price is paid in the second and third case and betrothal only takes place in the last case, that is when a marriage is arranged through a promise at circumcision.

Meggitt contrasts these three accepted forms of marriage with two interrelated forms of relationships: liaisons and elopements. Adultery he describes as a common practice, causing numerous fights (giving detailed descriptions of these and the punishments administered in specific cases), but overall considered normal practice. Elopements, he says, are rare and uncommon – if they occur and the couple involved is successful, these do result in marriages, however.

Promised marriage

The ideal marriage, according to Meggitt, is the eventuation of arrangements made between circumciser and circumcised during initiation. In detail, this is what he says:

The ideal marriage arrangement, and indeed the most common, is that in which a man promises his daughter (as yet unborn) to the M.B.S.S. or the “mother’s brother” whom he has circumcised [...] irrespective of the kinship status of the circumciser, a betrothal is essentially a union between two matriline of descent. The circumcision ceremony is, among other things, a public indication that a particular matriline will later provide the lad with a wife. Other men, by acting as the boy’s juaalbiri, those who decorate him before the circumcision, guarantee that they will ensure that this matriline honours its obligation. (Meggitt 1962:266)

Bell describes two crucial points of difference between her and Meggitt’s data in regard to promised marriages. First, she elaborates upon the politics surrounding the ‘promise’ made during initiation rituals, pointing out that women also are involved in a twofold manner in these negotiations. Women discuss their respective wishes with their husbands and thus both the father of a boy to be circumcised and the circumciser would at least know about and often head their wife’s wishes in each instance. Further, and more importantly, Bell describes the

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50 The term ‘brideprice’ is Meggitt’s. Since gifts are exchanged regularly between the parties until the death of the husband, and since the initial gift at betrothal differs greatly in extent and in meaning from other ethnographic circumstances where ‘brideprice’ is paid, the term is not well chosen.
practice cf. women making equivalent promises amongst themselves. During the slightly
dancing at initiation ceremonies the following event takes place:

In the early hours of the morning, the initiate's mother, who has during previous nights
danced with and cared for the firestick, passes it to the woman she wishes to have as
mother to her daughter-in-law. This, the women insist, is a decision taken
independently of the men. (Bell 1980b:255; see also Bell 1993 Chapter 4).

Often the chosen woman is the actual wife of the circumciser, if not, Bell maintains, this
simply means that some men have two promised wives (1980b:257-8). The second crucial
difference between Meggitt's and Bell's data is that Bell points out that a promised marriage
generally is a woman's first marriage, and thus constitutes only the first stage of a life long
process of serial monogamy (Bell 1960b:266). To summarise the differences: Bell asserts that
promised marriages are not negotiated exclusively by men for men but incorporate and run
parallel to promises made by women for women, and she emphasises that promised marriages
are not ideal marriage so much as women's first marriages. Today, things are different again. As
one informant answered my question about differences in marriage prac:

Olden days, father and father's brother of the girls promised them to their husband,
close family, all travelling together, close country to keep it all together. Also, they
promise them at business. Today, there's no more promised marriages cause young
people don't listen.

The first case refers to the negotiation based marriages Meggitt described. These do not take
place any more today. The claim about the dwindling of initiation related promises needs to be
qualified. It is not so much that the making of promises at initiation does not take place any
more but rather that these marriages often do not eventuate today. Another informant
compared the Yuendumu situation to the one at Willowra in the following conversation I had
with her about a man from Willowra who visited with his four wives:

- At Willowra, they get promised wives from business, when women dance, they
  promise babies in parrajas [baby carriers].
- Don't you do that at Yuendumu, too?

\footnote{At Yuendumu, Willowra is often described as a place where people 'adhere to The Law properly', examples of which are cases like the above cited marriage, as well as more regular ritual performance, suspicions about power, failure originating from there, as well as the fact that Willowra Warlpiri is said to be stronger as a language and less corrupted by English than the Warlpiri spoken in other places (cf. Dussart 1988a:59). I suspect, though, that strong adherence to 'The Law' at Willowra, as elsewhere, might be a preoccupation of the older generations.}
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- Yes, but after, they marry people same age. In Willowa they marry promised wives.

Whether or not this is true for Willowa, this statement makes a point about Yuendumu. Promises are still being made at initiation at both settlements, however, at Yuendumu people do not, as a rule, adhere to them. Initiation rites take place at Yuendumu almost every year and generally all boys get initiated, meaning, all initiated men have a promised wife. Promises are made public by the announcement of the identity of circumciser during initiation ceremonies, as well as by the practice described by Bell where women choose a mother-in-law for their son through passing over the firestick at the nightly dancing. The difference between Willowa and Yuendumu the informant alludes to is that at Willowa these promises have consequences whereas at Yuendumu marriages thus arranged rarely eventuate. At Yuendumu, not many end up marrying their 'promised one'. Today, there are not many avenues open to Warlpiri men to enforce the marriage with their 'promised one' – should they so wish. If however, both parties are amenable to the idea, these marriages do eventuate. I did not collect data on this issue specifically, but when taking genealogies, marriages between 'promised ones' generally were pointed out to me. There are a number of women in their twenties and thirties who are married to their 'promised ones', but many more who are not.

Women of the younger generations married to their 'promised one' are considered neither a rarity nor an oddity. If promised marriages work out, people are happy, if not, they are not too concerned. And those that have not eventuated always remain a possibility – giving grounds for lots of joking. For example, should a number of women be sitting around gossiping and the topic turns to a particular man who is the 'promised one' of one of the women, or particularly girls, present, he will be referred to as 'your husband' with a nod in the direction of the girl, rather than by some other reference – occasioning a good deal of laughter. Even if promised marriages do not eventuate, the respective 'promised' spouses are linked to each other in everybody's minds, as often is established through and reinforced by joking. I collected one story of a girl who fell in love with her 'promised one' – unaware of the promise. She was very embarrassed when she found out, and at first did not tell her family of her liaison with him, fearing their joking. This incident suggests that promised marriage and 'romantic love' may be seen as something quite distinct, something Bell also alludes to and I will discuss in more detail below.
Other ways of legitimately getting married

As indicated in Meggitt's quote above, matrilines are instrumental in organising 'promised' marriages, but also in the other two ways of 'legitimately acquiring a wife', i.e. negotiation and levirate. Peterson (1969) has further elaborated on the roles of matrilines in marriage arrangements (and the relationships between matrilines and patrilines to secular and ritual life respectively), and Dussart (1992b) provided examples of members of matrilines, even in the form of a woman's own children, objecting to or wanting to influence widow's choices to remarry in the 80s. Bell, while sketching the circumstances under which a widow in the 70s may consider the levirate, namely, when the brother of her late husband is married to a close sister of hers, indicates the beginning of the demise of the levirate years ago:

In keeping with the demographic pressures generated by polygamy, one could expect a widowed woman to be subject to the levirate, but, although this is a male expectation, it is frequently flouted successfully by women (Bell 1980b:258).

Dussart (1992b) presents both pre-settlement and post-settlement examples of widows avoiding the choices their mother's brothers made for their remarriage. Today, there are a number of marriages in the oldest generation of Waripi people alive which came about through the levirate, however, I am not aware of a continuation of this practice by the younger generations, nor of negotiations between families, particularly matrilines, resulting in the marriage of a young girl. The absence of the other two ways of 'legitimately acquiring a wife', among other things, indicate that today the influence of matrilines over a woman's marriage choices is distinctly diminished.

Betrothal

Meggitt describes promised marriages to in fact be a three step process: the promise made during initiation, the betrothal which takes place some years after the initiation of the husband to the, and the eventualisation of the marriage once the girl has come of age. While the first step is part of the initiation ceremony, and the third peculiar in its absence of ritual (to be discussed below), the second step, betrothal, is a ritual performed in its own right.
Betrothal occurs some years after the circumcision of the husband to be, when the promised girl is between six and 18 months old (Meggitt 1962:266). The betrothal is a performance involving only people closely related to the future spouses but within public view and observable by all present.\(^{52}\) It includes a number of real and symbolic exchanges.

In his camp, the husband to be, his parents, mother's brother(s), and sometimes his elder brothers, that is, those people who helped him organise the bride price will wait, placed next to the bride price. This comprises cooked meat and items such as spears and boomerangs and, a rare allowance to change, during Meggitt's time also blankets, clothes, and cash. From her parent's camp, the girl is carried over to her future husband by her mother's brother. While walking from the one camp to the other with the girl on his arms, the mother's brother proclaims for all to hear what he is doing, i.e. he makes official announcements about the betrothal and whom it involves. Upon arrival in the future husband's camp, her mother's brother will place the girl on the right thigh of his husband to be. He then proceeds to give a speech about the betrothal to all present in the camp. When all present agree to what he says, he carries the girl back to her parent's camp and then returns for the bride price. This, also, he carries back to the girl's parent's camp, where her parents and the mother's brother will eat the cooked meat and divide the other items between them. A few days later, the girl's mother prepares vegetable food for the girl's mother's brother to take over to the future husband's camp. It will then be eaten by the husband and those who contributed towards the bride price. This act concludes the exchanges of the actual betrothal, but from then on the flow of meat from the husband to the wife's parents and mother's brother continues.\(^{53}\)

The central role of the mother's brother during betrothal underlies the significance of matriline in marriage arrangements. I have never witnessed a betrothal, nor do they to the best of my knowledge take place anymore at Yuendumu. Neither could I find anything about betrothals in Bell's data. The abolition of this practice suggests increasing loss of influence of matriline over marriage arrangements, and a shift towards more personal and less matriline-influenced decisions in regard to marriage.

\(^{52}\) In the pre-settlement era there would have been distinctly fewer onlookers.

\(^{53}\) The issue of food exchanges in relation to marriage (and others sexual relations) is a significant one and I will discuss it in more depth below.
Realisation of marriage

In stark contrast to both the promise at initiation and the betrothal, the actual marriage, which takes even months years later, does not involve any further ritual acts. Meggitt describes that the marriage is announced by the woman joining her husband in his camp:

When a man thinks his betrothed is old enough to leave her mother – that is, when she is about eight or nine years old – he privately asks her father and mother's brother to send her to his shelter. The men instruct the girl's mother accordingly, and the girl joins her husband without any formality. Her father and mother's brother simply tell onlookers that the betrothal is consummated (Meggitt 1962:268-69).

Significantly, especially in respect to contemporary practices at Yuendumu, Meggitt points out the following:

The statement that there is no wedding ceremony requires comment. The people regard the initial removal of the girl to her husband's dwelling at his request as the termination of the betrothal and the beginning of marriage. Her walking through the camp to join the man constitutes the public statement of fact (Meggitt 1962:269).

As for the other two forms of accepted, or legitimate, ways of acquiring a wife, i.e. levirate and private negotiations with a girl's matriline, here too, the public announcement of the marriage being in place is made through the woman walking to her new husband's camp and joining him there.

Very significantly, this aspect of Warlpiri marriages had not changed at all. A marriage today is announced by the public moving of swags from one spouse's former residence to the residence of the other spouse. Today, it is not always the new wife moving in with her husband, it may also be the other way around.54 Indeed, the only way of knowing whether or not two people were married at Yuendumu during my research, if they weren't already by all known to be married, was to hear that they lived together in a married people's camp. As described in the previous chapter, married people's residences are denominated by a term of

54 And, since most Warlpiri people live in and around houses rather than in olden style camps, and there is a shortage of housing at Yuendumu, more often than not a newly married couple will share a house with others rather than setting up an individual camp.
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their own, yepukarra, and are distinguished from those residences sheltering males, jangkayi, and those sheltering female, jillimi. This residential categorisation into married and unmarried people on the one hand, and male and female on the other is crucial to an understanding of Warlpiri marriage.

There is no ceremony or ritual in place that marks the changed status from single person to married person apart from the ‘moving in with’. Warlpiri people do not tend to get married in civil or religious ceremonies. Living with each other in a yepukarra, and public acceptance of this arrangement as constituting a marriage fulfil these requirements, even in the eyes of the Australian state.

Who to get married to

According to Meggitt, during his research there existed two acceptable ways for spouses to be related to each other. The first, preferred one, is that a “man should find his wife among the women who are his classificatory mother’s mother’s brother’s daughter’s daughters” (Meggitt 1962:85). Actual MMBDD are considered too closely related however. The second, alternative, union is between a man and his classificatory mother’s brother’s daughter (MBD). All others relationships, he reports, are classified as prohibited (they nonetheless, if irregularly, occurred of course).

The 91 per cent adherence to marriage rules Elkin refers to in the foreword originate from Meggitt’s data about what he calls ‘adherence to marriage rules’ (Meggitt 1962:86). As described above, this relates to the how to get married, but is different to it by focussing on the who to get married to. Meggitt reports 566 of 617 recorded marriages, or 91.6 per cent, to be unions of the two acceptable ways, i.e. between classificatory MMBDD and MFZDS, and between classificatory MBD and FZS (see Figure 13 below). The remaining recorded

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55 I know of only two exceptions, both involving a Warlpiri and a non-Indigenous spouse, and living outside Warlpiri country.
56 When filling out forms, whether for welfare, taxation or other purposes, Warlpiri people do not seem to be required to prove their marital status by anything but their word. And it needs to be kept in mind that a Warlpiri marriage substantially differs from both a certified Australian marriage and a de facto relationship. Warlpiri spouses are highly unlikely to share their financial arrangements – a prerequisite for de facto relationships; and Warlpiri divorces do not require courts and other administrative involvement.
marriages, that is the ones not adhering to the rules are between a man and his classificatory M, MM, ZD, WM, Z, MFZ, and DD.

In regard to these choices of right and wrong marriage partners, Bell states that:

In 1979 Warrabri Warlpiri women identified a third choice marriage with a mother’s mother’s brother (mmb) as acceptable though not preferable [...] Perhaps in another twenty years this marriage will be absorbed into the correct category, and the Warrabri Warlpiri claim that they marry ‘straight’ can be sustained (Bell 1980a:249).

Today, Warlpiri people indeed assert that there are three accepted or ‘right’ marriage choices, called ‘1st’, ‘2nd’ and ‘3rd’ choice’ respectively. The former two equal those described by Meggitt, i.e. they are unions with those one calls ‘spouse’ (classificatory MMBDD – MFZDS) and those one calls ‘cross-cousin’ (classificatory MBD – FZS). I could not find out anything at all about when or how the 3rd choice emerged, or where the idea originated from, it may well be Alekarenge. At Yuendumu today, everybody across all ages simply asserts there are three ‘right’ choices.

Figure 13: 1st, 2nd and 3rd choice relationships
(note: actual genealogical links are considered too close, for a marriage to become possible, these relationships need to be classificatory)

However, there is a slight difference between the 3rd choice at Yuendumu and the one Bell describes for Alekarenge. While both are with a partner of the exact same subsection, there is a
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generational difference. The Yuendumu 3rd choice is not with a MMB, who would be much too old, but with a 'second cousin', that is between classificatory MMBSD and FFZDS (see Figure 13). All other unions are called 'wrong marriages'.

In his discussions about Warlpiri marriages (and other relevant issues) Meggitt has always maintained that the actual kinship connections are significant, and subsection terminology serves only as shorthand to summarise these. Meggitt has been very adamant in pointing out that Warlpiri subsections should not be misunderstood as marriage classes (see especially his response to Lévi-Strauss, Meggitt 1968). However, as outlined in Chapter 1, subsections are a very useful shorthand to describe most complex issues and for a number of reasons I will utilise them in the comparison between his data and mine (keeping in mind that subsection terminology subsumes under it much more intricate detail). First, while fully aware that subsections are shorthand for more complex realities, Warlpiri people use them incessantly when talking about marriage. A lot of my data is thus formulated in those terms. And second, since Meggitt conducted fieldwork, many things have changed, chief among them the extent of mobility and following this, an enormous increase in marriages with people from further afield. While these people often can easily be accommodated into the classificatory subsection system, actual kin links are much more arduously established.

An easy way to describe 'right' and 'wrong' marriages is by looking at alternate generation moieties (see Table 2). These comprise four subsections each.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Alternate Generation Moiety A</th>
<th>Alternate generation Moiety B</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>N/Japanangka</td>
<td>N/Jakamara</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Na/Jupurrula</td>
<td>N/Jpaljarri</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N/Jangala</td>
<td>N/Jampijinpa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N/Jungarrayi</td>
<td>N/Japangardi</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2: Alternate generation moieties

The marriage rules translate in the following way into alternate generation moieties. One finds one's potential spouses within one's own generational moiety, excluding those that are siblings. Put differently, this means that one's 1st, 2nd and 3rd choice marriage partners are of those subsections that are not one's own within one's own alternate generation moiety.
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For example, a Napanangka's 1st choice marriage partner would be a person of the Jupurrula subsection (MBDDS), her 2nd choice marriage partner would be a Jangala (FZS), and her 3rd choice a Jungarrayi (FFZDS, or according to Bell: MMB). All other subsections are considered 'wrong' for her, that is, she cannot with approval marry a Japanangka, who would be her classificatory brother, or any person of a subsection belonging to the opposite alternate generation moiety.

Wrong marriages are thus those between siblings, and between members of the opposite alternate generation moiety. Expressed in kinship terms, wrong marriages comprise the following classificatory relationships. Within one's own alternate generation moiety, the not marriageable relationship is between brother and sister (B – Z), and between alternate generation moieties, the relationships comprise mother-in-law – son-in-law (MIL – SIL), mother's brother – sister's daughter (MB – ZD), mother – son (M – S), and daughter and father (D – F).

To be able to compare Meggitt's data with my own I have translated both into the most direct classificatory link, and adjusted Meggitt's data in respect the recent emergence of a '3rd choice'. Table 3 presents the results of the comparison between marriages during Meggitt's research and mine.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Meggitt</th>
<th>YM</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL marriages</td>
<td>617</td>
<td>662</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1st choice</td>
<td>566</td>
<td>442</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd &amp; 3rd choice</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>174</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL right marriages</td>
<td>602</td>
<td>616</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B – Z</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MIL – SIL</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MB – ZD</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M – S</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D – F</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL wrong marriages</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3: Comparison between Meggitt's data on 'right' and 'wrong' marriages, and my own
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What is striking about this comparison is that the percentage of right to wrong marriages has not changed as much as could be expected over a period of some 50 years – as Bell in the above quote predicted would happen through absorption of a third choice into the correct possibilities. With the adjustments made for inclusion of 3rd choice, during Meggitt’s research the ratio of wrong marriages was 2.4 percent.57 By the time I conducted research, this had risen to 6.9 percent. This is some increase but considerably less than could be expected, especially in the light of the numerous complaints mainly older Wardpí people make about “wrong marriages all the time”.58 There is a very significant shift towards 2nd and 3rd choice and away from 1st choice marriages, as Bell also noted:

The sharp distinction, in 1959, between preferred and alternate marriage [1st and 2nd choice respectively] is in 1979, less sharply drawn so that either marriage is now considered equally correct (Bell 1980b:249).

This trend has continued and incorporated into it the 3rd choice option. All three are accepted as ‘right marriages’ today, and through this adjustment the one thing that has not changed significantly is the ratio between ‘right’ and ‘wrong’ marriages.

In respect to ‘wrong marriages’, even though statistically not significant what stands out is that both in Meggitt’s and in my data marriages between B – Z and F – D take place less often than those between Mil – Sil, MB – ZD, and M – S. These latter ones, especially the relationship between Mil – Sil are the ones linked to incest (see among others Hlatt 1984; Merlan 1997).59 Jakumpa stories abound with ‘wrong marriages’ between mothers in law and sons in law and the resulting punishments.

‘Wrong marriages’ exclusively are the ones between the kin relationships here described. In the case of a marriage between a Wardpí person and a spouse from a place where subsections are

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57 This means, that by refiguring Meggitt’s data to include ‘third choice’ marriages, the comparable rate for his data rises to 97 per cent. The related rate for my data is 93 percent. Compare also with diagram in Bell (Bell 1980b:249) which expresses the same dynamics, unfortunately lacking numbers, so I could not include it into my tables.
58 While they may be referring to the how of marriages as well, in the main these comments are directed towards the who, i.e. “wrong marriage” in the first instance is aimed at marriages between partners of the wrong subsections.
59 In contrast to Arnhem Land (see amongst many others Hlatt 1965; Keen 1994; Merlan 1997; Shapiro 1979; Warner 1937), Wardpí do not practice B – Z avoidance at any level.
not in use, no such evaluations are made.\textsuperscript{60} I recorded 76 such marriages between a Warlpiri spouse and a spouse from elsewhere with no subsection designation and therefore no translatable classificatory kin relationship. These marriages are listed in Table 4 (below) according to the language association and/or regions of the spouses.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Warlpiri Male</th>
<th>Warlpiri Female</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kardiya</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arrernte*</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alyawarre*</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pijantjijara*</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Australia</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Western Australia</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Top End</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qld. &amp; Torres Strait</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>37</strong></td>
<td><strong>39</strong></td>
<td><strong>76</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4: Outmarriage

* excluding those with prior (and know) subsection affiliation, these are included in Table 3

Out of a total of 738 Warlpiri marriages I recorded, 76, or just over 10 percent, were with spouses from further afield – a significant number. Further, these people come from a very wide geographical radius indeed, from Sydney, Adelaide, Darwin, the Top End, Torres Strait, to Queensland and Western Australia (cf. Figure 1 in at the front of Chapter 1 which provides a map of Australia representative the main locations non-Warlpiri spouses are from). I will focus on how such unions are made throughout this thesis; here I would like to note two issues. First, the not very surprising fact that almost three times as many Warlpiri women are married to Kardiya men than are Warlpiri men to Kardiya women. This obviously is due to the nature of inter-racial relations in the Northern Territory (cf. among others Cowlishaw 1999). This is further compounded by the fact that those Warlpiri men who married Kardiya women generally reside outside the Northern Territory, in or close to the capital cities in the southeast. Second, the disproportionately high number of marriages of Warlpiri men to Arrernte women needs explaining. I suspect this number is partly due to the fact that a lot of the Arrernte

\textsuperscript{60} In these cases, the spouse from afar simply is allocated the 1st choice subsection term.
husbands of Warlpiri wives have known subsection terms and are thus included in Table 3 while many of the Arrernte wives' subsection affiliation were not known to my informants and they are thus included in Table 5.

Stability

The general picture Meggitt presents of Warlpiri marriages at the time of his research is one of stormy durability. On the one hand, he declares, that “the Walbiri divorce-rate is much lower than that in a number of native societies” (Meggitt 1962:103) and asserts that “the norm of long-term unions is generally achieved” (ibid.). On the other, he elaborates that “there is a high incidence of casual adultery” (Meggitt 1962:104), and his ethnography is testament to that by providing numerous detailed case studies revolving around disputes to do with adultery. Meggitt himself, after presenting a number of vignettes concerned with adultery states:

It is impossible in the circumstances to estimate accurately the incidence of adultery among the Walbiri. To judge from their remarks to my wife and myself and from observed situations, most of them probably commit adultery several times during early married life, while for a few it is a pastime to be pursued on all occasions (Meggitt 1962:107).

In relation to what Meggitt calls ‘adultery’ nothing has changed much (but see below for a contemporary terminology of the different practices concerned). What has changed drastically is the impact upon marriages. In the past, marriages seem to have withstood the turbulences caused by adultery much better; today often they do not. This does not seem to be due to a change in adultery, but to changes in the nature of marriage. As discussed above, today marriages are much less a contractual arrangement between matrilines and more based on individual choice. Further, as will be discussed below, the economic necessity to remain in a marriage has undergone very significant transformations. And lastly, the point I focus on here, age differences have changed as well. Meggitt has shown the age difference between husband and wife to decrease with a woman’s age. For Yuendumu, for example, the mean age difference between women under 21 years of age and their husbands was 21.2 years. This fell to 17 years for women between the ages of 21 and 35, and to 11.5 years for women over 35
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(Meggitt 1965:156). Taking Bell's elaborations on the continual process of serial monogamy into account, the picture that emerges is one of marital carriers for women beginning with a marriage to their 'promised' one. Due to the large age difference (21.2 years at Yuendumu, 25.4 years at Lajamanu) in these first marriages, women would survive first their husbands. The consecutive marriages then were made between spouses gradually nearing each other in age.

Today, such large age differences are not considered a positive thing by women of the younger generation, and instead they marry husbands closer in age to themselves. In turn, they often do not remain married until widowed, and thus the stability of marriages has undergone very substantive changes.

To give an example, the following extract from my field notes reflects upon marriages:

There are Thomas and Lillian, compared to many other Warlpiri marriages, theirs is a very close relationship, intimate, loving - sometimes. At other times it is real stormy, with lots of brooding, running away, and fighting. Netta's husband dotes on her although, or because (?), she is more child than woman, continually sulking, very much dependent, and very very demanding. "You are a wife now", they sometimes tell her when she is grouchy, "you have to behave yourself". Maisy, somebody told me, was left by the old man when her sister left him: "If I can't have her, I don't want you either". Her sister was the one he loved. Now, she says, she is divorced, but she lives with the old man, and looks after him. Viola's husband got himself a second wife and her and Viola had big jealousy fights. When Rosalind came to Nyirrpi to visit, Viola asked if she could come with her back to Yuendumu - yes. Later her husband said: "I sent you to the shop, not to Yuendumu", and she should return to him, but, she didn't want to. Did she have a boy-friend? Ihl [empathetic no]. Years later and she quietly asks whether we are going to Laramba Sports (where her ex-husband will be, too) and she is always the first to jump into the car when we go to Nyirrpi (where he lives). Then there is Frederick and his two Glorias, always fighting over him. Marsha who just 'talked' to Alex before they got married and their hours of quiet whispers every night; and how Walter burnt all his wife's belongings because he was jealous.

While in nature not so different from Meggitt's vignettes about the storminess of Warlpiri marriages the crucial difference here is that two years after I wrote this, none of the marriages described were extant any more. I return to these issues in more depth below in the discussion of contemporary Warlpiri marriage practices, and here focus on divorce and stability.

61 This trend was even more poignant at Lajamanu, where the initial age gap was 25.4 years, i.e. higher than at Yuendumu, and then fell to 3.8 years for women over 35, i.e. much lower than at Yuendumu (Meggitt 1965:156).
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Meggitt characterizes divorce as rare. Out of a sample comprising 400 marriages, 119 were terminated by death, 250 extant and only 31 terminated by divorce or permanent separation (Meggitt 1962:103). Divorce or separation, as indicated above, today is much more common. Marriage stability seems to have undergone a significant shift in that nowadays stable marriages seem to be achieved much later in life, after each spouse has been through a number of more stormy marriages. Today, there are a substantial number of long-term marriages existent. However, this statement needs to be qualified. Most of Yuendemu’s most stable marriages, those involving couples who have been together for many years, are known and seen as a couple, live as a couple and act as a couple – generally tend to be middle aged or older. To give two examples:

Mona and Herbert, both in their late fifties, are one of Yuendemu’s more prominent couples. They spend much time together, both publicly and in their camp, are both involved in community affairs, set up and often live in one of Yuendemu’s outstations, and are generally considered a couple in a stable and loving relationship. While their relationship appears to confirm to the classic idea of a stable marriage, they have not been married for much more than 15 years. Mona has three grown sons from her previous marriage with her ‘promised’, now deceased, husband. Herbert has a son, and a son and a daughter, respectively, from his two previous ‘promised’ wives, who now live with other husbands. While conforming to the idea of a loving and stable relationship, this union was made rather late in life, and is Mona’s second and Herbert’s third marriage.

A further example is the marriage between Japaljarri and Daisy and Rose. All three of them are ‘old people’, at least in their early seventies, possibly a lot older. Daisy and Rose were married to Japaljarri’s older brother and had a girl and three boys, and two boys and a girl, with him, respectively. These children are now in their 40s and 50s. When his older brother passed away, Japaljarri through the levirate ‘inherited’ Daisy and Rose. At the time he was also married to his first wife, Megan, with whom he had a daughter. Megan later passed away. Japaljarri and Daisy had another daughter (who in turn has been married to and has had children with five men). Today, Daisy and Rose are wurlkumann, really old women. And Japaljarri, an old man himself, takes great pride in looking after them well. Much of his time is spend organising firewood for his wives in winter so they don’t get cold, and organising food. He often declines offers to go

62 The term ‘divorce’ in the Warlpiri context is problematic, see discussion of terminology below.
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on trips out bush if there is not enough room for his wives in the vehicle because he loathes leaving them alone. Again, then, this is an example of a stable and long-term Warlpiri marriage, however, for none of the spouses involved is it the first one, and again, for all of them it was formed rather late in life.

While long-lasting and stable marriages certainly still exist today, in most cases they are second, third or fourth marriages for both spouses involved, hinting at the pay-off for this stability. In actual terms this means that in order to achieve a stable marriage, unstable ones have to be endured first. This certainly seems to be the pattern, particularly in people’s teens and twenties. ‘Settling down quietly’ seems reserved for middle age and later, while young, stability is a fickle thing (as will be discussed below, and in the remainder of this thesis).

Continuities and changes qualified

In the past, marriage was a contractual arrangement between matrilineal who arranged a marriage. There was further investment in the marriage by the husband’s patriline with the advent of children, who would be initiated into and carry on the patriline’s rights and responsibilities in regard to land. There was thus vested interest in a marriage by a number of parties above the actual spouses. Motivations for the spouses to enter into a marriage were manifold as well. From a certain age onwards (very young in the case of female children, from the early 30s onwards in the case of men) married status was the norm. While potentially economically independent, genders combined their subsistence forays, and nuclear (and extended) families were tight economic units with clearly gender defined rights and responsibilities. Love was an added bonus, and the absence of it in a marriage prompted the numerous liaisons Meggitt described.

Warlpiri people of the older generation, as is the wont of older people generally, often bemoan the current state of affairs as one of loss (cf. Sackett 1977a; 1978).63 Disorder, fights, injustice,

63 At Wiluna however, there were gendered differences in these complaints, as Sackett (1977a:163) elaborates: “Sexual activity on the part of young people is a major worry for the older Aborigines at Wiluna. As such it is a frequent aspect of gossip between men, between women, and between men and women. Each sex regards the problem differently, however. [...] women are fearful their daughters and sisters will become pregnant. Men do not voice the same concerns, rather their discussions are couched in terms of the disruptions the illicit activities generate and the harm they do to the Law.”
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unhappiness all are claimed to be due to a lack of adhering to ‘The Law’. In the ‘olden days’, they claim, there was order because people were devoted to following ‘The Law’, i.e. the rules of the *jukurrpa*. Nowadays, people do not respect the *jukurrpa* in the same way and chaos in sexual relations results. One main area often singled out is that of marriage. “Too much wrong marriage all the time”, and “running around, marrying wrong way, all that mob” are often heard complaints.

The comparisons have shown that marriage as an institution has clearly weakened over the last decades. Meggitt asserts that 50 years ago, despite the pressure posed by high incidences of adultery, marriages were very stable indeed. Today, they are not. Contemporary marriages are much more short-lived, with stability and substantive duration often only being achieved in middle age.

These changes need to be conceptualised not only in the sphere of lack of adherence to ‘The Law’, as claimed by older people, but also within the contemporary setting. Enhanced mobility as well as larger concentrated populations led to enormously increased choice of potential marriage partners, and their subsequent inclusion by focussing on subsection affiliation rather than on kinship. Contractual arrangements between matrilines today are uncommon and hardly enforceable. Sedentisation under colonial rule and ensuing post-colonial welfare arrangements led to crucial shifts in forms of subsistence and thereby a shift in roles and responsibilities of spouses. Economically, marriages are of no crucial significance any more, quite to the opposite, women especially benefit financially from not being married through Australian welfare arrangements (see below). During Meggitt’s times, stability was an ideal striven for but under constant threat by, among other things, sexual relationships other than marital ones. In the present, the same threats seem to jeopardise marriage stability much more considerably, not least because marital status is of less economic and social consequence than it was in the past. There is not only a lack of adherence to ‘The Law’ but economic but socio-economic lack of *needing* to adhere and thus a lack of mechanisms to enforce observance. Today, love is the overriding factor for a stable marriage, as any of the former reasons to enter into one decreased very significantly with sedentisation and ensuing socio-political and economic developments. In the following sections I explore Warlpiri marriages in the contemporary context.
Contemporary situation

Today a minimum definition of Warlpiri marriage is when a man and a woman live together, consider themselves to be married to each other, and are considered by others to be married. In this second part of the chapter I examine what exactly these marriages entail as relationships and how these marital practices impact upon and emerge out of the contemporary setting of Warlpiri sociality. I begin by situating marriage in a continuum of sexual relations, to show how marriage both relates to these other relationships and how it is distinguished from them. Next I look at the issues revolving around marriage and co-residency, children, and economic conditions. Before concluding, I examine widowhood and the increasingly often made choice not to remarry, and the reasons behind this.

The above minimum definition of marriage contrasts with other kinds of relationships between men and women that are identified at Yuendumu today. These are all defined in terms of the sexual component of the relationships. There are a number of these terms, boyfriend—girlfriend, running around, loverboy and lovergirl and a complimentary set of terms used to describe the moral quality of the relationships. I discuss these from a woman’s point of view, but begin with the contemporary idea of divorce.

Divorce

It may seem odd to begin with divorce, but the usage of the term at Yuendumu sheds light on a number of issues relevant here. Meggit used to designate the practice of ending a marriage. At Yuendumu, this practice is described by using a different terminology. Most of this terminology is based on the Warlpiri verb *nyinami*, to sit and/or to be, and its negation. If a woman considers her marriage to have ended she might thus say something like “I am sitting down in the *jilimi* now”. Literally, this is saying that she is not a resident of a *yupukarrku*, a married people’s camp anymore, i.e. her marital status has changed and she is now single, living in a women’s camp. Other people may comment more directly on these facts by saying something along the lines of “she isn’t sitting down with X anymore” (and remember that to be and to sit are the same word, i.e. literally this means those two are not with each other).

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64 Other verbs for ‘to be’ are ‘to lie’ (*ngunami*), and also to some extend ‘to stand’ (*karrimi*).
anymore). If the woman has got married to somebody else in the meantime, the comment would take the form of “she’s now sitting down with Y”, which says that she is not with/not married to X anymore but now married to Y. The end of a marriage is signified by the reversal of the ‘moving in with’ – namely by moving out. When the *yupkarra* is left for good, so is the marriage. The role of residence in a *yupkarra* in respect to marriage is paralleled in the speech acts quoted above. The expressions used to describe the ending of a marriage centre around the negation of the verb for to be/to sit, thus manifesting verbally the close link between marriage and residence. Warlpiri marriage cannot be understood comprehensively without taking the significance of residing in *yupkarra*, the married people’s camp, into account.65 Interestingly in this context, the only two times I heard the term ‘divorced’ used, it was by women who still lived with their husbands. Both used the term to indicate that although they were still sharing a *yupkarra* with their respective husbands, sexual relations had ceased. As one of them put it:

I am divorced. My husband does not sleep close to me, I left him, he drinks too much. He sleeps at home but we are not married. He used to be strong, he had shiny eyes, he was stockman, always riding on that horse, riding, riding, riding. Now, I don’t like him talking to me, it makes me sick. He says: “Nangarrayi, how are you, I worry for you, sick woman, *nykarpina*.” But I don’t like listening to him. He does not worry for me, he just drinks.

Both women continued living with their husbands, sharing their food with them, cooking for them, looking after their children and grand children together. To be divorced at Yuendumu, now, means something entirely different to the meanings Meggitt imbued the term with. To be divorced means to still have a husband, to still live with him, but to have ceased sexual relations with him. The end of a marriage is signified by a shift in residence of the two spouses away from each other, and is expressed verbally as such. Not living together anymore constitutes the end of a marriage. While a marriage without sex is called a divorce, a number of terms are in use for sexual relations without or outside marriage.

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65 Sackett suggests a similar situation in regard to residence and marriage in the Western Desert by presenting the opposite case. In the Western Desert, he says there is no word “equivalent to the English ‘marriage’. *Guridjara* ‘spouse’ (*guri*) ‘having’ (*djara*), although close to ‘marriage’ includes much more, for it also pertains to persons promised to each other but not yet living together” (Sackett 1976:147 Footnote 6).
Transformations of Marriage Arrangements

Boyfriend & Girlfriend

The Aboriginal English terms 'boyfriend' and 'girlfriend' at Yuendumu are used to describe a relationship quite different but interrelated to marriage on a number of levels. First, a boyfriend - girlfriend relationship can only eventuate while at least one of the partners involved is also in a marriage at the same time. One crucial difference to a marriage is thus that the partners do not co-reside. Ideally such a relationship should not pose a threat to the existing marriage(s) of the partner(s) involved, meaning among other things, that any children resulting from a boyfriend - girlfriend relationship are considered to belong to the woman involved and her husband, not her boyfriend. While often the identity of such children's genitors is fairly public knowledge, the social fatherhood by the woman's husband is commonly accepted.64 In particular when taking genealogies, people would often point out to the biological fathers of particular children, and then say "but don't write him down, that one husband is father".

Commonly, even though people involved in boyfriend - girlfriend relationships strive to conceal the existence of their relationships, knowledge about these relationships generally is fairly public. Problems arise in only two cases. One is when the boyfriend - girlfriend relationship takes prominence over the marriage(s) and the respective spouses(s) need to react. If discretion is breached and the respective spouse(s) are required to publicly intervene - generally through fights65 - then public acceptance of the boyfriend - girlfriend relationship vanes. The second case in which public opposition will be expressed to such a relationship is when it involves partners in a 'wrong relationship', i.e. the same rules of 1st, 2nd and 3rd choice apply as described for marriages earlier in this chapter. Thus, to have a 'wrong skin' boyfriend or girlfriend is equally strongly opposed as it is for a marriage - pointing towards these rules applying to sexual relations generally, not only to marriage.

Boyfriend - girlfriend relationships may be very durable, or short-lived, but generally entail a flow of goods from the boyfriend to the girlfriend, continuing even after the relationship is

64 (Merlan 1986:481) says: "There is also no doubt that men wish to be recognised as the 'fathers' of their wives' children (though where possible they may claim any children their wives are thought to have conceived while copulating with other men (Meggitt 1962:97))."

65 A double standard operates here, as in the first instance it is women who are exposed in these fights. If it is the wife of the boy-friend who feels humiliated by the too public display of her husband's liking of another woman, she will fight his girlfriend. If it is the husband of the girlfriend he will fight with his wife first.
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over. Many women regularly commented to me upon gifts received when they caught up with old boyfriends. To give two examples, one woman in her sixties I lived with, received gifts of meat and money each time her boyfriend from two decades ago would drop in on visits to Yuendumu from Lajamanu. Another woman actively avoided all contact with one of her former boyfriends and refused to accept any of his gifts because she feared that because of her recently ended marriage the boyfriend would lay claim on her son, whose biological father he was. The son in question was reaching the age to ‘go through business’ and his mother was keen for her son’s social father’s brothers to take over organisation of this event, as the boy had grown up knowing these as his fathers. She was most incensed when she found out that the former boyfriend had tried to give a present of money to her son and urged him to avoid contact.

A last instance where the same terminology is used but no marriage needs to be in place is in the teasing of children. One particular 12-year-old boy, for example, took up having a shower every morning and carefully brushing his hair and choosing his clothes before setting off to school. “Must be that Jangala got girlfriend” was the essence of the remarks and the laughing that went on every morning while he was in the shower and especially when he came out. He took it with good humour and answered the constant questions about his girlfriend with a shrug and a smile. The term ‘girlfriend’ rather than ‘wife’ was used in this kind of joking as he was uninitiated and could not possibly legitimately have had a wife.

Running Around

This term implies less virtue and more license than the above ones exactly because it implies sexual relations without much adherence to rules. ‘Running around’ has the connotation of promiscuously looking for sex, and as a term relates human sexual behaviour to that of dogs. Dogs, it is said at Yuendumu, fornicate indiscriminately. They belong to people and have subsection terms, or skinnames, but “they do not know”, i.e. they do not behave according to the rules governing social behaviour the way humans do/or should do. Equally, a person who is ‘running around’ is somebody who is looking for sex, regardless of who with and under which circumstance. It is the lack of prudence and the focus on the physical, rather than social, that gives the term its dubious connotations. ’Running around’ often, but not exclusively, is linked to alcohol.
It may also be used to demigrate somebody. For example, Lisa’s husband had become the boyfriend of Joan. Lisa, when she became aware of the situation, never acknowledged Joan as her husband’s girlfriend instead maintaining that “Joan’s running around with my husband”, thus denying all emotional and social ties between Joan and her husband. Lisa’s accusation made it easier for herself to vent her frustration and disappointment and it lobbied others to take her side in the ensuing fights.

**Lovergirl & Loverboy**

These terms are linked to ‘running around’. They are used to describe persons looking for sexual adventure. They may be used disparagingly, or in joking. Often, the terms are used to describe behaviour caused by intoxication. Particularly men, particularly when drunk, tend to ‘become loverboy’ and ask loudly and publicly for sexual favours. These demands for sexual favours may range from a ‘just trying my luck’ type demand made at anyone passing by to a continuous assault on a particular person. Comments people make may range from “too much loverboy, that Japangardi” to “that Jangala come around again last night, drunken one, loverboy”. The latter statement regarding the continuous entreaties of a ‘loverboy’ as happens when a man has unrequited designs on a particular woman and he continues his demands with increasing vigour all through a drinking session and repeats them in the next.

Assessment of such behaviour and the usage of the terms ‘loverboy’ and ‘lovergirl’ varies from case to case. Usage contains a mixture of emotions, depending upon the actual behaviour, ranging from someone being quite pleased about being pursued to huge annoyance if the pursuit is not wanted and does not stop. It is the public nature of the demands that give this kind of behaviour its ‘funny’ connotations. For those not involved it is a spectacle to watch, talk and laugh about. The publicness of it also means that usually this behaviour does not lead to anything. It is the potentiality of sexual relations that people play with and are amused about, rather than the actualisation of them.

This is why, I assume, the same terms are jokingly applied to people of both sexes and all ages wearing new store bought clothes, especially when they are bright and colourful. This joking may be more moderate when involving adults, but any child with new clothes will be endlessly teased as ‘loverboy’ or ‘lovergirl’. In this case, it is the public signalling of desire (as expressed
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through new and colourful clothes) rather than the actualisation of a sexual relationship that invites usage of the terms, and gives substance to their use in joking.

Lastly, I have heard this term used to ruminate about the practices called ‘aduhery’ by Meggitt. For example, on day, when a number of us drove past Conistan Station, one older woman who grew up around the old homestead nostalgically reflected, when I commented upon how beautiful the creek bed with its abundance of ghost gums looked: “olden times, here, everywhere loverboys and lovergirls, full up!”

Warrura and Wingki

Sexual relations are thought of as ‘right’ or ‘straight’ when they involve partners in the right classificatory kin relationship to each other. This is most easily expressed in subsection terms, and there are three ‘right’ subsections from which to choose marriage and sexual partners from. Warlpiri has specific terminology to describe the non-adherence of these rules. Warrura means “marriage partner or lover not in the correct kin relation”. Importantly, the state of being warrura is dependent upon the kin relationships between sexual partners, not on the kind of relationship they are in. One can be warrura in a marriage, in a boyfriend – girlfriend relationship, or when running around. Warrura is the Warlpiri equivalent of ‘slut’ (used both for males and females), as it is often translated. It is thus not the kind of sexual relationship that gives one the status of 'slut' but the kin relation between oneself and one’s sexual partner.

The other term used to describe these unions between ‘wrong skins’ is wingki. This term has further meanings including “wrong, antisocial, unlawful, uncompliant, immoral, heedless, disobedient”. Put differently, this term is used to describe any kind of sexual behaviour between ‘wrong’ partners, as well as general wrongful behaviour. It thus strongly reinforces the point made above, that immorality in sexual relations is judged not on the basis of the sexual behaviour, but on how the partners involved are related to each other.
The Warlpiri term *waninja* has the double meaning of ‘throat’ on the one hand, and ‘being in love, feeling sexual desire, yearning, lustful, amorous, lover, girlfriend, boyfriend’ on the other. Moreover, the sign used in Warlpiri sign language designating a lover, or sexual desire, is the right finger moving right below the throat along from left to right. As above, *waninja* is applied for all kinds of sexual relations, without distinguishing by legitimacy. The Warlpiri dictionary, among many others, gives the following three examples, pertaining to (1) marriages, (2) to boyfriend – girlfriend relationships, and (3) to running around:

1) *Nyamnya-nyaamu-manu karnta yalumapi karnta nguij-parnta nguij-nyaamu waninjah-warri naturua, nyurrwarrnu waninja yalumapi waja Nampijinpa.*
   I am keeping an eye on that woman, my wife, my own love, that one who has been my lover for a long time – yes that Nampijinpa.

2) *Milkaarku karnta nyayuyu wepamirr kirdikiyri yukenjaku nganu, yungku nyuntuunya karluwanu waninja warrnu nyanyi.*
   You walk around all over the place to show yourself off thinking that he might fall in love with you, so that your lover will see you.

3) *Nyamparaku karnta karntaka waninjah-yiyrri-ni Kuriarrumaruwa warruku karnta waanija-yiyrri-ni.*
   Which woman are you in love with? I am in love with the one over to the east. Perhaps we will sneak off together tonight to make love. If I’m lucky.

These deliberations on the terminology of sexual relationships at Yuendumu show a number of points relevant to an understanding of contemporary marriage. Marriage is closely linked with the expectation and practical of sexual relations, but not exhaustively defined by it, i.e. a Warlpiri divorce means that a marriage is continuing without them. Marriages as well as all other sexual relations are morally judged in terms of the subsection affiliation of the partners involved. Marriage is distinct from these other sexual relations through a number of issues. Co-residency, in a *yupukara*, or married people’s camp, as previously described, is chief amongst them. And, the ‘moving in’ and ‘moving out’ of the *yupukara* are most significant markers for a marriage for the beginning and the end of a marriage. Or, to put it in other words, marital status is residually marked, that of other sexual relations is not. A further crucial difference
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between them is a right over and responsibilities towards children in marriages, to which I turn next.

Children and marriage

If the ideal of a stable marriage is achieved, then children grow up living in their parents' yupukarra. Their mother will look after their nutritional needs and, supported by other relatives, the mother is the main person responsible for the children's upbringing and early childhood education (cf. Hamilton 1981b; Musharbash 2000). Their father will spend less time with them, but ideally be loving and caring throughout their upbringing. Once the children reach teenagerhood, their patriline becomes more involved in their education, particularly as it relates to their rights and responsibilities to land, as expressed through ritual. Boys will be educated by their father, his brothers and other male members of the patriline, and girls by their father's sisters, father's mothers and other female members of the patriline.

So far, no detailed consideration has been given to how care and children relate to marriage today. As a paradigmatic case study I will look at a case of four siblings, three women and a man. These four siblings belong to the youngest married generation at Yuendumu and at the end I will formulate what I believe is an emergent trend in child-rearing started by this generation, which distinguishes them from both the previous generation, and from Meggitt's descriptions.

These four siblings are in their teens and early twenties (cf. also Figure 14 below). Kiara, the youngest, is 14 years old and has just given birth to her first child, a girl. Her husband is two years older than her, and in a 2nd choice relationship to her. Up until her pregnancy became obvious, which was when she was in her seventh month, their relationship was not called a marriage, as both were considered young and not too seriously involved. When they stayed together, they slept at her normal residence, a house she shared with some of her older siblings, or at his parents' place - having no yupukarra of their own set up. Since Kiara gave birth they are formally installed with her husband's parents, in their own yupukarra at his parent's house. Kiara's husband's mother, a woman in her thirties actively supports Kiara in looking after her baby.
Charity's situation is very similar. She is 16 years old and her and her 17-year-old husband are in a 1\textsuperscript{st} choice relationship to each other. Their daughter is now just over a year old and she, her daughter and her husband share a yamukara in her husband's parent's house. While her in-laws are supportive, Charity and her daughter spend most of the day away from their home, sharing time instead with closely related other young mothers and their children, among them her sisters Kiara and Megan, and their daughters.

Megan is in her early twenties and in her third marriage. She has a daughter, now eight years old, from her first marriage to a man from a community to the south. They were in a 1\textsuperscript{st} choice marriage to each other. Since they broke up, her first daughter has been brought up by her former mother-in-law and lives in that community. Megan and her daughter see each other at Sport Weekends and other occasional travel. Megan then married a man from Western Australia and suffered two miscarriages during that marriage. Her current, third, husband is from Yuendumu, and in a 2\textsuperscript{nd} choice relationship to her. They have a two year old daughter together. They live in a house shared by a number of young couples. Megan is exclusively responsible for her new daughter's upbringing, although receiving support from her own family and from her in-laws when needed.

Garret is the second oldest of the siblings, he is 23 years old. Eight years ago he was 'running around' with a classificatory mother-in-law of his. Although this was discouraged by all it
resulted in her becoming pregnant and giving birth to a girl. Garret was very young back then, they were in a 'wrong' relationship to each other, their relationship was never called a marriage and he didn't have much say, nor interest, in respect to his daughter. She is being brought up by her mother and her family in a community to the north and as far as I am aware, Garret has no contact with this daughter at all. A few years later, Garret became married to a woman from the south. They had a son together, moved from Alice Springs to Yuendumu, and then their marriage deteriorated. After Garret became violent towards her when inebriated, his wife left him with her son. However, after Garret had promised that he had 'settled down quietly', his wife and son returned to him a year later. His wife is now pregnant again. Garret, his pregnant wife, and their son have their yapankarra in the same house Megan, her daughter and her husband live.

During the day all four women, three sisters and one sister-in-law, spend most of their time in a group with other close female relatives from the same age range collectively looking after their small children. In the meantime, their husbands are at work or idle with their agemates. 'Family time' — if enjoyed — is generally spend together in the evenings, and again more often than not encompasses larger groups than nuclear families. For example all four siblings with their children and spouses, and often other visitors, will spend the evening together.

This case example illustrates a number of general trends that hold true for contemporary marriages and arrangements at Yuendumu regarding children.

(1) First marriages continue to take place at a very early age, and women have children very early (compared to the Australian average).

(2) The age difference between spouses seems to have shrunk significantly, with young couples preferring to be close in age.

(3) Depending upon the spouses being in the right relationships to each other, these marriages are supported by both spouses' families. Should the marriage result in children, the children's patriline will take a particularly active interest in the upbringing of these children, while their matriline is supportive but not the first port of call.

(4) Should such a marriage break up, paternal grandmothers (FM) are likely to take charge of the children.
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(5) Children resulting from 'wrong' relationships, on the other hand, often remain with their mother, or her close family, particularly her mother (i.e. the child's MM).

(6) By the time people reach their twenties they are very likely to be in their second or third marriage, often with children from each consecutive marriage.

It is these trends that mark the major break with the past described by Meggitt. It is hard to say exactly when they emerged but it seems to have been over the last thirty years, as Figure 15 suggests. It results in large groups of closely related young women spending days together looking after their children.

Figure 15: Children, mothers, mother's mothers and mother's mother's mothers

To some extent, it seems that this recent concentrated focus on bringing up children is a reaction of those young women to the circumstances of contemporary settlement life. These women choose to stay and live at Yuendumu, as opposed to many women of their mothers' generation who 'went to town' for a few years, basically, to drink. It seems that the current generation of young mothers has found something that keeps them occupied and that they can do surrounded by their peers: looking after their children. Even the young women without children spend much time participating in the upbringing and looking after of their peers' children – it seems to have become 'the thing to do'. The situation of mature women, on the other hand, is very different to that of young women. Many of them, as mentioned above, did not bring up their own children, and today take an equivalent stance towards bring up their grandchildren. While some, such as for example Kiara's and Charity's mothers-in-law take a
very active interest in their grandchildren, there is much more variety today. This fluidity in
marriage relationships and the various arrangements for bringing up children points toward
increasing residential mobility and a loosening of familial structures which raise important
questions about the ways in which Warlpiri sociality is structured today. These questions are
heightened still by examining issues to do with widowhood, economic circumstances and
domestic violence.

Widowhood, social security, and violence

The best documented obvious change in marriage relations relates to older women. Dussart
shows that a complete reversal has taken place in regard to the rates of remarriage after
widowhood. She states that “between 5 to 10 percent of women did not remarry in
presettlement times, today only about six percent of widows do remarry” (Dussart 1992b:342).
I here examine what has caused this drastic change, and what this says about Warlpiri
marriages.

In the pre-contact past, wives were substantially younger that their first, promised, husbands
and accordingly, it was women who became widowed rather than men. Meggitt (1962:264-5)
states that after a period of mourning the widow would be remarried, as stated above, ideally
through the levirate to one of her former husband’s brothers. Dussart (1992b) examines his
data from two different perspectives.

She deconstructs Meggitt’s claims about the past as too simplistic, using life histories to show
much more complex realities, especially in regard to the negotiations revolving around
remarriage and the involvement in these of the concerned women themselves. Dussart further
examines the impact of colonial and post-colonial economics on mature widow’s choices. Two
factors in particular have influenced mature widows’ choice not to remarry. On the one hand,
Dussart demonstrates through case examples the effects of the gradual loss of control of
matrilines to enforce their wishes over individual women. On the other, she shows how
increased economic independence through pension cheques enables widows to remain single.

As outlined in Chapter 1, welfare money became available to Warlpiri people from 1969
onwards. While Bell argues for the late 70s that:
Aboriginal women are eligible to apply for widow’s pensions, supporting mothers’ benefits, old-age pensions, and unemployment benefits, but are thwarted and hindered in their applications for benefits by illiteracy, bureaucratic bungling, and sometimes the attitudes of European male officers (Bell 1980b:267, Footnote 6).

Today, women’s status vis-a-vis men is not weakened in such a way. While it is generally true that Warlpiri people compared to mainstream Australian are disadvantaged in their applications for welfare through literacy skills and geographical distance from administrative centres (cf. Musharbash 2000), this applies equally to men and women. In fact, as Dussart shows, women benefit through the way social security payments are structured, especially when single. To quote from one of her case studies:

At the onset of her involvement with her new consort, Eleanor was worried that remarriage would undermine the economic power she had enjoyed as a widow. Government pension payments are more substantial for widows than for women who are married or remarried. As a result, Eleanor’s individual economic power was diminished by a third (Dussart 1992b:343).

Further, not only do remarried women receive smaller sums of social security money, they have to distribute it more widely. As Dussart (1992b:346) says, widowhood “allows a woman to distribute her pension to her children, grandchildren and siblings without the burden of supporting in-laws”. This distribution of pension money comes about in gifts of cash as well as through the expectation that a woman will ensure the availability of food for both her children and her husband. Contemporary married Warlpiri spouses do not tend to pool their financial resources. Married women thus acquire an extra financial burden because their husbands rely on them for food while using their own money for their own pursuits. Warlpiri fathers do not tend to pay child support, neither while married nor after a marriage has ceased. Men spend their own money and women use theirs (a large part of which arrives as ‘Child Benefits’ in any case) to support themselves, their children and their husbands. Economic reasons thus centrally underlie women’s choices not to remarry.

Many widows at Yuendumu, particularly women past childbearing age, prefer single life because of increased (not only financial) independence. Widowhood does not cut them off from sexual relations. Dussart (1992b:347) shows that Warlpiri widows are neither ostracised in any way, nor do they lack opportunities for sexual liaisons (see also Bell 1980b; 1983). In
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fact, many widows I know have married men as boyfriends, and are not opposed to some occasional 'running around'.

The very low rates of remarriage after widowhood again attest for the weakening of marriage as an institution, and are further underscored by the high rates of domestic violence. Dussart says that roughly one in seven widows does not engage in liaisons for the following reasons:

These latter widows say that if they remarry they not only loose their financial autonomy, but expose themselves to husbands' violence. They do not engage in sexual pursuit. As one widow explained, "They [widows who have sexual liaisons] are looking for trouble. I want to stay single. Men steal your money and beat you up when they are drunk" (Dussart 1992b:347-8).

I have no systematic data on the levels of domestic violence at Yuendumu. What I do know is impressionistic based on a number of sources. I witnessed a domestic violence conference organised by Legal Aid in 1995, and the testimonies by Warlpiri women presented in this forum. I have had some personal involvement in assisting a number of women in obtaining restraining orders against violent husbands and/or helping them to get to the clinic for medical help when they were assaulted. And I collected a number of first and second hand accounts by and about women who came to stay at the women's camp I lived, for short respite when their husbands went through a violent phase. On the basis of these experiences I can formulate the following:

(1) Domestic violence appears to be high at Yuendumu, with most Warlpiri women being affected by domestic violence at some stage of their lives.
(2) Very often, domestic violence at Yuendumu is linked to alcohol abuse.\textsuperscript{64}
(3) Unless a woman is regularly exposed to extreme domestic violence, it is taken as a matter of course.
(4) Although there are a number of support options available,\textsuperscript{69} there seems to be a general tendency of people preferring not to get involved in what is seen as 'other people's personal affairs'.

\textsuperscript{64} Yuendumu is a 'dry' community, however, 'grog' is smuggled in and consumed regularly.
\textsuperscript{69} Night Patrol, when functioning, may intervene; depending upon the interests of the co-ordinator at any one time, the Women's Centre may double as a refuge; and the Women's Shelter in Alice Springs is a known and often used option.
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These points alert us to the fact that many marriages at Yuendumu suffer from domestic violence. To some extent, it is an inescapable reality for many women. As a 17-year-old Warlpiri girl said to me about her marriage: "Sometimes we fight. Sometimes we argue. Sometimes it's ok." At the time, although reflecting upon it, she took domestic violence as part of marriage. After that marriage deteriorated, and then finally dissolved, she reflected upon single life as on the one hand more peaceful but on the other as 'really boring'. Three years after she made the first remark, when weighing up whether to enter into her second marriage she said: "This one says he doesn't hit women. Maybe that's true." While this obviously played an important role in her decision what I found remarkable was that, no matter whether his statement was true or not, it was made in the first place. It points towards the high occurrence of domestic violence and some awareness on the part of this young man that women do not like husbands who bash. Lastly, this statement underscores the fragility of marriage as it shows a rather surprising argument to enter into one – the promise that this one won't be violent.

Dussart's analysis of remarriage rates after widowhood in the 80s shows that marriage is a state much more attractive to younger Warlpiri women than to older ones, and those older ones who do choose to remarry do so for love, forsaking the economic and other elements of independence. Those widows who do not remarry stress their independence, and a few refuse remarriage because of previous violent experiences. What remains to be said is that none of these issues have changed since then, and moreover, that all of them apply to women who left a previous marriage as much as to those whose husbands died. Today, not all single women are widows, many are either in between marriages after having left or having been left by their previous spouse, and some women choose to remain single despite the fact that their ex-husbands are alive.

Conclusion

Although it is difficult to give precise measure to it, it is clear that marriage and consequently family structure has undergone enormous change among Warlpiri people over the last 50 years. A shift from a contractual arrangement between matrilines towards individual choice has brought love, or wamingia, to the fore as a reason to marry. This is true for young women as
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much as for mature widows and older single women deciding to remarry. Today, young Warlpiri women seem to choose marriage during early adulthood with some thought towards legitimising their children, however, these marriages are often of short duration. Most people are married a number of times, with children from a number of marriages. Children grow up in a variety of circumstances, depending on their parents' marital histories. The most stable marriages generally are achieved later in life. On the other hand, for older women, especially when mothers already, greater financial independence and less exposure to violence are strong motivations to remain single.

The weakening of marriage as an institution has had a profound effect on everyday life, especially in respect to people's residential patterns and the care arrangements of children. This has lead to jilimi, or women's camps, taking on a much more central role than they ever had before. Jilimi shelter collectivities of women and the children cared for by them. The ensuing chapters are concerned with different perspectives on life and sociality in the jilimi, and the issues revolving around contemporary marriage at Yuendumu.

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70 I do not have any data on this for the male population, but I strongly believe the situation to be comparable.
CHAPTER FOUR

THE EMERGENT CENTRALITY OF JILIMI

Today, jilimi are more numerous, larger in size, and more complex in residential composition than ever before. Their purpose has been vastly extended and these developments are accompanied by jilimi taking on enhanced roles socially, economically, and residentially. In this chapter, the historical transformations jilimi have undergone will briefly be sketched, before critically engaging with Bell’s work on and depiction of jilimi. This will set the scene for introducing one particular Yuendumu jilimi, in which the following ethnographic chapters are located. This jilimi was the camp I lived in longest during my fieldwork, and that I am most familiar with. It will be introduced by describing its spatial setting and four of its main residents, who are central figures in the ensuing chapters.

The historical transformations of jilimi

As delineated in Chapter 3, in pre-contact times, ideally girls grew up in their parents’ yupukarra and at an early age (according to Meggitt, at 8 or 9 years of age) moved into a yupukarra with their husband. There they lived until widowed when they spent the appropriate time for mourning in a jilimi, before remarrying and moving into yet another yupukarra with their next husband. Following this ideal life-cycle for women in pre-contact times, jilimi could not have had a prominent a position in everyday life for the simple fact that women lived in yupukarra for most of their lives and stayed in jilimi rarely and only for the purpose of mourning. Jilimi then were temporary residential settings for the single purpose of mourning.

Obviously there must have been many variations on this ideal theme, of which Peterson (1978) indicates one when elaborating on the role of women in determining the composition of residential groups. He there describes the practice of a widow moving with her daughter and her daughter’s husband to the latter’s country if she does not remarry. One can only assume that such women would have lived in jilimi substantially longer and for extended purposes. However that may be, it remains a fact that jilimi in pre-contact times would have been much
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more temporary than they are today and would only ever had two or three residents outside of large temporary ceremonial gatherings (see Tindale 1972:243 for an example of the latter).

This is further supported by reports from early explorers, who generally describe the spatial setting of the camps they encountered as clusters of married people’s camps and a separate camp for single men, that is yupakarra and jangkajji, but no women’s camps, or jilimi. The following quote by Thomson, describing his 1957 encounters with Pintupi people in the Great Sandy Desert is very typical:

The horde at Kimai comprised only fifteen or sixteen people, mostly women and children. For the Bindibubu, like other Aborigines, are polygamous, and a man marries all those women available to him in the correct relationship within his kinship horizon. Three families each had their own camp in the area occupied by the horde. In addition there was a very old man known as Tjakamarra [...]. With this old man a number of boys and youths lived apart in a single men’s camp (Thomson 1975:46).

As in pre-contact times, in the earlier days of settlement, jilimi seemed to be reserved for widows in mourning and, an apparent new addition, a few unmarried women. Meggitt describes jilimi at Lajamanu during his research in the following way:

In each community section a shelter […] forms the “women’s camp”, which houses widows not yet eligible for remarriage and the few unmarried women not living with their parents (Meggitt 1962:76-7).

Whether due to his own inclinations or to the fact that during his research jilimi indeed did not play a significant role in settlement life, Meggitt somewhat dismisses them as “hotbeds of gossip” (1962:236) and as places generally not warranting anthropological interest. Since then, jilimi seem to have become more prominent in both central Australian Aboriginal settlements and anthropological writing. Most writers agree that sendentisation had a major impact on broadening women’s residential choices and the subsequent expansion of jilimi (cf. Bell 1980a:177). Whatever the detail of the changes it is certain that they were significantly exacerbated during the period 1969 – 1975 when for the first time social security payments were made directly to Aboriginal people rather than to the European superintendent. Many women, at the beginning in the main widows, began living in jilimi for longer periods than before and in larger jilimi. With time, jilimi broadened in residential composition, the purposes for which people chose to live in them, and in turn the roles and purposes jilimi were taking on.
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Today, Yuendumu has an ever-changing number of jilimi, many of which are smaller ones attached to yapukarra. Some bigger ones are spatially independent of and not attached to other camps; of these there are usually at least six present in Yuendumu at any one time, often more. Dussart (1992b:345) says that there were six principal jilimi during her research at Yuendumu (in the eighties). Keys (1999: Appendix 5: Locations of jilimi in Yuendumu) in her PhD thesis on the ethno-architecture of jilimi at Yuendumu shows a total of 32 jilimi locations between February and October 1995, 17 of which were spatially independent and 15 were attached to, surrounded by or encompassed in yapukarra. Her count includes jilimi sections in larger mourning camps, which encompass all three gendered types of camps. During my research, the number of jilimi fluctuated significantly, with a minimum of six larger ones and an ever-changing number of smaller ones established being at any one time. It seems safe to say that today there are more jilimi than there used to be and that jilimi are larger than they were in the past. Further, as I discuss below and show in detail in the ensuing chapters, residential composition of jilimi has taken on new dimensions, and they have taken on new roles socially and economically.

A critique of Diane Bell’s depiction of jilimi

Bell, based on her work with first Warlpiri and then Kaytej people at Alekarene, has provided the most extensive anthropological exploration of jilimi to date. She presents the Kaytej jilimi at Alekarene as a haven for female solidarity, contrasting starkly with Meggitt’s ‘hotbeds of gossip’:

From the jilimi, other Kaytej drew not only economic support but also a sense of purpose, strength and knowledge. The women associated with the Kaytej jilimi were the moral watchdogs of the entire camp, the repositories of wisdom, the conscious carriers of a proud heritage (Bell 1993:11).

Neither the ritual and moral focality nor the exclusive gendered spacing she describes for jilimi at Alekarene are found in Yuendumu jilimi. Dussart in arguing against Bell’s depiction of jilimi says that:

[The situation at Yuendumu is significantly different from the one Bell describes, and is more complex. The distinctions between the two settlements are multiple. Yuendumu’s jilimi are not permanent, nor is the constituency of these mobile quarters stable. The Warlpiri women in the jilimi at Yuendumu do not oversee ritual with the kind of authority...]

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Bell found at Warrabri, nor are the widow’s quarters the locus of “ritual authority” (Dussart 2000:44).

I agree with Dussart that jilimi at Yuendumu are very different indeed to the jilimi described by Bell. As Dussart points out, Alekarenge and Yuendumu are different places; indeed they are more than 300 kms apart from each other as the crow flies. Maybe things are different at Alekarenge. Moreover, Bell started fieldwork in 1976 and temporarily, Bell’s research is located between Meggitt’s and mine. Just as the realities in respect to jilimi were vastly different during the time of Meggitt’s research and mine so Bell’s depictions may equally differ from either of ours. However, some differences are certainly also due to different theoretical approaches and ideological backgrounds. Bell’s ethnography is emphatically feminist in tone and in topic and she and I focussed on jilimi for very different reasons, not only on different jilimi. I will demonstrate the differences by going through Bell’s descriptions of the Kaytej jilimi at Alekarenge and contrasting these with my own observations.

She summarises the overall place of the jilimi in Alekarenge life in the following way:

A refuge, a focus of women’s daily activities, an area taboo to men, a power base, an expression of women’s solidarity, the home of the ritually important and respected women, the jilimi or single women’s camp is all this and more (Bell 1980a:177).

I shall discuss these features in turn.

A focus of women’s daily activities

Bell’s claim about the focus in jilimi being on women’s daily activities (‘socialising’ or ‘women’s activities’) needs to be qualified in the Yuendumu context. To elaborate on this it is important to look at the full range of residents. Bell (1980a:178) says that jilimi residents next to the core women are composed of single as yet unmarried girls, women visiting from elsewhere, women involved in domestic disputes, ill women, women in the last stages of mourning, and all these women’s children and charges.

Difficulties with this description arise in respect to the ease with which she brushes over the significance of “and all these women’s children and charges” — some of whom from the Yuendumu perspective are as much part of the ‘core’ as the women looking after them (see
Chapter 5, where they are discussed as ‘key residents’). At Yuendumu, they comprise children who are the women’s own, adopted ones, ones they are looking after at the time, related children from elsewhere staying in Yuendumu and with particular women for a little while, and especially children who live with and are being brought up by their grandmothers. Further, there are teenagers, who used to fall into any of the prior categories for children, who are now somewhat more independent and occasionally come to stay with older female relatives in the jilmi. Under certain exceptional circumstances, men also occasionally stay overnight in the jilmi (see below). Since any or all of these may be present, i.e. people of both genders and all ages, activities performed in the jilmi can hardly be called exclusively ‘women’s activities’. As I will describe in more detail in the ensuing chapters (particularly Chapter 7), activities performed in the jilmi encompass these but vastly extend them. Jilmi are of central importance for children and men as well as women, and it is general sociality rather than gender restricted ‘women’s activities’ that characterises activities performed in them.

An area taboo to men

Bell says that Alekareenge jilmi are “a base from which women can exclude men and seek them when desired” (1980a:179) and goes on to elaborate on women’s need to assert their separation from men. For contemporary Yuendumu jilmi such statements are simply not true. The previously introduced concept of time-zoning is crucial here. Men very rarely ever sleep in jilmi, but that does not mean they are excluded from jilmi space during the day. Keys (1999:257) also pointed out that the presence of men in the jilmi is permitted, albeit in a temporally structured manner.

A major shortcoming of Bell’s is that she implicitly seems to put men into two separate categories: On the one hand, boys, who are women’s sons and grandsons, and are not threatening and on the other, men who are potential husbands (or sexual partners) and who pose a ‘problem’. This in no way reflects the complexities of gender relations at Yuendumu. It is imperative to elaborate on her initial distinction to portray the Warlpiri situation more accurately and then extend it to encompass more multifaceted realities of gendered relationships.
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Male Warlpiri persons fall into a number of age-graded categories. Until initiation, male children are called *wirrija*, boys, and together with girls are considered children, *kardu-kardu*. No distinction whatsoever is being made in respect to access to space in the *jilimi* for children of either gender. After initiation, when boys have (been) turned into men access to the *jilimi* is more restricted. From dawn to dusk, men have relatively free access to the *jilimi*’s space – always depending on their relationships to specific women residing there. Men come to ask for food, drop off young children, to gossip, play cards, to flirt, and occasionally to distribute meat they have hunted. At night, once the *jilimi*’s residents have made up their swags, the presence of men is unusual but by no means unknown. Men who stay in the *jilimi* overnight fall into two categories, older sons of resident women who for some reason or another need shelter, and husbands from communities other than Yuendumu coming to stay for a short period with their wives who are in the *jilimi* at the time. In this latter case, strictly speaking, the couple would establish a *yupukarra*, married people’s camp, inside the *jilimi* for the time being – mostly only for a night or two and then move into a *yupukarra* proper elsewhere.

Lastly, every Warlpiri women will emphatically assert that there are many different ways to put men into categories. The closest relationship generally is between a woman and her sons, and often her son’s sons. No matter how old they are (and the sons of many *jilimi* women would be in their forties or older), they are always welcome in the *jilimi* and given food and other essentials they ask for. Then there are, of course, husbands and other sexual partners. As I will elaborate, these again are seen in a more facetted way then Bell portrays. And then there are grandfathers, mother’s brothers, fathers, sons-in-law, etc – behaviour towards each is influenced by both general rules and personal interpretations of those. And none of these, including son-in-laws, are excluded from *jilimi* space on a general basis. They may be excluded at particular times and for particular reasons, but to say that the *jilimi* is ‘taboo’ to men is simply incorrect at Yuendumu.

A power base

Bell says that women’s increasing choice to live in *jilimi* (rather than *yupukarra*) is a reflection of their changed status through sedentisation as much as a statement of their wish to live:

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71 See also discussions on Warlpiri life cycle by Dussart (1988b, especially Chapter 3) and Meggitt (1962, Chapter 13).
outside the control of men. The *jilimi* provides the necessary environment for women to maintain both their independence of men in daily life and their separation from men in ritual (Bell 1980a:179).

Separation from men and focus on ritual she says are what turn *jilimi* into visible proof of women's separateness and independence. Again, as Dussart (2000) also argued, I could find no evidence of this at Yuendumu. Neither were *jilimi* perceived as "a bold assertion of independence" (Bell 1980a:179) by anybody at Yuendumu, nor did women seek such separation from men—indeed, as Dussart argued so thoroughly, lines of divisions run between 'families' rather than gender. *Jilimi* seem to have increased in significance and size initially with women's mounting choice not to remarry, and, as I will have in Chapter 3, this may be a spatial expression of the weakness of marriage as an institution. It would be a misrepresentation of gender relations at Yuendumu to say that *jilimi* are a 'power base' for women and an expression of gender separation and independence (on gender relations at Yuendumu see more particularly Dussart 2000).

**An expression of women's solidarity**

Bell asserts that the "atmosphere within the *jilimi* is usually pleasant and supportive" (1980a:178) and that *jilimi* are potentially more powerful with increased size. I will show in the ensuing chapters that such assertions do not hold at Yuendumu. *Jilimi*, as other residential arrangements, experience their share of divisions, arguments, and fights. Their atmosphere may be pleasant and supportive one day, and it may not be so the next. Moreover, the larger a *jilimi*, the more grounds for arguments arise. I will explore these issues in detail in Chapters 5, 6, and 7, and will now introduce the particular *jilimi* in which these chapters are ethnographically situated.

**Home of the ritually important and respected women**

*Jilimi*, Bell says, have a permanent core made up of "active ritual leaders and repositories of religious knowledge" (1980a:178). Dussart refuted this by focussing on ritually active leaders herself and showing that residential choice and marital status were not related to their prominence in ritual. Indeed, she says, such ritually active women at Yuendumu "who possess
the kind of ritual authority described by Bell often inhabit the camps of their married children" (Dussart 2000:44). And I can add that the 'core women' of *jilimi* at Yuendumu may well be ritually active, but just as often are not (cf. Chapters 5, 6, and 7 of this thesis). Neither *jilimi* at Yuendumu known by the country association of the ritually powerful core as claimed by Bell (cf. 1980a:177-b4) – they are known by their position within the geography of Yuendumu.

The *jilimi* – a spatial description

The *jilimi* in which the ensuing chapters are set, and which was my home for most of my fieldwork, is located in Yuendumu’s Inner West Camp, within easy walking distance to the Big Shop and The Park. It has yet another large *jilimi* as one neighbour, while all other houses in its vicinity are occupied by *yupukama*, sometimes with smaller *jilimi* attached to them (except for one house across the road in which three Catholic nuns live, known as ‘Little Sisters’). The *jilimi* is situated in and around a house. The house is a structure made of corrugated iron with four identical sized rooms (approx. 2.5 x 4 m) adjacent to each other opening onto a roofed verandah facing north (see Figure 16 below). The verandah is separated by the yard from a wall about one meter high.

Each room has a louvered window (usually shut) onto the south yard. At the western end of the structure is a further (window-less) room, which opens onto the verandah without a door, as well as a kitchen. At the eastern end are a storage place, which can be locked, and two bathrooms, with a shower, sink and toilet each, as well as a little laundry space with a tap and a washing machine. The house is located in the southern half of a yard. Nowadays, the yard is confined by a fence on three sides, about 25 m long and 35 m wide; and the back of an identical house on the northern side. In the middle of the yard between the two houses is an iron structure which, when covered with canvas, provides shade and often has further shelters and shades attached to it. To the northwest is a large tree providing further shade.

The yard space south of the house is rarely used, I suspect mainly because it is not visibly observable from the other spaces. It does thus usually not comprise part of the *jilimi’s yarlu*

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72 To be able to observe all coming and going and other activity is a main requirement for a living space. The house visually blocked the south yard and thus hindered its usage. In fact, the only time I am aware of, that a
space. This, in the main, is made up of the yard and on the verandah, where most of the social activity within the jilimi takes place. This is where in the evenings the yunta normally are arranged.

![Diagram of the South Yard]

**Figure 16:** *The Jilimi - spatial layout*

*Yunta* was put up there was when one of the jilimi residents was expected to die. Surrounded by her sisters, this old woman spent her last days and nights in a properly built yunta in the south yard.
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Depending on how many people are staying at any one time and how relations are between them there can be anything between one long yunta, in the yard or on the verandah, to five or more yunta distributed across the jilimi space. In the latter case, one or two separate yunta could be on the verandah, another one on the eastern side of the yard and further yuntas in the western half. Cooking fires are arranged in a similar fashion, depending upon relations between the individuals in different yunta, there can be one single cooking fire or as many as there are yunta. After breakfast and before it is time to arrange the yunta, bedding is stored in the rooms and on the verandah; and the yarlu space of the jilimi is used for socialising. Who sits where with whom is not related at all to where the yunta were the night before or where they will be the coming night. Spatial arrangements during the day in the jilimi thus differ from night use. The negotiations surrounding the different uses of different spaces inside the jilimi will be discussed in depth in the ensuing chapters (especially the relationship between spatiality and sociality in the jilimi at night in Chapter 6 and time-zoning of jilimi space in Chapter 7).

The vexed issue of room ownership

As indicated in Chapter 2, rooms are not used for sleeping, unless it is very cold or rainy. The jilimi’s house’s four rooms are no exception and their main use is for storage, contrasting with the use of rooms in conventional Western houses, which are normally divided into rooms with shared access (lounge, dining room, etc) and private rooms (bedrooms).

However, there is a comparable element in that not all jilimi residents have equal access to all four rooms. In fact each room is known to ‘belong’ to a particular woman at any one time. This ownership is not exclusive in terms of rights over the room’s space and use. It is more accurately described as an association between a room and a person. A certain room for example, used to be called “Celeste’s room” for a while, and Celeste indeed did store most of her belongings in that room and slept in it when it was cold. However, people who stayed ‘with’ Celeste in the jilimi, as well as some of Celeste’s relatives who lived in other camps, had access to that same room. They stored their belongings in it, sometimes slept in it, and generally accessed it without asking Celeste for permission. And when Celeste moved to another camp, ‘her’ room became somebody else’s, and her associates’ access to the room ceased as well.
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While each room was thus associated with at least one main person at any one time (and these associations shifted), 'room ownership' in no way impacted upon access to and control over any of the other spaces in the jilimi. Nor did 'room ownership' add any weight to a woman's standing within the jilimi, i.e. no power was associated with this kind of 'ownership'. Apart from the rooms, access to the rest of the space of the jilimi is equally distributed to all residents present at any one time. This is not to say that disagreements between residents do not take place, but whether or not a woman 'has a room' in these cases does have no impact on arguments.

What 'room ownership' did do for women while they 'held' a room was associate them directly with the jilimi -- which was considered by them and others as their home. However, there are exceptions to this rule. I know of at least one woman who was said to 'own' a room while not actually living in the jilimi for a long time, and of many other jilimi residents who were most closely associated with it and did consider it their home, who never 'owned' a room.

Interestingly, the fifth room, the one on the western side without a door and thus open access to and from the verandah, was at no stage associated with a particular woman. It was used in a very similar fashion to the other rooms, i.e. for storage of bedding and sleeping in when rainy or cold, by a changing number of individuals. Since it had no door and no windows, however, it was never considered a 'proper' room. Nobody ever claimed it as theirs (even when using it over a period of months), nor was it ever attributed to be 'someone's' room.

I brought up 'room ownership' here to alert us to two issues. First, that rooms within the jilimi space (and other camps for that matter) are ambiguous spaces, they are not easily and clearly related to persons and their use thus throws up interesting issues in respect to the spatiality of camps when set up in and around houses. And second, the four rooms of the jilimi during most of my stay there were related to, or said to 'belong' to, four women who were central to the jilimi at the time and are central to this thesis. They will be introduced next.
When I first moved into the jilimi in late November 1998 the jilimi's four rooms respectively were said to belong to three classificatory sisters, Polly, Joy, and Nora, and Polly's daughter, Celeste. Both Polly and Nora were widows in their 70s. Joy and Celeste were in their 40s. Joy also often lived in a camp close by with her 'divorced' husband, and Celeste was married once but left her husband many years ago and has been single since.

The three sisters are related to each other in a variety of ways (cf. Figure 17). Joy's and Nora's mothers were married to two brothers, that is, Wadlpiri way they are considered 'close sisters' since their fathers in turn were 'close brothers'. Polly's mother was not only a half-sister of Joy's mother but also another wife of Nora's father. Polly's actual father, however, was a different man (a case of 'running around' in the 'olden days'). Further ties connecting these women are that Joy adopted and brought up one of Polly's sons, a common Wadlpiri practice. He passed away a number of years ago, but Joy now looks after his children. These actual grandchildren of Polly's
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consider Joy their first grandmother and stay with her rather than Polly when they spend time in the jilimi. Polly and Joy are further related to each other via their husbands who were close classificatory brothers; Joy and Nora are further connected to each other via a close friendship between Joy and one of Nora's sister's daughters. Previous to moving into the same jilimi, that connection has often brought them together in the past for outings such as hunting trips.

Central to my discussions of life in the jilimi are not only the ways these four women related to each other and other residents and but also my relations to them. In the following, I provide a brief sketch in narrative form about each of them, recapitulating interactions between these women and myself as they took place in the jilimi. These scenes represent personal portraits of the four women as I experienced them, and they also relate to a fight in which we all participated which will be discussed further in the ensuing chapters.

Polly Napalji:ri, 'my mother'

The first day of cold time: my sisters and I return home to the jilimi from that day's hunting. In our absence, the others had cleaned up. We join them in the yard where there are two fires: one smouldering with lots of thick white smoke in which the rubbish burns and one on which Nangala is making fresh damper. The white smoke of the rubbish fire against the crisp blue sky reminds me of the potato fires that are lit in my German village in autumn. For the first time in years I feel homesick. One of my grandmothers asks: "what's wrong, Napurrurla?" and passes my answer on to the others: "Napurrurla is thinking of home, little bit sad one, poor bugger." Polly, without replying, gets up. She takes a rake lying in the yard and starts to dance with it around the rubbish fire. She dances, first the way Warlpiri women dance in ceremonies, with quivering, slightly bent legs and abrupt movements. Then she starts mimicking the movements of the young girls at disco nights: circling her hips, faster and faster. Her dance becomes more and more lewd. Everybody claps and sings, and laughs. At night, when my sisters and I are lying in our swags next to each other we are still laughing: "that Polly, she's clown woman, that one."

Some months later: I am in the Big Shop and just heard the bad news. One of Polly's nieces has passed away. As I leave the shop, I can hear wailing coming from all directions. I hurry to the jilimi and start hugging and wailing with the women who are sitting lined up on the
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verandah. As I turn around I see Polly. She is sitting alone, crouched in the cold ashes of last night's fire. She has already shaved off her hair, and her head and body are covered in grey ash. The only visible bits of her of warm, brown skin are the tracks on her cheeks made by the flood of tears. Her wall pierces the afternoon air.

One day in summer: as I hang up my laundry on the barbed wire in the yard strung between poles in the yard as a clothes line, Polly comes over. There are wet blankets on either side of us and it is like standing in a tunnel. Polly is not like most of the other women: lively, demanding, noisy, intimate. She is quieter, and she mainly watches, mostly from a distance that she herself determines. Sometimes, she looks like a young girl and sometimes she looks as old as she must be. She has had two husbands; eight children, four have passed away. She has 22 grandchildren and 19 great grandchildren. In the tunnel of blankets, she comes towards me, touches my head, says "my daughter", and then she is gone.

Joy Napaljarri, "my first mother"

In the evenings, Joy and I often sat around the fire, telling stories. Many were about other white women Joy 'grew up'. "And then I helped that anthropologist, but she left me for that West Camp mob, and that linguist, she left for Leah, and that Women's Centre coordinator, she left, too." Her stories inevitably ended with "and now I got Napurrula, she is like a real daughter, she'll look after me for a long time, and when I get my house, she'll move in, too." Joy's name was right at the top of the list at council; the next house to be built in Yuendumu was to be hers. "When we move into that house, it won't be like those other houses, our house will have a garden with flowers and an orange tree, and a green lawn. Inside, there'll be curtains, and chairs and sofas, and pictures on the walls. And everybody will have their own room. One for me and Kiara (her granddaughter), one for Napurrula and one for Lydia (her daughter)." I liked sitting around that fire, in the evenings and sharing dreams - and often it reconciled me after the clashes we had during the day. It was nice to be compared favourably to 'the other' Kardiya women, those ones that left Joy. Sitting around that fire, we felt snug, warm and content, looking forward to the future, when our dreams would eventuate.

In the *jilimi*, every once in a while somebody, most often Joy, would decide it was time to clean. "This place is a mess, let's clean up!" Cleaning means a trip to the shop to buy a rake, a broom,
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and Ajax. The rubbish in the yard would be raked up and burned, the bathrooms sprinkled with Ajax, scrubbed with brooms and hosed down with water. One time, Joy said to me “go back to the shop and get some Pine-O-Clean.” When I came back, she opened the bottle, generously splashed it all over the bathroom and stood in the middle of it, her hands on her hips, looking expectantly. After a couple of minutes, her face dropped and she murmured, “maybe it only works for Whitesellars.”

In the end, Joy and I did not get along, and I, like all the other white women before me, ‘left’ her. I always felt I disappointed and hurt her gravely. Her biggest dream was having her own house, Kardiya style, and she knew that on her own she could not create and maintain a suburban dream house in the middle of Yuendumu. Her hope was my presence, the presence of a Kardiya in her house, would achieve that. We fought a lot and when she finally got her own house, I decided to stay in the jilimi and did not move in with her. I always felt that for her I was a disappointment in the same way the Pine-O-Clean was - in ads on TV she had seen what it could achieve: clean gleaming bathrooms with tiles in which you could mirror yourself. The Pine-O-Clean did not fulfil its promise, that bathroom never sparkled, and I did not move in with her and thus, although she was so close to achieving her dream of living in a Kardiya style house it was always my fault that it did not eventuate.

Celeste Napurrurla, ‘my sister’

The first time I saw Celeste, I was living in Old Jakamarra’s camp and she came over to pick up Joy for a Night Patrol shift. Celeste is small, a head shorter than me at least. There she was, small, but looking fierce in her Night Patrol gear: a large black bomber jacket with NIGHT PATROL written in silver letters on the back, swinging a big nulabnulah in her left hand, a black beanie on her head. After she left with Joy I said to Old Jakamarra, “Who was that?” He chuckled, “Your sister that one”.

Later, Joy and I moved into the jilimi and Joy resumed working full-time at the school’s Literacy Centre. Because of that and her many other responsibilities, she asked Celeste to keep an eye on me and make me tea and damper in the mornings. In retrospect I think the main reason she asked Celeste and not anybody else was that she never perceived Celeste as a threat in respect to her ‘ownership’ of me. Celeste is excellent in arranging domestic matters but nobody thinks she is too
bright when it comes to politics, neither is she showy. And while Celeste’s value as an anthropological informant is most limited, as a person to hang out with, to live with, and to be around she is bliss.

Rather than being demanding and domineering, Celeste made sure I had a break once in a while. This is not to say that she didn’t have her own agenda. Working around the jilimi all day long, looking after children and old people there, preparing food, organising firewood and sleeping arrangements, it was when she insisted I needed a break that she could have one, too. And in the mornings, we managed to stay in bed longer because of each other. I kept thinking, as long as Celeste is not up, I won’t need to get up either. So I spent contented extra minutes in my swag listening to the clatter in the jilimi, pretending to be still asleep, once in a while peeping out from underneath my blankets to make sure Celeste was still asleep underneath hers. One morning as I emerged for a quick glance, she did the same at the same moment. Having caught each other at it, we laughed and she said, “oh, now we have to get up after all.”

My most favourite memory of Celeste is how on a very, very hot summer afternoon we borrowed a fan and went into her room to have a siesta. There we were lying on the blankets with the fan keeping us moderately cool, Celeste’s steady breathing next to me as always the most soothing sound. As it was too hot to sleep properly I kept drifting in and out of sleep, once in a while opening my eyes for a glance to the outside. Through the half open door I would see the roof of the verandah, the wall dividing it from the yard and in between them a strip of blue, blue sky. Occasionally, there would be a cloud in it, sometimes two; sometimes there’d be none.

Nora Napaljarri, ‘another mother’

When finally, after many months, I had my big fight with Joy and the two of us stood on the jilimi’s verandah yelling at each other it was Nora who ended our fight. She was sitting at the other end of the verandah, next to a small cooking fire, making tea and damper. In the middle of our yelling she calmly said “Napurrula, come over, your tea is ready.” I went over and sat down with Nora, accepting a pannikin full of tea and putting chops on the fire for us. Joy stormed off. When the chops were done, I gave one to Nora and one to Polly and ate one myself. Polly nodded towards the door of Joy’s room and said “Too cheeky, that one. I will be your mother now,” and
Nora nodded in agreement. Up until that moment I had not been sure whether the fight with Joy was ‘a good idea’. Emotionally it was more than overdue; mentally I was unsure about the consequences it would have. What I had not counted on was somebody like Nora whose experiences in politics and negotiations are considerable.

Nora had ‘won’ a “medal from the Queen” for organising Yuendumu Night Patrol, she had been a big business woman, a very experienced singer, dancer, and painter. She was cranky a lot when I lived with her, often because she was ageing too quickly. While very much alive and full of ideas, her bones hurt and walking became more and more difficult. To be limited by one’s own body is a most frustrating experience and Nora did not give in to that easily. To have been powerful and now becoming “just another old lady” was very, very hard for her. In turn, I often found her demands on me a challenge mainly because they were made with an almost royal air. There was no way to refuse a request of Nora’s. Thus, I would drive her to the shop, to the clinic, to look for her grandson, to go hunting, and I would bring her meat, tea, fruit, and soft drinks from the shop whenever she asked. And it must be said that she always reciprocated, she would sing songs or perform love magic for me in the evenings, and sometimes she would slip me a twenty dollar note on pension days.

Two years after I left Yuendumu, I rang up, as I often do. This time, Nora was around and she came to the phone to talk to me. She told me about the house she had moved in to in the meantime, about her grandchildren, her son and other gossip. Then she said, “Napurrula, I am poor one, your mother has no skirt and no blouse, no shoes and no blankets.” This is the Warpiri way of asking me to send up some things for her because I was very broke at the time I had to tell her that I was dolla-wangu - without money. “Oh poor bugger, my daughter”, she said, “I’ll send you one hundred dollars”.

Conclusion

Bell invited the reader into the jilimi at the beginning of Chapter 3 of Daughters of the Dreaming by saying “[C]ome into the Kaytej jilimi of 1977, meet the residents and most frequent visitors, and explore their relationships with each other and with country” (1993:110). Only, she never took us there.
THE EMERGENT CENTRALITY OF JILIMI

In this chapter, I have shown that jilimi at Yuendumu bear little resemblance to Bell's ideological descriptions of Alekarenae jilimi. Over the last decades, at Yuendumu, social relations have undergone significant transformations that are manifested, among other things, in contemporary jilimi. These have increased in numbers, in size, in residential composition as well as in purpose. From a temporary residential arrangement for women during mourning they have been transformed into centres of sociality, not only for women but for children and men as well. At Yuendumu, the relevance of jilimi is not land and ritual based, nor is it to provide a power base for women. Today's jilimi are focal points around which life for many at Yuendumu revolves. They are a residential manifestation of the massive transformations Warlpiri life has undergone. Moreover, within any particular jilimi there is also constant flux through the continuous alterations in their residential compositions, and through the differentiated social use of their space during the day and the night.
CHAPTER FIVE

THE FLOW OF PEOPLE THROUGH THE JILIMI

In order to document the extent of the fluidity of contemporary social relations I analyse the flow of people though the jilimi introduced in the previous chapter. This jilimi has been reasonably stable spatially in that it has been attached to the same building since before my first visit to Yuendumu in 1994 and still is today (2002). The composition of its residents, on the other hand, has not been very stable at all, as I will show. The flow of people is a reality in all camps at Yuendumu and is by no means exclusive to jilimi, however, its volume is particularly high in these camps. Having lived and moved around with some of the jilimi’s key residents for more than a year I am much more familiar with them, with their patterns of mobility, and with their personal networks, than I am with others. This familiarity is crucial to an understanding of the underlying patterns of others coming to stay in the jilimi. Only through long-term day to day monitoring and a knowledge of people’s wider social networks is it possible to see the underlying patterns to this flow.

I begin by capturing this flow quantitatively with statistical evidence, which allows for the distinguishing of different types of residents. I then turn to ensuing case studies to look at the reasons underlying the movement patterns of different the types of residents. I examine why people came to stay at the jilimi, when they did so, with whom they stayed while there, where they came from and where they went to when they left. From the combined data, it is possible to see the patterns in the flow of people through camps the jilimi and by extension its implications for contemporary life at Yuendumu. The discussion in this chapter is limited to those people who stay overnight in the jilimi, with the flow of daytime visitors being discussed in Chapter 7.

The Flow of People

During my fieldwork, I took a census of who slept where and next to whom each morning when I woke up. I slept in the jilimi and recorded census data there for 221 nights - over a period of
THE FLOW OF PEOPLE THROUGH THE JILIMI

Some 467 nights. This means that for 246 days of that period I have no data about who stayed at the jilimi because I stayed elsewhere. This is significant in itself because while I considered the jilimi my home for this period of my fieldwork, the data shows that I spent fewer than half of the nights there. As my own mobility was largely determined by the mobility of the people I was living and working with this may well be quite representative of the amount of time people generally spend 'at home' and 'elsewhere'. I will return to this below.

A striking result of the census data for this period is that in total more than 160 individuals slept in the jilimi during those 221 nights. Compared to an average four-bedroom house in non-Aboriginal Australia, this is an astonishing number of residents. There are a number of difficulties with the census data; a first one is about accurate numbers. As I was by no means the first person up every morning the chances are that I have undercounted when people left early in the morning. Further undercounting I suspect has occurred in respect to children, not all of whom I knew, especially at the initial stages of fieldwork. More importantly, one difficulty arose out of the fact that many people stayed at the jilimi whom I did not know and unless they stayed for a number of days I often did not find out their names. The census data thus encompasses named individuals (105 in total) and three other categories of persons: no name adults, no name children and sorry mobs. The categories of no-name adults and no-name children comprised 60 and the 146 individuals respectively for the total period. However, many of these I suspect to overlap. One extreme example of this are four children whose names I did not know, who came to stay in the jilimi with their mother and grandmother for a number of nights on three occasions and thus make up at least 32 of the 146 counted no-name children. The situation for no-name adults is similar. As sorry mobs I classified people who came from other communities to Yuendumu for mortuary rituals and who stayed in or near the jilimi. I did not record numbers or names for these but just noted whether it was a 'small' or a 'big' mob at any one time. Thus, when I say 'at least 160' persons stayed in the jilimi over the census period, this is a conservative estimate.

Counting named and un-named individuals (but excluding sorry mobs), Table 5 shows, on average 17 people stayed in the jilimi each night, comprising on average 12 adults and 5

73 During the first few weeks of fieldwork I felt bewildered by this flow, and often not confident enough to ask for the names of people I did not know. By and by I got to know most people through the appropriate channels (asking in the morning when taking the census would not have been appropriate), and after a while worked out polite ways of inquiring about a person's name when I did not know them.

74 Sorry business or just sorry is the Warlpiri term for mortuary rituals. These will be discussed in Chapter 8.
The flow of people through the jilimi

Children. While there were on average 12 adults present at night, the minimum number for adults was 6 and the highest 19 (again, excluding sorry mobs). For children, the highest number was 11 and the minimum was one child present.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Average</th>
<th>Highest</th>
<th>Lowest</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Adults</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5: Average numbers of adults and children sleeping in the jilimi over 221 nights (excluding individuals from sorry mobs)

As I have pointed out elsewhere (Musharbash 2000), averages like these when referring to Aboriginal camps in remote communities have to be treated very carefully, as they hide another dimension. These average numbers comprise different people, which distinguishes them from comparable non-Indigenous statistics. In the case study I presented in the 2000 study, there was an average of 22 people staying at another Yuendumu jilimi, but in actual fact...

Over the fortnight there were a total of 27 different adults and 15 different children sleeping at the house; that is, a total of 42 different persons. Moreover, a 'core' of 11 persons (seven adults and four children) slept at the house for the whole two-week period (Musharbash 2000:59).

The average numbers of residents conceals the actual flow of people through it. The figures in Table 5 above should thus be treated with caution and be read as indicating statistical realities rather than actual practice. The fact that more than 160 people stayed in the jilimi over the census period is at least as important as the fact that on average 17 of them were present on any one night. Further analysis of the figures draws attention to other features of the jilimi population. The graph in Figure 18 (below) presents the number of nights the 105 named individuals spent in the jilimi on those 221 nights I slept there.75

75 Graph 1 excludes both un-named individuals and sorry mobs.
Figure 18: Graph of nights/people in the jilimi

Each column of the graph of Figure 18 represents the number of nights a named individual slept at the jilimi. As it is based on the nights I myself spent in the jilimi, the tallest column represents me and the 221 nights I spent there. The next column in line represents the person who spend the next highest amount of nights in the jilimi, while I was there. It is important to keep in mind, however, that this person, like most others covered by the graph, would have been present on many of the nights I was not.

The graph in Figure 18 is skewed by my own mobility, it does not present data for a continuous period of time, and it may well under-represent some people and over-represent others. Nonetheless the data does reflect well the way people relate to the jilimi. In analysing the data in the graph it is helpful to divide the columns into four sections, splitting the 105 individuals into categories according to how many nights they spent in the jilimi.

The first section comprises eleven individuals who all slept in the jilimi more than 100 nights (133-221 nights), and distinctly more than everybody else. I call these the key residents and discuss them under this heading below. Then, the curve takes a deep plunge and the next section comprises those individuals who spent distinctly fewer nights than the key residents but distinctly more than the remaining individuals in the jilimi – these I call regular residents (44-75 nights/12 individuals). Then the curve peters out slowly and I divided it into two more sections, comprising those individuals who slept in the jilimi on an on-and-off basis (8-36 nights/36 individuals) and
THE FLOW OF PEOPLE THROUGH THE JILIMI

those who slept there seldomly (1-6 nights/48 individuals). The former are discussed under the heading on & off residents and the last under the term sporadic residents.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Number of nights</th>
<th>Number of individuals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Key Residents</td>
<td>100+</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regular Residents</td>
<td>44 – 76</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>On &amp; Off Residents</td>
<td>8 – 36</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sporadic Residents</td>
<td>1 – 6</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6: Types of residents

Key residents

Under this heading I refer to those eleven individuals who stayed in the jilimi for distinctly more nights than all other residents over the same period. Four of them are the four focal women introduced in the previous chapter, Polly, Joy, Celeste, and Nora. The other seven, apart from myself, are closely related to them, some of them their dependants. These eleven individuals can be described as relating emotionally to the jilimi as ‘home’ for most or all of the census period. They would have thought of and talked about the jilimi as ‘home’ when they were sleeping there as well as on the many nights they slept elsewhere.

The relations between the four focal women already introduced and the other seven key residents are shown in Figure 19 below. The key features of the relationships are:

• Polly and her daughter Celeste share the responsibility of bringing up Neil (13).76 He is the adopted son of Celeste, the real son of Celeste’s sister and thus Polly’s grandson.
• The two also help Joy in looking after her very old and frail mother, Nangala (80s).

76 All ages in this thesis are approximate only. Most Warlpiri people, including children and teenagers, are not certain of their exact age (on Warlpiri birthdays and dates of birth see Musharbash forthcoming).
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- Also with Joy lives her granddaughter, Kiara (10).\textsuperscript{77} Kiara is the daughter of Polly's son whom Joy adopted, and thus is, in actual fact, Polly's granddaughter and Celeste's niece.
- Nora in turn looks after one of her grandsons, Toby (12),
- Nora and Pearl (70s), one of her close sisters, co-reside, share their resources and much of their time
- Annie (50s) is the daughter of a close brother of Polly's deceased and Joy's former husbands. Unlike the other people described previously she is not a co-dependant of any of the four women and in fact moved into Nora's room when she left, taking up a similar focal position in the jilimi as Nora held before.\textsuperscript{78}
- And myself (YM).

![Genealogy of key residents]

Figure 19: Genealogy of key residents

Who comes to stay at the jilimi, when and why is largely determined through the relationships people have to any of the focal women among these key residents, i.e. Polly, Joy, Celeste, Nora

\textsuperscript{77} This is the same Kiara as discussed in the case study in Chapter 2. Please note, though, that the jilimi data predates that particular case study, i.e. Kiara (and her siblings) are younger in the present descriptions.

\textsuperscript{78} This was only a couple of months before I moved into another camp with Polly and Celeste. Since I am not as familiar with Annie as with the other four focal women, I focus more extensively on the latter throughout the thesis.
and Annie. Usually, any person described in the other residential categories below only ever stays in the jilimi if their focal reference woman is present at the same time. And it needs to be kept in mind that while Polly, Joy, Celeste and Nora and the other seven were key residents in the jilimi they did stay in other camps regularly - where in turn they would fall into one of the other residential categories.

Regular residents

The individuals described as regular residents stayed in the jilimi less often than the key residents described above. Again, they can best be described in relation to the five focal women from among the key residents (cf. Figure 20).

![Genealogy diagram](#)

**Figure 20: Genealogy of regular residents aligned with Polly and Celeste**

Thus, closely aligned regular residents with Polly and Celeste are:

- **Marion (37)**, who is Polly's daughter, Neil's mother, and Celeste's sister.
- **Adrian (early 20s)** who is Celeste's son.
THE FLOW OF PEOPLE THROUGH THE JILIMI

- Adrian’s wife Stella (19)
- Ada (40s), the ex-wife of another one of Polly’s sons; i.e. she is Polly’s (ex)daughter-in-law and Celeste’s (ex)sister-in-law.
- Brian (11), the son of Celeste’s ex-husband and his second wife, who considers Celeste a close mother and Neil his close brother.

Regular residents aligned with Joy are shown in Figure 21:

![Genealogy diagram]

Figure 21: Genealogy of regular residents aligned with Joy

They are:
- Isa (60s), a classificatory sister of hers and the mother of another one of Joy’s adopted sons, and
- Lydia (18), Joy’s adopted daughter who is the actual daughter of Joy’s sister and their co-husband.

Regular residents aligned with Nora are shown in Figure 22 (below). They are:
- her actual sister Bertha (70s)
- her grandson Ray (6) who also is the close brother of Nora’s other grandson Toby (who is a ‘key resident’).
- Neillie, a close father’s sister of both Nora and Nora’s classificatory sister Pearl (another ‘key resident’, described above, and cf. Figure 22).
Lastly in the same way as regular residents relate to those four focal women, Annie in turn became a key focal woman and attracted people to stay with her. Regularly with Annie stayed her sister Pennie and her half-sister Honey (both in their 60s), as well as her daughter Myrtle (30), as shown in Figure 23 below.

As these descriptions make clear, the individuals I describe as regular residents are some of the relatives of the focal resident women, but by no means all. They come from a relatively small range of the potentially very large pool of relatives and close associates that each of these women can draw upon. In the present cases, regular residents are comprised of sisters (4), daughters (3), sons (2) and a son's son, father's sister, son's wife and daughter in law each. It needs to be kept in mind that each woman would have a much larger number of people in these kinship relationships and that it is only a few who regularly stay with them.

This point is important as it underlines the fact that other factions are at work besides the kinship status of the people involved. Annie, for example, has a large number of sisters and
THE FLOW OF PEOPLE THROUGH THE JILIMI

half-sisters; however, Pennie and Hoeny stay with her much more often than do the others. Moreover, while a handful of her half-sisters stay with her frequently, a number of other half-sisters stay with her very seldomly or never.

Figure 23: Genealogy of regular residents aligned with Annie

A similar point can be made about the individuals staying with Polly, Celeste, Joy and Nona. Each of these women has other people as closely related to them as the ones staying with them regularly, who however stay with them less frequently or not at all. The forces underlying the formation of particular relationships are discussed in more detail below and in the rest of the thesis.

On & off residents

Individuals I have classified as on & off residents stayed less often or for shorter periods in the jilimi than did individuals described as key and regular residents. However, on & off residents are recruited also from the larger pool of kin surrounding the five focal women identified. In the main on & off residents relate to these women as children, grandchildren, great-grandchildren, sisters and cousins. Further, there are some other individuals in this category whose relationships can be
THE FLOW OF PEOPLE THROUGH THE JILIMI

traced genealogically to the key women but are more accurately described in respect to their relationship to the jilimi.

One woman in particular in this context is interesting because she used to be the 'owner' of one of the rooms, in her own words, 'the whole building' used to be hers. While I was staying at the jilimi, she had two other main residences she oscillated between but also frequently came to stay at the jilimi. Having used to be a focal woman in this particular jilimi herself, she stayed in the jilimi because she felt it was her right to do so and also to express her closeness to some of the more recent focal women through residing with them occasionally (see also discussion in Chapter 6). Often, when she came to stay her granddaughter and her sister joined her, these two never came to stay in the jilimi without her.

Another woman in this category was based in a neighbouring community but made frequent visits to Yuendumu and when there, she often stayed for substantial periods of time in the jilimi. Although she often camped somewhat on the spatial margins of the jilimi in many respects she paralleled the key women in terms of access to rights and space within it as well as through the gravitational position she was in. When in the jilimi, she was often joined by her daughter-in-law and a number of grandchildren (see also discussion in Chapter 7).

A last woman in the category of on & off residents was a close sister of a former key residential woman who had passed away. Since this woman was also a close classificatory relative of some of the current key residential women she continued to stay at the jilimi for a period before moving elsewhere for good.

Sporadic residents

The individuals I have termed sporadic residents are similarly composed to the on & off residents in that they are made up of actual and close classificatory relatives of the key women. Some differences between the two categories are that the former includes ex-focal women and that persons in the latter stayed in the jilimi less frequently and for shorter periods, often for one night.

In fact, when I visited Yuendumu for the first time in 1994 as well as on subsequent trips I made she was based at this particular jilimi, and had moved elsewhere fairly recently just before I began the PhD research in November 1998.
THE FLOW OF PEOPLE THROUGH THE JILIMI

only (during the census period, that is). It can safely be assumed that these patterns of occasional very short stays were repeated at other times.

Those latter, most infrequent short-term stayers fall into two different kinds. First, those who would have a number of other options to explore before staying at the jilimi, whereas for many individuals described as regular and on & off residents the jilimi would be the first choice - after their own 'home'. And second, short-term stayers described as sporadic residents are also made up of those who came from another community and stayed in Yuendumu for a brief period only. While only a few individuals in the above categories have their usual place of residence elsewhere than Yuendumu, a striking difference about sporadic residents is that almost half of them are individuals usually based elsewhere. Many of these are grandchildren of the key residential women visiting from other communities, as well as sisters and cousins. And while no adult key resident is male, and the categories of regular and on & off residents contain one and two men respectively, four of the sporadic residents where men. This indicates that while by no means usual, men do stay in the jilimi, but not many do and rarely for very long. These men are either sons and grandsons of the key residential women or in two cases they were the husbands of one of the key resident women's daughter and granddaughter.

Stopping in the Jilimi

At Yuendumu, the Aboriginal English term for 'staying at' or 'living with' is 'to stop'. Thus, when I return to Yuendumu these days, my friends and me reminisce about "that time we stopped in that jilimi", or, when giving somebody a lift home a sensible question to ask first is "were you stopping?" in English, or the Warlpiri equivalent "Nyampam-ndi kampa yina?" (where are you sitting?).

To 'stop' is an apt verb to describe this element of Warlpiri residency patterns which are processual. The continuous flow of people is halted each night when people 'stop'. Warlpiri people move, almost nobody now lives in the same place with the same people permanently; rather, people follow their own paths, which continually criss-cross those of others forming

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80 The usage of the term 'to stop' at Yuendumu contrast with the usage of terms such as 'taking off, shooting through, running around' describing different ways of exiting from a camp as reported by Sansom (1989:140) as "moral words for movement" in Darwin town camps.
THE FLOW OF PEOPLE THROUGH THE JILIMI

flows of people through camps. Motion is an integral element of Warlpiri life, and ‘stopping’ aptly characterises residency patterns in a life where they change on a regular basis, both in term of where one stops and in terms of with whom one does so. There are as many reasons to stop in the jilimi as there are people who do so: here I will present a sample of some of those reasons with a view of further elaborating the distinctions of the residential categories discussed above. The following case studies are chosen to present relations between individuals from all these categories and the focal women, Polly, Joy, Celeste and Nora.

Stopping with Polly: Amy

Polly has many descendants, next to her own eight children, 22 grandchildren and 19 great-grandchildren, she has also ‘brought up’ a number of other children, and they, their descendants as well as her children’s and grandchildren’s adopted children make up the very large pool of people directly or very closely related to her. However, not all of them spend equal amounts of time with Polly, nor do they all have the same access to her resources.

Each of the four residential categories includes kin and descendants of Polly’s and this hints at a crucial difference between types of residency: although people in one category may be equally closely related to a focal woman as those in another, they stay with her for different amounts of time and for different reasons. Residence may thus acquire different qualities depending upon the factors underlying it.

Amy is in her twenties and is the daughter of one of Polly’s (deceased) sons, they are in a yaparla relationship to each other.41 She has been married twice, once to a man from Nyirripi with whom she has a teenage daughter, who spends most of her time with her paternal grandmother in Nyirripi. Amy's second husband is from Kintore and she has a five-year-old son with him, who usually stays with Amy and sometimes with his paternal grandmother in Kintore. Amy herself mainly lives in one of Alice Spring's town camps. Then Amy became gravely ill. After several checks at Alice Springs hospital, the doctors there decided they could not tell what was wrong with her. Since her illness could not be determined with certainty everybody suspected sorcery and Amy thus had to find a safe place she could stay at. Neither the Alice Springs town camp, nor

41 The relationship between FM and SC, yaparla, is a particularly close one, see also Chapters 1 and 6.
Kintore or Nyiripi seemed good places to stay since in all of them lived affines of Amy — and affines, especially if marital relations are not too good and there are fights over children, are the first suspects in cases of sorcery. Since her parents are no longer alive, the one place for her to go, then, was to her grandmother, Polly. During her sickness, Amy stayed very close to Polly, sleeping next to her every night and sharing her money and food with Polly. Polly in turn looked after Amy and organised a number of trips to go with her to other settlements to visit traditional healers to find out the causes of and cures for her granddaughter’s illness. Amy stayed in the jilimi for 36 nights (while I was there), while her son stayed with her for 28 nights.

Amy and her son are in included under on & off residents and their pattern of staying in the jilimi is one of one substantial period of time for a particular reason (Amy’s illness). Once cured, Amy went back to Alice Springs and when she came visiting in Yuendumu often preferred to stay in other camps. During Amy’s illness her daughter came to visit her from Nyiripi but while in Yuendumu she often preferred to stay with some of her paternal relatives and only spent a total of six nights in the jilimi. Amy’s daughter is included in the category of sporadic residents and serves to illustrate nicely some core differences. The jilimi is Polly’s home, Amy came to stay with Polly during the time of her illness and Polly, Amy and her son shared space and resources equally. Amy’s daughter, who also is Polly’s great-granddaughter, sometimes came to stay with her mother, and although Amy looked after her while she was in the jilimi, Polly did not get involved much. Amy’s daughter’s access to space in the jilimi was conveyed through Amy and did not come from Polly. The fact that Amy’s daughter spent fewer nights in the jilimi and more with her paternal relatives points to the reasons why she classified as a sporadic resident while her brother is classified as an on & off resident. Both she and her brother are related to Polly in exactly the same way (both are children of Polly’s granddaughter Amy), however, her brother is closer to Polly than she is and she thus stays elsewhere more often.

Stopping with Joy: Charity, Jenna and Megan

Joy’s adopted son (who was Polly’s son) had four children, all of whom were brought up by Joy, as well as one of their sisters, Charity, by the same mother but a different father, (she is thus not a grandchild of Polly’s). The youngest of these, Kiara, stayed with Joy at all times (and is one of the jilimi’s key residents). Her siblings are in their teens and early twenties, and most of them are married on and off. Kiara’s next eldest sister, Charity, was very mobile and oscillated between her
father's place, her young husband's parents' place, her grandfather's place, her sister's place and the jilmi. There, she spent 34 nights (during the census period) and is thus a typical example of an on & off resident. This kind of ‘restless’ or ‘unsettled’ residency behaviour is very representative for young Warlpiri girls, who until they settle down with a husband and children are extremely mobile within a fairly stable and limited number of residences. Where Charity would sleep each night often depended upon what happened during the day, with whom she spent time and where she ate dinner. If she had dinner in the jilmi, as she sometimes did, she would simply stay there. Other nights she would have spent time with Kiara at the disco at night and then came home with her, etc. The point is that in all her usual residences there would always be a place for her to stay and if she felt like it, she would come ‘home’ to the jilmi and quite simply crawl under the blankets with Joy and Kiara.

Kiara's and Charity's two sisters Jenna and Megan are also on & off residents. Jenna stayed in the jilmi for 18 nights, and like Charity, Jenna oscillated between a number of places: her young husband's parents' place, Mt Theo and the jilmi. Being in a somewhat more stable but still very stormy marriage than Charity, Jenna would only stay in the jilmi when fighting with her husband, or to be with her siblings if all of them were at the jilmi at the same time. Megan, the eldest, also falls into the category of on & off resident; she stayed 20 nights in the jilmi. Her story is somewhat different to the others. She had been married to a man from the south and lived there until their marriage deteriorated. When she returned to Yuendumu she moved into the jilmi with Joy as a single woman and lived there until she got married again and then moved with her new husband into her grandfather's camp. Megan's and her sisters' patterns of and reasons for staying were quite different, however, they all can be classified as on & off residents and they all came to stay with Joy.

Stopping with Celeste: Adrian and Stella, Jemima and Angelina

Adrian is Celeste's son. Many years ago Celeste separated from her husband (who lives in Willowa) and has been living in a number of jilmi since. Adrian lived with her until his initiation.

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82 Mt Theo is an outstation about 150 kms northwest of Yuendumu which houses kids who were caught petrol-sniffing at Yuendumu (cf. Brady 1992 on petrol sniffing generally; Stojanowski n.d. on the Mt Theo Programme). Since Jenna and her husband often lapsed into petrol-sniffing, both spent substantial amounts of time there.

83 While staying in the jilmi Megan's daughter from her first marriage came to visit once for a night, exhibiting similar residence patterns to Amy's daughter described above; both are 'sporadic residents'.
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when he began living in jangkayi, men’s camps. When he married Stella, a girl from Hermannsburg, they had to face the problem of where to live. Normally, a young newly married couple joins the camp of either partner’s parents. However, since they wanted to live in Yuendumu, where Adrian had employment, this was not possible: Stella’s family lived in Hermannsburg, and all of Adrian’s paternal relatives were in Willowra and the older members of his maternal family at Yuendumu were women living in jilimi. At first, Adrian and Stella stayed in a derelict house close to the jilimi for a while using the facilities of the jilimi and joined by a number of other couples. As winter approached and the derelict house provided almost no shelter and no warmth all but Adrian and Stella deserted it. Finally, without protection from the weather and without martha, company, they used Celeste’s room in the jilimi as a yajup卡拉, married people’s camp. Due to the substantial period they spent in the jilimi while looking for a new place, Adrian stayed for 48 nights and Stella for 54, they are classified as regular residents. When Adrian was elsewhere, their yajup卡拉 ceased to exist and Stella would sleep with other women in one yunta set up in the jilimi. While the arrangement of having a yajup卡拉 in the jilimi did not please anybody (neither the couple nor the other residents) everybody agreed that for the time being there was no other option and put up with it without further ado. During the day, Adrian was at work at the Mining Co. or away with his brothers and cousins and he had previously, while unmarried, often been present in the jilimi at meal times anyway. The only difference during their stay in the jilimi was that the door to Celeste’s room was closed at night and access to the room was restricted.

Jemima and Angelina are the six-year-old twin daughters of Camilla, Celeste’s deceased sister’s daughter. They are Celeste’s close grandchildren and Polly’s great-granddaughters. Celeste and Camilla share a close friendship and work together at Yuendumu’s Childcare Centre. When Camilla is away shopping in Alice Springs or to do courses at Batchelor College she asks Celeste, rather than Polly, to look after her daughters. Her daughters, Angelina and Jemima, spent 20 and 15 nights in the jilimi respectively and are thus on & off residents. The difference between the two is due to the fact that while Camilla looks after Angelina, her twin Jemima is being brought up by her paternal grandmother who spends substantial amounts of time in Murray Bridge. Thus, Angelina sometimes comes to stay with Celeste on her own, while Jemima is only ever in the jilimi when Angelina is there, too. When they stay in the jilimi, they always stay with Celeste, not with Polly.

In the past, they would have lived with the wife’s parents first before moving to the husband’s country later (cf. Peterson 1978).
Stopping with Nora: Sharon, Leah, Eva and Ray

Nora’s daughter Sharon often came to visit the jilimi during the day, to gamble, gossip, and pass time. She also spent a substantial amount of nights there because of her rather stormy marriage. Her husband often left Yuendumu for business trips that frequently turned into long absences. Whenever he left Yuendumu, or they had a fight, Sharon would, according to Watpiri practice move into the jilimi. However, Sharon’s relationship to her mother Nora was almost as stormy as that with her husband. She would thus move into the jilimi, in which her mother was staying, but only stay in the same yunta as her mother when their relations were smooth. More often, she would set up her mattress next to some other people staying at the jilimi at the same time, for example with Polly’s daughter Marion when she was stopping in the jilimi, or with Joy’s grandchildren. Sharon spent 29 nights in the jilimi, and is thus yet another on & off resident. But due to her age (she is in her early 50s) and her familiarity with the jilimi and its residents she moved into the jilimi as a free agent as much as she did as Nora’s daughter.

Nora’s sister Leah (in her 50s) and Joy’s half-sister Eva (50s) came to stay in the jilimi to stop with Nora twice for different reasons. The first time they came to look after Nora, who returned home after having been hospitalised with pneumonia. The second time they came because of trouble at their former residence. Leah and Eva for a while had been living with Leah’s daughter and her husband. However, this camp was known to be a locus of violence and after things got out of control one too many times, they moved into the jilimi. With them came Ray, Nora’s grandson and Toby’s half-brother. Previously, Ray had moved between the two camps, and stayed alternatively with Nora or with Leah, as a regular resident in either camp. Now, these women together with their half-sister Pearl who had been staying with Nora already, and Nora’s grandsons, formed a tight-knit group, sharing resources between them and living in close proximity. In fact, when Nora received ‘her own house’, they all moved into that house together (except for Pearl who joined them there much later). Today, they still live in that camp joined by a continuous flow of people coming to stay with them in turn. Interestingly here are two things. First, in the fact that Eva, who is more closely related to Joy, stayed with Nora because Leah did so. This is thus a case where friendship ties, those between Leah and Eva, were more significant than kinship ties, those between Joy and Eva. Second, while Leah and Eva were on & off residents in

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the jilimi where they did not stay very long and for necessity only, once they moved into the new house with Noma, all three of them, as well as their grandsons, became key residents there.

Warlpiri Hospitality

Warlpiri camps do not have guest rooms, and people staying in a camp for short periods of time receive no different treatment than anybody else in the camp; no special offerings of choice food, no invitations to sit on a chair or in the shade, no instructions to 'feel at home'. Warlpiri hospitality works very differently to say Western or Middle Eastern ideas of hospitality. There is no concept of a 'guest'. If a person decides to stay in a particular camp, for however short or long a time, they are part of that camp. Children coming to stay, at night crawl under the blankets of the woman they came to stay with; adults without ado put up their mattresses next to the people they came to stay with. Warlpiri hospitality is at its greatest exactly when no difference is made between a newcomer and those who were in a camp before, when others are most unceremoniously integrated into the social texture of camp life. To come and stay in the jilimi does not require an invitation or the granting of permission. Stays in the jilimi are never verbally negotiated. People come, and stay, in the same way key jilimi residents go and stay in other camps. Once in the camp, there is thus no difference in the quality of residence, no matter whether one is there to stay for a night, a week, a month, or longer.

The atmosphere within the jilimi is dependent on who is there, how people get along with each other, and, importantly, on numbers. Days when there were fewer than ten people present carried an undertone of 'loneliness' - ten people was never enough to fill the jilimi's space with its usual verve and liveliness. More than 30 people caused residents to become cantankerous and tense, and the first night of fewer people after it had been 'full-up' was always accompanied by sighs of relief and a feeling of things having regained equilibrium. But these matters never had any impact upon whether a person was 'allowed' to stay or was 'refused'. Indeed, these terms do not make any sense in the Warlpiri context. People come to the jilimi to stay there for their own reasons and stay there as long as they please. In this respect, the four women Polly, Joy, Celeste and Noma were no exception.

Of course, this kind of hospitality does not work with any kind of person and at all times. It is dependent upon pre-existent relationships. 'Strangers', people one does not know or with whom
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no close relations exist, would be treated differently should they come to stay (and they would behave differently at their arrival, too). Myers (1979:361-65) describes kurnta, i.e. shame, shyness, embarrassment, as the emotion around which relations between 'strangers' are built:

The "politeness" of Aborigines may be due to consideration of "embarrassment" or "shame". Often, people will not ask strangers or distant kin for food, because they are "embarrassed," afraid that such a request will be too pushy. With very close kin such considerations are less relevant, but persons may sit waiting to be offered food rather than ask for it (this certainly does not occur in one's own camp where desires are more aggressively expressed) (Myers 1979:363).

When I first started to live in Warlipiri camps there were difficulties for both me and my Warlipiri co-residents as we were trying to resolve how I should be treated, like a kardiya or like a japa person. Initially, I did get offered blankets to sit on, a bed if one was present to sleep on and people seemed to clean a lot when I was around. I, on the other hand, did not know what to do about food; not being used to just serving myself when staying at somebody else's place, I did go hungry for a while. The initial period was characterised by cultural communication problems revolving exactly around the matter of whether I was a 'guest' or a 'resident'.

A second example of the treatment of strangers happened during 'business time', in January, when large groups of Aboriginal people travel through Central Australia for initiation ceremonies (cf. Peterson 2000). These initiation ceremony journeys often span many hundreds of kilometres and bring together people from numerous language groups and regions who have not met previously. It is by no means unusual in this context for people from South Australia and Western Australia to travel to the Northern Territory and vice versa. One day early in January 2000, hundreds of people arrived from down south at Yuendumu to pick up people to travel further north. They stayed in Yuendumu for three nights, first camping just outside the community, where CDEP workers had prepared camping grounds for them by bulldozing some areas and providing piles of firewood. However, on the second day the weather changed and we first had severe sandstorms and then torrential rains. Since the visitors could hardly be left out in the rain they were divided into smaller groups and distributed around the houses of Yuendumu. There, the visitors would camp as a group as far away from whoever else was living in the camp, and both sides were shy around each other. Directions about facilities and water taps were given but apart from that interaction was minimal. This shyness, or as Myers calls it, embarrassment, is typical for a situation where people are 'forced' into contact without 'knowing' each other.
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Walpiri hospitality only works within and is based upon personal networks that each Walpiri person creates from an early age onwards. It is for these reasons that I have previously rejected the term ‘visitor’ for people staying overnight in a particular camp as used in ABS censuses (ABS 1991; 1996). In my critique I said:

At Yuendumu, to ‘visit’ someone contrasts with to ‘stop’ somewhere, the former being an activity that does not extend to overnight stays and the latter having no time restrictions. In other words, by stopping somewhere overnight one is no longer a visitor. Moreover, once a person stops at a place, it becomes exceedingly hard to distinguish the new arrival from people who have resided there longer, on the basis of rights and access to resources and space (Musharbash 2000:62).

In this thesis, ‘visitor’ is the term for people visiting during the day (to be discussed in Chapter 7). Accordingly, people stopping in a camp for a reason and with specific people in this thesis are classified as residents. In terms of access to space and in their relations to other residents there is no difference between a person who stays for 112 days and a person who stays for 12 days. And even the four focal women and their closest dependants, who were the jilimi’s most stable residents, spent less than half of their time in the jilimi. Moreover, none of them lived in this particular jilimi when I first came to Yuendumu and none of them lives there anymore. Nora was the first to leave in November 1999 when she received ‘her own’ house, one of 16 new houses, which were built at Yuendumu in 1999/2000 (for more detailed discussion of new houses see Musharbash 2001). Annie took over Nora’s room, and a similar position in regard to focality. Joy received ‘her’ house a short time later and also moved out of the jilimi for good, taking with her old Nangala and Kiara. Her room remained empty for a long time. When I returned to Yuendumu for some follow-up research in August 2000, Polly, Celeste, and their dependants had moved out of the jilimi due to a death and were living in the derelict house Adrian and Stella had lived in for a short while previously. Sometime later they moved into a different house vacated for them by one of Polly’s sisters. The last time I was in Yuendumu, in October 2002, none of the regulars from a year or two earlier lived in this particular jilimi anymore. They were residing in jilimi, yapukarna and in the case of some of the boys (now men) jangkayi elsewhere (most in Yuendumu, some in neighbouring settlements). The jilimi is still there today, but its residents are entirely different.

85The term ‘visitor’ would also be appropriate and was actually used in reference to the ‘business mobs’ from down south, and similar cases.
The Flow of People through the *jilimi*

Hospitality is thus not something house-centric or camp-centric. Hospitality Warlpiri way is expressed through living together and by being part of the flow of people through camps and freely integrating others into one's own camp. While living in the *jilimi*, key residents accommodated for and perpetuated the flow of people through the *jilimi* by their presence and contributed to the flow of people through other camps by their own mobility. Each of them did it, and continues to do this within their own personal networks, no matter where their 'home camp' is. Residence patterns and the flow of people through camps are thus manifestations of these personal networks.

Conclusion

The data presented here underline the high level of movement of people through the *jilimi* and characteristic of social life throughout the settlement. People's movement patterns reflect their need for sanctuary when ill or involved in marital disputes, their involvement in mortuary rituals, their visiting of relatives, their needs for help, their arrangements for childcare, and simply socialising. Above and beyond the particular reasons for any move stands the common practice of creating and the need to maintain personal networks through face-to-face interaction, for without such networks, residential shifts of any kind would not be possible. In order to create and maintain the conditions for one's own mobility one needs to accommodate the mobility of others.

Beckett (1988) and Birdsall (1988) observed similar patterns among Aboriginal people in the 'settled' parts of New South Wales and Western Australia respectively. Thus Beckett elaborates:

An Aborigine may go 200 miles to a place where he is known, rather than 10 miles to a place where he is not. Usually, being known means having kin who will receive him and act as sponsors in the local community. The area within which he moves — his 'beat' as I shall call it — is defined by the distribution of kin (Beckett 1988:119).

What Beckett calls 'beats' and Birdsall calls 'runs' and 'lines' are spatial representations of the patterns of mobility within personal networks as I have outlined them. Here, I have explored the

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86 Warlpiri hospitality in camps parallels to some degree the more reported upon issue of permission seeking in using a country in the past. This permission was always granted. The only difference here is that the asking of permission (never expecting a refusal) was actually required.
same kind of mobility at a micro-level within a settlement. Despite the fact that Beckett and Birdsall are dealing with movement between towns, often many hundreds of kilometres apart, there are clearly isomorphisms here.

I discovered those personal networks through participation rather than by being told about them. Warlpiri people do not generally teach the anthropologist by answering questions, they insist on one doing things (cf. also Harris 1987; Morphy 1983; Myers 1986a:294, and Preface). “You did this and now you know” were words I often heard. In respect to mobility and residence choices it is only in retrospect that I realise what I have learned, and created. When I now return to Yuendumu I have choices as to where and with whom to stay. There are those people I am closest to, but should they be elsewhere I would not be homeless. There are a number of others whose camp I could join with equal ease. I cannot approach somebody and tell them “I’ll stop with you for a while” just because they are my classificatory mother, sister or daughter; however, I can do exactly that with somebody who is part of my personal network. Personal network relationships are based on shared experiences, shared residency in the past, and continued practice of reciprocal exchanges based on demand sharing (cf. Martin 1993; Myers 1982; Peterson 1993; 1997; Schwab 1995). To be able to walk into a camp with one’s swag and put it down next to a person there, to ‘stop’ there for an unspecified period, is possible only once one knows from whom one can demand hospitality. The flow of people through the jilimi, rather than random activity, thus is focussed agency. It is social practice being lived out. The rapidity of the turn-over has implications for how people organise their life day to day which I examine in the next chapter in the context of the negotiations around sleeping arrangements.
CHAPTER SIX
SLEEPING ARRANGEMENTS

The previous chapter has made it clear that people who pass through the jilimi have, for the most part close relationships to the local women who reside there. It is in the early evening when people organise their sleeping arrangements for the night that these relationships become most evident. My initial experience of this evening routine puzzled me:

I arrived in the afternoon, I knew the family I was going to stay with, I had notified them of my arrival, brought presents of meat and clothes and everything went smoothly although a little bit awkward until it was time to put out the swags. “Go and get your swag, Napurrula,” Napaljarri said. I went and got it and asked “where are we camping?” “There!” Napaljarri pointed. I went over to the indicated place and unrolled the swag. “Not that way, that wrong way” shouted my adopted mother. “Head in the east!” Thank god the sun was just setting so I did not have any difficulties working out directions, and turned my swag, crawled in and fell asleep, utterly exhausted from that first day. [...] The next night when Napaljarri said: “time to get out the swags,” I got mine, proudly unrolled it proper way head east – only to hear: “No, Napurrula, we camp over that way.” The first night’s camp had been to the north of Napaljarri’s house, this night’s camp was to the south of it. The following morning we went to get leafy branches to build a shelter on the south side of the house, “so we have proper camp there!”. We built the shelter and spent the rest of the day there and then at night – we unrolled our swags over at “Napurrula’s, your sister’s house” (Musharbash 1998:1-2).

The constant shifts and continual movement of sleeping location, both within the yard of the jilimi and at other camps at Yuendumu, as well as the perpetual changes in the social composition of people sleeping next to each other led me to ask about it early on. “Why do we sleep somewhere else every night? Why is Lilo not sleeping next to Magda as she did last night? Why are we on the north side of the house tonight?” All these questions invariably were answered by a shrug of the shoulders, or some vague comment along the lines of “that’s Yapa way”. It did not take me long to realise that the flow of people through a camp could be crystallised into actual ethnographic moments of accommodating, facilitating and negotiating relationships as expressed by the sleeping arrangements. This chapter presents an exploration of the nightly social organisation of space within the jilimi and its significance for understanding contemporary social relations at Yuendumu. That is, at the basis of this chapter
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lies the relationship between the camp as a socio-spatial entity and the production and reproduction of sociality.

The following analysis will mainly revolve around the four focal women. I begin by discussing my methodology for collecting data about sleeping arrangements and then distinguish types of negotiations invested in organizing them. Two case studies examine how sleeping arrangements express the state of social relations between particular persons and extend the discussion of the processes involved and the meanings created through sleeping arrangements. The last section looks at sleeping arrangements as expressions of personhood and examines comparatively the choices underlying the sleeping arrangements made over the period of two months by Polly, Celeste, Joy, and Nora.

Methodology

To be better able to find and understand the patterns of the social dynamics underlying sleeping arrangements, I drew a map of the previous nights sleeping arrangements every morning. For these maps I used a mix of Warlpiri iconography (introduced in Chapter 2) and written directions. They are made up of lines depicting individuals, shorter ones for children, and longer ones for adults, with the name of each individual written next to them. Longer lines placed horizontally above them describe the extent of each junta. The maps include lines for the fence, the verandah and indicating walls of rooms (if relevant); cardinal directions were also marked on the page, and sometimes asterixes describing the location of fires. Looking at these notebooks of sleeping arrangement maps now, they remind me of the flip books I used to play with when a child. One can imagine, when flipping through the notebooks' pages, how these maps display a 'moving image' of the social composition of the jilimi with its junta continually expanding and contracting over time. They portray persons arriving for their first night in the jilimi, staying, and then leaving in a way comparative to time lapse photography. They show persons moving through the space of the camp, sleeping in one junta for a few nights, and then perhaps in another; next to this person first, and then next to somebody else. They show images of persons within the camp moving closer together night after night, or moving away from each other. In other words, the maps show spatial representations of lived social experience. If one were to fill the maps with daily activity, with gossip, with the developments of relationships and with fights, they would start to approach quite closely some of the core
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aspects of contemporary life at Yuendumu. I will discuss a number of these maps, all located in the jilimi following the description of verbal negotiations of where to sleep.

Where to sleep? – Verbal Negotiations

When it gets dark, people in the camps start making arrangements for the night. Fires are lit, bedding is taken outside (or down from the trees and shade roofs were it was stored during the day) and is laid out on the ground to form the yunta. The main part of this chapter is about the tacit negotiations involved in determining who sleeps where and next to whom. But some explicit negotiations take place as well, and these will be discussed first. In the main, explicit verbal negotiations are not concerned with the social elements of sleeping arrangements but with the physical environment, with supernatural forces and practical concerns generally. They are made up of discussions of whether to sleep inside or outside, and if sleeping outside, where in the yard are the choicest places that night. In the jilimi, as in other camps, there is a very strong preference to sleep outside if at all possible.

Unless it is very cold or rainy, the four rooms of the jilimi’s house are not used for sleeping. Some other camps at Yuendumu are located in or next to better built and equipped houses than our jilimi and there weather may impact on the decision whether to sleep inside or outside differently. People living in camps that have houses with air-conditioning and in working order sleep inside more frequently on hot summer nights, and people in camps with houses that have heating in working order in turn sleep inside in winter more often. Currently, however, the greater number of houses occupied by Warlpiri people at Yuendumu lack either or both, and decisions are made in the same way as described here. Weather-related discussions are either in terms of ‘rain’ or ‘wind’. A third issue triggering discussion about sleeping inside or outside relates to jampa, malevolent supernatural beings. And finally, there are practical concerns that trigger explicit verbal discussion.
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Rain

“Ngapa kapu wanyirri, mayi?” — “Lava, yatjarra yaniyana.”

“It will rain, won’t it?” — “No, the clouds are moving north.”

Yuendumu experiences three different types of rain. Torrential rainstorms, although occurring rarely can happen at any time. They result in flooding Yuendumu and its environs for up to a week during which everybody who can shelters inside — without discussion.

The second type of rain, mostly occurring in summer, is more usual and consists of single rain clouds bringing highly localized rain. Sometimes it is possible to stand in Yuendumu and with a sweeping 360 degree view to spot up to eight different rain clouds in different directions raining in the distance. Some of them may pass over Yuendumu and then may or may not bring rain, others will sweep by in the distance. If these kinds of rain clouds are in the sky lengthy discussions will ensue at the time of putting up junda. Persons present will offer their reading of clouds, wind, and probability of rain. The paths of all visible rain clouds will be projected, usually declaring that they will pass by Yuendumu but not directly over it. During these discussions women will make gestures ‘shooing’ the rain clouds away. Only if it is raining heavily at the time, or will clearly rain very soon is the bedding put up on the verandah and/or in the rooms. Most often, however, it is decided that it will not rain, and swags are put up outside in the yard. This practice makes moves back onto the verandah due to rain in the middle of the night by no means uncommon. When it does start raining at night, moving onto the verandah is postponed for as long as possible. If the rain starts as a drizzle, moves back inside are only made when blankets start becoming soaked. And even after a middle-of-the-night move back onto the verandah because of rain, when the rain stops, often moves back into the yard are undertaken — as are subsequent moves back onto the verandah for the next shower.

The third kind of rain is that of large thunderstorms. These brew in a spectacular fashion painting the sky in dark and violent colours. These storms roll in from all sides, often with a large front of blackness in the east, and to the north and south of it smaller individual black

87 Literally: “Water will fall, won’t it?” — “No, northwards it is moving.”
Sleeping Arrangements

Clouds. These are called *kardu-kardu*, the children of the storm.\(^8\) Thunder is called *kumparri* and lightning *wirnpa*. Next to the rain, it is the latter, lightning, that requires sheltering and other avoidance behaviour most. During a thunderstorm one cannot cook, especially meat, for fear of being struck by lightning. "*Wirnpa* smells meat, it looks for fire and will kill you" people often say. During thunderstorms, if at all possible, people sleep inside.

Wind

Yuendumu experiences severe storms, particularly during seasonal changes from hot to cold and from cold to hot weather. Often these storms turn into sandstorms, making sleeping outside during those times rather unpleasant, and the rooms and verandah the preferred options. However, often storms die down during the night, in which case the usual decision is to move outside — often only to be awoken by small gusts full of sand in the morning.

The hot storms announcing the end of the cold season and the beginning of summer, including big willie willies of enormous diameters sweeping up and swirling around debris from a large radius, with the skies overcast and cloudy from the burning of surrounding country, are oppressive. During this time, people become cantankerous, suffer from headaches, and generally ‘feel weak’. Sleeping on the verandah, if possible, is much preferred during this time.

Then, there are the cold winds. These are greatly disliked, especially if they occur after a sudden cold change. People dislike cold winds not only because of the physical unpleasantness of the actual winds, but because severe cold winds are associated with ‘bad news’, that is death.\(^9\) Keys briefly discusses age-graded ideas about causality in relations to cold winds, saying that “younger women described changing weather conditions as causing deaths, older

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\(^8\) *Kardu-kardu* which literally means ‘children’ also builds the stem for the verb *kardu-kardu-pinya* which means to form clouds, make offspring, generate, form, spawn, and procreate — neatly alluding to the interconnections between water and fertility. The other word I was given for individual smaller storm clouds was *kunarlypyu*, which the dictionary translates as ‘hall’.

\(^9\) At Yuendumu, the term ‘bad news’ is always and exclusively used as a euphemism for death. ‘Good news’ on the other hand is used for descriptions of newly developed liaisons, especially in joking between cousins. "I heard the good news" if said by one female cousin to another thus means that the first one has found out about the other’s affair with a man. Note that ‘good news’ does not, like in some other Indigenous communities, refer to the bible, this is called *pipa*, from ‘paper’, i.e. ‘book’.
women saw the change in weather resulting from a series of deaths” (1999:197, original emphasis). In my experience Warlpiri people generally are aware that the cold winds can cause illness, and especially so for the very young and the old and frail, but the main concern, regardless of age, is that strong cold winds are a harbinger of 'bad news'. Cold winds make people want to sleep inside or in more protected areas where they feel not only more comfortable but safer because sheltered from them and what they may bring.

Jarmpa

A further issue triggering discussions and making people prefer to sleep inside or in a more sheltered position than usual is the presence of jarmpa. This is the Warlpiri term for kurdaitcha, which the Warlpiri dictionary translates as ‘a person who walks around at night in order to kill another person and make trouble, with special powers to make themselves invisible, who wears emu-feather foot covering to dissipulate tracks’ (see also Meggitt 1955 for a typology of jarmpa). Warlpiri people describe them as beings covered in red ochre and fear them greatly, as they bewitch innocent victims, making them sick, or even killing them. Often, jarmpa announce their presence by a whistling peculiar to them. A particular bird also often announces the presence of jarmpa by its singing. It sounds like “pataka pataka” and if pitch and speed with which the bird sings increases, people know jarmpa are close. They yell at the bird “yantarrai!” – “go away!” in the hope that the jarmpa will follow the bird, away from people. Warlpiri people claim that they cannot see jarmpa, they are invisible to them, however people from further afield and Kardiya are thought to be able to spot them. If jarmpa are sighted or heard, the rumour will spread through Yuendumu with speed. If they are detected near a camp it may well get deserted, and people in camps close by will make sure they are more sheltered at night than usual. This procedure of sheltering is repeated inside the camp. When discussing the sleeping positions of yiiti (outside) and kulkmur (inside). People who sleep yiiti are said to be brave, and that when jarmpa are around, few people want to sleep yiiti. Keys (1999:197) links concern about jarmpa specifically to windy time, as the winds make jarmpa tracks (as well as all other tracks) unreadable, and jarmpa whistling inaudible. This is a time, then, when people feel much less safe than usually and look for safe shelter, often sleeping inside.
Sleeping Arrangements

Practical Concerns

Apart from issues to do with wind and weather, the only other explicit verbal statements involved in putting up junta have to do with practical concerns. For example, people may request help when carrying a particularly heavy mattress, or when laying out a large ground sheet when it is windy. They may have verbal exchanges when requesting the use of a bed, if one is present, and how to position it, as often happens when people are in pain or ill. There are comments about a junta being too long and suggest it be broken up into two, and also criticise junta too haphazardly arranged and deviating from ‘proper’ orientation. Also, the placement of old and frail people, and of those who are considered warringska, not knowing, will be matter-of-factly and verbally decided by others. “Put that old Nangala there, next to Nakamarr and not too close to the fire”, or, “Leave that Nungarrayi on the verandah, she can sleep there with Napaljarri” are examples of such comments. Newcomers to the jilimi, too, may be given verbal advice. “Don’t sleep too close to the western fence, we saw a snake track there this morning,” or, “stay away from the eastern side, that septic tank is smelly.” Apart from that, however, the orchestration of nightly sleeping arrangements happens by tacit understandings and without explicit verbal mediation.

Who to sleep next to? – Tacit Negotiations

Putting out bedding at night is not a communally orchestrated effort. Apart from the issues outlined above, it does not involve debate, nor indeed does it engender any kind of comment. Someone or other will get up first and get their bedding from a room or the verandah, drag it outside into the yard and put it up at a place of their choosing. Others will follow in their own time and arrange their bedding in a location of their respective choice. The result, however, is not a random aggregation of swags strewn all over the yard, but, depending on the number of people present in the jilimi, a rather neat arrangement of a number of junta distributed over the jilimi’s space. All swags will be oriented so that the sleepers’ heads will point east, arranged in rows (unless people are sleeping in rooms, where spatial orientation is dictated by walls and doors). Moreover, the arrangement of people into different junta to a very large extent will reflect both general social relations and more specifically what has happened during the day.
Sleeping Arrangements

Logistics would be Celeste's calling. In the jilimi, she was the only one who took an active role in organising sleeping arrangements, ensuring that there was enough firewood, that children were being fed, that old women slept in good enough shelter, and when going on trips that all things necessary, from groundsheets to billycans and water, tea, and meat would be taken. She would organise trips out bush to get poles and branches to build proper windbreaks, she was the only one I ever encountered to frequently give directions and make decisions about who would sleep where. In short, she cared about the running of the jilimi, she looked after it. Nobody else in the jilimi ever showed any great interest in these matters, all relying on Celeste. While often it seemed they good-naturedly let Celeste perform were she was good, when Celeste was away or when she took up paid work and spent less time in the jilimi, complaints started arising. Especially a number of very old women who were living in the jilimi at the time had come to depend on Celeste. They would protest about being neglected, general grumbling could be heard about the lack of firewood, and so on – none of these accusations would be aimed at anyone specific, but all lamented the absence of the kind of organisation that they had come to take for granted. When Celeste was present, things seemed to run more smoothly.

Most nights, after dinner, Celeste would get up and say, "come Napurrula, let's get the swag." The two of us would go to her room, get her large blue plastic groundsheat and take it onto the verandah or into the yard to the place Celeste chose for us that night. After putting out the groundsheet, making sure it was all smooth and in the right direction, we would get the swags, Celeste's first and she would put it were she would want to sleep. Then mine. "Put it there", Celeste would direct, usually indicating either north or south of her own swag. Depending on who else was staying in the yunta with us that night she would direct them, too. "Napaljarri can sleep here, and Nangala there." Our activity would be a sign for the others present to get up from their fires and start their own preparations for the night. Their putting up swags into yunta however would normally include no or much less discussion than ours. As Celeste had made a start, people not included in our yunta would set up theirs in a distance and orientation to ours mirroring what suited them and as I later learned indicating their relations to us. In the following, I will first present the maps for my first nights in the jilimi, and then discuss two case studies to bring issues relevant to understanding sleeping arrangements to the fore.
Sleeping Arrangements
Maps of the first nights in the "jilimi" and how to read them

On the night of 29th of November 1998, my first in the "jilimi", the sleeping arrangements took the following shape (cf. Figure 24). The old and frail women (Lydia, Bertha, Nellie and Lynne) slept on the verandah that night. Nora and her grandson Toby, who often had their own little "junta", had spent much of the day with Nora's sisters Lydia and Bertha and with their father's sisters Nellie and Lynne. Since they were all getting along famously during the day, there was no question at all whether or not to sleep in one "junta" - that was taken for granted. The night was clear but unusually cold for November, so rather than moving out into the yard, the old women stayed on the verandah and put up their swags next to the fire they had cooked dinner on. Toby, as always slept on the same mattress as Nora, his grandmother who was bringing him up. Lynne had two little granddaughters staying with her, and they slept next to her on the same mattress. Since the verandah was warm and snug and there was "maripa", company, there, old Nangala was put next to one of the women there - rather than being taken out onto the yard with her daughter Joy, close to whom she usually slept.

Figure 24: Sleeping arrangements for the night of 29.11.98
In the yard, Celeste shared a mattress with her sister’s daughter Josephine, who often stayed with her. Normally, her ‘son’ Neil (Josephine’s brother) slept under Celeste’s blankets, but since Josephine took up his spot this night he stayed with his grandmother Polly. I slept with Celeste and Josephine on one side, and Joy and her granddaughters on the other. This was the first night I slept in the jilimi, and there were a number of interrelated reasons why Joy and I had moved there. Moving from our previous camp, where we had lived with Joy’s ex-husband and a number of her grandchildren to the jilimi somewhat decreased Joy’s burden of looking after me. She was ‘the owner’ of one of the jilimi’s rooms and thus closely acquainted with as well as related to the other jilimi key residents. She could expect them to help her in looking after me. This added help became doubly important as she had just switched from working part-time at the school’s Literacy Centre to going full time, thus having less time for me, especially so considering that she was also looking after her ex-husband, her old and frail mother and a number of grandchildren.

Moreover, while Joy was my ‘first mother’, the person I knew best and who initially looked after me, tensions had begun to arise in our relationship. In retrospect, I suspect tensions had also mounted between Joy and the jilimi residents as they had observed her directly benefiting from and restricting from others access to my resources. The move to the jilimi also meant that I became more of a ‘shared commodity’, pacifying others but in turn furthering tensions between Joy and myself. Use of my Toyota, access to which Joy had previously controlled tightly, caused much friction. When Joy and I moved to the jilimi she had asked Celeste to help look after me, that is, cook tea and damper in the mornings and generally share the responsibilities of ensuring I was alright and did not commit too many blunders.

Joy, wherever she went, usually had her granddaughter Kiara with her and often some of Kiara’s siblings. My sleeping position in between Celeste and her daughter and Joy and her granddaughters thus indicated my social position at the time. I was being looked after by both women and not particularly close to either.

Further west in the yard that night was a third yunta, comprising Polly, Neil and Mabel. The latter usually slept in her camp with her ex-husband and her daughter’s family. At the time, however, Mabel was very ill and her stay in the jilimi was hoped to help her regain some of her strength as there she could be looked after rather than having to look after others. Most nights,
her sister Greta stayed with her, but as she was absent that night, Mabel shared a yunta with Polly.

The next night was even colder, and all jilimi residents slept on the verandah in the following order (cf. Figure 25):

Figure 25: Sleeping arrangements for the night of 1.12.98

On the eastern end was old Nangala, who always slept yinpi, on the outside, “so that she could make wee in the night on the side”. Joy and her granddaughter slept next to Nangala, me next to them, with Celeste, Josephine and Neil on my other side. West of them was Polly, and west of her the other old women who had slept the previous night on the verandah. At the furthest
end were Mabel and her sister Greta who had returned that day and Greta’s granddaughter, who stayed with Greta in the same way as Toby did with Nora and Kiara with Joy.  

Variations of these two patterns, everybody on the verandah, and one junta on the verandah and one or two junta in the yard with the same social compositions prevailed over the next week. Some small alterations were undertaken when new residents joined the jilimi. For example others of Joy’s granddaughters and one of her daughters joined her and Kiara, and another one of Nora’s grandsons joined her and Toby. The next major shift occurred when Nora had a minor fight with one of her sisters and left the junta of old women and instead made up a junta with Mabel and Greta. A few days later, after yet another minor affray, Nora and her grandsons moved even further away from the old women, taking up their previous and often later repeated habit of having their own separate little junta, this time equally far away from all other junta. Mabel and Greta joined Celeste’s junta.

None of these moves ever would be discussed, especially not when actually putting up the junta. In a way, it was as if the storing of the bedding inside or on the verandah in the morning wiped the slate clean of the affairs of the previous twenty-four hours. The day would begin and whatever it would bring would be reflected in the sleeping arrangements of the next night – when people would take their bedding out and place it where they felt comfortable. Nobody ever commented on these choices while they were being made. Sleeping arrangements are made tacitly. They are a spatial expression of each person’s reaction to, interpretation of, and statement about the happenings of the day, and as the evidence below will show are clearly read by others as such. Since these readings are rarely discussed (but see below), it took me a while to come to understand and be able to read sleeping arrangements myself. Especially the meanings of the sleeping arrangements of the first few months I spent in the jilimi, I can read them only in retrospect and only with the help of my notebooks where I recorded the daily happenings. I present two case studies to clarify and elucidate upon this further, the first one is about Greta and Mabel, the second about Joy and myself.

90 All three women are bringing up/looking after (some of) their son’s children. In the chapter on marriage I alluded to the practice of children often growing up with the paternal grandmothers when their parents’ marriage deteriorated. This practice benefits not only the grandchildren (currently) without parental carers, but very often is actively sought by older single women. They often form very close bonds with one particular son’s child (aparla), comparable in fact to a mother – child relationship.
SLEEPING ARRANGEMENTS

Greta and Mabel

Greta is the woman mentioned previously as a former 'owner' of one of the jilimi's rooms, or, according to her, the whole house. At this stage, she had two other main residences, one where she shared a house with a Kardiya woman and looked after the house during the woman's long and frequent absences, and the other with her sister Mabel, in a camp not far away from the jilimi. When Mabel became ill and moved into the jilimi, Greta moved with her, to look after her.

That first night described above (cf. Figure 24), Mabel was in the jilimi without Greta and slept next to Polly. Then Greta returned and as the next few nights were rather cold and all residents made up one single yunta on the verandah, where Greta and Mabel took position on the extreme western end. Once sleeping in the yard became possible again, the first night they slept in the same yunta with the old ladies who before had slept on the verandah. The next night Mabel, Greta and her granddaughter made up a yunta of their own, positioned north and west of the other yunta present in the jilimi. The next six nights they shared a yunta with Nora and her grandsons, and the following night slept next to Celeste and me. A few nights later, in turn, they shared a yunta with Joy, and later slept in a yunta with Polly again.

These frequent moves from one yunta to the next were triggered by two separate objectives. The first was Greta's concern about Mabel's illness and her – successful – attempts to involve as many jilimi residents as possible in the care of Mabel. By sharing different yunta on successive nights she raised awareness in different social sets about Mabel's needs and thus during the day, when Greta was absent, there were a number of different people who looked after and cared for Mabel - as she had shared all their yunta. The second objective was based in the fact that Greta used to be a key resident in the jilimi but was not anymore. By sharing the yunta of all new key residents on successive nights she made an implicit statement about her relations to them: that she related to all of them in equally congenial ways, that she did not prefer any of the women to any others. In fact, her movements through the jilimi space are an explicit political statement about her wish to maintain good relations with all key women. They also attest to her personality, being a woman very concerned about the maintenance of amicable and harmonious relations of all around her.
Sleeping Arrangements

Joy and myself

The second example of how to read the sleeping arrangements of the early months in the *jilimi* in retrospect involves my first mother Joy and me and is rather less amiable. As indicated above, the relationship between Joy and I was becoming increasingly fraught. From before our move into the *jilimi* it was characterised by many small frustrations and outbursts, which continued for a number of months until Joy 'dis-adopted' me. For a long time, both of us tended to smooth over these smaller fights as neither of us was yet prepared to give up on the relationship. When we moved into the *jilimi*, Joy's decision to ask Celeste to help look after me initially meant that some of the strain was taken of Joy while at the same time she did not have to worry about 'loosing' me and access to my resources. After all, for years Celeste had generously helped Joy look after her old and frail mother, Nangala, and that arrangement worked just fine for all three of them. The first weeks in the *jilimi*, the only one who needed directions when putting up *yunta*, was directed to put up my swag either next to Joy or next to Celeste. More often than not, the other would put up her swag on the other side. Joy and whoever was staying with her, and Celeste and whoever was staying with her would thus form one large *yunta*, connected by having me in the middle. These sleeping arrangements mirror exactly the arrangements agreed upon by Joy and Celeste: that both would look after me and 'shared' access to my resources. As shown in Table 7, during the first 60 nights I slept in the *jilimi*, I spent 23 nights sleeping in the middle between Joy's *yunta* and Celeste's *yunta* combining the two into one long *yunta*. For 14 nights I was sleeping next to Joy; and 20 nights next to Celeste and three nights I slept next to other people in their *yunta*.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Positioning</th>
<th>Number of nights</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Joy one side - Celeste other side</td>
<td>23 nights</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>next to Celeste</td>
<td>20 nights</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>next to Joy</td>
<td>14 nights</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>next to neither</td>
<td>3 nights</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 7: My positioning in the *jilimi* for the first 60 nights

Relations between Joy and me were steadily deteriorating and accordingly, as time progressed, I slept more and more often next to Celeste and less often next to Joy. At the time, I was not at all conscious of the analogy between sleeping arrangements and the state of social relations.
SLEEPING ARRANGEMENTS

However, as indicated in the introduction, looking through those notebooks of sleeping arrangements now, one can, for example, see Joy and me slowly, from one night to the next, creating increasing distance between us in our sleeping arrangements. In fact, our sleeping arrangements foreshadowed the turn our relationship was taking as we created this physical distance many weeks before we actually had our 'big fight'. Thus while, even though very frosty by this time, the relationship was still acknowledged by both of us, we in fact had long ceased to sleep next to each other, a crucial indicator about the decline of amicable relations. Indeed, after the first 60 nights described above I never slept in a janta with Joy again, with the exception of four nights in May 1999, when Celeste was away for a course at Bachelor College and Joy's and my relations took a decisive turn for the worse.

At the time, concerns about me and my work were being voiced by two Kardiya women (I alluded to this in the introduction), and their disseminating of rumours about my writing sensationalist reports about Yapa camps in newspapers required me to talk to many people and rally for support. Joy was very instrumental in helping me and I was most grateful. As Celeste was away at the time, Joy took her chance to regain control over me and my resources. On my return from a weekend in Alice Springs in a last attempt she 'made' me sleep in her room. In my notebooks I wrote down the following:

came home and went to Celeste's room, which was full up with children and young women who all said at the same time "Napurrurla!". [...] Then began the big "where will Napurrula sleep?". I had planned to sleep in Celeste's room, "that's too loud" said Joy and suggested I sleep in her room on her bed. I said, no, and I didn't want to take her bed away from her, and she said she doesn't like sleeping on it anyway. Stella, and Josephine and Tamsin asked: "will you sleep with us?" [in Celeste's room] and Joy said "get your swag and put it here [her room]". Oh dear. Decided to sleep with Joy tonight, and then move.

I ended up sleeping in Joy's room for five nights, until Celeste returned. Each night, Joy tried to talk me into moving out of the jilimi with Nora who would be the first person to receive one of the newly built houses and stay with her until Joy's house was ready. I had no intentions of moving with either her or Nora and kept repeating this -- and thus our five nights together were vexing and frustrating for both of us. This shows clearly in the sleeping arrangements, as shown in Figure 26 below.
While life in the jilimi and for its other residents followed its usual paths, during those five nights, Joy and I were like trapped in her room, arguing and not being able to come to an agreement suiting both of us. Thus, although we slept in the same room, in the sleeping
arrangements for these nights it seems almost as if we were dancing around each other. While in the same small room we never slept next to each other but in fact as far away from each other as possible.

Sleeping Arrangements & the Person

Sleeping arrangements, apart from being able to be read as snapshots in time of the state of social relations, can also serve as interpretations of the individual choices a person makes. They depend on a person’s age, gender, marital status, and personal inclinations. The similarities and differences in the choices individual women in the jilimi made in respect to who they slept next to and where they slept can show that there are patterns observed by all as well as quite idiosyncratic features. The latter say much about personal inclination as well as about a person’s relation to others. Here, issues of personhood in relation to sleeping arrangements will be discussed by looking at the four focal women: Polly, Celeste, Joy and Nora. As detailed above, they took up gravitational positions in respect to the flow of people through the jilimi, and accordingly often had their own separate yunta sharing it with whoever was staying with them. There were only three exceptions to this. First, the above-described nights of combined long yunta of Joy’s and Celeste’s usually separate yunta with me in the middle at the first stage of my stay in the jilimi. Second, when it was cold and/or rainy, sometimes all jilimi residents would form a single yunta on the verandah. And third, while each of these four women’s yunta seemed to move around the jilimi space according to their own inclinations and usually at some distance to the other women’s yunta, Polly’s and Celeste’s yunta were combined or spatially much closer to each other more often than the others.

Table 8 (below) presents collated data for the four women and those people who slept immediately next to them for the first 60 nights I spent in the jilimi – the same nights that provided the case studies for the previous section.91 The first row of Table 8 indicates the number of nights out of the 60 nights recorded that each respective woman spent in the jilimi. During those 60 nights each woman was absent from the jilimi for anything between five

91 The table only registers those people who slept immediately next to any of the four women, not the entire range of people that made up their yunta. To include all people would have impacted on clarity.
SLEEPING ARRANGEMENTS

nights and almost three weeks. The second and third rows provide information on the relative sleeping positions within a yunta (i.e. yiiti for the outside position, and kulkurru for the inside) for each woman over the nights they were present, in both numbers of nights and percentage. The fourth row provides information on additional relevant sleeping arrangements, e.g. when women slept in single person yunta, or in a room, in which case yiiti/kulkurru position could not be determined.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Polly</th>
<th>Celeste</th>
<th>Joy</th>
<th>Nora</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nights present of 60 nights total</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yiiti (nights/ percent)</td>
<td>22 - 50%</td>
<td>5 - 11%</td>
<td>24 - 44%</td>
<td>27 - 65%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kulkurru (nights/ percent)</td>
<td>18 - 41%</td>
<td>35 - 73%</td>
<td>31 - 56%</td>
<td>13 - 31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other (nights/ percent)</td>
<td>4 alone - 9%</td>
<td>8 in room with children:</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>1 alone:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Person(s) slept next to most often and number of nights</td>
<td>Neil (DS) - 15</td>
<td>Neil (S) - 31</td>
<td>Kiara (SD) - 40</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Me (Z) - 20</td>
<td>Me (D) - 8</td>
<td>Nangala (M) - 12</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Josephine (D) - 8</td>
<td></td>
<td>Toby/Ray (SS) - 40</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of people slept next to</td>
<td>22 persons</td>
<td>15 persons</td>
<td>8 persons</td>
<td>11 persons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationships to those people</td>
<td>6 D</td>
<td>3 Z</td>
<td>2 D</td>
<td>3 D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3 M</td>
<td>2 M</td>
<td>2 Z</td>
<td>2 SD</td>
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<td>3 SD</td>
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<td></td>
<td>3 DSD</td>
<td>2 BD</td>
<td>2 SD</td>
<td>1 Z</td>
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<td>2 ZSD</td>
<td>1 SSW</td>
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<td>1 MFZ</td>
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<td></td>
<td>1 DS</td>
<td>1 ZDD</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1 DiL</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 8: Sleeping position and sleeping companions

Further, as also outlined in Chapter 5, I slept elsewhere as frequently, and the 60 nights are thus not consecutive ones. The fact that Joy seemed absent less often than the others is due to me during much of that time travelling with her, i.e. when absent, we were both absent.
SLEEPING ARRANGEMENTS

The next row indicates the main person(s) a woman slept next to, providing the number of nights and relationship. The last two rows provide information on the range of other people a woman slept next to over the recorded nights, in the first giving the total number, and the second the relationships.

Before discussing the significance of the information in Table 8 it is necessary to return to a consideration of the *yitipi* and *kulkurru* sleeping positions. As elucidated in Chapter 3, *yitipi* is the name for the sleeping position on the far side of a *yunta*, and *kulkurru* means to sleep inside, or in the middle of a *yunta*. More often than not, a *yunta* includes more than four people, so that there are more *kulkurru* positions available each night than *yitipi* ones. Whether to sleep *yitipi* or *kulkurru* is not completely open to choice, it is also influenced by and dependent upon weather (i.e. one *yunta* and thus only two available *yitipi* positions on the verandah due to rain) and the number of people present. However, individual women's preferences in respect to these two positions clearly reflect upon them as persons.

Apart from Celeste who slept overwhelmingly *kulkurru*, the other women chose *yitipi*, outside, positions frequently. A first reason keys into the previous chapter's explanations about the women's gravitational positions within the *jilimi*. At night, when it was time to put up *yunta* these women would take their swags out and put it up in the place of their choice - and the people staying with them would arrange their bedding next to them. While all the activity of putting up *yunta* would go on, as described above, without discussion, the fact that these women sleep *yitipi* so often points towards their authoritative role within the nightly arrangements of the *jilimi*. The *yitipi* position is generally taken up by those people requiring the least protection and able to provide others with the maximum amount of security - both in the social and physical senses.

As these women are 'at home' in the *jilimi*, they are more acquainted with it and therefore more often sleep *yitipi*, sheltering those who came to stay with them. *Kulkurru* positions occur more often than could be expected because this sample was taken in summer and there often were many nights when all *jilimi* residents slept in one long *yunta* on the verandah. In these cases, Joy's mother Nangala always was positioned on the eastern end, and Nora most often on the western end. Nora and Celeste both stand out, the former for her comparatively to the others much higher rate of *yitipi* nights, and the latter for her distinct preference for sleeping in
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kulaarru position. The meanings associated with these choices will be examined in more depth below.

Polly

In comparison to the other women, three issues in Polly's column stand out. First, she slept alone in single yunta distinctly more often than the others, that is four nights in her case, one in Nora's and none in Joy's and Celeste's. Second, she spent significantly fewer nights sleeping next to one particular person compared to the others. The person she slept next to more often than anybody else, her grandson Neil, spent 15 nights next to her, less than half as many nights as the other three women slept next to their main person. And third, the number of other people sleeping next to her is very high (22 persons over 44 nights), in fact more than twice as high as Joy's, twice as high as Nora' and distinctly higher than Celeste's.

All these points are illustrative of Polly's independence and her capacity to both be 'boss for herself' and 'look after' people. Polly is a widow in her 70s, fully in control of her life and resources, e.g. not yet warungka. Other Warlpiri women of her situation and constitution often choose to form close relationships with another person. They share their lives with either another woman, particularly a close sister, in a similar age and position to themselves, or with a grandchild, most often a son's child, yaparla (as for example do Joy and Kiara, Nora and Toby, and Greta and her granddaughter, described above). These women tend to sleep next to and move about with either their sisters and/or their grandchildren. Polly consciously chose not to, and by this exhibits a tendency of more autonomous and independent behaviour than most. As she often said, she had had two husbands and brought up many children and grandchildren, and now tremendously enjoyed being her own boss without responsibilities for another person. While she was keenly interested in what was going on in the jilimi and with the large number of her descendants, whenever possible, she preferred to be in a position of observer rather than participant. She also lacked the patience to deal in great depth and spend much time on things she considered trifles in the larger scheme of things. Having experienced and witnessed almost everything in her own life, a daughter with a philandering husband for example, could not expect sympathy from her but only a "leave it, and find somebody else".

93 On both concepts see among others Bell (1993), Dussart (2000), and Myers (1976; 1986a).
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Her sense of judgement however was very keen and greatly admired and this was part of her independence: she was a person other people sought but who did not seek nor did need to seek others herself. This achievement is clearly visible in her sleeping patterns: she often sleeps yitiyi, in the position those sleep who are able to offer the greatest amount of protection. Moreover, she sometimes sleeps in single person yunta, always of course within the jilimi, as sleeping in a camp on one’s own would be anti-social indeed. Her little yunta, when sleeping alone would always be positioned close to another yunta, thus not expressing social disconnection but just independence. And lastly, her sleeping patterns attest to her popularity and her capacity to ‘look after’ when needed. Her sleeping patterns show how her very successful management of the complimentary pulls between ‘looking after’ and ‘being boss for herself’ – there is a great number and range of people she slept next to, by far surpassing the other three women.

Celeste

Striking about Celeste’s column is the number of times she slept kulkurn – she was in that position 73 percent of the nights which is much higher than any of the other women (more than twice as often as Nora and distinctly more often than Joy and Polly). Celeste slept yitiyi only five times and this points at one of her most prevalent characteristics: she is intensely social and loves to be surrounded by people especially younger relatives of hers. This is also attested to by the number of people she slept next to, distinctly larger than those of Joy and Nora and from a wider range of relationships. Further, a lot of these were from descending generations and a lot younger than herself, underscoring the fact that she likes looking after children. When putting up yunta Celeste often makes conscious efforts of grouping as many people around her as possible – very successfully. Her sleeping kulkurn, in the middle, so often is an expression of her achieving what to her is her ideal of domestic bliss: a neat yunta, snug and warm, and full up with people she is close to. It also points towards another trait, namely, that in daily social intercourse Celeste sees herself and is seen by others as less authoritative than for example the other three women. Her sleeping kulkurn so much more often than the others testifies for her want in authority, as much as for the others’ presence thereof.
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A further reason why Celeste mainly slept kulkurru is that her yunta very often was connected to Polly’s. In these cases, Polly would be jilipi on one end, Celeste somewhere in the middle and somebody staying with her on the other jilipi end. While independent of each other in all respects (except for their shared responsibilities in bringing up Neil) they relied on each other for resources in times of need, and often also pooled resources when people came to stay with both of them. Since they are mother and daughter many of the people who came to stay with them were equally related to both of them. In the case of adults, for example Marion, who is Celeste’s sister and Polly’s daughter, this did not cause them to move close together and share, rather Marion would take up yunta with one or the other. However, there were many instances were children came to stay with them from further afield who were Celeste’s nieces and nephews and Polly’s grandchildren, and in these cases they often did move together. Significantly, this never caused either of them to move into the same yunta with Joy, who’s constant flow of grandchildren were indeed Celeste’s nieces and nephews and Polly’s grandchildren, but who were socially considered Joy’s by all, since she had adopted and brought up their father, Polly’s son.

Joy

Joy slept kulkurru slightly more often than jilipi because of having her old mother Nangala on one side and her granddaughter(s) on the other. Her sleeping position is thus not so much influenced by choice but by circumstance. What stands out about Joy and her column most is the very small number of people she slept next to and the small range of how they are related to her. It is this small sample of sleeping partners that says much about her as a person. To explicate upon the list in the 7th row: the two ‘daughters’ who slept next to her were Lydia, her sister’s daughter whom she had brought up, and myself. The two sisters were Nora and Polly, next to whom she slept one time each when there was a long yunta on the verandah. Her mother, old Nangala was mentioned above. Her two son’s daughters were Kiara who stayed at her most times, and Kiara’s sister Charity, who stayed with Joy often. And lastly, Joy once slept next to Martha, her grandson’s wife, when she was staying in the jilimi. These people come from a very small and very close range of relations, attesting to the fact that the ‘gravitational pull’ described for the four women was much less intense in Joy’s case than for the others. That her personal network was much less extensive than those of the other women underscores certain traits about her. Her main social contacts were with her very close family.

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and some of her colleagues from work. Her social circle was a lot less extensive than most others' of her age, partly due to her inclinations, but also allowing for as well as caused by her thriftiness. Through her ceaseless attempts to keep a tight lid on her resources, as well as through her disinterest in participation in ritual, she manoeuvred herself to some extent into a bit of an outsider's position. Her sleeping patterns thus attest to her peculiar position.

Nora

Nora, much more often than the other women slept in small yunta just made up of her and one or both of her grandsons. Accordingly, she slept jitiipi much more often than the other women (65 percent, as opposed to 50 percent in Polly's, 44 percent in Joy's and 11 percent in Celeste's cases). Generally speaking, Nora exhibited more solitary behaviour than the other women (and opposed to Joy who had less people around her but spent more time with them). Unless it rained, or there were particularly amicable relations Nora did not join up with other yunta and neither was her yunta joined by others as regularly. Largely this was due to the fact that she saw her stay in the jilimi as of short duration and not due to her choice. She was waiting for her new house to be built into which she would move with two of her younger sisters once it was completed. In the meantime, these younger sisters lived in the camp of one of their daughters, which Nora would not join because of differences between her and the daughter's husband. As she was a widow and some of her older sisters were living in this particular jilimi this was the obvious residence of choice.

However, Nora, who formerly was a very influential 'business women', i.e. ritual leader, at Yuendumu as well as very involved in community politics was getting older. She begrudged this very much as she was constrained by physical ailments from continuing her previously very active life-style. To be living with her old sisters who had given up on all that and 'passed their days gossiping in the jilimi', to use Meggitt's phrase, and not going anywhere was hard for her to bear. She consciously chose a peripheral position in the jilimi to mark that she did not really belong, that she was just there for a little while, waiting for her house to in the hope of regaining her previous life-style. Her sleeping arrangements attest to her rallying against approaching old age, they are a statement of her not giving in (yet), and of not wanting to be associated with those who are wurngka - very old and without control.
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Lastly, the number of nights she slept next to her grandsons Toby and Ray is noteworthy. Out of 41 nights, she slept next to them 40 nights—attesting to the very strong yaparla bond between her and her grandsons. In this she contrasts most starkly with Polly, as outlined above.

Conclusion

That the meanings of sleeping arrangements are crucial to an understanding of Warlpiri social relations becomes evident when revisiting the sand stories alluded to in Chapter 3. When discussing events, no matter whether they involved camping out bush on a hunting trip, next to the road on the way to another community, in a motel room at Alice Springs, or in the jilimi, people always explicitly describe who slept next to whom and in which yunta.

Such descriptions of events are always underlined by sand drawings, where the sleeping position of every person present is indicated by a vertical line in the sand, while recounting their names, and the yunta would be drawn by a horizontal line above them. Had a story been recounted about the night from 29th to 30th of November 1998, the example of Figure 24, the lines would have been drawn into the sand exactly as they are represented in the Figure, and the respective names said while each line was drawn: “Joy Napaljarri, and the two Nakamarra here, then Napurrula, Celeste, Josephine. And there Mabel, Polly and that Japangardi. And on the verandah …”.

Even a question such as “who went to Papunya Sports Weekend?” would generate a large sand drawing. It would outline where exactly different people from Yuendumu put up their yunta and how these were positioned to each other. The speaker would always include a detailed description of the actual sleeping order of people in the yunta he or she slept in as well as those other yunta the speaker had knowledge of.

These sand stories underscore the significance of sleeping arrangements and of the tacitness of both creating them and reading them. In the same way that people generally do not discuss sleeping order while putting up yunta, they do not discuss the meaning of recounted sleeping order in sand stories. The sand stories themselves reveal these meanings as everybody who listens to them knows everybody involved in the story. A person who was not present learns a
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lot from such a sand story. Warlpiri listeners easily deduce many facets by being told that X slept next to Y, and that Z did not. There is no need to verbally and publicly analyse any implicit meanings as they are all equally clear to all listeners – and this rather oblique way of relating stories of social relations has great appeal to Warlpiri people in general. Sand stories about sleeping arrangements are statements about the impact of that day’s occurrences upon webs of social relations; statements about the way each person related to the others present; and statements about the person and personhood.

Lastly, sleeping arrangements and the sand stories recounting them are an excellent example of Moore’s (1986) proposal to read (domestic) space as a text and read physical activities and movement through it as revealing and reinforcing social meaning. To transplant that metaphor to the Warlpiri context, one could say that: Warlpiri people inscribe domestic space as text with the positioning of their bodies each night. And in turn, when recounting these inscriptions, turn them into text by expressing them in sand stories.

Another author who paid close attention to the issue of sleeping, albeit in a different manner, is Verdon (1979) He looked at sleeping arrangements in a different context and from a different perspective with the aim of deconstructing the concept of the ‘domestic group’. He argues that most activities performed by those sharing a dwelling, such as cooking, eating, pooling of resources and labour, are commonly engaged in with others from other dwellings. In turn he defines the ‘residential group’ by the one only shared activity exclusively by all people in one dwelling, namely sleeping. Examining the dynamics of ‘residential groups’ thus defined he postulates

in every society with residential groups, one thus observes a certain limit of internal complexity in their composition, some kind of ‘breaking point’ which is only exceeded in uncommon demographic, economic or physical circumstances (Verdon 1979:420).

I take his point that there is some inherent significance in the activity of sharing a dwelling for the purpose of sleeping. However, as I have shown, at Yuendumu this does not easily lead to postulations about some kind of ‘residential group’. Such terminology would not be appropriate exactly because the internal complexity is so extensive. People previously classified as ‘residents’ are those who stop in a camp over night. As indicated there, the composition of a camp’s residents may well change from one night to the next. What I have shown here is that
those people who do sleep in the jilimi cannot be classified together in some kind of grouping, exactly because of the complexities of relationships and the fact that residence in Warlpiri camps can be very short lived. In this chapter, I have taken this further by demonstrating that indeed further subdivisions exist among those people who sleep in one camp. More often than not, more than one yunta is put up at night underscoring additional internal division among those that share a camp. Further, the composition and location of individual yuntas change from night to night. Sleeping arrangements at Yuendumu are thus not about group identity, rather they are an expression of the current state of interpersonal relation, of how people present relate to each other on that night, and, they are statements about the person and personhood. Sleeping arrangements attest to the impact of that day's occurrences upon webs of social relations and underscore the fluidity of sociality as lived at Yuendumu. They represent spatially how people relate to each other, how relations are manifested, created, transformed, broken, reinvented, negotiated. Put differently, these maps of sleeping arrangements show how the space comprising a camp is constantly being reformulated and how the negotiations, divisions, invasions, withdrawals, uses and appropriations of this physical space can be read as analogous to those of social relations. In the next chapter, I look at activities that take place during the day, and how they relate people who sleep in one camp to those that sleep in others, how they may cause friction between people, or bring them closer together, and how they are relevant to formulating ideas about sociality at Yuendumu.
CHAPTER SEVEN

THE DAY: SPATIAL TIME-ZONING AND SOCIAL ZIGZAGGING

The flow of people through the *jilimi* and the movements of *jilimi* residents during the day are harder to monitor comprehensively but the underlying logic is clear. As Sansom comments on Darwin fringe camps:

> Although there is a day and night contrast between the camp doing and reforming and the camp resting and formed, people in both the active and the resting state should locate themselves in places where they have reason and business to be. Unrolling a swag ‘one side’ and spending long day-time hours ‘other side’ are contrary allocations of time. They raise the issue: ‘Which way you bloody think you goin?’ (Sansom 1980:111).

Activities of the day impact upon the particular configurations of the restedness of the night. Of particular significance are two perspectives on daily activities. On the one hand there are the contractions and expansions of people present in the *jilimi* during the day through the movements of residents leaving and re-entering the *jilimi* at various times, and then there is the added movement in and out of the *jilimi* by visitors.

I begin by looking at breakfast, examining the internal spatial and social restructuring of the *jilimi* area through the movement of residents from *junta* to breakfast fires. A particular breakfast food, damper, is significant because it reveals ideas about of food distribution, and how connecting paths between different camps can be represented through it. The discussion of damper also brings up the issue of gender.

I then progress to activities taking place during the course of the day, singling out two peculiar to contemporary settlement life: ‘cruising’ and ‘bithering and thithering’. Based on descriptions of each their relevance is discussed in respect to spatio-social time-zoning within the *jilimi* and to the ways in which *jilimi* residents spatially and socially relate to the wider sociality of the settlement. Analysis of both practices shows different ways in which paths of sociality criss-cross the geography of Yuendumu during the day, how people establish and maintain personal and social networks and reinforce connectedness.

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I conclude, as the day does, in the late afternoon back in the jilimi, with a discussion of negotiations about firewood. This underscores the theme of the previous chapter, namely, that shared residency, especially but not exclusively in the jilimi, does not necessarily allow for formulations and conceptualisations of residents of any camp as a social ‘group’ in any simple sense.

**Breakfast and the importance of damper**

It is during breakfast that an initial camp-internal reshuffling of sociality occurs that can be spatially mapped. The number of breakfast fires in a camp, and the relationship between the spatiality of seating arrangements around these fires and the spatiality of sleeping arrangements in junta constitute this initial step from resting to being active.

A further crucial factor distinguishes the two states. At night, the jilimi (or, any other camp) shelters its residents, those people who sleep there. During the day the jilimi (or any other camp) is populated by quite diverse people. Many of its residents may be elsewhere, and people who are the residents of other camps may be present. These latter ones, people who spend time in the jilimi but sleep elsewhere, I classify as visitors. Significantly, visitors start to arrive in the camps around breakfast time. They may only spend a few minutes in the jilimi, e.g. a man picking up damper in the morning, or the whole day, e.g. an old lady coming to visit a resident old lady to pass the day with her.

If at all possible, breakfast is cooked and eaten outside. This is dependent upon three factors: weather, availability of firewood, and availability of food. Provided these are all in order, typically, the morning in the jilimi is started by some of the older, but not the very old women, making fires. Depending upon relations between individual junta there may be a fire on a junta, however this is unusual. More frequently only one or two fires are lit. Fires are lit in a little distance from the junta, so as not to wake up the sleepers with the clatter and the smoke. The woman who starts a cooking fire boils the billy for tea and for the hot water required for making dough for damper. By and by, as the other sleepers wake up, they gather around the

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94 Damper is a simple flat bread made of self-raising flour and hot water and baked on the hot ashes or on a wire over a small fire. On how to make damper, see White (1997).

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breakfast fires according to their closeness and the state of relations to the damper making women. Seating arrangements around breakfast fires could be mapped in a parallel way to sleeping arrangements in yunta. In retrospect, I wish I had taken regular maps of the number and locations of breakfast fires, and especially of seating arrangements around these fires. However, breakfast was the time I wrote up my fieldnotes. It was the only time I was able to write without being interrupted, and accordingly I scribbled madly while drinking my tea and eating damper, without time to note too closely what was going on around me. As soon as I put the pen down 'the day started proper' and I was too busy for further note-taking, and breakfast was over in any case.

Therefore, I cannot produce any such maps, only some general statements about breakfast fires and seating arrangements that such maps would have provided and underscored. Generally speaking, the following points hold true:

- Unless relations between yunta are very bad indeed, there are less breakfast fires than there are yunta. From this follows that the reordering of people from a number of yunta where they slept to a smaller number of breakfast fires where they eat points towards a beginning increase in the volume of sociality. The state of restedness of the night is given up, by opening up the more intimate formations of small yunta. Breakfast fires invite people to begin the day through increasing contact with more people.

- Which fire to choose and where to sit depends on very similar issues to and is conducted in an equally non-verbal manner as the nightly establishment of yunta. Invitations are not issued. People get up from their yunta and walk over to a fire of their choice. This choice depends upon who else is sitting there, who one would like to sit next to, or not sit next to, how much room there is around individual fires, which way the wind and smoke are blowing, and similar issues. Seating arrangements around breakfast fires thus underline the state of social relations in a parallel way to sleeping arrangements in yunta.

- Sometimes (especially after the redistribution of flour after ritual, discussed below), there may be a number of breakfast fires in the jilimi, on all of which tea is cooked, and around each of which people sit and eat their breakfast, but only one fire for the
production of damper. In this case, people eating breakfast at one of the other fires get up, get their damper from the damper-making woman, and return to share and eat it at their fire. Other food items such as butter or jam are always shared by all the people around one fire, and if relations between different fires are good, may also be passed from one fire to the next. People from neighbouring camps may also come over to ask for some butter, jam, sugar or salt. Closely related people residing in another part of Yuendumu may even drive over to request one of these items, if they need them and know about their availability in the jilim.

- Although there is some opening up and a beginning of more active sociality involved in the formation of people around breakfast fires in groupings larger than those of the junta of the night before, it is unusual for a person to eat breakfast at more than one fire. The fire one chooses to sit at is the fire where one eats. Parallel to the way one sleeps in only one junta, and each junta thus constitutes a separate unit for the night, one eats at only one fire, and people around a fire constitute a unit in a similar way.

- A major difference to junta is that breakfast fires may be joined by people from other camps, especially by younger people coming to get food from some of their older (always female) relatives. People, particularly men, picking up damper from a breakfast fire to take over to their own camp may also briefly join them, however, they usually eat elsewhere.

- The mood around a breakfast fire depends upon a number of issues. If relations are good, or there is enough firewood available for a number of breakfast fires, breakfast can (and usually is) a very sociable, yet quite homely affair. Especially in winter, when people move over from their junta to the breakfast fire huddled in blankets and move close together for extra warmth, breakfasts can be very intimate. If relations between junta are not very good and there is a shortage of firewood forcing people to share a breakfast fire despite their personal inclinations, then people tend to cut breakfast time short.

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93 Generally, margarine is used, however, this is often called 'butter'.
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• Lastly, as happens frequently, particularly towards the end of the fortnightly pay period, there may not be any food in the jilimi, and in this case only tea is boiled, quickly drunken, and then the fires are left.96

Flour, damper, and gender

Damper is not the only food eaten at breakfast, and neither is it eaten every day. Other breakfast foods include porridge or wheatbix, often toast, tinned meat or jam, and fresh meat. Damper however was the most common breakfast staple during my fieldwork and as such, it provides valuable insights into the dynamics of breakfasts and how they relate to sociality at Yuendumu. Whether or not damper is made in the mornings, in the main, depends on the availability of firewood and flour. Firewood will be discussed in the last section of this chapter, here I look at flour, and at who is involved in the production of damper, and how it gets distributed. While my description here arises from observations mainly made in the jilimi it needs to be mentioned that many yapukarra also are places of damper production. These are yapukarra with senior women resident in them. Younger women tend to either buy bread or get damper for themselves and their charges from their mothers or grandmothers.

Damper production is not only age-graded but also gendered in that it is exclusively women who make damper, I have never seen a man make damper.97 The gendered nature of damper production is expressed not only through the nonexistence of male produced damper, but through distribution and production itself. On the one hand there is the quotidian morning damper ration individual men receive from their wives, mothers or grandmothers. In the case of some large ceremonies the gendered nature of damper production and distribution becomes pivotally pronounced. During these ceremonies men and women camp on separate sides of the ceremonial ground (men to the east, women to the west). Just after dawn, the beginning of the day is signaled by a number of women walking over to the middle of the ceremonial ground and handing over a large amount of damper to a few men who carry the damper to their side for breakfast. Significantly, all women present are required to rise when the fires are lit before

96 Paydays and their impact upon sociality at Yuendumu are discussed in the following chapter.
97 Occasionally, all male camping groups make so-called Johnny cakes, fried damper, pers. com. N. Peterson.
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dawn to either participate in or at least be witness to this damper production, thus underscoring the link between women and damper.

At Yuendumu, there are two 'kinds' of flour, privately bought and owned flour and flour received after ritual. Most women who make damper (see below on description of who they are) ensure in their budgeting that they have enough flour for the fortnight between one pay or pension cheque and the next. The damper produced from this flour is theirs to eat and distribute.

The 'other' flour arrives in the jilimi (and other camps where senior women reside) as a result of distributions undertaken during ritual, most often mortuary rituals. Mortuary rituals end with a distribution of large quantities of blankets, flour, tea and sugar to the mother's brothers of the deceased. ⁸⁸ This second 'kind' of flour undergoes a number of significant transformations and exchanges before it gets consumed in damper form (cf. Figure 27).

![Diagram of flour distribution during mortuary rituals]

Figure 27: Flour distribution during mortuary rituals

In mortuary rituals, ideally, the siblings of the deceased pool their resources to sponsor the goods, including flour, to be distributed to the deceased's mother's brothers at the end of the ritual. The siblings are in turn supported by their close relatives, as well as today by grants for

⁸⁸ Mortuary rituals are discussed further in Chapter 8.
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due to these purposes. Yuendumu Big Shop (which is set up as a Social Club with an aim to redistribute profits) often also ‘donates’ large quantities of flour (tea, sugar and blankets) for mortuary rituals.99

During the course of the ritual, which may take anything from a few days to two weeks, increasing amounts of goods are stored in the ‘sorry camps’ where the key mourners sleep and live. These goods are said to have originated exclusively from the siblings but with their storage in the ‘sorry camps’ they become a ‘public good’ in the context of the ritual. At the end of the ritual this ‘public good’ is redistributed to the deceased’s mother’s brothers and thus transformed into ‘private goods’. While the deceased’s mother’s brothers may keep items such as blankets and previous belongings of the deceased (which are part of the distributed goods) for themselves, they pass the flour on to their mothers.

While private flour turns into public flour once the deceased’s siblings bring it to the ‘sorry camps’ it turns private again when the deceased’s mother’s brothers receive it. Once the mother’s brothers pass it on to their own mothers, this flour not only becomes transformed into damper, but also into a good with a different redistribution status. The damper the mothers (of the deceased’s mother’s brother’s) produce from this flour, in turn, is more public than damper made from privately owned flour, and less public than the damper distributed in central gendered ritual distributions described above. Firstly, it is passed on to all the residents in the jilimi, and to the sons who had passed on the flour in the first place. They come to the jilimi every morning to receive damper for themselves and residents of their respective camps while the flour lasts. Neighbouring camp residents may also come over and ask for a damper or two, if they did not receive their own flour at the ritual. This goes on every morning for as long as the flour lasts (as often this kind of flour comes in quantities of a number of twenty kilo buckets, it may go on for a week or two).

It is after mortuary rituals and other ceremonies involving the distribution of items such as flour, that the above described central damper production takes place in the jilimi (and other camps) where all damper is produced on one fire and eaten around many. One woman is responsible for turning this flour into damper, and the damper, rather than the flour will thus

99 The arrangements for this change with different store managers and elected committees, sometimes they are ‘donations’ at other times ‘loans’. Unfortunately, I was not able to obtain precise data on these transactions.
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be further redistributed. Damper made from this flour is different to that made from individually bought and privately owned flour in that it retains parts of its 'public' character. It is not public in the sense that it passes to all and sundry but its distribution is more extensive, and crosses more camp boundaries, than that of damper made from privately owned flour. Once this flour is gone women fall back on their own flour and distribution of damper made from this is much more limited.

Women who make damper

While all women know how to make damper only a few do so regularly. In the main, they are senior women who 'look after people'. The people they 'look after' with damper comprise children and grandchildren, particularly male ones, husbands if they have any, and often also older female relatives. The latter usually 'pay' for their services with flour. For example Pearl and Bertha, Nora's very old sisters, always bought 20 kg buckets of flour as soon as their pension cheques arrived but never made damper themselves. They passed the flour and with it damper making responsibilities on to usually either Nora or Polly. The woman who receives their flour in return makes damper for them, for herself, and for her charges out of it. Not only do the old woman 'pay' for the labour involved with more flour than they receive back in damper form, but the damper producing women factor the receipt of such flour into their budgeting.

Polly was regularly the first person in the jilimi to start a breakfast fire, for several reasons. She was up very early, and this gave her something to do, but more importantly, she saw it as her responsibility to produce damper for the many people she knew depended upon her. In fact, we all came to rely on Polly so much so that one entry in my notebooks reads: "great confusion this morning, Polly didn't make a fire, and no-one in the jilimi has damper or tea."

Her damper making responsibilities encompassed not only older sisters staying in the jilimi, but usually also Celeste and myself, and any number of her grandchildren staying with her or with Celeste. Close descendants would also come to the jilimi in the mornings to pick up 'their' damper. In Polly's case particularly grandsons living in jangkapi, men's camps, regularly came for damper in the mornings, in Nora's case her sons would often do the same.
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The seniority of the damper-making woman and her role in nurturing those dependent on her (both younger, e.g. children and grandchildren, and older, e.g. old sisters, and sometimes husbands) can be illustrated by Polly’s and Celeste’s co-operation in these matters. Normally, Celeste and her direct charges where encompassed in the much larger amount of people Polly catered for, with Polly and Celeste pooling their flour and Polly normally being in charge of production. Thus, when Joy initially asked Celeste to help her look after me, including my breakfast provisions, Celeste often did not make the damper herself, but got it for me from Polly. However, when Polly was absent, Celeste took over her role and produced damper for her own as well as for Polly’s charges. Although I can not be absolutely certain, to the best of my knowledge I cannot remember them ever making damper at the same time. Other senior women in the jilimi at times also would pool flour and responsibilities with Polly, and at other times they did not, depending upon relations between them. For example, Polly sometimes made damper with Joy’s flour for Joy and her charges. More often however, both women would make damper at the same time, on different fires.

Breakfast at Napperby

To further illustrate the significance of damper production, I will describe breakfast not in the jilimi, but made and eaten at Napperby (also called Laramba), a mainly Anmatyerrre settlement about 100 kms east of Yuendumu. Polly, who has part Anmatyerrre heritage herself, and many of her close descendants, try and go to the Laramba Sports Weekend every year, as they have many relatives there. I went with Polly, Celeste and some of their close relatives to Laramba Sports Weekend in late August 2000, and we camped in the creek, just near the entrance of the settlement.

Napperby Creek is a magnificent camping spot, wide enough to allow for the comfortable putting up of many junta, with large ghost gums providing shade. All people who came ‘for Sports’ from Yuendumu camped in the creek, and we took up position at the northern end, furthest away from the road that crosses the creek into the settlement. Our camp was made up of a number of junta, all sheltering close descendants of Polly. Polly herself, in a junta with

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100 In time, I entered into similar arrangements as Judy and Kitty did, buying flour and thus receiving damper from the woman I gave the flour to.

101 Sport Weekends are discussed in more detail in Chapter 8.
THE DAY: SPATIAL TIME-ZONING AND SPATIAL ZIGGZAGGING

Neil and Amy was in the middle of our camp. North of hers was a junt with Gladys, her close sister, and Gladys’s daughter Sandra, and Sandra’s son Pete. North of them were Polly’s daughter Marion and her husband. South of Polly was a junt with Celeste, her ‘son’ Brian, and myself. South of us slept Gladys’s other daughter Kate in a junt with Polly’s granddaughter Camilla, her husband, and their daughters Angelina and Jemima, and south of them Celeste’s adopted daughter Tamsin and her husband.

In the morning, we congregated around one breakfast fire and were joined by more of Polly’s relatives: two of her grown up grandsons and their children and a son of Gladys’s, his wife and child. Polly sat in the middle, surrounded by her relatives, next to the fire and positively turned into a damper-producing machine. The breakfast party quickly transformed into a carneval-esque scene with everyone shouting for more damper, the jam, some in-of-meat, demanding spaghetti, the knife, tea, sugar; passing salt one way and meat the other, becoming louder and louder, everybody talking over everybody else and most memorably, lots and lots of laughter. At some point, Camilla said to me “oh, I am happy. All the family together. This is good!”

That breakfast was a celebration of relatedness. Through the sharing of food and the space around the breakfast fire, grouped around Polly who churned out the damper, a festive feeling of togetherness was created. Polly was central to this in a number of ways. Literally, she sat in the middle, next to the fire. She was also the common link through which all persons present traced their relationships. And while everybody contributed to the breakfast with additional items, such as tinned meat, jam, etc, the staple, damper, came from her. The wonderful mood this breakfast projected was due to it being an anomaly. Not only was there an abundance of food (very unusual), enough for everybody to truly fill themselves, there was an abundance of closely related people who did not usually share their breakfast together. In fact, with slightly varying compositions, the only other times I experienced breakfasts similar to this one were at other Sport Weekends, which is when relatives living afar meet in great numbers.

Polly’s centrality as a damper producing woman and, in this case, her role of ‘matriarch’, is what bound people together. Goodale (1996) has described the role of senior wives and female
heads of households, so-called *taramaguti*, in the Tiwi Islands. There men tried to acquire very large numbers of wives, resulting in establishments comprised of up to one hundred individuals, and *taramaguti* acquired the role of matriarch, by becoming the matri-focal heads to the large establishments. The term matriarch sits somewhat uneasily with Warlpiri ethnography, as polygamy very rarely exceeds three wives, none of which would be distinguished from the others as first wife with more power in any case. However, the fact that the age discrepancy between husband and wife(s) used to be rather substantive means that women usually survive their husbands and as they age turn into central figures for their descendants. In the main, this does not provide them with any 'power' but rather with a great number of responsibilities, such as 'looking after' people, of which damper production is a central expression.

It is senior women in these positions who usually are the 'damper-producing' ones. And the damper they produce move along their lines of descent. Elsewhere (Musharbash forthcoming) I have compared women in different age groups in respect to the food they are identified with, suggesting that the oldest ones alive are associated with bush foods, the older generation with damper, and younger women more often with 'new food', such as store bought bread, salads, and stove-cooked meals.

Damper, it needs to be remembered, is an introduced food item, closely associated with colonisation (cf. Rowe 1998), and currently (still) the main staple apart from meat making up people's diet at Yuendumu. The contemporary damper production going on in *jilimi* almost daily (provided flour is available) is a reminder of the centrality of these senior women, and what they stand for. These women make damper in the *jilimi* to feed themselves and their co-residents, and to provide sustenance to those they are close to, starting the day by inviting the network of people across camp boundaries based on descent. The day thus begins with children and grandchildren dropping in to pick up 'their' damper. Breakfast can be seen as a launching pad into the gradually intensifying sociality of the day, and damper as having a central role in this, as it travels along the lines of connections between people before it is consumed.

102 Sansom (1982) argues along similar lines for an emergent matrilocality as an element of the Aboriginal commonality. But see Finlayson (1991) for a critique of matrilocality and its commonly assumed implications based on ethnographic research at Kuranda, northern Queensland.
Daytime movements through the settlement

If breakfast is the opening up or loosening of the restlessness of the night and the positions established there, then the end of breakfast signals the 'day proper' to begin. From now until the *yunta* are put up again in the evening there is a steady increase in interaction with others. Naturally, this takes many forms and shapes. After breakfast, those who have a job leave for their offices or classrooms. Children too young or not going to school (that day) form gangs and play in the vicinity of their camp, or, if older, also at quite considerable distances. The old and more immobile women in the *jižimi* start doing some craftwork or similar activity if they are up to it, or play cards, and wait for the first of the day's long flow of visitors to arrive. Those that do not have a specific task at hand usually do one of two things: go hunting (if there is transport available) or go 'cruising' (i.e. driving or walking around, checking out what is going on elsewhere, and visiting).

During my fieldwork, I drove more than 1,000 kms every week (on average). This includes a number of irregularly occurring trips to places quite far away from Yuendumu, e.g. Murray Bridge (S.A.), Kintore, Lajamanu, Balgo; and many regular trips to places in a smaller radius, e.g. Nyrripi, Willowra, Papunya, Mt Allan; as well as monthly trips to Alice Springs. A lot of that mileage, however, was done closer to Yuendumu (getting firewood, going hunting or swimming) and most of it in Yuendumu itself. Indeed, I probably spent more hours driving around Yuendumu, than from Yuendumu to some other place. It was by no means unusual to do more than 50 kms in a day without ever getting out of Yuendumu.

A lot of that driving was taken up by what is called 'cruising', the other by the driving around before leaving Yuendumu for some other destination, or, what I call 'hithering and thithering'. The focus here is with the way people from one camp, in this case the *jižimi*, socialise with people from other camps and through this on a daily basis shape, create and reaffirm webs of relations.
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Cruising I

When a person has no particular task at hand, the thing to do is to go ‘cruising’. At Yuendumu
the usage of the term ‘cruising’ is largely limited to describing the activity while driving around
in car. There is no specific word to designate the same activity performed on foot, but I will
here use ‘cruising’ to describe both.103 ‘Cruising’ is more exhilarated, and more fun, in a car, but
since cars are not often readily available, it is more regularly performed on foot.

‘Cruising’ entails leaving the home camp and heading towards one’s usual stops: camps of
close relatives, the shop, or the locations of specific organisations and institutions where one
knows or expects to find people to talk to and hang out with. From the first stop one is
propelled on to the next depending on who is there, what kind of news and gossip are
exchanged and what is going on at the time. This is repeated at the next stop. To give an
example:

In the morning after breakfast, Lydia, who did not have anything planned for that day,
decided to start the day by walking over to Warlipi Media. There she was hoping to
find Delilah, who works as a radio announcer. Delilah indeed was there, and Lydia
watched and helped her work, listening to music and answering some phone requests.
Other people dropped by, and someone mentioned that Lydia’s cousin Megan had
arrived back in Yuendumu from Alice Springs late last night. Lydia decided to walk
over to their place and see what they had brought with them. At Megan’s place she
marvelled at the new pram they had bought and sat down for a chat and for news
about relatives in Alice Springs.

After a while, she and Megan decided to walk over to Megan’s sister Charity who they
knew would be ‘happy for company’ and who had not yet seen the new pram either.
Lydia, Megan and her daughter walked over to Charity’s, where they sat down and
exchanged and discussed their news. Then they, with Charity and her daughter, walked
to the shop to buy drinks. At the shop they exchanged Alice Springs news with some
people there when all heard yelling and shouting coming from in front of the council
office where a fight had broken out. Everybody ran over to watch. As the fight died
down, Megan and Charity with their daughters decided to go and visit their sister Kiara
and Lydia went back to the shop in the hope of finding her mother there.

103 There is a second, interrelated, kind of ‘cruising’ practiced at Yuendumu by children and teenagers at
night. After dark, often until very late at night, they ‘cruise’ around an area bordering on the western end of
The Park, between the basketball court in the north and the Youth Centre in the south. Flocks of children and
teenagers walk up and down that strip in groups of varying compositions, somewhat determined by age,
gender, kin and co-residency but fairly fluid. They stroll up and down, checking each other out, all the while
imbuing that space at that time with their distinctive presence.
The best metaphor to describe cruising from a personal perspective is a pinball game: when cruising, one is being propelled from one place to the next by a conglomerate of reasons, moving from one point of the settlement to the next, carried forward on the impulse of news and gossip, and intercepted in one’s path by others. For example Lydia, Charity, Megan and their daughters each followed their own paths of cruising, overlapping and running parallel for a while, then diverting and splitting, while simultaneously each of their paths were criss-crossed again and again by other people in the same pursuit. Unless big events, such as fights, draw the paths of many people cruising at the same time to the one place/event, each cruising individual follows their own trail. This is determined by his or her inclinations that day, through their personal networks, and their objectives. Often paths overlap, or run parallel for a while (as did Lydia’s and Megan’s and then Lydia’s, Megan’s and Charity’s) but over the span of a day each of the three women’s cruising paths would have been individual and idiosyncratic. Cruising on the level of the person is a spatial expression of personal networks and one’s reaction to ‘what is going on’; on a general level it is an activity connecting people over the course of the day. Looking at it from a perspective of the dissemination of news and gossip, it must be said that ‘cruising’ is part of why the mythologised ‘bush telegraph’ works so well. Any piece of news is distributed all over Yuendumu with enormous speed as it radiates out from its point of origin along the intersecting cruising paths of individuals. It is through cruising and related practices that it can be guaranteed that any important information is known all over the settlement within minutes.

Cruising II

From a personal perspective, the trajectories of cruising take an individual from place to place in their personal fashion. From a spatial perspective, the practice of cruising means that people’s trajectories cross and overlap in some places more than in others, making them points of convergence for a great number of individual cruising paths. At Yuendumu, the Big Shop is such a place of intensified sociality due to overlapping cruising trajectories. Another such main centre is the front of the Council building on mail days, especially on Thursdays, which is still the main payday. People go there to pick up their cheques, and other people go there to receive (demand share) money from those who received cheques. Others go, because many people are there already and it is a good place to ‘hang out’ for a while and catch up with news. Other places where trajectories meet in a concentrated manner at various times are the building
where Warlukulangu Artists Aboriginal Association is housed, Warlipiri Media, the Women’s Centre, and around ‘smoko’ the front of the school. And, some camps equally become the focus of many individuals’ trajectories, jilimi chief amongst them.

The jilimi I lived in was empty only under rare circumstances (when a death occurred in the jilimi or when, very unusually, all residents went away from Yuendumu at the same time). Many of the older women resident in the jilimi stayed there during most of the day, attracting older women from other camps, which were mainly empty during the day, to come and stay with them, marpa-ku, so that both the resident old women and the visiting old women had company. These aggregations of old women in turn attract younger women, who come past to chitchat with their mothers, aunties or grandmothers for a while, which in turn attracts more young women and children.

Especially, but not exclusively, on paydays card games are started in the jilimi. These games in turn attract more people to come, either as spectators or as participants. When a few occasional and scattered card games turn into ‘gambling schools’ they can encompass up to thirty or more people, including men. This practice caused a lot of tension in the jilimi, which regularly hosted ‘gambling schools’. On the one hand, residents were happy about the diversion, participating themselves in the gambling, and enjoying watching the games when the stakes were getting very high. On the other hand, after each such event complaints mounted as the camp became “dirty” with so many people being hosted, who “just leave their rubbish” and “use the toilet all the time”. Moreover, these gambling schools often continued all through the nights, hindering the jilimi residents from getting their sleep. One woman or another would turn the main electricity switch off and declare that the power meter, which in Yuendumu needs to be fed by ‘power cards’ was empty – but the gamblers always saw through the trick.

Getting up in the morning, after a night of no sleep, with no money left and in a camp littered with soft drink cans and chips packets caused jilimi residents on a fortnightly basis to declare “no more cards in this jilimi”. But, with most of them being big gamblers themselves all this

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104 Gambling in Aboriginal settlements has been discussed in more detail among others by Harris (1991), Martin (1993: Chapter 3) and especially Altman (1987). And on a comparative note see Riches (1975). Martin includes the rules for some of the most often played games at Aurukun (1993:129-34) which have different names from those at Yuendumu although their rules are very similar.
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was forgotten the next time cruising patterns caused the jilimi to be the locus of big gambling schools.

The jilimi during the day was also frequently at the centre of activity and sociality for other reasons, some of which were caused by cruising and others by other practices. One primary such other reason were mortuary rituals, which are discussed in Chapter 8.

hithering and thithering

Before going on a trip, no matter whether a hunting trip for a few hours or a trip to a place 500 kms away for a week, the car(s) to take the travellers drive(s) around Yuendumu, from one camp to the shop, to another camp, back to the first one, and so on usually at least for half an hour, often much longer. Although every anthropologist I know who has worked in central Australia is aware of this practice, and often impatient with it, I could find neither a name for it nor anthropological discussions of it. In my notebooks I called this practice 'hithering & thithering', which I abbreviated in entries to 'h&t', so that there are daily entries such as "2 hours of h&t before we got out".

Initially, 'h&t' used to drive me crazy. I failed to understand its internal reasoning and its purpose, interpreting it instead as 'disorganised' behaviour. All that is needed for a hunting trip, I thought, is a car, people, crowbars, water, and some food (just in case). Considering that logistically this should be quite easy to organise, initially I used to despair about the amount of time it took from having the first woman hop into the car to finally being out on the road. It took me a while to get used to 'h & t', and even longer to fully comprehend its meanings.

Largely, this impatience was due to me, as the driver, having a different idea about the purpose of driving than any of the passengers. Focussing on the destination of the trip, 'h&t' became a chore, something that invariably and inevitably happened before we 'hit the road'. While driving around Yuendumu impatient for getting to where we were heading, I did not at first realise that 'h&t' was as much part of the trip as was driving from Yuendumu to X. The first time I realised this, significantly, was when I was a passenger myself in a car driven by another Kardiya person in preparation for a trip to some site west of Yuendumu. All of a sudden, I was the one giving instructions as to which camp we needed to drive to next, that another stop at
the shop had become necessary, and so forth. After this, I began paying more attention to ‘h&c’, and started seeing it as an end in itself, not only as part of the exasperating preliminaries to a trip.

Any kind of trip away from Yuendumu requires ‘h&c’. I here focus on hunting trips, but the general points are true independently of destination and purpose. A hunting trip often is ‘planned’ in advance by people suggesting “we might go hunting, maybe tomorrow?” hoping that something will develop out of it. Planning to go hunting first of all will pose the problem of where to go hunting.

Even if the initial suggestion is “we might go hunting at Wayillilypa, full up with yam”¹⁰⁵ this needs to be confirmed, okayed, and verified. Povinelli (1993) has described the ‘language of indeterminacy’ that permeates the decision making of Belyuen women as they ‘decide’ where to go hunting and what for. She notes that an “important dimension to the sociality of hunting is the relationship among knowledge claims, responsibility – culpability, and authority – status” (1993:685), drawing out the fields underlying women’s hesitancy in determining the cause of action. The situation at Yuendumu is identical. The decision of where to hunt is not one easily made and partly underlies the ‘hithering and thithering’ illustrated by the following case study.

Yarns were in season at Wayillilypa and Leah from South Camp had suggested to me a few days earlier that we could go hunting ‘might be anytime’, i.e. when it suited. A few days later in the jilomi, during breakfast I repeated her invitation and announced my plan to take her up on it that day. Polly and Celeste asked if they could come along, marpa-ku, for company. ‘Sure’, I said, and they and Neil hopped into the Toyota. The four of us drove over to South Camp to pick up Leah. She suggested that we also take her daughter Rita and her sister Eva, as well as Rita’s nephew Marcel. From Leah’s camp, now eight of us in the car, we drove over to East Camp, to the camp where a number of Nampijinpa women at that time lived. Wayillilypa is their country and we wanted to let them know that we were going there.

Most of them had already left to go hunting themselves earlier that day, but Lina and Celia Nampijinpa did not get a lift then and were very keen on going, too. Polly said in that case she

¹⁰⁵ Wayillilypa is an outstation and the country surrounding it about 60 kms south of Yuendumu (see Figure 3 in Chapter 1 for location).
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would stay behind so there would be enough room for them. We drove back from East Camp to the jilimi in Inner West Camp to drop off Polly and then returned to East Camp to pick up Lina, Celia had gone to her camp to pack. Lina’s crowbar was her husband’s camp in South Camp, so we drove there from East Camp to pick it up, and then on to North Camp to fetch Celia and two of her little granddaughters. While at Celia’s camp in North Camp, Neil chatted to one of the boys there and heard that Camilla had bought a new video, so he asked to be dropped off at her place in East Camp where they were watching it (also, the car by now was not only very full, but full with exclusively females. Neil chose a polite way of opting out of the trip). After dropping him off in East Camp, we went to the shop so everybody could buy drinks and oranges, and ran into Moira who asked whether she could come along.

There were now ten people in the car, including three children, and some discussion ensued about what to do. Moira is a very good hunter and she would be fun to take along, so it was decided that Eva, who “is cripple anyway” might as well stay behind. We drove back to South Camp to drop off Eva, back to the shop to pick up Moira and then to West Camp where she was living to pick up her crowbar. On the way back we stopped at our jilimi in Inner West Camp to get our own crowbars and the big jerry can for water, only to discover that somebody had borrowed it. Lina said she had one in South Camp so we went there and got her jerry can, then returned to the shop to fill up with diesel and then were on our way to Wajillilinya.

Figure 28 (below) shows the paths we took during this ‘h&t’ for a short hunting trip snapped onto a mud map of Yuendumu. Drawing a map of the paths a car follows during the ‘h&t’ before any one (hunting) trip, one inevitably comes up with something very similar to this, namely, a representation of a finely spun web connecting a number of camps and other places distributed over several of Yuendumu’s Camps, and often spanning over the whole geography of the settlement. The Oxford English Dictionary translates the expression ‘to hither and thither’ as ‘to go to and fro; to move about in various directions’. And rather than disorganisation being the root of this practice, it is the purposeful moving about in various directions, the tying of connections that underlies it.
Figure 28: Map of 'hithering and thithering'

It is not just the paths and their connecting feature that are significant, but what actually takes place at each stop. Usually, a stop, for example, at a camp so crowbars can be picked up, involves intense discursive activity between the people in the car and the people in the camp. During these brief (and sometimes not so brief) periods all sorts of 'essential' information is exchanged and if need be, new decisions pertaining to the planned trip are made. The people in the car broadcast their intentions, the anticipated itinerary the trip will take, the intended composition of people going, ideas about the time of return and so on. From the people at the
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camp they receive similar information about other trips in preparation, as well as any other
news and gossip people in the camp have received from others, passing by or briefly stopping.
Information about other hunting parties as well as the gossip in turn at the next stop is
'exchanged' and up-dated so that within the one hour or so of 'h&ct' both the people in the car
as well as most people in camps at Yuendumu will be updated on anything that there is to
know. This is also, why 'h&ct' often includes quick stops at any of Yuendumu’s organisations
and institutions, to quickly inform those who are at work of something just found out that may
concern them.

To believe 'hithering and thithering' is caused by lack of organization is to utterly fail to
understand this practice, which fulfils a range of vital purposes. It is a crucial activity
underlying sociality. Approval needs to be sought for most actions, however implicitly, e.g. in
the case study approval needed to be sought for the purpose and destination from those
people responsible for the country the trip was going to be made to. The 'h&ct' in the first
instance thus informs all people with a right to know of the intended trip and gauges its
acceptability in terms of destination, itinerary and composition of people going. A point
underscoring the importance of this approval seeking is the fact that regularly after a bit of
'h&ct' the planned destination and/or itinerary and/or the composition of people in the car
change. It is not uncommon at all to start off with four people in a car planning to go hunting
out east and end up with seven other people going west instead.

'Hithering and thithering' is exactly about connecting people and places. The map in Figure 28
outlines the paths taken, and presents a visual image of the web thus spun during on particular
episode of 'h & t'. Realistically, what needs to also be taken into account is the fact that
simultaneously to us driving around, other cars with other people in them were occupied in the
same activity, as well as the numerous paths taken by people involved in cruising. If one were
to draw a map of the entire extent of 'h&ct' and cruising taking place at Yuendumu during one
hour, the illustration would be black with the quantity of lines needed to draw this,
underscoring the intensity of lived sociality and the multitude of social interconnections
interweaving with each other at Yuendumu during the day.
Ending the day: firewood

As the day comes to its close, the intensity of sociability lessens and subsides gradually. The focus shifts from settlement wide interactions to spatially and socially more narrow ones. The example of a refocus to domesticity at the end of the day I present here is that of gathering firewood. It underscores this refocus as well as the previously made point about the often-occurring fractionisation of camp residents and reinforces issues about relatedness negotiated over commodities.

The Warlpiri word for both fire and firewood is *warnu*, also encompassing a number of related meanings such as hot, ashes, fireplace, hearth, cooking fire and so on. Negotiations revolving around firewood are central to life at Yuendumu. Only a small number of camps/houses, populated by people in their mid-twenties and younger, use firewood very rarely, while almost all other camps use firewood regularly, and many of them depend exclusively on firewood for cooking and/or warmth. Firewood is not available within walking distance of the settlement, and transport is necessary to acquire it — making it a very valuable and often scarce commodity in high demand. Yuendumu Council, CDEP, and Yuendumu Old People's Programme all have commitments towards providing residents with firewood, however, this is a task often neglected. Especially camps whose residents are overwhelmingly old or female, which in the main are also the camps most heavily dependent on firewood, have difficulties in obtaining amounts adequate to their needs due to lack of access to transport.

Residents in these camps have to rely on being able to persuade relatives owning cars to help them, which may put strains on these relationships, especially in winter, when daily firewood trips become necessary to meet all the needs for warmth and cooking. The negotiations revolving around firewood throw light on sharing, asking, distribution, and conflict. Starting with the rare examples of two situations of an abundance of firewood being present and what happened, I work towards the more 'normal' scenario of firewood supply being scarce but present, concluding with examples of social tensions being expressed through negotiations about firewood 'ownership'.
The social limitations on the capability to accumulate

All through my time at Yuendumu, I was involved in daily trips for firewood, both for the jilami and for a number of other camps in which resided people I was working with. In the winter of 1999, as it became colder and colder, requests for firewood trips increased to such an extent that they hindered me from doing other work. The jilami residents, who were more aware of this than others suggested I get a large trailer so that I could get a week’s supply for them which would help free me up to do other work. We went out three times with the trailer, piling it up high each time, resulting in an enormous amount of firewood in the jilami. Very pleased with the thought of at least no more jilami firewood trips for a while I was able to spend the day elsewhere in Yuendumu following up other issues. By the time I returned to the jilami in the late afternoon all the firewood had disappeared. Getting such an enormous amount in fact meant that it lasted less time than a small pile normally did.

This was because all the neighbours of the jilami, like us dependent on firewood and undersupplied, saw the huge pile and many came over to ask for ‘just a little’. The news that there was a huge pile of firewood in the jilami spread like wildfire and people from a bit further away came too. Nobody could be refused any firewood, on two accounts: First, the jilami had heaps and therefore giving a little to others was the only decent thing to do. Second, since many others had received ‘their share’ nobody else who asked could be refused. By late afternoon we had nothing left ourselves and I had to go out again to get some more.

It is simply not possible to store a large supply of a something that is in demand by others for one’s own use. My frustration about firewood that day was paralleled earlier by Joy’s frustration about margarine. She declared:

I will not buy margarine again. I eat a little and then, put it in the fridge, somebody will eat it. Leave it outside the dogs will eat it or it will melt in the sun. Buying margarine is a complete waste. Someone will take it anyway.

The point in both cases is that if one has more than one needs for immediate use — others will use it. The traditionalist hunter-gatherer literature has for long argued whether one or the other of two preferred moralities underlie this phenomenon (cf. among many others Bird-David 1992; Hawkes 1993; Hiatt 1982; Ingold, et al. 1988; Lee and DeVore 1968; Sahlins 1972;
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Testart 1987; Williams 1981; Woodburn 1982). Is this simply a manifestation of an altruistic ethic of generosity or is it a more calculated sharing of things in abundance with a view to receiving returns later when in need. This argument was developed further by Peterson (1993; 1997) who argued for a reconsideration of the meaning of ‘generosity’ and postulated the practice of ‘demand sharing’ to be essential to any understanding of such activities.106 This often overlooked practice not only sheds light on veracious ideas about generosity but is an intrinsic element of Aboriginal social life as inter-personal relations are structured around it. Peterson says:

Demand sharing is a complex behavior that is not exclusively dedicated simply on need. Depending on the particular context, it may incorporate one, some or all of the following elements. It may in part be a testing behavior to establish the state of a relationship in social systems where relationships have to be constantly produced and maintained by social action and cannot be taken for granted. It may in part be assertive behavior, coercing a person into making a response. It may in part be a substantiating behavior to make people recognize the demander’s rights. And, paradoxically, a demand in the context of an egalitarian society can also be a gift: it freely creates a status asymmetry, albeit of varying duration and significance (Peterson 1993:870-1).

The case of what happened to the jilimi’s huge pile of firewood in the middle of winter when everybody around was complaining about their lack of firewood incorporates all the above-mentioned elements. The residents of the jilimi felt there was no option but to respond to all demands made on them for firewood until they were out of firewood themselves – in the light of the huge pile previously visible to all who came past the only polite way to refuse further requests was to be honestly able to say that there was “nothing left” and, therefore nothing to give. This giving of firewood did indeed create asymmetry, as return demands by jilimi residents over the next weeks were always answered (often not in kind, as there are many things to demand). It was a peculiar situation, however, since such a ‘flaunting’ of a scarce good is rather unusual and stimulated increased requests from others for a share to such an extent that nothing was left for jilimi residents themselves. This example contrasts starkly with the following example.

A few weeks later that winter, CDEP organised some firewood runs, involving the labour of a number of men and a large CDEP truck. They dropped off a truckload of firewood at specific camps, chosen because of their residential composition, which put them in a higher ‘need’

106 See also Martin (1993), Myers (1982; 1986a; 1988a).
category than other camps. The *jilimi* due to its large proportion of older women was one of the recipient camps, as was the *jilimi* right next door to it. There was *was* created a situation where two neighbouring camps in Inner West Camp each received a truckload of firewood while all surrounding camps did not (this situation was mirrored in other parts of Yuendumu). The CDEP objective was made public and everybody *knew* that this particular firewood was for ‘the old and needy’ only. Demand sharing happened to a much smaller degree and the truckloads of firewood lasted for a little over a week.

During this time Nungarrayi from Willowra came for one of her frequent stays in the *jilimi* (she was described as one of the on & off residents in Chapter 5). She had gathered some firewood on the trip to Yuendumu and brought this with her. The day after her arrival she took me aside and asked whether we could go on a firewood trip. I replied that there was a large pile there and why did she not use some of that? “No”, she answered, “that one CDEP *warlu*, it belongs to the *jilimi*, I can’t use him”. Her refusal to use the firewood delivered by CDEP for the *jilimi*, of which she was a resident, makes an interesting contrast to the almost public demand sharing which consumed the above described pile of *jilimi* firewood within hours.

Nungarrayi and I went out to get her some firewood, which she kept in a small pile next to her *yunta*. As at other times, during this particular stay in the *jilimi*, she often used and sat around other resident’s breakfast fires. However, she used her own wood for the warmth fire at night, thus making implicit statements both about different uses of different types of firewood and about her relationship to the *jilimi* and its other residents. Hers was a declaration both about her independence (not using the wood of ‘the old and frail’) as much as about her usual residential status. Being from Willowra meant that although she regularly stayed in Yuendumu, she did not use the wood provided for Yuendumu old people by Yuendumu CDEP, fully aware of the implications this would have had for her in the case fights arouse. Further, this is a case of firewood being distinguished into different kinds, the CDEP pile being reserved for specific people and purposes, and her own one allowing her usage as she pleased.
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My firewood, your firewood, our firewood

Often, the jilimi had one pile of firewood only, which all residents used. As long as relations in the jilimi were amicable this worked well. However, when tensions arose this was often ‘visible’ before they were actually aired by people’s behaviour towards firewood. A number of piles of firewood in the one camp are a clear indication of things running less smoothly than is ideal. I discuss three separate firewood trips to elucidate upon the relationships between firewood and sociality.

While Nungarrayi was still staying in the jilimi, I went on a firewood trip with her, Joy, and two other women from two camps in East Camp. We drove to an area north of Yuendumu through which recently a bushfire had gone (in the desert, firewood collection is easier after a bushfire, not only because the Spinifex grass is burnt down but also because large and heavy trees, wood from which burns longer than the dry wood normally gathered, are more easily breakable). I parked the car and the four women and I went off in different directions in search of good firewood. About half an hour later, I loaded up my wood and then drove past their respective piles and we loaded them onto the back of the Hilux, all the while making sure that wood from different piles did not mix. I first dropped off the other two women and their piles at their camps, then we drove to Joy’s ‘divorced’ husband’s camp where she dropped off half of her pile. As Joy moved between his camp and the jilimi (mostly sleeping in the latter and eating in the former) she was responsible for firewood in both. Then we drove to the jilimi and unloaded our piles in three separate locations: Nungarrayi’s next to her camp along the eastern fence of the jilimi yard, Joy’s wood on the eastern side of the verandah, where her yunta was located and mine in front of the kitchen for the use of the remaining jilimi residents.

A second firewood trip later that week did not end quite so peacefully. This time, I dropped off Polly, Nora and Nungarrayi half way on the road to Mt Allan were I was heading with Judy to pick up her pension cheque. On the way back we picked them up and loaded the wood they had gathered onto the back of the Toyota. Nora had standard firewood only, while Polly had also gathered some wood for producing artefacts to sell on a planned trip to Melbourne, and both Polly and Nungarrayi had found some extra heavy long-burning firewood. While I

107 It is not unusual for Yuendumu residents to receive welfare cheques in neighbouring communities, I have described this practice in more detail elsewhere (Musharbash 2000:59-60).
was loading the wood onto the Toyota all three women gave minute instructions as to where to put it, which was basically, that each woman’s logs were to be put as far away as possible from the others’. When we arrived in the jilimi, a fight broke out between Polly and Nungarrayi, with accusations flying high about wood theft. While they were fighting, Nora proceeded to unload, and (accidentally?) took some of the coveted heavy wood, in turn drawing her into the argument as well. The yelling and screaming over that particular load of wood, containing lots of “this one’s my wood”, “that one’s your wood”, stands in stark contrast to the idea of demand sharing in connection to firewood described above. This particular case of fighting over firewood was fuelled by the emotions about a trip to Melbourne. Originally all three women were to go on the trip but earlier that morning they had received news that only Polly was going to be able to go. Nungarrayi’s and Nora’s anger was due to their disappointment about not being able to go, and some envy that Polly was. This was not verbally played out in the fight, the emotions about it were instead transferred to the issue of ‘wood-ownership’.

Lastly, as often as there were separate piles of firewood in the jilimi, we would have only one communal pile. This happened when relations between focal women were relaxed and amicable. On these days, people from different jintja came on the one firewood trip and the firewood was randomly piled onto the Toyota and then unloaded as one pile somewhere central in the jilimi — for everybody’s use. The use of and negotiations about firewood thus parallel other markers of the nature of social relations: ideally, firewood is shared by all within the jilimi. Just as often, though, rifts in social relations are expressed through the separation of firewood into different piles for the uses of different social fractions.

Conclusion

I began this chapter with reference to Sansom’s distinction between the state of restedness of the night and the state of being active of the day. I have shown the state of being active during the day to take an elliptical course, beginning slowly in the morning with first inter-camp visitation during breakfast, then steadily increasing to heightened hive-like activity with which the settlement ‘hums’ during the day, to the diminished interactions toward the evening with a refocus on domestic matters.
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The day has been portrayed as the time during which webs of sociality are created, lived, maintained and reinvented through the criss-crossing of interconnected paths. A second theme woven through this chapter revolves around the interconnected issues of sharing, distributing, caring, accumulating and the negotiations about public/private of items and commodities. This happens on various levels and to various degrees depending upon the item in question and the situation within which this is played out. The example of damper showed production and distribution to differ in a variety of situations, spanning the whole spectrum from public to private damper and related mechanisms of distribution. Information, news and gossip in contrast, the pursuit of which underlies and perpetuates some of the main activities taking place during the day, are exchanged freely, speedily with and all present in the settlement. The example of negotiations about firewood reinforces the point about divisions within the domestic sphere often being negotiated via some other issue, e.g. ownership of firewood, sleeping arrangements, and so forth.

Together, these examples show the boundary of the jilimi (and for that matter, any other camp) to be highly permeable, accommodating flows of visitors for different purposes in and out of the jilimi as well as residents. Further, this permeable boundary encompasses a space (that of the camp) and not a group. Jilimi residents may or may not share their breakfast and their firewood, and usually do so in spatio-social configurations, which do not coincide closely with those of the junta groups of the night. In the following chapter I expand on these issues by introducing the range of time frames within which the different socialities of the day and the night are encompassed.
CHAPTER EIGHT
TIME, MORTUARY RITUALS, FIGHTS, AND BOREDOM

Time, at Yuendumu, flows, trickles, passes and stagnates in various ways. There are the recurrent rhythms of time structured by school bells, weekdays and holidays, by the oscillations of day and night, hot time and cold time, and the ebbing and flowing of ‘pension week’ versus ‘nothing week’. There are things that halt these flows, punctuating them occasionally, such as Yuendumu Sports Weekend every first weekend in August, the Sport Weekends of other settlements, Alice Springs’ Lightning Carnival in April, the annual initiation ceremonies over the summer holidays, and so forth. There are also irregular interruptions, unplanned events punctuating the flows of time irregularly such as mortuary rituals, the occurrence of fights, and other such events. And, as some people complain, there are long stretches of ‘nothing is happening, really boring’ periods.

Discussions of time prevalent in the Aboriginalist literature generally tend to approach the issue of time from an ontological perspective. Entanglements and permeations of jukurrpa and ‘lived time’ are not at issue here, but rather the currents of ‘everyday time’. This chapter is concerned with the temporality within which the sociality of the everyday is embedded by distinguishing between different ‘temporal frames’: regular time flows, recurrent events that punctuate these flows, and events occurring irregularly. Together, these ‘temporal frames’ provide an idea of the broader temporality within which the sociality of the everyday is embedded.

Here I focus on fights and mortuary rituals, which contrast with but are fully connected to the sociality as described in previous chapters before elaborating on the issue of personhood and the issue of boredom.

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108 Anthropological contemplations of Aboriginal perceptions of time commonly are situated in the context of cosmological, ontological and spiritual temporality, specifically linking ideas about time to the concept of the Dreaming (among many others, see the Chapters on Dreaming in most ethnographies, for example Dussart 2000: Chapter 1 The Dreaming and its Kin: Past and Present Circumstance; Myers 1986a: Chapter 2 The Dreaming: Time and Space; Poirier forthcoming: Chapter 2 Ancestrality, Sentiment Places and Social Spaces; as well as Stanner 1979 for an early example). Other anthropological considerations of time include Gell (1992) and Fabian (1983) and see below.
Time and time frames

Reviewing the enormous literature on anthropology and time Munn (1992:94) concludes by proposing "a notion of 'temporalization' that views time as a symbolic process continually being produced in everyday practices". Having so far emphasised the spatiality of sociality at Yuendumu, here I want to add a view of the temporal entanglements within which they necessarily need to be anchored.

My interest does not lie with the question of whether Aboriginal perceptions of and ideas about time are linear, cyclical or any other such geometric thing, or indeed how the jukurrpa permeates other spheres and levels of time. Instead I draw on Leach's Two Essays concerning the Symbolic Representation of Time (1968) as a starting point into the patterning of everyday time flows, and the processes involved in their social production.

Leach starts by examining the word 'time' in English and comparing it with other languages and the resulting discontinuities (multiple words for multiple 'things' all called 'time') making him ask the questions "How do we come to have such a verbal category as time at all? How does it link up with our everyday experiences?" (1968:125, original emphasis). His answer is build around the tension between two basic experiences:

(a) that certain phenomena of nature repeat themselves
(b) that life change is irreversible (ibid.).

The single most important insight he gains from contemplating these two basic experiences, and highly relevant to this thesis, is that the oscillations of phenomena that repeat themselves (day and night, the seasons, etc) are between points that are 'the same but different'. The following figure (taken from Leach 1968:131) illustrates this:
The 'A' and the 'B' in Figure 29 may stand for day and night, or any such pair of binary oppositions between which time oscillates and illustrates that while there is endless repetition (from day to night to day to night etc.) in fact, each day and each night is a unique one. They are unique because each is experienced, and thus different from previous ones and from following ones. The other issue that becomes clear with this diagram is that something actually oscillates between the two opposites, i.e. it is not only significant that night and day repeat themselves in a specific order but that this order is experienced. One metaphor Leach brings forward to express this is the shuttle used in weaving, going back and forth, back and forth.¹⁰⁹ This shows that the movement, the 'thing' making or experiencing the movement, and the points between which the movement is made are all equally important. It is this interplay between time and experience I explore in this chapter. Leach says: "We talk of measuring time, as if time were a concrete thing waiting to be measured; 'but in fact we create time by creating intervals in social life" (Leach 1968:135). This is a good starting point, but I think, we need to go further and include ideas of structuration. It is necessary to conceptualise this creating of time not as an act but as process, or, as Giddens (1984, see especially Chapters 3 and 4) put it, pay attention to structuring structures. That is, not only do we create intervals, but through experiencing them, they in turn create us, which in turn impacts on our way of creating them.

¹⁰⁹ Since in these essays he focuses on Greek myths the actual example is Penelope: "Penelope sits at her loom. The shuttle goes back and forth, back and forth, love and war, love and war; and what does she weave? You can guess without looking up your Odyssey – a shroud of course, the time of Everyman" (Leach 1968:132).
TIME, MORTUARY RITUALS, FIGHTS AND BOREDOM

In part, the preceding chapters were built around the opposition between day and night, and have also alluded to different time zones into which either of them, particularly the day, is broken up. Night and day, and the these particular time zones only make up a small number of the different kinds of 'bits of time' as they are experienced at Yuendumu, however, they point at two (of more) underlying patterns of how 'bits of times' are structured. Night and day are an oscillation as discussed above, and below I give examples of other such oscillations. Pairs of oscillating time periods are qualitatively different from each other through their physicality, their feel and their emotional valencies.

Time zones (one following the next in a patterned manner) are an example of time compartmentalisations. Compartmentalisation differs from oscillation in that it has a less oppositional and less stark effect on everyday life, however, it does impact on spatiality and sociality in its own ways, as will be discussed.

Both patterns, oscillations and compartmentalisations overlap with and permeate each other and form the regular flows of time within which everyday life at Yuendumu happens. A number of differently structured time patterns interrupt or punctuate these flows of time, some regularly at particular intervals, others occurring irregularly and unpredictably.

Oscillations

Since I have discussed night and day in the preceding chapters, I here focus on some other main examples of time oscillations and how they influence everyday life at Yuendumu. A first one is that between cold time and hot time. Traditionally, the 'calendar' included more seasons, which were not only indicated by temperature, but more importantly, through food availability as different plants come into season (cf. Latz 1995). Today, hot time and cold time are the two main seasons named and talked about.110 Wild describes the two seasons (for Lajamanu which is slightly more tropical than Yuendumu) most succinctly and compassionately:

110 I have previously discussed the uncertainty of windy time, occurring during the threshold of change-over between hot and cold times, and the associated fears of illness and death.
Most rain falls in the long, hot and humid summer between September and May, when rain bearing winds blow from the northwest. Shade temperatures during this period are frequently above 100 degrees Fahrenheit [38 degrees Celsius]. In the short, cold winter from June through August the temperatures frequently drop below 50 degrees [10 degrees Celsius], an uncomfortable temperature without artificial heating or insulated shelter. A discomfort which the Walbiri suffered. In this period, dry winds carrying thick, fine dust blow from a general easterly direction, and, understandably, the Walbiri did and still do detest the winter (Wild 1975:3).

Cold time and hot time necessitate very different styles of living. It does get very cold at night during cold time, dropping below freezing point at Yuendumu, requiring people not only to wear more and warmer clothing but also to organise and use greater numbers of blankets, gather more firewood, or to sleep indoors if there are heaters. During hot time, on the other hand, it gets extremely hot at Yuendumu, and weeks with degrees in the 40s are by no means unusual. During hot time people wear light clothing, use less blankets and sleep outside more often, generally go to sleep later at night and nap more during the day.

Another oscillation of time is that between weekdays and weekends. Weekdays (Monday to Friday) are structured differently (see below) to weekends (Saturday and Sunday), and different activities are performed during each. Opening hours for organisations and institutions differ significantly between the two, with most being shut on the weekends. This has numerous implications in regard to everyday life. Those people who have employment generally work during weekdays. In respect to daily life in the camps this means that from, generally, 9 am to 5 pm these people are absent from their camps and less accessible to people networking. It also means that some of those places previously named as centres of cruising are such only when open, i.e. cruising takes different paths during weekdays than it does on the weekends. Shopping also is impacted upon through this oscillation. Many Walbiri people often shop a number of times during the day, always getting exactly what is needed at the time rather than buying more and trying to store items. On weekends the opening hours of Big Shop and the store at Mining Co. are distinctly curtailed which means less shopping opportunities and accordingly often less food. Since those who work often are the ones who own cars and since they are generally free of their wage labour responsibilities on the weekends, many more bush trips happen on the weekends than they do during the week.
A further oscillation is that between school term and holidays, in particular the long summer holidays. This oscillation in quality parallels that between weekdays and weekends but surpasses it in extent. Largely so, because Yuendumu’s population composition changes distinctly between the two. Most Kardiya who are able to and can afford it leave Yuendumu over the summer, to either go down south or have a holiday elsewhere (especially teachers and administrative workers). Only those Kardiya running essential services (e.g. nurses and police), and those committed to living in Yuendumu remain. It is during the summer holiday, through their absence, that it becomes most obvious how large the Kardiya impact is on the life-style of the settlement. Yuendumu during the summer holidays is quite simply a different place to Yuendumu during school term. Many restrictions and limitations, during school term almost internalised, lapse and everybody moves around more freely (see below).

A last oscillation to describe here is that between ‘pension week’ and ‘nothing week’. In the past, all welfare cheques as well as all wages were paid on the same alternate Thursday. Out of this practice emerged ‘pension week’, the week beginning with the Thursday on which cheques were received, and ‘nothing week’, the week preceding the next payday. ‘Nothing week’ is aptly named, as literally nothing (neither money nor food) remains after the week of plenty that is ‘pension week’. Generally all money received is spent within the first few days of ‘pension week’ and while the bulk of it is normally spent on food, this too does not last much longer.

Today the practice underlying this oscillation is somewhat shifting as Centrelink for the last few years has been offering its customers a choice of day on which to receive social security payments. At Yuendumu, the full potential of this option is only realistic for those people with bank accounts as everybody else is dependent upon receiving their cheques by mail, which arrives on Tuesdays and Thursdays. Some, however, do take advantage of this option by receiving their pension cheques on alternate weeks to some of their relatives, thus being able to

111 An alternative term for ‘nothing week’ used all over the Northern Territory is ‘miller week’ (Sansom 1980), ‘malu week’ or ‘mala week’ (Harris 1991). The origins of this term are unclear. See also Sansom (1988:161-64) for the seasonal fluctuations between ‘miller time’ and ‘good time’ in Darwin fringe camps.

112 The results from a questionnaire sample conducted for CAEPR in both 1999 and 2000 were that 60 and 57 percent of respondents said they spend all their money on food, 33 percent in both years said they spend it on food and clothes, and 7 and 10 percent respectively said they spend their money on food, clothes and other items (Musharbash 2001a:5).

113 Centrelink introduced this measure in an attempt to afford women in particular more flexibility in budgeting.
control budgeting a little better. For example, one of the focal women, Nora, and her sister Leah are recipients respectively of their grandsons' Ray and Toby's 'kids money' and have arranged to have their social security cheques sent on different Thursdays, thus helping each other to alleviate the shortage of money and food in their respective 'nothing week'.

The impact of this Centrelink measure, for the moment, remains relatively insignificant at Yuendumu, as not many people choose to take advantage of this option. Some, however do, and this has led to 'pension week' and 'nothing week' happening at different times for different people. Most people at Yuendumu however, still have them at the same time. And all live oscillating between what in the literature often is called the cycle of 'boom and bust' or 'prosperity and poverty' (see among others Daly, et al. 2002; Finlayson 1991; Finlayson and Auld 1999; Sansom 1980; 1982; 1988; Schwab 1995; Smith and Daly 1996).

Compartmentalisations

As discussed in Chapter 3, each day is divided into different times (mnga, mngalyurn, kalarla, wunjii, wurjii-wunjii). And as elaborated upon in more detail in Chapter 7, these different times of the day are reserved for different kinds of activities, in turn impacting upon spatial time-zoning in camps. However, this is not the only way the day at Yuendumu is compartmentalised. As hinted at above, 9 am to 5 pm is an important slice of time that is distinguished from others through working and opening hours.

In fact, the weekdays of school term at Yuendumu are compartmentalised in a curious manner, a peculiar mixture of 'western clock time' and 'settlement time' truncated and announced by the school bell (in fact, an alarm siren). The siren sounds and punctuates these days seven times. The first siren is 'wake-up time'; the second indicates that school (and other business) start(s); the third rings at the beginning of 'smoko' or 'cup-of-tea-time', the forth rings to announce the end of the same and a return to school/work; the fifth rings for the beginning of lunch time; the sixth for the end of lunch time and for resuming school/work; and the seventh announces end of school for the day.
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This siren rings and is audible over the entire settlement (with the possible exception of West Camp, depending on the wind). Poirier in her discussion of neo-colonialism at Balgo describes a similar phenomenon:

The most noticeable sign of this situation [neo-colonialism] was certainly the daily siren that echoed from the office all through the settlement at precisely 8:00 in the morning, apparently calling the Aborigines to ‘work’ (Poirier forthcoming, unpaginated).

However, she also says that “[u]se of the siren was finally abandoned in 1988” (ibid). At Yuendumu, it continues in 2002. And while its intentions, to be sure, are as neo-colonial as those of the siren at Balgo, it has developed a number of vernacular idiosyncrasies. The practice of compartmentalising school days with the aid of the siren has created distinct time zones, e.g. ‘school’s on’, ‘cup-of-tea-time’ and so forth, which are exactly not clock time. The siren is rung an hour earlier in summer than it is in winter, thus distinctly not instilling ideas of ‘clock time’, which so often is one of the objectives of colonialism and neo/post-colonialism (on ‘clock time’ in Aboriginal settlements see Harris 1991). People know that school starts at the second siren, but many do not know at what time that is. For example, in d.e filimi confusion reigned daily about ‘clock time’, ‘first siren’ and ‘shop opening time’ (which also occasionally, and quite unpredictably shifts: The shop used to open at 9 a.m., depending upon the season coinciding with second siren, at other times it opened at 8.30 a.m., sometimes coinciding with first siren).114

Be that as it may, most significant here is the compartmentalisation of school days by siren time, bringing with it distinct spatial and social patterns, e.g. concentrated cruising around the school at ‘cup-of-tea-time’ and so forth.

And lastly, to close a circle, school days contain an oscillation between ‘siren time’ and ‘after’. Business hours (siren time), today, are distinctly marked by a concentrated visible presence of Kardiya in the settlement, especially around The Park. It is during this time that resident Kardiya leave their houses, mainly for work. Moreover, this is the time when ‘Government Kardiya’ and contractors come into the settlement ‘from Alice Springs and Canberra’. The

114 Moreover, on weekends (no sirens) it opens at 10 a.m., and no matter what the day, a most usual sight is that of people in front of the closed shop in the morning, waiting for it to open so they can buy items for breakfast.
roads of the settlements during 'siren time' are full with 'Government Toyotas', each bearing
the name of the organization the driver works for on their sides: Central Land Council,
Centrelink, ATSIC, Telecom, Territory Health Services (THS), N.T. Government, and
whoever else has business to conduct in Yuendumu. This is part of what creates 'the interface'
or 'third space' anthropologists have been attempting to analytically explore recently (see for
example Hinkson 1999; Hinkson 2002; Holcombe 1998; Merlan 1998; Rowse 1990; Trigger

The end of 'siren time' (close of business) is marked by an even increased presence of Kardiya
vehicles on the roads of Yuendumu, as they run last errands and then drive home, or leave the
settlement. A little while after that, the settlement has an entirely different feel to it: through
Kardiya absence, Yapa become the prominent presence, walking and driving around cruising,
'singing out' to people in a camp they drive by, stopping for a chat, congregating in groups
discussing news. The only Kardiya visible in the settlement at this time (and until 'siren time'
starts again the next day) are those who drive from their house to somebody else's for a dinner
party or come such thing, normally with all car windows closed, never stopping.\(^{113}\)

The oscillation between 'siren time' and 'aft er' in terms of public presence is one of Kardiya
being prominent to Kardiya being absent (or, the 'third space' being enacted, and Yuendumu
space being more exclusively 'Yapa space') – mirroring in microcosm the oscillation between
school term and holiday time described above.

A last compartmentalisation of time to mention here is that of dividing the week into days
(Monday – Sunday). Above, I already described the oscillation between weekends and
weekdays, here; I want to look at the distinctions among the latter. Mondays, as is usual in the
West as well, are the day after the weekends when everything reverts to 'normal', i.e. work and
time influenced by and structured around work. Friday on the other hand is the day before the
weekends, when many people who work 'knock off' early and embrace the feeling of being
under less restraint, i.e. Fridays have an almost weekend feel to them.\(^{114}\) Tuesdays and

\(^{113}\) There are some exceptions to this rule, Kardiya who walk for example, or those who drive around with
open windows happy to engage in an occasional chat with Yapa.

\(^{114}\) Kardiya also often 'knock off' early on Fridays, especially so if they have a long weekend in Alice Springs
planned. Fridays are thus also marked by a little exodus of Kardiya from the settlement.
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Thursdays are distinguished by being 'mail days', i.e. the days where the mail plane arrives. These two days entail significant cruising movement towards and concentration at the Council building, which houses the post office. People cruise there to pick up their own cheque- as well as mail if expecting any, to drop by in the hope of a share from somebody else's cheque, and to generally catch up with news. Thursdays, as mentioned above, stand out in particular, as they are still the prominent 'pension day', where most people receive their pay and 'pension' cheques. Lastly, there is nothing extraordinary about Wednesdays except for the absence of anything setting this day apart.

The time flows at Yuendumu are made up of these oscillating and compartmentalised 'times', repeating themselves in the terms outlined above. They intersperse, overlap and encompass each other depending upon their scale so that at any one moment a number of them are happening concurrently, e.g. 'cup-of-tea-time' on a Thursday during 'nothing week' in 'cold time'. The flows of time they produce are regularly and irregularly punctuated by events I describe below.

Regularly recurring temporal punctuations

There are a number of events occurring regularly over the year, which are neither oscillating nor part of a compartmentalisation. They are annual 'one off' events punctuating the 'normal' flows of time. Chief amongst these interspersing events at Yuendumu are Sport Weekends (described below) and other sport-related events such as Lightning Carnival and the Football Grand Final at Alice Springs. Others are ritual related, such as the annual initiation ceremonies during the summer holidays, Easter Purlapa, which involve in the main Baptist Yapa congregating at a different settlement each year and performing Easter ceremonies; and the annual Law and Culture Meetings involving Aboriginal women from an extensive radius meeting for ritual purposes (Holcombe 1998), again at a different location each year.

17 This has changed after I finished my fieldwork, currently there is an incoming mail plane on Mondays, an outgoing one on Tuesdays, and a regular (both ways) one on Thursdays.
TIME, MORITARY RITUALS, GIGHTS AND BOREDOM

No matter whether they are sport or ritual related, these annual events always bring with them a great air of festivity and excitement, both for those involved and for those at least hearing about them. Leach, broadening Durkheim’s postulations about festivals being a temporary shift from the profane to the sacred, looks at the actual kinds of behaviour engaged in during this sort of time patterning. There are three such main categories of behaviour: formality, masquerade, and role reversal (Leach 1968:135). Their presence in ritual, including Aboriginal ritual has been well documented. Here, I will look at what makes Sport Weekends ‘a special time’ to people living in Yuendumu in terms of the flows of time at Yuendumu and in terms of social practice.

The folk history of Sport Weekends in Central Australia as circulated around Yuendumu, is that the first one happened at Yuendumu in the early sixties, and other settlements have since taken up the idea. By the 1990s Sport Weekends were certainly well established events, with each settlement staging one having ‘their date’. Yuendumu Sport Weekends are on the first weekend every August; other settlements are earlier or later, together covering ‘the football season’. That Yuendumu was the first settlement to have staged one of these events puts pressure on the settlement today because ‘to be number one’ means not only to be the first one to have staged one, but to be the biggest and best one each year, and to win the Grand Final, of course.

Weeks before the first weekend of August preparations begin. CDEP employs extra workers to clean up the settlement, collecting all the rubbish; to paint white the stones lining the roads; and to weed the green on the main oval.118 The Big Shop and the store at the Mining Co. stock up, while others plan the various events. Sports Weekends encompass a number of sport-related events; e.g. football, basketball and softball competitions, as well as sometimes spear-throwing competitions, and some other events, chief among them ‘The Battle of the Bands’ on the Saturday night and other concerts on the other nights, and often ritual performances and exchanges especially of yasmany (cf. Dussart 2000; Holcombe 1998). All this requires careful planning and organisation involving many committees and individuals.

118 Yuendumu certainly was the first settlement in Central Australia to have lawn on one of its ovals. This project made all very proud, so proud in fact that the first year the greened oval was not used for competitions as it was deemed too precious.
TIME, MORTUARY RITUALS, FIGHTS AND BOREDOM

Sport Weekends vary in scale and size but each tries to compete both with previous ones in the same settlement and with the ones taking place in other settlements that year. Thus, even a very small and intimate Sports Weekend such as the one at Laramba (see Chapter 7) has its speciality it is famous for, in this instance, a women's football game - occasioning hilarious amusement, a definite example of role reversal (cf. below). Yuendemu Sports Weekend is famous for its size (5,000 spectators are by no means unusual) and for its drawn out grand finals, very often played by Yuendumu and Papunya which are in the fiercest competition with each other.119 During Sports Weekend, no permits are required for non-Aboriginal spectators, guaranteeing a large turn-up of Kardiya from Alice Springs and further afield.120 In brief, Yuendumu Sports Weekend is the largest public event taking place annually in the settlement.

It is during Sport Weekend that each and every camp at Yuendumu shelters large numbers of people normally residing elsewhere. This contributes to the air of joy, festivity and excitement described in the previous chapter when looking at breakfast. This extends out of the camp over the whole settlement, and, most significantly, this atmosphere and the fact that so many people are present leads to not only the maintenance and reinforcement of already existing relationships (as in the example of breakfast) but to the creation of new ones.

Sport Weekend is an opportunity for catching up, for meeting people, for making new acquaintances and it is on Sport Weekends that many new relationships including marriages are formed. Cruising activity is at an absolute high at these times, and since Yuendumu people cruise with their relatives from elsewhere upon meeting another cruising party, introductions are easily made and cruising party compositions easily rearranged. All women under the age of

119 So much so, that after one particular grand final at Papunya Sports Weekend where Yuendumu won, people from Papunya felled trees on the road leading from Papunya to Yuendumu; or, another year at the grand final at Yuendumu, involving both teams, threw rocks at the announcer and PA at every goal for Yuendumu. On the other hand there are rumours that Yuendumu decided to replay the grand final the previous year until it finally beat Papunya. This competitiveness is fabled and draws even more spectators to attend. In light of the fact that Yuendumu and Papunya are spatially very close (about 160 kms apart), as well socially close through intermarriage and shared histories between the people of both settlements, this competitiveness underscores the validity of recent arguments that settlements are taking on a kind of ‘community identity’ (cf. Holcombe 1998).

120 There are people from Melbourne and Adelaide who travel up annually to Yuendumu for Sports Weekend. Connected to this uncontrolled flow of Kardiya into the settlement during ‘Sports’ are some issues with lack of control over the activities of these visitors, as they often include reporters and film crews who attempt to gain access without the permission by Warlpiri Media required for such activity (on the role of Warlpiri Media see Hinkson 1999, and for an especially distasteful piece of reporting from Sports Weekend and the ensuing politics at Yuendumu ibid.:11-4).
30 I have talked to said they had met at least one future husband or boyfriend at a Sports Weekend.\textsuperscript{121}

In 2002, Marion, who had arranged for a phone to get connected to the house she, Celeste, Polly and a number of their dependents were staying in, had to get the phone disconnected because the young men in the camp had been getting so many reverse charges calls from girls they had met at Sports Weekend that the month will totalled more than $2,000.

Sport Weekends are loved for the excitement they bring, for the opportunities of catching up with many friends and relatives living elsewhere, for the chance of meeting new lovers, and for the interruption they bring to the ‘normal’ flows of time. They are true instances of ‘creating time’ in Leach’s sense by being distinguishable also in terms of behaviour or social practice performed while they are on. Formality, masquerade, and role reversal all play a role. The formality is brought forward in the speeches introducing sporting events, the concerts, and particularly in the handing over of trophies to the winning team in each sport, which concludes each Sports Weekend. Masquerade is lived out by people dressing up for Sport Weekends. In fact, many organise trips to Alice Springs beforehand for the express purpose of buying special clothes.\textsuperscript{122} While women choose the most colourful and bright outfits they can find, young children, especially boys, are often clothed in outfits with the colours and emblems of their favourite football team. Teenagers, especially, wear sports clothes with large lettering saying ‘Yumbum’ on them in the colours of the Yuendumu teams they barrack for. Lastly, role reversal, as Leach himself says, not the most prominent of the three, does occur, too. This is always part of joking behaviour and occurs in the main during the concerts where certain performers play with this, causing bouts of raucous laughter (and endless retelling of the performance for weeks after).

\textsuperscript{121} When I caught up with Stephan Lakan, a PhD student from Marseille doing fieldwork at Balgo, he corroborated this observation and said that many of the marriages of younger people at Balgo had followed from Sport Weekends.

\textsuperscript{122} Cf. the teasing of those wearing new clothes as ‘loverboy’ or ‘lovergirl’ described in Chapter 3.
Unpredictable temporal punctuations

Life at Yuendumu comprises other events that are situated somewhat differently within the flows of time at Yuendumu as described above. Two central examples of these are the occurrences of fights and of mortuary rituals, others are funerals, parties, trips away to cities in the south and so forth. As most of them occur unplanned and unforeseeably, they are irregular events within the temporal framework, displaying none of the other time frames' predictability. On the other hand, they occur so often that they take on a kind of regularity through quantity. While it cannot be foretold when they will happen the fact that they will is predictable. As such, they need to be included in any exploration of time at Yuendumu.

Mortuary rituals

Mortuary rituals (or sorry) take precedence over any other event. The announcement of a death means that any other ritual, work, or other activity will be interrupted and postponed. Due to the nature of the cause of the ritual it cannot be planned in advance. When death occurs, sorry occurs. Today, this happens all too often. In fact, when I began the PhD fieldwork and explained that I was at Yuendumu to learn about ‘Yapa way’ the most frequent response to this was ‘You want to learn yapa way, you go to sorry’ and ‘sorry business is yapa way’. In the first PhD research period of thirteen months I participated in twelve sorry businesses, but I missed a considerable number during interspersing periods I was doing research elsewhere (such as Murray Bridge and Canberra).

The picture emerging here is a very different one to the way Peterson described Warlpiri life in the early 1970s. In his comparative study on ritual in different physical environments, the tropical Top End and the Central Australian desert, he concluded that Warlpiri ritual had an explicit focus on fertility while in Arnhem Land people concentrated more on the management of death:

123 Mortuary rituals are always performed immediately after a death has occurred, funerals take place later, often many weeks after a death. This is due to logistics, such as having to wait for coroners’ reports, coffins, and corpses to be flown in.
124 Sorry business, sorry meeting, or just sorry, are the Aboriginal English terms used to refer to mortuary rituals at Yuendumu. The Warlpiri term is malamala, however, nowadays this term is seldomly used and seems to have been replaced by the term sorry.
Unlike the Murungin clan rituals, those of the Walbiri do not focus on death but on fertility. [...] The concern of desert ceremonies with fertility would appear to correlate directly with the environmental differences between Arnhem Land and the desert (Peterson 1972:22).

Myers, in the comparative conclusion in *Pintupi Country Pintupi Self*, about structural differences in political organisation of small-scale societies also, albeit in passing, makes a point very similar to Peterson’s. Contrasting Yolngu organisation of structured alliances with realities in the desert he says that “among Western Desert people, social attention to temporal continuity in terms of mortuary, clan structure, or even the reproduction of alliances is insubstantial” (Myers 1986a:295-6). Peterson’s and Myers’ assessments of mortuary rituals and their significance to the structural organisation underlying both society and everyday life need to be reappraised in the light of recent changes. A significant shift seems to have occurred from a ritual preoccupation with fertility to the contemporary prevalence of mortuary rituals. Two interlinked reasons serve to elucidate this shift. First, and significant in itself, during Peterson’s research only one death occurred and second, the fact that mortality patterns have significantly changed over the last few decades.125 These days, deaths occur frequently and *sorry business* has become a crucial part of Walpiri life. The more recent frequency of *sorry* has in turn shaped contemporary Walpiri life in such a way that the management of death has become a key ritual element and focus of everyday life.

The occurrence, volume and significance of *sorry business* have been amplified through a number of developments, some recent. First, sedentisation and improved means of transport have made possible very large numbers of participants (cf. also Peterson 2000); and the desolate state of Aboriginal health has meant an increase in *sorry* through an increase in deaths.

To better understand the implications of *sorry* in terms of its impact on the structuring of time at Yuendumu, I present here an abbreviated version of the ritual sequences (mainly from a woman’s point of view).

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125 N. Peterson pers. com. and Meggitt (1962:317) states that he never observed *sorry* because no adult death occurred during his fieldwork.
TIME, MORTUARY RITUALS, FIGHTS AND BOREDOM

I) Announcement of Death

These days most deaths of Warlpiri people occur at hospitals (in Alice Springs, Darwin or Adelaide) and a death usually is announced by a phone message which is then passed with incredible speed from camp to camp: \("bad news from x (place), y (person) doesn’t have a z (kinship term)\)." From this moment onwards the name of the deceased is avoided in speech. Not only does the deceased’s name become replaced by the word *kumunjigi* (no name) but direct reference to the deceased person is avoided as far as possible.\(^{126}\)

Upon hearing the message, women start wailing and walk towards the nearest *jilimi* in either East Camp or West Camp since for *sorry* people re-group themselves into ‘East-mob’ and ‘West-mob’.\(^{127}\)

II) In the *Jilimi*

Upon arrival in the *jilimi*, women pass from one wailing person to the next, hugging them while wailing themselves, to then sit down and be hugged by later arrivals. Each woman applies white ochre, which is ground with water over a stone, in an inverted U-shape over her temples and forehead, and most also cover their upper arms and breasts with it.\(^{128}\) While still in the *jilimi*, the following real and classificatory relatives of the deceased person cut short their hair and cover

\(^{126}\) For more detail on the term *kumunjigi*, see Nash and Simpson (1981).

\(^{127}\) The East-West division is of particular interest to this thesis as it encapsulates a series of shifts in meaning that occurred with sedentisation. In the pre-contact past, cardinal direction bi-polarisation reflected the respective directions two different mobs would have travelled from to meet before performing *sorry*. In the early days of settlement, when people settled in the four Yuendumu Camps according to their ties to ancestral country, this bi-polarisation based on direction was easily translated into opposing East Camp mob and West Camp mob because people from countries in different cardinal directions mainly lived in the respective Camps. This way, it was as if people from different directions and different ancestral connections met for *sorry*. Nowadays, however, the implicit meanings have undergone further transformation. While the East Camp - West Camp division is still crucial to the ritual’s structuring, it does not reflect ancestral connections to land anymore but contemporary residency patterns. Since people do not now live in the four Camps according to ancestral ties, contemporary residency patterns, rather than ancestral connections now structure this particular bi-polarisation in *sorry*.

\(^{128}\) White ochre for *sorry business* is called *karli*. This is also the word for Kaolin, which is used alternatively. *Karli* is duller than the shinier white ochre *ngurungunju*, used in other ritual. For *sorry* ochre is mixed with water and put on by oneself, whereas in other ritual ochres are bound with fat (emu fat, frying oil, margarine) and the body paintings are splashed to one person by another. The haphazardly self-applied, dull, white ochre in *sorry* echoes differences to other rituals where the shiny ochres in different colours are skilfully applied in beautiful patterns, enhancing beauty and attracting the other sex. See Dussart (1992b:347) for description of Warlpiri ideas about bodily beauty and desirability.
their whole upper bodies in white ochre: mothers, mother’s mothers, and in the case of a man his wives and in the case of a woman her sisters-in-law.\textsuperscript{129}

3) First Sorry Meeting

Once these preparations are well under way, people start moving towards the main \textit{sorry ground} in either East or West Camp, depending on the deceased’s ties. There, people sit in four distinct groups waiting for everyone to arrive: the women form two opposing groups on the western side, with the East Camp women to the south and the West Camp women to the north. The men on the eastern side mirror this formation (cf. Figure 30 below).

On the western half of the \textit{sorry ground}, the women on both sides sit ordered according to their subsection terms. The mother(s) from the Camp with closer ties to the deceased, i.e. all women with the same subsection term as his or her real mother, sit in front of their group of women, holding a neatly tied up roll of bedding called \textit{yampinyi}.\textsuperscript{130} On the other side, their sisters, i.e. the deceased’s mothers from the opposite Camp, start the ritual by walking towards the women sitting down around the bedroll. Some of them use aggressive dancing steps while holding a \textit{nullahnullahl}. All of them walk and hit themselves over the head with \textit{nullahnullahl}s, stones, tins or whatever they can find when approaching their sitting sisters.\textsuperscript{131} The women are accompanied by a few of the deceased’s (real and classificatory) sisters, and are met by other sisters from the other side. The role of the deceased’s sisters is to prevent women from hurting themselves too badly and to oversee the proper proceeding of the ritual.\textsuperscript{132}

\textsuperscript{129} According to Glowczewski (1983:230), this also applies to the deceased’s sisters, daughters, mothers-in-law and in some cases father’s sisters (at Yuendumu, close sisters and daughters might shave off their hair, classificatory ones usually do not). Meggitt reports that mothers, widows and mothers-in-law also sing their pubic hair (Meggitt 1962:320). I never witnessed this at Yuendumu. Note also that the practice of cutting the hair short at Yuendumu commonly is described as “shaving”.

\textsuperscript{130} The \textit{yampinyi} or \textit{pamananggal}, is made up of a bedroll, the deceased’s hair, and sometimes clothes, inside it and is later passed on to the deceased’s mother’s brothers.

\textsuperscript{131} See Myers (Myers 1979; and Myers 1986a:117) on the inscriptions of grief onto bodies through self-harm and the memories entailed in these scars.

\textsuperscript{132} According to Glowczewski (1983:230) the sisters perform this task jointly with the father’s sisters.
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Figure 30: Spatial configuration on *sorry ground*

When the walking mothers reach the sitting mothers with the bedroll, they kneel down in front of them and hug and wail with each of them. When they finish, they first move back to their starting point and then approach their classificatory daughters-in-law, whereas the sitting mothers will be approached by the deceased's classificatory wives, or in the case of a deceased woman, her sisters-in-law. In this way, the ritual proceeds until each group of female (classificatory) relatives from one side has hugged and wailed with each group on the other side. Note that these classificatory relationships can be and are expressed in subsection terms, indeed, the sisters of the deceased responsible for the proper proceeding of the ritual give commands like "that mob Nungarrayi - go to this mob Nangala" etc.

On the eastern side of the *sorry ground*, the men perform their equivalent. The men are painted up differently: also using white ochre, their body paintings start on their arms, going over their shoulders and meeting down on their bellies and none of them shave off their hair. The men also use a very different style of approaching, a high prancing step and they clasp each other while standing and holding, or if tempers and accusations fly high shaking, spears and boomerangs.
TIME, MORTUARY RITUALS, FIGHTS AND BOREDOM

They do not have an equivalent to the roll of bedding. Their style of wailing is lower pitched and not as piercing.

This part of the rital continues until both on the women’s and on the men’s half of the sorry ground every group on one side has hugged and wailed with every group on the opposing one. Once this is achieved, the spatial, the subsection and the gendered divisions dissolve and the sorry ground turns into a mélange of people. Warlpiri people do not believe in natural causes of death. Even in the case of a motor accident someone or something is seen to have caused it and every death for which sorry is performed, that is all deaths with the exception of those of children or very old people, must therefore be avenged. Individual women close to the deceased approach the deceased’s mother’s brother(s). These are sitting on the ground and the women will kneel behind them, hug them and wail. The mother’s brothers are the ones to avenge the deceased’s death and the women’s action urges them to do so. Around them, depending on the circumstances under which the deceased has passed away and some other issues like age, involvements in fights and disputes and so on, people either leave the sorry ground peacefully or, and more commonly, fights break out. In this last part of the gathering, accusations and counter-accusations will flare up and often people considered responsible for the death will be attacked. Women will attack with nullahnullahs and men with spears and boomerangs, which, at a large sorry can turn into a large mass of people, hitting each other over the head and otherwise attacking each other, screaming and ducking away from boomerangs flying from all directions. Eventually, the fights will quieten down and people leave for home or the sorry camps. Although most likely these fights spark up again later, after this first sorry meeting, the people who took part in it for the purpose of the remainder of the mortuary rites are considered to be united.

4) Sorry Camp

Upon receiving the ‘bad news’, no matter whether this occurs in the middle of the night or during the day, the deceased’s former camp will be deserted in its entirety (cf. Chapter 2), and such camps turn into yarkuyiija. All residents from there, as well as any close relatives from other camps set up a sorry camp outside the settlement. Sorry camps are made of windbreaks, people’s mattresses


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and some personal belongings and closely resemble a 'bush camp'. Usually, they are located at such a distance from the settlement as to make necessary substantial walks for water, and will have no access to electricity and ablution facilities. After the first meeting, more people move into this *sorry camp* (and more people will join them after subsequent meetings). In the main, categories of relatives staying in the *sorry camp* comprise actual and close classificatory mother's brothers, mothers, husbands or wives depending on the gender of the deceased person, and brothers-in-law and sisters-in-law. One of the tasks of the deceased's siblings is to oversee the mortuary rites and to 'work for' and 'look after' these people, especially members of the deceased's matriline. The siblings generally stay in the *sorry camp*, too, however they are much less restricted in their mobility and their responsibilities include the provision of food and firewood and to generally negotiate interaction between the other *sorry camp* residents and the wider world.

Residency in *sorry camps* symbolises the key mourners' exclusion from normal life, including sexual relations. Key mourners stay in them for substantial amounts of time and their exclusion is not only spatially expressed but also by language, especially in the case of women who use sign language instead of spoken language and often remain under a speech taboo for a duration of weeks to months (cf. Kendon 1988b).

5) The Next Meeting

Depending on the importance of the deceased, the first internal Yuendumu *sorry meeting* will be followed by a number of *sorry meetings* with other people from other settlements. The structure of these repeats that of the first meeting. However, after the first meeting the Yuendumu East Camp - West Camp division will cease to be operative. Instead, the Yuendumu population becomes united on one side of the *sorry ground*, with the men in the east and the women in the west. The people from the visiting settlement position themselves on the other side, also divided by gender. For example, if people from Willowra or Lajamanu travel down to Yuendumu for *sorry,*

14 If the mourners from elsewhere arrive too late to perform *sorry* that same day (*sorry* is always performed during daylight), they will wait for the morning in their own *sorry camps* set up outside the settlement. These are located in the cardinal direction they travelled from (i.e. Alice Springs mourners camp to the south-east of Yuendumu, Lajamanu ones to the north-west, etc) and nobody in them will enter the settlement until *sorry* is to be performed. The people who came from each respective settlement, or, for the purposes of *sorry* forms a separate *sorry camp.*
the women from there take position in the north-west and the men in the north-east, with the Yuendumu women in the south-west and the Yuendumu men in the south-east. Willowra and Lajamanu are located to the north of Yuendumu and the spatial organisation on the sorry ground mirrors this.

In the case of a big sorry, more likely than not, people from many settlements travel to perform sorry. In this case the merging process of the first meeting is repeated for each consecutive meeting in such a way that if, say Willowra and Yuendumu perform the second meeting, for the third they will be united on one side and perform sorry with the next settlement, and so on.135 The idea always is to unite two opposing groups so they can confront and then unite with the next one. This process is repeated until all parties are united into one. This may happen simultaneously in different places. For example, if a large sorry is happening at Lajamanu, a number of sorries would be performed at Yuendumu, combining for example Yuendumu, Nyirripi, Papunya, Mt Liebig and Willowra into one big sorry mob who then travel up as one group to Lajamanu to perform sorry with people there.

6) The Last Meeting

At the last meeting, after the last two groups have met and united, both men and women gather in the middle of the sorry ground, the men in the east, the women in the west, with the yampinyi between them. The brothers of the deceased open it and take out a small bundle (also called yampinyi) containing the cut-off hair of the deceased.136 They pass it on to the sisters of the deceased who first touch each mother’s, mother-in-law’s and wife’s breast with it and then all other women. Then the yampinyi is passed back to the men who are all also touched by it. The yampinyi, similar to damper described in Chapter 7, draws paths between the genders. First, the

135 This practice of treating people from different settlements as social units is mirrored in Sports Weekends, see above. A very important fact to note about this however, is that not settlement affiliation as such but current presence determines on which side one performs sorry. For example, Yuendumu residents who travelled with members of another settlement to Yuendumu will participate in sorry on the side of their travelling companions, not on the side of their normal residence.

136 According to Meggitt, in the past, the hair of the deceased was shaved off and spun into hairstring worn by the mother’s brothers of the deceased to remind them of their duty to avenge the death (cf. Meggitt 1962:322). On the significance of hair and hairstring in Warlpiri ritual see Glowczewski (1983), and on the use of hair and its metaphoric significance more generally, among many others, see Hallpike (1969), Hershman (1974), Leach (1958), Magoo (1994) and Obeyeskere (1981).
women wail over it, then it is passed to the men, from the men to the women, around all women, back to the men, around all men, to end up with the mother’s brothers.

7) Finishing Up

Once the *yampinyi* at the last meeting has touched all people present, the so-called *finishing up* takes place.\(^{137}\) It is performed on the *sorry ground* and entails activities of re-distribution. First, though, the mothers, mothers-in-law and wives congregate kneeling and wailing in front of the items to be distributed and all men touch the items to be distributed with short branches and then throw the branches on the mass of wailing women saying “*yakarra-parriya*”, “wake up, come back to consciousness”. Next, the senior mother’s brothers of the deceased receive his or her possessions such as television sets, trailers, cars; to keep or redistribute among the matriline of the deceased. All other items belonging to the deceased such as clothes and food would have been burned immediately upon receiving the ‘bad news’.\(^{138}\) Once these items are allotted, ritual ‘payments’ are distributed among the mourners as described in Chapter 7. Ritual ‘payments’ are made up of large amounts of flour, tea, sugar and blankets in large amounts. Up to twenty new blankets, twenty 10kg bags and numbers of 20-kg buckets of flour, 5-kg buckets of tea and 10 kgs of sugar are about the minimum. Bought at a settlement store, these items amount to $1,500 at a minimum.

8) Sweeping

The last part in the sequence of *sorry business* is performed by all the women present after *finishing up*. They form one group and, each of them equipped with a leafy branch, go and ‘sweep’ (cf. also Keys 1999:236-7). Wailing loudly and sweeping the branches in front of them, they go on a tour around the deceased’s settlement, sweeping all the places the deceased used to frequent, i.e. the clinic, shop, council building, roads and paths etc, as well as his or her house, following his or her

\(^{137}\) The same term or a similar one, *finish time*, is also used for the lifting of the speech taboo of widows (cf. Dussart 1988b:107).

\(^{138}\) According to Gowlewenski (1983:231), in the case of a woman’s death her belongings are passed on to her mother - I am not too sure about this. At Yuendumu at least, belongings are always passed on to mother’s brothers.
main routes of cruising. At places with special significance, i.e. a clinic bed if the deceased was at
the clinic before being flown out to a hospital, or the verandah of a house if that is where he/she
slept last – each woman lies down, wailing loudly while some sisters of the deceased press their
hands on her back. Sweeping clears away all foot tracks\(^{139}\) the deceased might have potentially left
and aptly symbolises the physical becoming of ‘nothing’ also mirrored in the taboo placed on the
name of the deceased by replacing it with the term *kumunjigi* and the avoidance of his or her
former residence, which is now *yankunjugu*. After the sweeping people who had come from
elsewhere for *sorry* will return to their respective settlements while the main mourners will return
to the *sorry* camp.

*Sorry business* is a costly matter not only in terms of ‘payments’ (re)distributed but also in terms of
transport and time. Usually, people from far and wide come to participate in *sorry* and drop
whatever they are doing at a moment’s notice. While most other ceremonies and rituals take place
either at night, on the weekends or during the summer holidays when most Kardiya are away and
local businesses are closed, the timing of *sorry* due to its nature is not foreseeable. The fact that
people leave their jobs and whatever other activity they are undertaking when they hear of *sorry,*
and that large amounts of money are given up to buy the necessary quantities of ritual ‘payments’
point to the significance *sorry* carries for Warlpiri people.

Lastly, since *sorry* is a ritual drawing such large numbers it is not only an occasion for mourning
but in fact contains a singular mixture of intense grief, sadness, pain, and joking.\(^{140}\) It is a most
public ritual which has, like most other Warlpiri ritual, a definite but hidden undercurrent of
sexuality. Through the size of contemporary *sorry,* these rituals have become events creating a
‘buzz’. A big *sorry meeting* may involve more than a thousand participants and *sorry* is one of the
very few occasions where Warlpiri men and women do the same thing at the same place and

\(^{139}\) See Munn (1970) and Morton (1987) on the significance of foot tracks in Central Australian cosmology.
\(^{140}\) The joking is limited to people not closely related to the deceased. Examples of such joking are: When
applying *karjil,* the dull white ochre for *sorry,* too zealously women will be commented upon: “what? You
looking for husband?”. The joke is playing on the inversion of the ‘love magic’ potency in body designs applied
for other ceremonies, which by contrast are in colour, mixed with fat, i.e. are shiny, and applied by others, and
which *sorry* ochre and designs expressively lack. To tease a woman like that draws attention to the implication
that she tries to be noticed during *sorry* and that *sorry* ochre has exactly the opposite qualities to the ‘love magic’
she is accused of infusing it with. The high occurrence of jokes of this kind during *sorry* substantiates the
assumption that people consciously play with the metaphoric qualities of hair and ochre and that joking indeed has
its place within *sorry.* And during the actual performance of the ritual, multiple comments to ‘the other side’, i.e.
the men’s side, are made by the women: “look that one there” or, “look, all the Japangka are watching us”, etc.
time.\(^{141}\) Underlying the structured performance of *sorry business* there is scope for play with this kind of sexual tension not least because it is such a large-scale event. Resulting from this, *sorry* is an opportunity for much sexual joking, flirtation, and vivaciousness. In *sorry business* as much as in everyday life, individuals follow both their personal motives and social requirements. The significance of this cannot be overemphasised as the large numbers of participants and the regularity of people’s stays in *sorry camps* attest. Increase in deaths has led to an increase of death focussed ritual and through ritual and residential practice Warlpiri life becomes transformed. *Sorry business* impacts on Warlpiri lives emotionally, residentially, temporally, and in respect to people’s bodies. Through the repeated practice of participating in *sorry*, through the multiple inscriptions of grief on people’s bodies, through the wide travels undertaken for *sorry*, through frequent periods of residency in *sorry camps*, and through the changes in residential patterns due to *yan-nyinyi*, Warlpiri people’s lives and bodies are constantly being shaped and reshaped.

Fights

Fights relate to time in a similar way as do mortuary rituals in that they punctuate the ‘normal flows of time’ by their unpredictability. As do mortuary rituals, fights present a rupture not only in the temporality of the settlement but also in the ‘social order’. Fights occur frequently at Yuendumu, even though people usually try and avoid having them in the first place. However, once a fight happens, it generally attracts large numbers of spectators, sometimes drawing them into it as well and thus escalating, and alway including them as ‘witnesses’ – making the event a publicly owned one in Sansom’s sense (see especially Sansom 1980:102-10).

Fights, if realised and flaring up, require a reordering of sociality. No matter whether physically involved in a fight, or bystanders watching, spectators are part of if, or as Macdonald put it:

> It is in the audience, as much as in the fighters, that the real significance and drama of the fight are to be found. Without the audience there is no fight - only a brawl, a flogging or mucking around. The audience acts, first, as an agent of control and spectators will act to ensure the fight does not get out of hand. [...] Second, the presence of an audience legitimates the activity: spectators are assenting as witnesses,
even if they are not formally watching are in the vicinity and close enough to know what is going on (Macdonald 1994:188-9).

There are different reasons for fights, all to some extent revolving around the tension between autonomy and relatedness that Myers (1986a) has so skilfully shown to be the one around which Pintupi sociality is construed (for the same principles being applied in Cape York see Martin 1993). Myers' postulations, which I outline here, are equally true for Walpiri sociality:

A tension between 'relatedness' (being *wahjja* [i.e. family]) and 'differentiation' (as expressed in conflict and violence) defines the basic lived problem of Pintupi life. Although shared identity, compassion, and the like constitute genuine, basic features of Pintupi social life, their opposite is also a fact of life. Violence, conflict, and threat exist, on the one hand, as well as willingness among those threatened to stand up against these. [...] Both men and women are proud of their fighting prowess and speak of past fights with animation. Pintupi do not desire a quiescent life: fights provide drama in lives lived entirely in public (Myers 1986a:160).

I here present four examples of different scales of fights, the first one is that of an avoided fight; the second of a pestering underlying fight surfacing occasionally, but suppressed with the help of all involved; the third of a typical 'jealousy fight'; and the fourth on large fights involving many people in the settlement. It is important to distinguish the scale of fights as they allow for a closer inspection of the relationships between fight and sociality by looking at which fights are allowed to turn into real everyday dramas and which ones would be too hurtful for those involved to be realised. Further, through these examples winds a common thread of fight language and the issue of 'talking' which is very significant.

**Pearl and Nora**

One morning I woke up in the *jilimi* to Pearl on the verandah lamenting the way she was treated. As described in Chapter 5, Pearl is a close classificatory sister of Nora and Polly, she is in her seventies, not very mobile any more and dependent upon help. Not having any close descendents to look after her she stayed with Nora at the *jilimi*. However, shortly before Nora had been joined by Leah and Eva and started to spend less and less time with Pearl, and, significantly, started sharing her resources with them rather than with Pearl. So Pearl intoned all her misgivings about feeling lonely, neglected and used in the high-pitched, very fast, and
repetitive lament language that Wardipi women use in such situations. Sitting on the verandah on her own, she poured out all her grief for all to hear. The others were sitting around their breakfast fires in the yard, with their heads bowed down slightly, feeling *kunta-ngka* (shame, shyness, embarrassment) but pretending not to listen. As this particular way of lament intonation is very fast (repeating parts of sentences over and over again almost as in song) I had difficulties understanding. “What does Pearl say?” I asked Celeste. “She is talking” was the answer. To ‘be talking’ in this case meant to be voicing one’s grievances in public in the appropriate style.

As there was no response apart from the taking note that Pearl ‘had talked’, Pearl had no option but to leave (the other option would have been for Nora to respond in which case a fight would have ensued). The same day, she moved to Mt Wedge Outstation and lived there for a few months with some other classificatory sisters and mothers. A couple of weeks later Polly organised to drive over there to visit Pearl and thereby reinstating her relationship with her. Polly gave gifts of food and clothes and received some bush tucker in return. Later, Pearl moved to Mt Allan and returned to Yuendumnu to live with Polly after she had moved out of the *jilimi*. Two years later Pearl again joined Nora who at the time was living in her ‘new house’ with Leah and Eva.

The potential fight between Pearl and Nora was avoided because they both knew that for the time being the situation could not and would not improve. By leaving the *jilimi* Pearl asserted her independence and thus was able, two years later, when the misgivings were forgiven to resume her relationship with Nora. They had been close sisters for too long (more than 70 years) to risk a fight and destroy that relationship.

**Megan, Joy and Polly**

This example is similar in that the relationships were just too close for real fight to be allowed to erupt, however, the tensions between the protagonists had been bubbling away for years and once in a while surfaced quite violently. As mentioned earlier (cf. Figure 18 in Chapter 4), Joy had brought up one of Polly’s sons, Megan’s father. On the one hand, giving her son to Joy cemented an already very close relationship between Polly and Joy. On the other hand, his
death (about which I could never find anything out) created tensions, as there were very strong feelings of guilt, accusation, and loss. These underlying tensions somewhat defined not only the relationship between the two women but all their descendants as well, that is Polly's other children and the children of the deceased son being brought up by Joy. Since they were all so closely related and often lived together as well, these tensions were always present but smoothed over and generally not allowed to surface.

Myers, again, is very useful in understanding the situation I am about to describe. He says:

'The Pintupi societal emphasis on relatedness is reflected powerfully in the concern individuals show to complete themselves through identity with others. This dimension of Pintupi life is most strikingly evident in the situation of 'orphans'. The very term "orphan" (yapunta [the same in Warlpiri]) is itself used for anything that has been lost or has lost its relationship of belonging. No one is entirely an orphan, of course, in that if one's parents die, others will take over the role. [...] Many of the Pintupi who have lost a parent in childhood show adjustment problems, an anger that is not appeased. One very intelligent man I knew had been raised with love by his parents' siblings, yet he seemed unable to settle himself in a community. He took to drinking heavily, and under the influence was expressive of his difficulties. "I have no mother, no father, nothing," he cried. "I can die, no worries." (Myers 1986a:178).

Megan, of all the children of Polly's deceased son, showed the same sentiments most dramatically. She would get drunk once in a while, and then come to the jilimi at night, verbally abusing Polly and her side of the family for not looking after her and her siblings properly and of being neglected ("talking drunken way"). Myers describes drunkenness as an opportunity to occasion to vent anger, which among other issues he relates to feelings of not being 'looked after proper'. "Being drunk is a culturally acceptable excuse for being out of control, for not recognising relatedness to others, for not being aware of the rules" (Myers 1988b:599). This is certainly true in this instance. On one such night, Megan went too far and above her usual complaints about being alone, not loved, and being rubbish she yelled that all that 'Polly and Celeste mob', her 'real family', was rubbish anyway, that she did not need them in any case and then called out her father's name really loudly.13

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142 His wife moved to the south, leaving all children with Joy. She was a heavy drinker, only visiting her children on Yuendumu Sports Weekends, and passed away in September 1999.
143 Cf. Kendon on a perceptive explanation of the reasons why the mentioning of the names of the dead causes anxiety by undermining "in a particularly vivid way the denial of time that seems to serve as a bulwark against the social disintegration that is so ever present" (Kendon 1988b:449); and Sackett (1988:70) for a
Although her father had passed away many years ago, his name was still *kumunjigi* in all of Yuendumu and especially so to Polly and Joy, his mothers. To even say that name in their presence, not to speak of yelling it out loudly, was to cause them the greatest hurt—what is what she intended in her drunk state; hurting those that hurt you as she perceived them to be at fault. Especially Polly was very distraught and became physically ill, spending the next day huddled up next to a fire, neither moving nor talking. After she sobered up, Megan felt very guilty and with her siblings organised to drive to her father's grave so she could apologise to him. Polly regained her strength after that.

The tensions underlying the fraught relationships between Joy, Polly and Megan could never be resolved as they were based around the feelings of loss created by the death of Megan's father—feelings that they all shared. And they continued to surface irregularly, brought to the fore every time Megan was unhappy and drank. As the three women were in such close relationships with each other, fights 'proper' could not erupt but, the potential always was there.

**Melissa and 'that woman'**

Melissa had been happily married for nine years to a man from Balgo when her marriage began to be shaky. She started spending more and more time in Yuendumu, her place of origin where most of her family lived while her husband moved between Balgo and Yuendumu. After a while, it turned out that he had a girlfriend in Balgo. When she confronted him about this he asked her to consider polygamy, adding he would be quite happy to be married to both of them. Melissa was furious and told him 'no' in no uncertain terms. Then followed a period of painful making up and breaking up again and eventually he returned to Balgo for good, not calling and visiting her any more. Melissa's pain about the loss of a relationship she had in the past been very proud of and happy about partly turned into wrath directed towards 'the other woman'. This "vile man-stealing slut who just runs around all the time anyway, never gets

*similar example of a woman at Wiluna using terms the use of which is restricted to men in a drunken rage. He interprets Aboriginal drinking as an expression of ‘antipathy to the idea and practice of others administering their lives. Not only this, they indicate Whites are unable to castigate Aborigines in a way which really concerns them. This drunken rejoinder has been addressed by heightened attempts to constrain and instruct Aborigines, leading to more drinking, further arrests and the perpetuation of the cycle’* (Sackett 1988:76).
married, and is cheating on Melissa’s husband as we are speaking” Melissa maintained was “talking about” her.

This needs to be clarified by distinguishing two modes of talking. One is what I previously called ‘gossiping and exchanging news’. This is made up of exchanging ‘the word’ as described by Sansom in his analysis of how Darwin fringe dwellers create ‘the word’ (1980, see especially Chapter 2). ‘The word’ is an accepted by all version of what happened, or, as he puts it: “When a company of witnesses agrees to attest to statements, sayings are transformed to become the word” (Sansom 1980:205). Warlpiri gossiping (exchanging of ‘the word’) is very different from the often character-defaming gossiping of Kardinya. Warlpiri gossip is made up of public, shared, and accepted assessments of situations, it distinctly lacks slander and vilification. To be ‘talking about somebody’ on the other hand, is exactly that and ‘the word’ about this act would be: “X is talking about Y”. It is not of crucial relevance what exactly has been said but that the fact that ‘talking about’ has been engaged in. Thus one girl once told me early on in fieldwork: “I will have fight soon, that Nakamarra has been talking about me?” I was puzzled and said: “Why, what did she say?” and the answer was “I don’t know, she has been talking about me.” I saw my initial puzzlement mirrored a number of times when I accompanied people to the Police Station where they wanted to get a restraining order against somebody. Often, police would ask, “have you been threatened by this person?” only to be answered, “they are talking about me” which causes the question “yes, but did they threaten you?” and thus these conversations proceed in circles.

It needs to be understood that ‘to be talking about somebody’ is a threat because it is a departure from the publicly shared ‘word’, it is a personal vilification by one individual of another one – the only response to which is a fight.

In fact, Melissa was one such person I accompanied to the police station where she wanted to apply for a restraining order against ‘that woman’ when she heard her ex-husband and new wife were coming to Yuendumu for Sports Weekend. During the entire Sports Weekend

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144 For an interesting comparison see Bird-David (1994:591) who discusses Nayaka (India) sociality, linking the absence of gossip to immediacy (see also Chapter 9 of this thesis). She says: “They rarely gossip – even to this ever-urging anthropologist always eager to hear gossip [....] that is because they know each other so well. In a sense, they ‘grow old together’, getting to know each other’s bibliography, personality, habits and idiosyncracies, and experimenting for themselves most of what happens in the hamlet.”
Melissa kept a very low profile, hiding inside her daughter's and her cousin's houses, missing out on all the fun because she did not want to risk the fight. On the third day of Sports Weekend she came to the jilimi early in the morning, covered in blood streaming from a head wound: "take me to hospital". Not expecting anybody to be up, she had chanced a trip to the shop early in the morning to buy some tinned meat only to be assaulted in one of the shop's aisles (and defended by a that woman who managed to bash her over the head a few times with a crowbar before the shop manager disarmed her. I drove Melissa to clinic where she received eleven stitches - and rather than lying down as the nurse suggested she got herself a crowbar and went looking for 'that woman' who, wisely, by that time, had left the settlement.

Big fights

The above described fight between Melissa and 'that woman' remained just that, a fight between two women. But very often, such fights escalate into big public fights where people take sides and violently and repeatedly clash, usually increasing in scale each time. These big fights may be triggered by a simple 'jealousy' fight, or, more often they revolve around accusations of blame over a death. People use these fights as a forum in which to publicly vent other resentment as well, in a third kind of 'talking'. Venting one's anger publicly and loudly is called 'talking rough' (wakorturdun which means with force and strength, quick, rapid, fast, vigorous, heavy, rough) and is distinguished from 'talking quietly' (pupua which means soft, quiet, slow, careful). The first reaction to somebody 'talking rough' inevitably is the instruction to 'speak quietly': Pupua wangoxayat Kulu-wangu nyinaka! Which translates as "speak softly! Do not fight!" Liberman reports the same, quoting his informants' advice to each other and himself when getting embroiled in arguments: "Don't arkamin [...]. Let's keep it nice, we don't like too much arkamin [...]. Speak softly always" (Liberman 1985:14, original emphasis). 'Speaking softly' is praised when it does happen, which is rare. More often people do not listen to this advice, and fights ensue. To give an example:

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14 The phrase 'kulu-wangu nyinaka' is significant as verbatim translation is 'fight-without sit down', underlying the connection between sitting and being.
TIME, MORTEARY RITUALS, FIGHTS AND BOREDOM

A sixteen year-old girl (of the Smith family) accused another sixteen year-old girl (of the Miller family) about running around with her seventeen year-old husband. She did not accuse her face-to-face but by ‘talking about her’ thus inviting the first fight. When they physically met, the two girls started ‘talking rough’, i.e. yelling and swearing, which escalated into them going at each other with nullahnullabi. Bystanders managed to separate them and for a while the fight died down. Each girl walked around the settlement surrounded by close family members, swearing loudly (‘talking rough’), and clearly unwilling to settle down. Later that same day, the two girls clashed again, by this stage fully incensed and rather than separating them, people accompanying the respective girls started accusing each other as well and ‘talking rough’ themselves, and the fight thus escalated into a “mighty big one”.

While normally a simple jealousy fight between two young girls does not involve many others, in this case there had been differences between members of the two families already. Each family had amongst it a number of very ambitious and involved individuals who had been ‘colonising’ different organisation at Yuendumu.146 Lately, they targeted the same organisation and the enlarged fights sparked by the girls’ jealousy fight were thus really about political influence within the settlement. Over the next few months fights broke out all over Yuendumu between members of the Smith family and members of the Miller family, becoming more and more violent. In fact, these fights went so far that scores of people had to be flown out by the Royal Flying Doctor Plane to Alice Springs, many individuals got arrested by the police, cars were burned, and other property was destroyed. Every time the two families clashed the reason given was that a girl from the other family “had been talking”.

Similar circles of violence are drawn when a violent death occurs. In these instances accusations fly high about who is responsible and again ‘families’ start fighting with each other, rocking and shaking the settlement with violence. The term ‘family’ needs to be understood contextually as the boundaries around who is ‘family’ are drawn differently from case to case. Since all ‘families’ at Yuendumu are intermarried to some degree, people may identify with their affines as ‘family’ in one fight and attack them in the next. From an individual point of view each person has a number of ‘families’ they can join, or not, in the case of a fight. No

146 Cf. Folds (2001) for a more amenable view of this practice on the one hand, and Sackett (1990) for an example of Kardiya actively fostering such divisions in pursuit of their personal political aims and almost causing a settlement-wide open conflict at Wiluna on the other. 222
matter who gets involved, these large fights are always talked about as 'Lastname A mob' fighting with 'Lastname B mob'.

Fights, sociality and time

I began these case studies of fights with examples of fights that could not turn into big fights because people involved were too closely related. Other examples of these are mother–daughter fights which happen very regularly at Yuendumu, underlying the point I am making here. Namely that the relationships people have with others very close to themselves are fraught with the potential for fights, in fact, the closer two people, the more latent possibility for fights there is. However, because these relationships are so close, there is also external pressure as well as one's own wish, to avoid fights. When, however, fights are sparked between people reasonably socially distant from each other, they create less of a rupture in social relations but more of temporal rupture, as they interrupt what ever else is happening, often drawing spectators and bystanders into them. As Myers said "fights provide drama in lives lived entirely in public" (1986a:160) — and if significant social rupture can be avoided then they provide desperately needed entertainment. This is why the largest fights occur along the least close relationships, which makes them permissible. In fact, this way, it is hoped, differences may be resolved (usually however, it only creates more fights). Lastly, each fight is not only a spectacle to watch but it also provides hours and days of diversion by the crafting and then relaying of 'the word' to those who missed it, because, as Macdonald (1994:179) puts it "[b]oth a fight and a fight story are great dramas, with all the ingredients dramas should contain."

Time and being

This chapter began with a brief note on time detailing how the descriptions here are different from the more usual treatments of time in the Aboriginalist literature. There are, however, some of the latter which are pertinent to my discussion and I present them here. While in the main concerned with Aboriginal perceptions of history, Swain (1993) also looks at Aboriginal perceptions of time and introduces the concept of 'rhythmed events' which is useful. The idea that time is perceived in 'rhythmed events' links to Giddens and the above-mentioned interlooping dynamics between time, social practice, and experience. Significant in this context
also is Meillasson's insistence that time, rather than being governed by chronology, is "primarily defined by connections between people and place, and [that] the mode of knowing about them is the travelling mode" (1998:66). In particular, she isolates and contrasts in her informants' stories the "short cycles of daily movement" with "the longer periodicity of movement from [in this case] one work location to another" (ibid.). Also building on this, Poirier gives the following explanation and examples:

From an Aboriginal perspective, any past event or experience can be woven into a qualitative temporal frame, rather than a quantitative one, as the following examples show: "during the last rainy season", "when the goannas come out of the ground", "during the X ceremony", "following the trip to the Y site", "when I was a child", "before the mission time", or "a long time ago in the bush when my grandfather was a young man" (Poirier forthcoming, unpaginated).

She further underlies her postulation that Aboriginal people have no interest in chronological, measured time by examples of what she calls "their infinite patience" (ibid.). The most salient example she provides is about what happened when the car broke down on a trip:

[]ar from being concerned or in a hurry to repair it, the friends with whom I was travelling took it as an opportunity to invest themselves in the immediate place where the event occurred. Some wandered about, looking for animal tracks or edible plants; others sat around or gathered firewood. In other words, they established camp. It was as if the break-down was an occasion to engage themselves with the place, an opportunity to feel the place and the moment; and see what would happen in that space, that time, that moment (Poirier forthcoming, unpaginated).

The attitude underlying "infinite patience", i.e. the ability and willingness to 'be in the moment' wherever one is, no matter what happens, Wendy Baarda, a linguist who has been living in Yuendumu for more than thirty years calls "living in the absolute present". An example of the 'absolute present' is the answer one will invariably get if asking about the whereabouts of a person, if the person replying does not know (or does not want to disclose the information): "they must be somewhere". To clarify, a further look at some Warlpiri terminology will help.

As mentioned in Chapter 2, the Warlpiri verbs for 'to be' are 'to sit' (nyinami), 'to lie' (ngunami), and also to some extend 'to stand' (karrimi). A further way to express the state of being, in the

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147 Pers comm. with Wendy Baarda, many times at Yuendumu.
sense of presence is *palka*. Any thing or person that is present is *palka*, e.g. the positive answer to the questions "Is there any water in the rockhole?" and "Is Polly in the *ji kim?" would in both cases be "*yuyayi, palka" — "yes, it/she is present". If there were no water, and if Polly were elsewhere, the negative answer(s) would be "*lawa, walka", which literally means "no, absent". The sense of 'absent' here is that right now, there is no water in the rockhole, and right now, Polly is not in the *ji kim*, implying simultaneously that at some other time, there may well be water in the rockhole, and that at that moment Polly is not in the *ji kim* but that she is *elsewhere*.

The Warlpiri verb for to be born, to come into existence is *palka-jarriini*, literally, to 'become present', and the verb for giving birth is *palka-manji*, literally, to 'make present'. To die on the other hand is *lawa-nyinami*, literally to 'nothing-sitting', i.e. not being anymore.148 And to kill is *lavourinji-jarriini*, literally to 'be the cause of making someone nothing'.

To return to the discussion of the answer "they must be somewhere" — this implicitly contains within it the philosophy expressed in the above semantic issues revolving around being. If a person is neither here (*palka*) nor dead (*lawa-nyinami*) then common sense tells us that by necessity they have to be "somewhere", alluding to the fact that all beings alive at all times are *palka*. The point is that in Warlpiri thought, in order to be, one has to be *somewhere*. Or, to put it in other words, that being is always intrinsically linked to both time and place, the temporal and the spatial.

**Boredom**

Young people, especially teenagers, at Yuendumu passionately and fervently complain about boredom once in a while: "nothing happening, too boring, true!" and "sick-of-it-da, always the same, nothing ever happens" are brought forward with big sighs, often daily. Children and older people, on the other hand do not complain about boredom.

148 This refers to the death of the body. The spirits (according to Meggitt, men have three and women two cf. 1972), or non-physical forces of being undergo different transformations, joining the *fukurra* from whence they came (particularly Dussart 2000:75-6; and also Morton 1987; Morton 1989; Munn 1970).
I believe the reasons for this difference are manifold and go also beyond the postulate that links boredom in Aboriginal settlements to lack of opportunities to engage in wage labour. This certainly does contribute, though. It is a fact that people who do not work ‘have more time’ which needs to be ‘killed’. And consequently their time is worth less than that of people in the labour market and those in the mainstream, as Bourdieu has shown over and over again.¹⁴⁹

In contrast to subproletarians, who, since their time is not worth anything, have a deficit of goods and an excess of time, overworked executives have an excess of goods and an extraordinary lack of time. The former have time to give away, and they often ‘squander’ it […]. The latter, by contrast, are paradoxically, always short of time, condemned to live permanently in the uskholia, the hurry, which Plato opposed to philosophical skholia, and overwhelmed by goods and services which exceed their capacity to consume and which they ‘squander’ […]. If this is the case, it is because they have so many and such profitable opportunities to invest, by virtue of the economic and symbolic value of their time (and of themselves) in the various markets, that they acquire a practical sense of the rarity of time which orients all their experience (Bourdieu 2000:226).

Still, this does not explain why the young get bored while the old and the very young do not, as all of them have ‘more time’ than any ‘executive’. One reason for this can be found by looking at why young people feel bored. Teenager’s complaints about boredom contain hints at, and sometimes explicit exclamations of frustration about the sameness of repetition. Returning to Leach’s first point is useful here. His contribution was to emphasise the movement (i.e. experience) between oscillations (and I would argue all other kinds of flow), thereby distinguishing one oscillation from the next. He says that while night will follow day every night, each night is a new and different one. I would argue that children and older people at Yuendumu experience time like this, living in the ‘absolute present’ making something out of every moment. To them, ‘cup-of-tea-time’ today is not the same as ‘cup-of-tea-time’ tomorrow, last week or next year, nor are the other ‘cup-of-tea-times’ relevant.

Young people on the other hand sometimes seem to experience the flows of time as endless repetition of the same, all ‘cup-of-tea-times’ becoming one. To them, when complaining about boredom, the flows of time at Yuendumu seem oppressive, like a cage in which they are

¹⁴⁹ For a summary of his arguments about time and the sub-proletariat see especially Bourdieu (2000: Chapter 6: Social Being, Time and the Sense of Existence)
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caught, experiencing the same thing over and over again without any possibility of escape. It is not the amorphous amount of too much time as postulated by Bourdieu that causes their boredom but the repetitiveness, the predictability, the familiarity with what will happen next. The future, Bourdieu says, becomes fantastic to the subproletariat through economic distance from the mainstream. The future, to young people at Yuendumu, seems unreachable because there is no way of escaping the ever-imminent present. The repetitiveness of the flows of time at Yuendumu does not allow any glimpses of 'something else', and it is in moments when young people feel the constraints of being fixed in a never ending present that they so passionately complain about boredom.

Significantly, there seem to be two main and contradictory escape mechanisms to choose from. The first is to escape the repetitiveness of flows of time by watching television for days on end, thus exchanging an oppressive seeming time regime with a truly Bourdieuan amount of amorphous unstructured time. The second is to respond to temporal constraints with spatial escape. I have described mobility throughout the thesis as very high among the Warlpiri population generally; this is especially true for teenagers, who are restlessly 'on the move' – both throughout the settlement and between settlements. Cruising around all day long, sleeping in the jilmi one night, in North Camp the next, then off to Willowra, to Alice Springs and after that to Papunya, always moving always looking for 'something to happen', is a very usual way of being for teenagers. While there seem to be preferences, i.e. some teenagers watch television almost constantly, others are mobile in an almost frantic manner, mostly, those two options are alternated and interspersed by anything else that comes available, even short-term employment.

There is a gender difference however, for young women and that is the choice to focus utterly on the upbringing of their children in peer groups. In a context where there is truly 'nothing to do' in terms of employment and entertainment, they have found a way of giving their time value, exactly by experiencing it through and with their children.

Conclusion
I have drawn a picture of the different flows of time at Yuendumu by delineating several distinct time frames: oscillations, compartmentalisations, regular and irregular punctuations. Together, and interspersing, extending into and overlapping with each other, they constitute the temporality within which sociality at Yuendumu is placed, and within which it needs to be examined and understood.

I have described how life at Yuendumu acquires different 'feels' at different times of the day and the year. While the previous chapters of this thesis have in the main been concerned with social practice located in 'normal time', here, I paid special attention to examples of events punctuating 'normal time' regularly and irregularly. The example presented of the former were Sport Weekends and examples for the latter were mortuary rituals and fights.

Both, regular and irregular punctuations of time flows are accompanied by (varying) degrees of 'buzz'. This, I argue, derives not only from the enormously intensified sociality at these events, but also through the fact that a temporary escape is made possible from normal structured temporality which is perceived as very oppressive especially by teenagers.

Munn (1992:116) has commented that "In a lived world, spatial and temporal dimensions cannot be disentangled, and the two commingle in various ways" and here I have shown that at Yuendumu Warlpiri ideas of being are indeed intricately linked to the spatiality and temporality of the settlement.
CHAPTER NINE
CONCLUSION

This thesis began with the questions arising out of my initial puzzlement about what then seemed to me a random flow of people through camps at Yuendumu. In the ensuing chapters I have outlined the historical, political and economic influences that have impacted so heavily on contemporary Warlpiri residential mobility. I have analysed the weakening of the institution of marriage and the subsequent emergence of jilimi as central to contemporary everyday life at Yuendumu. Taking one of these jilimi as a case example, I have examined expressions of contemporary Warlpiri social practice by looking at the flow of people through the jilimi, and the negotiations around space, sociality and resources within it. I have further contrasted the social and spatial use of the jilimi at different times, marking day and night as the most crucial distinction, and further integrating my analysis into time frames as they operate at Yuendumu. The initial puzzlement about high residential mobility has guided me towards an understanding of it as a crucial element underlying Warlpiri social practice, which I have squarely situated as emerging out of and responding to the contemporary circumstances of settlement life.

In this conclusion I want to contrast this initial puzzle with yet another one, the latter arising out of a conversation between an 18-year old Warlpiri girl and myself. These two puzzles form the poles between which my ethnography and analysis is situated. The conversation and its context creating the second puzzle were as follows:

One night in the jilimi, we had a long extension cord and put the television outside, in front of our yunta, to watch a popular game show, Who wants to be a millionaire. Tamsin (18) came over and made herself comfortable between Celeste and me. Each time Eddie McGuire, the game master, asked his signature question, “Who wants to be a millionaire?” everyone in the yunta replied “Mel Mel Mel!” — Tamsin next to me loudest of all. During an ad-break I asked Tamsin what she would do if she became a millionaire, and the following conversation ensued:

T: I would build a house.
YM: Where?
T: In Yuendumu.
CONCLUSION

YM: And what will it look like?
T: It's really really big, with lots of rooms, and every room has furniture in it. Sofas, and beds, new blankets, and tables and chairs. And every room has a stereo in it, and a television, and a video player and a playstation.
YM: And who will live in that house?
T: Me.
YM: And who else?
T: Nobody else. Just me!
YM: Won't you be lonely?
T: No, I'll have peace and quiet. And I'll keep the door locked. I won't let anybody in.

The ultimate fantasy of a million dollars provides license to dream about what one desires most. Since the chances of ever having access to that amount of money are utterly unrealistic, the dream might as well be about something one will never get, acquire or achieve. In Tamsin's case this was a house filled with copious amounts of desirable items such as new blankets, video recorders and playstations, which seems understandable given the impoverished material circumstances in which people at Yuendumu live. The surprising and striking aspect of the fantasy was that she would not have to share these items with anybody else. Further the private space of the house was to be inaccessible to others, it was to be exclusively hers. Lastly, and this is what puzzled me most, her fantasy house was to be located smack-bang in the middle of Yuendumu. I tackle the questions arising out of this conversation by examining elements of Tamsin's life history and by drawing upon the core concerns I have raised throughout this thesis.

Personal networks

A generation ago, Tamsin's mother Chloe was 'given' to Polly by her mother, Polly's close classificatory sister. Celeste, Polly's own daughter, and Chloe, Polly's adopted daughter, grew up together (with their other siblings) and later married their promised husbands, two brothers, Basil and Rory. Chloe, who had seven children in turn, gave her eldest daughter, Tamsin, to Celeste, who only had one son herself (cf. Figure 31). Tamsin grew up with Celeste and Basil while they were married, and after their marriage deteriorated, mainly in a number of jilmi with Celeste. However, she regularly went (and still does go) to Willowra, where Basil and his next
wife live, to stay with them, or with her yapurla, Basil’s and Rory’s mother. She also on a regular basis stays with her biological parents, Chloe and Rory. Or, when they are involved in one of their frequent marital disputes, lives with either of the two.

![Genealogy Diagram]

Figure 31: Genealogy Tamsin

She also often goes to Papunya where one of her older brothers is married and stays with him and his in-laws. Lastly, Tamsin is in a very stormy marriage with a man a few years older than her (in a 1*choice relationship). Her husband comes from Hermannsburg, and when together, he and Tamsin sometimes live there, sometimes with other members of his family in Alice Springs, and sometimes in Yuendumu.150

Tamsin effectively has two mothers and two fathers, and is tightly interwoven into each of their domestic arrangements whenever she decides to stay with any of them, which is frequently. She has a large number of close and classificatory siblings and cousins with whom she socialises. And, she has a husband. Together, these people make up her most intimate circle of relations, or to put it different, they make are the core of her personal network. These are the people she interacts with on an almost daily basis, the ones she can demand from (unrestricted admission to domestic space, food, money, commodities, lifts, care, intimacy, and time in their company) and who demand from her.

150 For a while they used to share the derelict house with Adrian and Stella described in Chapter 5.
CONCLUSION

As Myers and Sansom have argued for elsewhere and I have shown throughout this thesis personal networks are the keystone to Warlpiri sociality. In his discussion of Pintupi sociality Myers emphasises that “the mobility of individuals is a primary feature of the social structure” (1986a:71). He goes on to say that:

[The formation of a group should be seen as a social accomplishment, not simply taken for granted. Furthermore, the significance of individual mobility in Pintupi social life does not mean that all enduring structures are lacking. The ego-centred qualities of Pintupi society are themselves social facts, the products of a larger system. To grasp these dialectical relations, one must start with individual action, as the Pintupi do (Myers 1986a:72).

Similarly, Sansom examines ‘mob’ formation in Darwin fringe camps as a realisation in time. He says that ‘mobs’ “are collections of people brought together in places where social purpose is not established in the long term but shifts instead in time” (Sansom 1980:14) and that “[m]obs brought into being in this way are not entities as are corporations. Rather a mob brought into being in this way is, at any moment of its existence, a realisation” (1980:16).

Both Myers and Sansom were concerned with the way in which social aggregations of people are achieved. In this thesis I have looked at the realisations of social aggregations by examining them through the lens of the jilimi at Yuendumu. By investigating mobility from the perspective of the flow of people through the jilimi, and by focussing on the negotiations around nightly sleeping arrangements and daytime time-zoning I have shown how Warlpiri social relations are manifested, created, transformed, broken, achieved, reinvented, and negotiated as a continuous social process. Such process necessarily requires focussing on individuals and social networks rather than on fixed social units.131

Children are socialised into these networks from an early age onwards, first into those of their main carer then gradually expanding partly depending upon their own choices and inclinations. Due to the often short-lived nature of contemporary marriages a child’s main carers may be a close female relative other than their mother, most often a yaparla (FM), but often MZ or MM and their close sisters.

131 It remains for future research to investigate the nature of the interrelationships between these highly fluid everyday networks and the much more enduring kin groups of the ritual domain (cf. Dussart 2000).
I have shown that some individuals’ personal networks are more extensive than others. Some individuals crystallise as focal points in a large number of other people’s networks. Polly, Celeste, Joy and Nora were introduced as such women. And I have shown how they are focal within these networks, rather than being ‘the core’ of the jilimi in Bell’s sense. As discussed, they all ceased living in the particular jilimi I described by the time I had finished fieldwork, but continued to be focal to many people’s networks wherever they lived. There are differences between the expansiveness of their networks, and I have shown how Polly in this respect was ‘more focal’ than the other women. A girl of Tamsin’s age, on the other hand, does not command anything like this focality. While firmly anchored within her personal network she is still at the beginning of expanding it and has relatively little influence within it. Moreover, she is still emotionally, economically and socially highly dependent upon other people in her network. The frustration that goes with this is voiced in her fantasy – where she owns everything she wants and does not need to ask anybody for anything (see also below).

Performative kinship

Relationships within these ego-centric networks are, as are all relations, always formulated as kin relations. However, the classificatory nature of the Warlpiri kinship system as well as the extensive use of subsection terminology in everyday discourse effectively veil the finer nuances of how these networks are created. Sansom has analysed similar realities in terms of performative kinship, which he says is the north Australian mode:

Its spectacular features receive less than due emphasis in the literature because most contributors evince interest in what they call kinship structures, kinship systems and social organisation where these umbrella terms shelter everything that pertains to kinship save the conduct of relationships of kinship between persons (Sansom 1988:172).

Sansom presents parent – child and husband – wife relations to illustrate his understanding of performative kinship, recounting how parenthood is ascribed to a whole range of people who at various times of their young life ‘grew up’ a person, and how it can be denied to biological parents if they did not ‘look after’ their children, as well as how marriages “are sustained only

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by and through adequate performance” (Sansom 1988:171). Both examples are true in Tamsin’s case, who while always ascribing fatherhood to both Basil and Rory, from time to time has violent fights with Chloë exactly centring around negating the latter’s motherhood: “She is not my mother, she did not look after me”. Her marriage as well fluctuates wildly between being ‘on’, when she and her husband live in a yapukarra, and being ‘off’ when they do not. The performative aspects of kinship are very significant indeed at Yuendumu and are so in respect to everybody. Relations are activated, validated and maintained through sharing of resources, sharing of time, and as I outlined extensively, sharing of domestic space. They are fractured, split and broken for a great number of reasons and these ruptures are expressed through fights, moving away, ceasing to share and so forth.

However, performative kinship does not capture the nature of relations at Yuendumu in full. It is not only the question of whether or not for example a sister relationship is ‘activated’ through interaction or is lying dormant, there is a multitude of gradations within these relationships, involving a range of interactions. At Yuendumu kinship is a paradigm concealing the realities of personal relations. As I have outlined throughout the thesis, genealogical and classificatory kin ties are meaningful but by no means crucial in determining who lives with whom, who shares with whom, and who spends time with whom. After all, most Warlpiri people can trace genealogical links to each other in one way or another, and all of them can trace a classificatory link, but not all live together or even like each other for that matter. Through the subsection system, a Nangala gets to call every other person called Nangala ‘sister’. But obviously, not all persons called Nangala get along with each other in the same way, even if they all call each other ‘sister’. They may live together, share lots of time and resources with each other; or they may not even be on speaking terms with each other. Thus, when I describe two sisters living together, it means that these two women are not living with other women who are in the same kinship relationship to them. There is a subtle but significant difference between the paradigmatic meaning of the term ‘sister’ and the different realisations of that relationship in everyday life, or, as Bird-David (1994:594) puts it “relating makes relatives – not a pre-given link in a logical template of fixed relationships”.

152 There is a significant difference between Darwin fringe camps and Yuendumu in what this performance entails. In the former commensality is essential and couples who “got no real kitchen anymore” (Sansom 1988:171) are denied their marital status, whereas in Yuendumu co-residence in a yapukarra is crucial.
CONCLUSION

The reason I chose to present people in this thesis by describing their kin relations to each other is that this represents everyday Warlpiri practice, it is the way people themselves describe everyday realities. But I hope to have illuminated the nature of some of the actual personal relationships and to have made it abundantly clear that closeness of relations depends at least as much on ‘friendships’ and animosity, on life-histories, on personalities and inclinations as on kinship.

I have pointed out the restricted use of the Aboriginal English term ‘friend’ for non-Indigenous people, and indeed it would not adequately capture the reality of for example two sisters who are very close to each other. Firth, in the preface to The Anthropology of Friendship has called this phenomenon “kin-friends, a real category to be distinguished from simple kin” (Firth 1999:xiii). However, none of the contributors to the book took up this issue, while all maintain that friendship is something qualitatively different to kinship, and, along the lines of Samson’s quote above, that kinship studies have tended to overshadow research into friendship (cf. contributions in Bell and Coleman 1999). I do not think that friendship covers the issue particularly well at all, as it in turn diverts attention from a second issue, namely that kin relations do not necessarily necessitate amicableness.

Throughout the thesis I have drawn attention to the fact that Warlpiri relationships, and often especially close relationships are fraught with tensions. Two sisters may share a camp and a junta harmoniously for a while, and if relations deteriorate, gradually increase distance between them by moving into separate juntas within the same camp, by pooling resources to a lesser degree, by beginning to use separate piles of firewood and so on. These are ways in which slowly drifting apart from each other are expressed spatially and socially. On the other hand, relations can also be ruptured swiftly and suddenly, tensions may erupt in fights and new social distance is marked by packing one’s swag and leaving. The subtleties of the nature of actual relationships cannot accurately be captured through kinship, they require careful and intricate ethnographic examination.

Relationships and diplomacy

Warlpiri relationships are built around negotiating the tension between notions of autonomy and relatedness, as elaborated upon in depth by Myers (1976; 1979; 1982; 1986a; 1986b; 1988a;
CONCLUSION

1988b). In terms of interaction, Kendon describes the realities of this tension in everyday social practice by saying that

[I]ndividuals must be highly diplomatic, continually negotiating with one another, attempting to achieve satisfaction of their own needs and desires, at the same time as they try and ensure good relations and continued cooperation with others (Kendon 1988b:451).

I have documented this diplomacy in interpersonal relations in the tacit negotiations about sleeping arrangements. These are subtly executed statements about the state of relations whose diplomacy derives from their non-verbal execution. Through movement, within camps as well as between and out of camps both autonomy and relatedness are tactfully expressed. This was further explored in the circumspect way in which during 'hithering and thithering' consensus is sought for any planned activity (cf. Povinelli 1993).

Another way this requirement of diplomacy is met is through the mechanisms of demand sharing, as elaborated upon by Peterson (cf. 1993; 1997). The demands made in demand sharing take on different qualities depending on the relations between people and the item requested. Between close people a simple "Jungka Xi" — "give me Xi" suffices as both, the person demanding and the person giving are aware that the transaction is part of their everyday way of relating to each other. If the item demanded is something more than food, small amounts of money, a dress or some such thing the demand is more carefully formulated, as it is in the case of the person demanding and the person asked not being quite so close to each other. In this way, relationships are tested in Peterson's sense. However, while the placing of demands is normally conducted in a socially accepted manner it is also fraught with the possibilities of friction. To demand something too big, to demand something inappropriate from another person, or to place demands too incessantly may cause refusal. This creates anger both in the person refusing and in the person refused. Indeed, Myers links anger to compassion and says it is aroused "by a perceived rejection of relatedness, [and an assertion] of autonomy in the face of loss" (Myers 1988b:596).

This took a comical turn in the above-recounted conversation with Tamsin. When she said that she will keep the door locked and not let anybody in, I said: "what? Not even me?" "Oh, okay", Tamsin answered, "you can come and visit, but not Celeste!" This was said within Celeste's earshot, who was lying right next to Tamsin and following our conversation. Tamsin said it fully aware that Celeste was listening and in order to tease her. Celeste replied "you can keep your
CONCLUSION

house, you are not my daughter anyway” — playing along with the joke built around a refusal to share and the subsequent negation of the relationship.

There is another element to Tamsin’s fantasy about the closed door to her house full of resources, and that is her expression of a desire to have and not to share. This refers to both the resources and the privacy of the house. The matter relates to living in a context where, as described, relatedness is tested through demands and it is thus impossible to hold on to any possession for long. The second matter, that of privacy, is different again.

The immediacy of sociality

Kendon says about Aboriginal life:

A further feature of everyday Aboriginal sociality that is important to mention is its highly public character. People must live out their lives in continual co-presence. Individuals are almost never alone and there is almost no privacy (Kendon 1988b:446).

Warlpiri life at Yuendumu is highly public. At night, people prefer sleeping outside so they have visual control over what is going on around them — in turn being observed by others. During the day Yuendumu is a hive of social activity, humming with news and everybody knows everybody else’s business, from fights they are involved in to who they were ‘running around with’ last night. More, they all know each other. The meaning of sandstories in which people recount sleeping arrangements when they were away on a trip are read implicitly, there is never any need to spell out why X did or did not sleep next to Y — the fact that they did tells the listeners all they need to know. Bird-David describes immediacy for Nayaka (and comparatively for Pintupi and Inuit) as the basic principle around which social relations are organised “mutual help and sharing are underwritten not by kinship ties but by immediacy” (Bird-David 1994:593) — and this is certainly true for Yuendumu as well.

The fact that Tamsin’s fantasy house is stocked with all she needs (from blankets to videos) frees her from having to ask others for things, and the closed door frees her from having to share with others in return — it frees her from etnng. That it is locked and access is denied to those close to her (and others) underscores the stress of the intense levels of socialising that almost all Warlpiri people are involved in. The immediacy of sociality defines Tamsin’s life, she
CONCLUSION

lives in constant engagement with others every minute of every day of her life, and this is what she rebels against in her flights of fancy when dreaming about the impossible. The constancy of sociality, the theme running through this thesis, is not only a blessing – it can also be a burden.

Yuendumu’s then (Kardiya) school principal summarised this, to the amusement of Warlpiri people, in 1996 during a staff meeting where he said to the Kardiya teachers: “You have to understand that the Yapa teachers have two jobs. They work as teachers at the school and when they go home they have to be Yapa. Being Yapa is hard work.”133 Specifically he was referring to the fact that during that week (as on many others) many people in the settlement were tired and exhausted because they had just returned from a large sorry business at Lajamanu, a trip that involved many hundred people travelling a more than 1,000 km return trip that lasted five days. His understanding of ‘being Yapa’ was that one had to constantly engage with others, that there was no possibility of excluding the self from social activity. And much of this activity embraces mobility.

Sociality and mobility

Returning to my initial puzzle, the flow of people through camps, I have shown that mobility is a constituent part of Warlpiri sociality. In order to relate to others one has to be with them. And Warlpiri networks reach far – throughout the settlement, to other settlements and places all around Australia. I have distinguished kinds of mobility by the reasons underlying them suggesting that residential movement divides people into four kinds of residents, key, regular, sporadic and on & off residents. Every person falls into each category at different times and places. Annie, while a key resident of the jilimi during some of my research was a regular resident in another jilimi in North Camp, an on & off resident at her sister’s camp in Nyiripi and a sporadic resident in a number of camps around Yuendumu. Another kind of mobility is caused by Sport Weekends, big sorry businesses and other events. Through movement people live their relations to others. Movement defines relations in that moving into a yapukarra constitutes a marriage and moving out of it the end of the marriage. Lastly, movement is

CONCLUSION

triggered by death and people respond to it by moving out of camps that become *jarrkujuju* and by defining their paths through the settlement through places of avoidance.

Tamsin, like all Warlpiri people, is very mobile, between certain points defined by her network. One can expect her at any one time to be in Yuendumu, Willowra, Papunya, Alice Springs or Hermannsburg. In each of those places, again, she can be found in a specific set of domestic arrangements of any of her close relatives or in-laws. Significantly, what she lacks is 'a place of her own', a camp where she is a 'key resident'. Instead she is always staying in other people's camps for brief periods of time.

As a teenager Tamsin was sent to Kormilda College in Darwin, as happens to many bright pupils from Yuendumu School. She stayed at Kormilda as long as one of her close cousins did, but often complained about 'loneliness' and 'homesickness'. When her cousin left Kormilda, she left as well and returned to Yuendumu. Around the time we had the above-recounted conversation she had started to work at Yuendumu's Childcare Centre, where her 'mother' Celeste also worked. Together, they went frequently to Batchelor to participate in Early Childhood Training courses.

She was always excited about trips further away, as they promised an escape from all that is known to her. Significantly, however, in the same breath as voicing her excitement she always mentioned people from Yuendumu, regularly including Celeste, who were going with her, no matter whether to Batchelor, Adelaide or Murray Bridge. The same applies to trips she has undertaken in the past or is planning for the future. For example when talking about how the senior girls of Yuendumu School had travelled together to Adelaide she always mentions who she stayed closest to, or when making plans to visit me upon my return to Canberra: "I'll come and visit you, and Celeste, and Chloe, and Neil, and Polly, we'll all come together." Thus, while there is a willingness, and sometimes even an eagerness in Tamsin to travel beyond the points she knows and is familiar with, she does not seem to want to go on her own.

Lastly, Tamsin was one of the younger persons most frequently complaining about the boredom mentioned in the previous chapter. "Yuendumu is rubbish", she would grumble, "too boring, true, I am going somewhere else". And as soon as the opportunity arose, she would be off. To Papunya, to Willowra, to Alice Springs, to Hermannsburg. After a few days
there, she would complain about boredom and go to the next place. Once she rang me up from Papunya saying she could not stand it anymore, could I please, please, please pick her up? I did, and the next evening she complained about boredom at Yuendumu and was off to Willowra.

Why then locate the fantasy house in Yuendumu?

I think, the answers to this question are twofold. On the one hand, Tamsin is very strongly aware that Yuendumu is the centre of her universe, not only spatially, but socially. Yuendumu is the place most of her close relatives live, where her networks are the strongest and most supportive, where she will always have people to fall back on, people whom she cares about and is very close to. Yuendumu is where she is from, spatially and socially it is her home. And, importantly, I think, her answer to my questions encapsulates the desire not to escape the realities of Yuendumu, but to have a life she is in control of and happy with exactly at Yuendumu. It stems out of an implicit awareness that going to some other place will not change anything, that the most difficult thing, the ‘biggest challenge’ (to use Eddie McGuire’s terminology) for her is to achieve independence rather than interdependence, to make come true her wish for a calm centre of protected selfhood situated in the middle of life as she knows it. The ultimate fantasy is not to have full control over one’s life (resources, personhood, domestic space), but to have all this at Yuendumu.
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APPENDIX – GLOSSARY OF WARLPIRI AND ABORIGINAL ENGLISH TERMS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<tr>
<td>business</td>
<td>generic term for ritual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dolla</td>
<td>Dollar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>jaja</td>
<td>reciprocal term between ego and MM, MMZ and MMB</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>julangi</td>
<td>present (time), today, now, current, recent, fresh, new</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>jamindi</td>
<td>reciprocal term between ego and MF, MFB and MFZ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>jungkayi</td>
<td>men's camp</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>jampa</td>
<td>a person who walks around at night in order to kill another person and make trouble, men with special powers to make themselves invisible who wear emu-feather foot covering to dissipulate tracks, who travel with harmful intentions, kurdaitcha, bogey-man</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>jilimi</td>
<td>women's camp</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>jinamardami</td>
<td>to hold and to look after</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>jinta</td>
<td>one, one, single, singly, single-handed, solitary, same, unique</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>jukana</td>
<td>female cross cousin, MBD or FZS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>jukurpa</td>
<td>dream, Dreaming, ancestral beings and associated rituals, designs, songs, places, ceremonies time of the ancestral beings, story, ritual, song, law, custom</td>
</tr>
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<td>Term</td>
<td>Description</td>
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<tr>
<td>------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>kajirri</em></td>
<td>ritual: the name of two Dreamtime beings and related myths and rituals performed during advanced stage of male initiation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>kakararrak</em></td>
<td>east</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>kanpa</em></td>
<td>you (singular) are</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>kapirdi</em></td>
<td>older sister, kinship term for older sister, and older parallel cousin, older MZD, and older FBD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>kardirri</em></td>
<td>white, light in colour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>kardiya</em></td>
<td>non-Indigenous person, whitefella</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>karlarru</em></td>
<td>west</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>karlarr-uwarlingki</em></td>
<td>‘those belonging to the west’, polite way of referring to women</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>karliji</em></td>
<td>dull white ochre, used in mortuary rituals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>karna</em></td>
<td>I am (doing something)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>karrimi</em></td>
<td>to stand, to be</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>kirda</em></td>
<td>one’s own patri-moicty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>kirdana</em></td>
<td>father, kinship term, also <em>wadjirra</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>ku</em></td>
<td>suffix: to, for</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>kuka</em></td>
<td>meat, also <em>kuyu</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>kukurnu</em></td>
<td>younger brother, kinship term for younger brother, and younger parallel cousin, younger MZS, and younger FBS</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
kuilkurrn  
in the middle

kulu  
fight

kumparrri  
Thunder

kumunjigi  
no-name, a term used, in address and reference, instead of a name of a person (or place) whose name cannot be spoken because of its phonetic likeness to the name of dead person (a person for whom mourning is in progress), or of secluded initiate

kunarrapu  
storm clouds, hail

kurnia  
shame, shameful, shyness, embarrassment, reticent, reserve, timidity, reticence, ashamed

kurdu  
child

kurdu-kurdu  
children, storm clouds

kurdu-kurdu-pinji  
to form clouds, make offspring, generate, form, spawn, and procreate

kurdangurriu  
one’s opposite patri-moity

kurlirra  
south

-kurlu  
about, with, having

-kurra  
towards
APPENDIX

kurrawarri visible pattern, mark, drawing, painting, or design associated with jukurrpa, spiritual forces: the mark may be attributed to these forces, or it may symbolize and represent them and events

kuturn fighting stick

kuyu meat, especially from large game; also kuka

kuyukari opposite generation moiety, other generation moiety

lawa no

lawarinji-jarrimi to kill, literally to ‘be the cause of making someone nothing’

lawa-nyinami to die, literally to ‘no-lying’, i.e. not being anymore

makurnta-wangu same matri-moiet, self’s matri-moiet

makurnta-wurrn opposite matri-moiet

malamala mortuary ritual, bereavement ceremony where relatives of deceased gather for public display of sorrow and anger over death, sorry business, sorry meeting, mourning rite

mangarri bread, vegetable food, also miyi

mariba company, companion, companionship

mo-yi turning a sentence into a question, “isn’t it?”

miyi plant food, roots, berries, fruit, seeds, and bread

munga night
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Phrase</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>mungalhurr</td>
<td>early morning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ngamirri</td>
<td>mother's brother, kinship term</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ngapa</td>
<td>water, rain</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ngati</td>
<td>mother, kinship term</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ngawurru</td>
<td>younger sister, kinship term for younger sister, and younger parallel cousin, younger MZD, and younger FBD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-ngka</td>
<td>on, in, at; suffixed onto words with one or two syllables</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ngunaka</td>
<td>lie down!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ngunami</td>
<td>to be, to lie, lying down</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ngunjungunju</td>
<td>white ochre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ngurna</td>
<td>camp</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nullahnullah</td>
<td>Aboriginal English term for fighting stick, also kuturn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nyarpara</td>
<td>where, how, what, who, which, somewhere, anywhere</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nyija-nyija</td>
<td>question asked to find out a person's skinname, literally 'what-what'?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nyinaka</td>
<td>sit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nyunami</td>
<td>to sit, to be</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

269
| **pamangarra** | belongings of dead person, including their bedroll, their shaved-off hair, and other items, also *yampigyi* |
| **palka** | for something or someone to be present |
| **palka-jarrimi** | to be born, to come into existence is, literally, to become present |
| **palka-mani** | to give birth, literally, to 'make present' |
| **papardi** | older brother, kinship term for older brother, and older parallel cousin, older MZS, and older FBS |
| **pimiridi** | father's sister, kinship term |
| **pita** | paper, bible, church service, funeral |
| **pulja** | soft, quiet, slow, careful |
| **-rta** | on, in, at; suffixed to words with more than two syllables |
| **sorry, sorry business** | vernacular term for mortuary rituals, see also malamala |
| **sorry camp** | camp people sleep in during mortuary rites |
| **nakurturdu** | with force and strength, quick(ly), rapid(ly), fast, vigorous(ly), heavy/heavily, rough(ly), loud, forcefully |
| **walu** | absent |
| **-wangu** | without, to be without |
| **waninju** | throat, to be in love, to feel sexual desire |
| **wangkami** | speak, talk, say, tell |
Appendix

wankaya  speak

wankili  male cross cousin, kinship term, MBS and FZS

wanthmi  to fall

Warlpiri  name of people traditionally occupying northern part of the Ngalia Basin, the Tanami Desert, Lander River, Hansen River (see also yapa), name of the language spoken by Warlpiri people

warlu  fire, firewood, hoi, ashes, fireplace, hearth, cooking fire

warringyi  reciprocal term between ego ant' FF, FFB and FFZ

warrwara  marriage partner or lover not in the correct kin relation

warningha  deaf, forgetful, unable to understand or remember, stupid, retarded, foolish, mindless, uncaring, feeble-minded; also used for the very young and the very old: not fully knowledgeable social persons

wati  man, initiated man

waypali  non-Indigenous person, whitefella

wingki  wrong, antisocial, unlawful, disobedient, uncompliant, heedless, disobedient

wirrpa  lightning

wirriya  boy

wiyarpa  poor bugger, poor thing, sympathetic exclamation
APPENDIX

wuragi  afternoon

wuragi-wuragi  around sunset, late afternoon, evening

wurlkumunu  old woman

yakarra-parri-mi  to wake up, be awake, come to (from state of unconsciousness)

yakarra-parriya  wake up!

yalka  space between windbreak and head of sleeper

yampinyi  see pamangarra

yani  to walk, move, go

yaparla  reciprocal term for ego and FM, FMZ and FMB

yarlpurru-kurlangu  same generation moiety, self's generation moiety

yarlhu  space with nothing on or over it

yarlukuru  synonym for jilmi: women's camp

yarrkujuju  place where deceased person lived, where person died, camp of dead person, deceased person's camp

yapa  person, Warlpiri person, Aboriginal person, people, Warlpiri people

yapunta  orphan, discarded, abandoned, rubbish, thrown out

yatijarra  north
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Word</th>
<th>Definition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>yawlyyn</td>
<td>women's ritual, women's ceremonies, women's designs and songs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>jitiyi</td>
<td>outside, on the outside</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>yungka</td>
<td>givel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>yunta</td>
<td>windbreak, place where people sleep</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>yupukarra</td>
<td>married people's camp</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>yunardli</td>
<td>house</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>yunayi</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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Yuendumu Health Profile

APPENDIX – GLOSSARY OF WARLPIDI AND ABORIGINAL ENGLISH TERMS

business  generic term for ritual

dolla  Dollar

jaja  reciprocal term between ego and MM, MMZ and MMB

jalangi  present (time), today, now, current, recent, fresh, new

jamirdi  reciprocal term between ego and MF, MFB and MFZ

jangkaji  men’s camp

jarpapa  a person who walks around at night in order to kill another person and make trouble, men with special powers to make themselves invisible who wear emu-feather foot covering to dissipulate tracks, who travel with harmful intentions, kurdaitcha, bogey-man

jilini  women’s camp

jinamardarni  to hold and to look after

jinta  one, alone, single, singly, single-handed, solitary, same, unique

jukana  female cross cousin, MBD or FZS

jukurpa  dream, Dreaming, ancestral beings and associated rituals, designs, songs, places, ceremonies time of the ancestral beings, story, ritual, song, law, custom
### APPENDIX

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Definition</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>kajirri</td>
<td>ritual: the name of two Dreamtime beings and related myths and rituals performed during advanced stage of male initiation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kokarrara</td>
<td>east</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kanpa</td>
<td>you (singular) are</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kapirdi</td>
<td>older sister, kinship term for older sister, and older parallel cousin, older MZD, and older FBD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kardirri</td>
<td>white, light in colour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kandiya</td>
<td>non-Indigenous person, whitefella</td>
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<tr>
<td>karlara</td>
<td>west</td>
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<tr>
<td>karlara-wardingki</td>
<td>‘those belonging to the west’, polite way of referring to women</td>
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<td>karlji</td>
<td>dull white ochre, used in mortuary rituals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kama</td>
<td>I am (doing something)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>karimini</td>
<td>to stand, to be</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kirda</td>
<td>one's own patri-moi:ty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kirdana</td>
<td>father, kinship term, also supirra</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-ku</td>
<td>suffix: to, for</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kuka</td>
<td>meat, also kuru</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kukumnu</td>
<td>younger brother, kinship term for younger brother, and younger parallel cousin, younger MZS, and younger FBS</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX

kuilkurru in the middle
kuulu fight
kumparri thunder
kuumnejigi no-name, a term used, in address and reference, instead of a name of a person (i.e. place) whose name cannot be spoken because of its phonetic likeness to the name of dead person (a person for whom mourning is in progress), or of secluded initiate
kunarilpu storm clouds, hail
kurata shame, shameful, shyness, embarrassment, reserve, timidity, reticence, ashamed
kurdu child
kurru-kurdu children, storm clouds
kurdu-kurdu-pini to form clouds, make offspring, generate, form, spawn, and procreate
kurdungurru one's opposite patri-moicty
kurliirra south
-kurru about, with, having
-kurra towards
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<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>visible pattern, mark, drawing, painting, or design associated with jukurpa, spiritual forces: the mark may be attributed to these forces, or it may symbolize and represent them and events</td>
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<tr>
<td>katuru</td>
<td>fighting stick</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kaju</td>
<td>meat, especially from large game: also kuka</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kajukari</td>
<td>opposite generation moiety, other generation moiety</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lava</td>
<td>no</td>
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<td>lawanninji-jarrimi</td>
<td>to kill, literally to ‘be the cause of making someone nothing’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lawa-nyinami</td>
<td>to die, literally to ‘no-lying’, i.e. not being anymore</td>
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<tr>
<td>makarnu-wangu</td>
<td>same matri-moiety, self’s matri-moiety</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>makarnu-wannu</td>
<td>opposite matri-moiety</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>malamala</td>
<td>mortuary ritual, bereavement ceremony where relatives of deceased gather for public display of sorrow and anger over death, sorry business, sorry meeting, mourning rite</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mangarri</td>
<td>bread, vegetable food, also miyi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>marpa</td>
<td>company, companion, companionship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mayi</td>
<td>turning a sentence into a question, “isn’t it?”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>miyi</td>
<td>plant food, roots, berries, fruit, seeds, and bread</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>munga</td>
<td>night</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Term</td>
<td>English Translation</td>
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<td>------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mungalyurn</td>
<td>early morning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ngamirmi</td>
<td>mother's brother, kinship term</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ngapa</td>
<td>water, rain</td>
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<td>lie down!</td>
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<td>ngunami</td>
<td>to be, to lie, lying down</td>
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<tr>
<td>ngunjungunja</td>
<td>white ochre</td>
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<tr>
<td>ngurra</td>
<td>camp</td>
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<tr>
<td>nellabnillah</td>
<td>Aboriginal English term for fighting stick, also kuturn</td>
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<tr>
<td>nyarrpura</td>
<td>where, how, what, who, which, somewhere, anywhere</td>
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<td>njiya-njiya</td>
<td>question asked to find out a persons skinname, literally 'what-what'?</td>
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<td>nyinaka</td>
<td>sit!</td>
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<td>nyinami</td>
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</table>
**APPENDIX**

*Pamangara*  
belongings of dead person, including their bedroll, their shaved-off hair, and other items, also *yampinya*

*Palka*  
for something or someone to be present

*Palka-jarrimi*  
to be born, to come into existence is, literally, to become present

*Palka-manu*  
to give birth, literally, to ‘make present’

*Papardi*  
older brother, kinship term for older brother, and older parallel cousin, older MZS, and older FBS

*Pimirdi*  
father’s sister, kinship term

*Pipa*  
paper, bible, church service, funeral

*Puha*  
sort, quiet, slow, careful

*-rta*  
on, in, at; suffixed to words with more than two syllables

*Sory, sorry business*  
vermacular term for mortuary rituals, see also *malamala*

*Sory camp*  
camp people sleep in during mortuary rites

*Wakurturdu*  
with force and strength, quick(ly), rapid(ly), fast, vigorous(ly), heavy/heavily, rough(ly), loud, forcefully

*Walku*  
absent

*-Wangu*  
without, to be without

*Waninja*  
throat, to be in love, to feel sexual desire

*Wanghami*  
speak, talk, say, tell
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Word</th>
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<td>wangkaya</td>
<td>speakd</td>
</tr>
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<td>to fall</td>
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<tr>
<td>warlu</td>
<td>fire, firewood, hot, ashes, fireplace, hearth, cooking fire</td>
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<tr>
<td>warringyi</td>
<td>reciprocal term between ego and FF, FFB and FFZ</td>
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<tr>
<td>wuti</td>
<td>man, initiated man</td>
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<tr>
<td>wayipali</td>
<td>non-Indigenous person, whitefella</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>wingki</td>
<td>wrong, antisocial, unlawful, disobedient, uncomppliant, heedless, disobedient</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>wirnpa</td>
<td>lightning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>wirriya</td>
<td>boy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>wiyarrpa</td>
<td>poor bugger, poor thing, sympathetic exclamation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Term</td>
<td>Meaning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>wunigi</td>
<td>afternoon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>wunigi-wunigi</td>
<td>around sunset, late afternoon, evening</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>wurikumanu</td>
<td>old woman</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>yakarra-pardi-mi</td>
<td>to wake up, be awake, come to (from state of unconsciousness)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>yakarra-pardiya</td>
<td>wake up!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>yalka</td>
<td>space between wi dbreak and head of sleeper</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>yampiinyi</td>
<td>see pamangara</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>yani</td>
<td>to walk, move, go</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>yapurla</td>
<td>reciprocal term for ego and FM, FMZ and FMB</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>yarlparru-kurlangu</td>
<td>same generation moiety, self's generation moiety</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>yarlu</td>
<td>space with nothing on or over it</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>yarhkurrn</td>
<td>synonym for jilimi, women's camp</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>yarrkujuju</td>
<td>place where deceased person lived, where person died, camp of dead person, deceased person's camp</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>yapa</td>
<td>person, Warlpiri person, Aboriginal person, people, Warlpiri people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>yapunta</td>
<td>orphan, discarded, abandoned, rubbish, thrown out</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>yalijarra</td>
<td>north</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Term</td>
<td>Meaning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>yawan'yu</td>
<td>women's ritual, women's ceremonies, women's designs and songs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>yitipi</td>
<td>outside, on the outside</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>yungka</td>
<td>givel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>yunta</td>
<td>windbreak, place where people sleep</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>yupnkarra</td>
<td>married people's camp</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>yuwarii</td>
<td>house</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>yuwaji</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>