CHAPTER SEVEN

INFORMAL ASSOCIATIONS

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

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

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

All these informal associations influenced the other types of grouping discussed in earlier chapters. The entire community life was based on the
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maintenance of a delicate balance within, and between, groups and associations which was essential to the survival of Junjuwa as a group.

7.1 Gender based action

"Us Women we are different" (Justine)

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

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

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

Broader distinctions that existed between men and women in the past were preserved on cattle stations. Men and women engaged in separate and distinct working activities: the former devoting their time to stockwork and related activities, whereas the latter were assigned to domestic work and duties associated with the homestead (Berndt & Berndt 1987:61, McGrath 1987:50-59). From the interviews I conducted in Junjuwa, it is clear that on none of the cattle stations in which Junjuwa residents had worked were women ever engaged in stockwork, apart from being occasionally a cook in a stockcamp, although this has been reported in other areas (McGrath 1987:51-52, Laurie & McGrath 1985).
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Apart from working activities, the main difference was residence. Women lived with children and old people at the main Aboriginal camp located next to the homestead. Men stayed in small groups at various stockcamps established within the boundary of the station. Thus, women experienced living in large residential groups, sometimes with people from several language groups, whereas men were more accustomed to living in discrete and smaller units for much of the time. In some stations, mainly those located to the south of the Fitzroy Valley, men had very limited access to the main Aboriginal camp and husbands and wives had to see each other secretly. Some women expressed their bitterness about this when remembering the period, but many described it as one during which they acquired some autonomy from Aboriginal men:

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

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

When people moved from cattle stations to the mission compound in Fitzroy Crossing, they experienced different living conditions, but differences based on gender that existed before and during the cattle station era were perpetuated. The mission camp was organised similarly to the cattle stations' Aboriginal camps. Only married people, or those recognised as such, were allowed to share a house. All young unmarried people lived either in the boys' or girls' dormitory. Many men were still engaged in stockwork, for which they had to travel back and forth from Fitzroy Crossing to the stations. Men who lived permanently in the mission compound learned some mechanical skills, vegetable growing, butchering and baking. The permanent mission population, mostly women, children and old people, were engaged in other activities. Children had to attend school, some old people worked with the missionaries on translating the Bible into Walmajarri, and women were in charge of all domestic tasks (washing, sewing, cleaning dormitories, raising chickens, cooking for old people). The more skilled women taught the unskilled women, the younger ones and those who had recently migrated from further south.
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Women, children and old people were the first to be forced off the stations when the Pastoral Award was implemented. This migration brought more people to the mission compound, and influenced living conditions. Missionaries relied on the town police to enforce rules meant to keep the reserve in good order. All those not registered as residents, and intoxicated persons, mostly Aboriginal men at that time, were denied access to the mission area. One of the consequences was that women were more numerous than men in the reserve, and they played an important part in the running of the camp.

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

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

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

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

The relative autonomy that women experienced on cattle stations was further developed when individual payment of social benefits was implemented. Many married couples in Junjuwa did not receive their social benefits in a joint cheque. Women were often registered as single parents and therefore were eligible for a pension, while men only got unemployment benefits (Bell 1980). Consequently, women received money directly, but they also received extra allowances for children. Social benefits such as family allowances were paid monthly to women. This financial autonomy was challenged by men who attempted to obtain money from their spouse or female relatives once they had spent theirs. Many women relied on savings to protect their family budgets: they either had an account at the UAM store, or left part of their cash in the Junjuwa office’s safe. Most of the office workers were female and could be trusted not to give woman’s money to any man that would claim it.
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Differences between men’s and women’s employment activities continued at Junjuwa. In 1985, all but three of Junjuwa male working residents were employed in seasonal work in the cattle industry. Women overall had fewer job opportunities but held permanent positions that provided them with a regular source of income throughout the year. Apart from seasonal activities on cattle stations, men took jobs in Junjuwa, whereas women were mostly employed outside the community. When several women affiliated to different languages were employed at the same place (Kindergarten, Hospital, UAM store), they shared news or information that would otherwise be limited to a single language group.

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

At the most, there would be two or three females from Junjuwa attending fortnightly council meetings. They never took part in the discussion nor did they raise any points, although it was clear from one meeting to the next that women played a role in the decision-making process within Junjuwa. This role was not public; rather, women exchanged ideas and information they heard during council meetings, and sometimes influenced the position held on issues by their husbands and/or male relatives. There is little doubt they acted as ‘liaison person’ between language groups whenever those were opposed over a council decision or did not share the same ideas on a particular issue. I am not saying that women always succeeded in settling arguments between male council members or community leaders, but they certainly made possible exchanges of views whenever men could not or would not agree to do it. For example, there was once a problem about school attendance. Male councillors were divided on whether or not non-Aboriginal teachers from the school could come into Junjuwa to round up kids. It was a heated debate and both views were strongly supported by heavy and loud arguments. The meeting was closed without any decision being taken on the issue. Further, none of the male councillors were prepared to challenge either of the two leaders who were opposed over the issue. The following day, wives and older sisters of these two men went fishing with other women. Such large fishing parties were uncommon and, since
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women had little if any access to community vehicles, they approached me to provide them with transportation. The women did bring fish back to Junjuwa in the evening, but most of their time had been spent talking about the school attendance problem. The opposed views of the two men were discussed at length and women tried to find a compromise that would suit everyone. One of the women suggested that since her husband was driving a community vehicle and did not start working before mid-morning, he could take care of the problem. All the women agreed that could be a suitable solution and decided to 'talk' to their husbands and males relatives before the next council meeting. The man who had been suggested by the women to undertake this duty was not closely related to either of the two opposed leaders, therefore his involvement could not be interpreted as a victory by either side. All council members reached an agreement over the solution proposed by women at the next meeting. This example cannot be taken as representative of women's behaviour as opposed to men's in Junjuwa, but the former, being more cohesive, were better organised to reach a decision on common grounds than the latter, who were more fragmented in their groupings and less inclined to find a public compromise.

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

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

Ritual activities were another area in which women had some influence, even though there were no separate women's ceremonies in Junjuwa. Some old women had a wider knowledge than most men about ceremonial songs. Women often accompanied their husbands during trips undertaken for ritual purposes. They attended ceremonies as spectators and built up a knowledge that afterwards was shared and traded with other women. Once, I was asked by an old Walmajarri woman to tape some women's songs. She wanted to make this tape to use it to teach young women as well as as a trade item. She told me she could not sing in Junjuwa but that we should go to the river where other women would join us. Six women got together for that improvised singing session; they were from four different linguistic groups and sang songs in seven
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languages. They knew songs in languages they could not speak, that they had learnt from other women. Most of these songs were associated with public ceremonies and this was why they could sing them without the owner’s permission, but off the record they sang women’s secret songs and, more surprisingly, male secret songs, in both cases in their respective languages.

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

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

Gender was, thus, a criterion under which people grouped themselves, although male and female associations differed in size, goals and motives. Overall it could be said that women were less ‘kin-group’ oriented than men and more concerned with community problems. They also had a role in the
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decision-making process, although it was not always as obvious as the men's. Men, for their part, grouped in smaller units and criticised women's groupings but did not challenge them openly, since many women had positions (office workers, health workers, accountants) and skills that gave them an edge over men and were needed by Junjuwa community and its male residents (access to money, unemployment benefit forms etc.).

7.2 Generation based action.

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

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

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

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

Early marriage for a young man does not necessarily mean he is no longer under older men's authority. Once again, cattle station records show that on each station an old man was in charge of a group of ten to fifteen young men, most of them single, and they all moved regularly from one station to another.
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When I interviewed a former station manager on that practice he argued that it was controlled by the station management and common whenever extra labour was required on a station. Later, while collecting Junjuwa male residents' life stories, I established that these journeys to different stations were used to perform initiations or male rituals as well as offering an opportunity to arrange marriage. One old man, who had been in charge of one of these groups, told me that trips were decided on by the elders, who could then control young men often seen as a threat because they were likely to try to have affairs with the young married women or unmarried ones already promised:

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

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

The combination of changes in rituals, economic autonomy, early access to women as well as such factors as better education, life in settlements, and demographic inequalities has created a wider gap between the generations that has contributed to Junjuwa's instability. In Junjuwa, people tended to group with peers, although among the old and young linguistic affiliations limited age groupings to a language. If young people were less under the control of elders than in the past, these elders still enjoyed privileges and remained in a powerful position at the community level. For example, people who were officially listed as community councillors in 1985 and 1986 (JCCM, Annual General Meeting 1985 and 1986), were those who appeared in the first list of Junjuwa Councillors in 1975 (JCCM, Annual General Meeting 1975), and who before had held a leading position on the mission reserve. But these elders had little if any control over the young people. The lack of control was always put forward in public situations to explain why the young people caused disturbance in community life:
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These young fellas, Bunuba, Walmajarri, Wangkajunga, all the same, them all the same, them do nothing but humbug, humbug all the way, all the time too, drinkin', fightin', disco, humbug all the way. Well, they don't listen us old fellas, maybe we are slack now, but they don't listen and now that Junjuwa place him proper no good one because them young fellas they're runnin' wild (Jack).

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

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

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

Young people were opposed to the strong grip that elders had over Junjuwa, but argued they could not do much about it since they were 'left behind, not given a real chance and not taken into account'. Even when individuals were given an opportunity or decided on their own to bridge the generation gap, pressures within each group were so strong that neither a young man nor an elder had much chance of success. A young Bunuba man was offered the position of trainee project officer in early 1985. The purpose of this training was to give him the opportunity to acquire the required knowledge in a
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year or so, then to be appointed project officer. After less than three months he resigned, even though he had shown some promising ability, skills and commitment during that time. Several factors led him to resign, but two were important in his decision. First, the old councillors were always trying to test his capability for fulfilling the position; second, the other young Bunuba blamed him for working under the same old people he had previously criticised and accused him of having sold out to the elders.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

This was the stereotyped statement heard from nearly all old people (men and women) who belonged to the people's church group. That group was formed at the beginning of Junjuwa community and its members were Walmajarri and Wangkajunga who first resided at the UAM camp in the mid
1950s. Their settlement in the Fitzroy Valley was facilitated by their conversion and the subsequent support they received from the missionaries. Some of these people, mostly Wangkajungu and some late Walmajarri migrants, were also involved in ritual activities, but none of them saw any major contradictions between Christianity and Aboriginal ceremonial life.

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

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

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

Many components of Christian identity made it a particularly attractive one for Junjuwa people: it explained their current settlement in Junjuwa, and it could solve most of their problems. Christian ideology was also put forward to justify Junjuwa's political attitude. Junjuwa leaders were opposed to land rights issues as they were promoted by the KLC, and were against linguistic group oriented claims which should instead be made at the community level (see Chapter Five). Christian Aborigines got together regardless of their individual backgrounds to communicate, sing and pray. Thus, it was not possible for a Christian Aboriginal community to be engaged in a land rights issue that was based on claims made by a sub-group of the community, because such claims
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were in conflict with a Christian identity. A further element that made land claims impossible was the potential for confrontation with White people it created, because when they became Christian, Aborigines had to forget all antagonism that existed between them and non-Aboriginal people. This attitude to land rights was a particularly strong element of Christianity in the Fitzroy Valley. One of the early Aboriginal leaders in the Noonkanbah events converted to Christianity once the crisis was over. He admitted publicly his past mistakes, especially in creating confrontations between Whites and Aborigines. He subsequently created the Kimberley Christian Fellowship (KCF)\(^9\). This was one of the reasons why Junjuwa’s chairman, himself associated with the KCF, was convinced that a better future for Junjuwa could only be reached with the help of Christianity:

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

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

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

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

Finally, Christians often organised joint activities: they travelled outside the Kimberley to attend conventions, they went on trips that mixed Bible studies and Aboriginal economic activities, they gathered every Sunday for services that were followed by a lunch at the UAM compound, and held night
services that included dinner once a week. Therefore, joining them could represent for some a way to escape the boredom of Junjuwa life. In Junjuwa many people spent days in their homes, mainly because they did not have anything to do, but also because they did not have the required status to join groups that had activities. For these people, Christianity was the quickest way to acquire a status that gave opportunities to participate in meetings and trips that kept them busy. Being involved in Christian activities was also a way to limit pressures from relatives during pension weeks, not least because Christianity offered the chance to step aside from the system of duties, obligations and responsibilities that one had towards relatives, since these practices belonged to the past and Christians saw themselves as 'new people'.

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

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

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

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

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

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

While non-Aborigines made distinctions between the children of full and mixed descent, Aboriginal people of full descent did not make any distinction between them. All information I collected relating to this issue, both from Aboriginal people of full and mixed descent, confirmed that the latter were always considered as full Aborigines. Children of mixed descent were given Aboriginal names, they were included in the kinship network, they underwent initiation ceremonies, they spoke the language of their group and nothing in their behaviour could differentiate them from Aboriginal kids of full descent. It seems that for Aborigines, the skin complexion of mixed descent children was not a relevant criterion for considering them as different. However, this attitude changed once people of mixed descent got to adulthood, when they acquired privileges that were denied to people of full descent. Aborigines of mixed descent were the favourite target of missionaries, who relied on them to propagate Christian ideas to others. Therefore, many mixed descent people
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received a good education in English and some were offered opportunities to acquire high school qualifications in Broome, Port Hedland or even Perth. In this process a small percentage of mixed descent Aborigines took this opportunity to sever all links with their Aboriginal families\textsuperscript{11}. Those who returned to live in Fitzroy Crossing have since had many chances to leave the area but somehow do not seem to be able to stay away from it for very long.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Aboriginal people of mixed descent for their part were very frustrated because they felt that their relatives did not acknowledge their contribution to
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the community. Mixed descent people often acted as brokers between government bodies or agencies on one side and their relatives or Junjuwa on the other side, but any unsuccessful initiative from them was interpreted negatively by their Aboriginal families:

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

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

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

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

Despite the problems with their Aboriginal families, people of mixed descent had a good understanding of the problems faced locally by all Aborigines and attempted to solve them at community level. In the process they often got together on the basis of gender. They compared and shared experiences as well as the possibilities they had for improving the situation by using their positions and planned action. Gender was probably the most
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effective basis on which people of mixed descent could get together, although at
times it was challenged by linguistic loyalties. When conflicts existed between
speakers of different languages within Junjuwa, mixed descent Aboriginals
privileged a grouping based on language rather than on gender. These smaller
associations would break down whenever tensions arose within families of
speakers of one language; subsequently, mixed descent people would group
with those from their own kinship network (same father or mother).

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

7.5 Gang based action

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

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

Gangs formed at school as early as grades two and three, when children of
the same community and language stuck together. I am not sure that the
emergence of gang leaders could be dated as early as that, but most gangs
members I interviewed confirmed that they got together during their early
schooling. From this period up to the time gang members reached their early
teens, gang activities were limited to games, in the school yard or within
Junjuwa. These groups of children were called gangs by the kids themselves,
and by teenagers, but in my opinion these groupings did not have all the
characteristics that established and recognised gangs had. A gang had a name
and a leader, had either all male or female membership and was made up of
people affiliated to the same language who lived in one community and were
bound by close genealogical ties. Gang meetings took place regularly at the
same location, to discuss and plan gang activities.
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In Junjuwa I knew of eight gangs that had all the characteristics mentioned above. It was likely that others existed but they were not as prominent. Some gang names referred to the language spoken by its members ('Bunuba Chicks'), others had a name inspired by American movies ('Warriors') or that depicted the behaviour of members ('Midnight strikers'). During my first field trip to Junjuwa, gangs were less numerous and had less colourful names, nor did their members wear distinctive garments as was the case in 1985/1987. I have mentioned in an earlier Chapter the importance of videotapes in people's lives: videos had a very strong influence on gang behaviours, language, clothes and graffiti.\(^{13}\)

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

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

We are 'Warriors', all Walmajarri boys from Bayulu. Our cousins and big brothers them were 'Warriors' too. Them bin say them always had big fights with them mongrels 'Rebels' from Junjuwa. Alright, now I am the boss for them 'Warriors'. One day I bin meetin that damn kid, at the movie in Fitzroy School. Him bin tell me: 'fuck off you Warrior shit, you're on Rebel land...' Well next day my gang and myself we got them, we fight them alright them Rebels mob. We're proper good because my cousin-brother him bin told us
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them trick from that Kung-fu business. But now today, we bin havin big mob of trouble with our own people for that kid from that Rebel mob, him bin proper crook one at the hospital. Well, I don’t know before that them Rebels from Junjuwa, them were proper Walmajarri people just like us. My big brother him bin told me, them Rebels all one mob, all Wangkajunga them fellas... Well, that time them don’t have that name... Us Warriors we don’t know, that new name story, but now we have big mob of problem... we gonna find one more gang to fight properly, show them other gangs that us ‘Warriors’ we are proper strong gang too (Jonathan).

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

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

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

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

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

In some special circumstances when local gangs were threatened by outsiders, all gangs from Fitzroy got together and fought to chase their opponents out of town. This happened once when a gang from Balgo came to Fitzroy Crossing. The night before they arrived, Balgo gang members attacked a young man from a Bayulu gang and stabbed him in the throat with a screw driver. All the Balgo gangs were feared in the Fitzroy Valley and whenever they were in Fitzroy Crossing local gangs overcame their conflicts and got together. The day after the stabbing incident, the Balgo gang went to a disco organised at Fitzroy Crossing's Basket Ball court. They had only been at the disco for a few minutes, when gangs from Junjuwa, Kurnangki, and Bayulu attacked them. Their only chance was to leave town which they did as quickly as they could.
Plate 8

'The Rebel's car'. This car belonged to the leader of the Rebel gang (male Walmajarri from Junjuwa), who had bought it three weeks before this photo was taken. One night he was arrested for drunk-driving and was jailed for ten days. The police officers towed the vehicle to Junjuwa and parked it in front of his house in the Walmajarri section. The vehicle was vandalised and most parts stolen during a raid conducted by members of another gang while the Rebels were out of town. Once the gang leader was released from jail, the gang members got together, and covered the wrecked vehicle with graffiti. It subsequently became their meeting place.
Plate 9

Graffiti by members of 'Bunuba Chick', a female youth gang. It was located on a derelict basketball court which was part of the mission compound. This had been the gang's meeting place and territory a few years ago. The graffiti is fully representative of that by gang members at locations they see as their territory: the names of the gang and leaders are in full, while the rest of the gang members put their initials only.
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Gangs provided an opportunity for young people to form their own independent associations. The criteria for belonging ranged from age group, community of residence, linguistic affiliation, to gender and kinship ties. Activities of gangs differed according to members age, from 'hide and seek' for the younger ones to drinking and fighting for the older. These gangs were a source of frequent conflicts both within Junjuwa and the town. They represented a further basis of complaints made by old people against the younger generation. Gangs were a recent phenomenon and were heavily influenced by American models of youth gangs depicted in videotapes available in Fitzroy Crossing.

7.6 Drinking associations

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

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

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

People from different Aboriginal communities never mixed to drink except in the 'Blackfellow' bar. But drinking sessions in groups were different from drinking at the pub. People who drank at the 'Blackfellow' bar usually did not belong to any drinking associations or for some specific reasons did not join the one they used to drink with. Within each community, drinking, with many
other activities, was organised along language lines. All discussions, and talking while people drank, were in their own language (although most of the swearing was in English). Gender was also an important criterion but not in the sense of female as opposed to male. It is true that men were likely to drink together, but drinking associations of women only were very rare. A group of women drinking alone in the bush at night would have been interpreted by Aboriginal men and women as an open invitation for sexual intercourse. Moreover, even if women decided to drink on their own, once drunk it was likely that they would have been sexually assaulted. Consequently, women had to join an existing drinking association whose members were mostly male. Mixed drinking associations were frequent, usually with a majority of men, and the women generally being either sisters or wives.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Fights between intoxicated people were extremely violent and did not seem to have any limits. Often the people involved were totally unequally matched: several people would not hesitate to attack a single person. Many of the deaths that occurred in Fitzroy Crossing in the last six to eight years were alcohol related, and among those a high percentage were caused by fights. There was always a real danger of these fights getting out of control. Some work
was done by the local police to prevent fighting, but the most efficient control was done by non-drinkers from each group in Junjuwa who checked on their own relatives’ behaviour throughout the night. They travelled back and forth, in private and community vehicles, between Junjuwa and the drinking spots. They took back home those too drunk to walk or to defend themselves if a fight broke out. They also limited the amount of alcohol available, when they realised that people had had enough to drink. Extra cans were confiscated by relatives and given back the following day. They also attempted to defuse conflicts and disputes. What was really surprising in their attitudes was that a sober person never took advantage of the situation to settle an old conflict with any intoxicated person:

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

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

Drinking associations were small groupings formed by several former members of the same gang, together with female relatives and older men. Each drinking association had the choice of several drinking spots. Activities were not limited to drinking but extended to fighting and the like. Non-drinkers were also involved with drinking associations because they had to control their relatives’ behaviour. Although these groupings were small and their activities limited they had a strong influence on life in Junjuwa.
Legend:
1: drinking spots of Bunuba from Junjuwa
2: drinking spots of Walmajarri from Junjuwa
3: drinking spots of Wangkajunga from Junjuwa
4: drinking spots of Kurnangki residents
5: drinking spots of Bayulu residents
6: drinking spots of 'Kaudji Pardi residents or of Wangkajunga from settlements outside town
7: drinking spots of Walmajarri from settlements outside town
X: open drinking spots

MAP 9
Main drinking spots in Fitzroy Crossing
1986

SCALE 4 cm = 1 km
Chapter Seven

7.7 Conclusion

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

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

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

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

5 See life stories in Chapter Two.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

14 See Chapter 9 for the full details of this story.
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15 With the prospect of purchasing the UAM store, Junjuwa's own store was developed and the community took a 50% participation in the running of the mission store in order to be prepared for the take over.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

8.1 Aboriginal Leadership

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

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

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

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

Not only could the councillors not act individually but they could not interfere when Junjuwa residents who spoke a different language from themselves caused problems. Nevertheless, councillors saw their positions as prestigious and did their best to hold onto them throughout the years. Consequently, appointments to the Junjuwa council were either the privilege of the same individuals, or were passed on amongst members of a few families. This is clear from looking at Junjuwa's records. The first council, appointed in May 1975 had ten members. Five were Bunuba, or were recorded as such, according to Junjuwa's constitution. The last list of Junjuwa's councillors I had access to was dated from November 1987. This list showed that fourteen councillors had been appointed, including nine Bunuba men. For the 1987 list, four names were from the 1975 list and all subsequent lists, and four other names were those of people appointed in 1976 and in position since then.
names that appeared in the 1987 council were those of either younger brothers or sons of councillors nominated in 1975 who had died or stepped down. Further, genealogical links that existed between councillors, either those of 1975 or 1987, confirmed that such positions were monopolised by a few families (see Figure 7).

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

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

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

1975 Year of appointment
R 1976 Year of retirement
+ 1978 Year of Death

FIGURE 7
Kin connections of all the council members appointed between 1975 and 1987
Chapter Eight

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

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

By using such statements, councillors indicated their willingness to get involved in Junjuwa's affairs but not to interfere with internal conflicts in other language groups. Most of the time this attitude was respected and this was probably why leaders who were not councillors were not disturbed by those who were: the latter did not challenge the authority the former had over their group. In fact, the support of leaders was needed by councillors for approval of council decisions, and in return leaders were granted privileges by councillors when needed. The involvement of non-appointed leaders in Junjuwa life became more significant from the 1980s onwards. Prior to this, only council leaders attended council meetings. From 1980, community council minutes show that people other than councillors participated in meetings.

All leaders were consulted for any important decisions even if they did not attend council meetings regularly. Council meetings I attended brought together between fifteen and thirty people according to the time of the year, issues discussed and others factors. Not a single decision out of all those discussed during the meetings at which I was present was taken the first time it was raised. Important issues were debated during several council meetings and prior to each one leaders, councillors as well as others, got together along language lines to talk about it. Afterwards, a spokesman from each language, usually a person who was both a leader and a councillor, presented his fellow leaders' view(s) at the council meeting. A similar process took place after each council meeting: the positions taken by leaders and councillors during the
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meeting were commented on at the level of each language group. During and between meetings councillors acted as liaison persons and brokers between leaders of different sub-groups. If an issue was particularly sensitive, a meeting was called during which all leaders, as well as councillors and female residents, would present their views. Then, when a decision was reached, it was up to the chairman to put the issue on the council meeting's agenda.

Whenever a particular issue was raised in a council meeting, only a few councillors would talk and the impression given was that the councillors were taking a decision: however, the leaders had already agreed on that decision prior to the meeting. Whenever a decision had obviously been forced by anyone or taken while a leader was away, it was likely that it would be cancelled at the first opportunity and reconsidered afterwards. In such cases the chairman addressed the meeting and argued that some councillors or leaders did not quite understand what the decision taken was all about and that it was better to discuss that matter once more. In fact it was usually the case that meetings between groups of leaders had already been held, the unwanted decision rejected and a new one adopted instead.

After 1986 Junjuwa's annual general election, during which the chairman came first, but with the second person very close behind (see Bunuba coup, Chapter Six), the community adviser suggested that this person could be appointed as vice-chairman. Some councillors commented positively on the idea and during the confusing minutes that followed the chairman's election, it seemed to the community adviser that the idea had been approved by the entire council. Consequently, the challenger to the chairman's position was officially appointed vice-chairman. Four days later the chairman called for another meeting during which several leaders from various sub-groups as well as councillors argued that they had been rushed over the decision concerning a vice-chairman and claimed they had reconsidered their choice. Instead of the young Bunuba man they nominated a mature Bunuba who during the previous months had done a lot to improve health standards in the community. The nomination made by non-Bunuba councillors was unanimously supported by all those in attendance. It was an interesting move for several reasons: first, because non-Bunuba councillors showed they did not challenge the first vice-chairman being a Bunuba; second, because instead of a young man who proposed to 'get rid of Walmajarri people' and therefore threatened community cohesiveness, leaders and councillors appointed a person who had worked for the well-being of all Junjuwa residents; third, because Bunuba leaders and councillors who were already divided on the choice of the first vice-chairman were helped to a resolution of an internal conflict with the assistance of leaders from other languages; finally, because the chairman and the community adviser, who were both the target of the challenger but nonetheless agreed on his appointment as vice-chairman, were helped out of this difficult situation by all councillors and leaders.

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When Junjuwa residents, usually young men, contested the monopoly of leadership by a few families within Junjuwa, councillors rejected critics by adopting attitudes similar to those described previously, when younger males had been appointed to the council (see Chapter Seven). Councillors who had been in their position for over a decade stated publicly that they were prepared to step down anytime, but they added that they had to remain on the council since, as they put it, none of the young men was able to do a 'good job'. In such statements they used the image of the community being a group to which they devoted all their time and energy. This notion of working for Junjuwa was a typical form of the rhetoric used by the councillors: they had 'made' the place, had maintained Junjuwa as 'one mob' throughout the years and were not prepared to step down if younger people did nothing but spoil their 'work'. Councillors also stated they had an intimate knowledge of what was required in that position: ability to deal with non-Aboriginal people, and experience with meetings at all levels. All these elements showed that young people could not be appointed without the community being put at risk: commitment, hard work and time-consuming activities were put forward by old time councillors, whereas privileges advantages were forgotten or omitted.

8.1.2 Sub-group leaders

"I am the boss for my mob nobody can talk for us, nobody can talk for me" (Fred).

I pointed out in the first section of this Chapter that not all councillors were leaders and vice versa, although I also indicated that those appointed as community leaders (councillors) rarely challenged other leaders’ authority since they needed their support. Other leaders were either spokesperson for members of one minor language group which did not have a representative at the council (Gooniyandi, Jaru, Kija), or leaders of sub-groups that existed within the main language groups (Bunuba, Walmajarri, Wangkajunga). None of these leaders had the power to veto council decisions but they could be an obstacle to their implementation. Each leader had followers7, who abided by Junjuwa’s rules only if these rules were supported by their leaders.

For example, Junjuwa council had passed a rule under which any person caught bringing alcohol into Junjuwa should be fined $50 for the first offence and $100 for any further breach of the rule. The rule had been discussed at several council meetings but was voted on by a few councillors only, mainly Walmajarri. An old Bunuba man, not a councillor but leader of a sub-group of that language, brought two cartons of beer in the village and organised a 'drinking party' in one of his followers' houses. The house was located directly opposite of the chairman's father house, who could not ignore what was going on. The same evening, some Jaru men, encouraged by their leader, drank beer and played loud music in their leader's house. Neither the councillors nor the chairman interfered with any of the drinking going on in these two houses. In
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the case of the Bunuba leader, he wanted to show that the chairman’s father, himself a Bunuba, who had voted on the rule did not consult with Bunuba leaders before supporting the decision. The Jaru leader, although he also challenged a rule which for him did not exist, had something else to say: he was a leader and since he did not vote on that rule he did not see himself bound by to respect it in his house. This controversial rule was eventually adopted but had to be discussed by all leaders before it was put on the meeting agenda again, when it was approved by the council as well as by representatives of various factions of Junjuwa.

For some leaders it was a personal choice not to be a councillor. In doing so, they preserved their group autonomy and did not feel individually bound to council moves they did not approve of. Further, being out of the council put them in a powerful position since their support was needed by the councillors. Finally, although some groups resided in Junjuwa for long periods of time they maintained their own coherence, leadership and autonomy that enable them to leave Junjuwa whenever a suitable opportunity existed (see Kurlku people Chapter Four). Such a decision would be difficult to take if leaders of these sub-groups were councillors.

As I have shown, many types of groups and sub-groups co-existed within Junjuwa, and forms of leadership were various, some being more prestigious than others. Some people were eager to be a councillor because it was an avenue for acquiring a status that gave some power, but leaders whose status was based on traditional values did not need to enhance their authority. For example, a Bunuba elder, who kept his distance from community affairs and attended few council meetings, during which he remained silent, had nonetheless a very strong influence over council’s decisions. He was consulted by Bunuba councillors prior to and after council meetings, the chairman visited him at least once a day, and even Walmajarri leaders would not decide to do anything in Junjuwa without his approval. He always kept a low profile and spoke rarely about Junjuwa’s affairs. His leadership came from the fact that he was the only custodian of Bunuba secret sites close to Junjuwa, and even if Bunuba ceremonial life had almost vanished his religious inheritance made him a powerful and highly respected person. The only public statement he made was to join the challenger’s supporters during Junjuwa’s chairman election in 1986. I was counting ‘votes’ and was extremely surprised by his attitude, especially because his brothers, although they openly supported the challenger, lined up behind Andrew. In fact, the Bunuba leader was the only leader to display publicly his support for the challenger. The warning was clear enough and immediately after the election, the chairman and Walmajarri councillors altered some of the attitudes which had prompted the ‘Bunuba coup’.

Another category of leader was those too old to be involved in community affairs. They usually spoke very little English and for them Junjuwa’s affairs were like ‘Gardiya business’. In that matter they were literally from another world and had not yet assimilated all the changes they went through during
their life time. This lack of understanding of community affairs did not mean they were not taken into account in the decision-making process. On the contrary, they were consulted on many issues but slowed down this process considerably because lengthy parts of the meetings with them would be devoted to translation. Since meetings were primarily called to discuss community affairs and to take decisions, these old men did not have to participate. When meetings were important, such as the transfer of the UAM lease to Junjuwa, or if ceremonial activities were discussed, they joined in and took a prominent role in the debate.

I have already mentioned that seating arrangements during council meetings displayed people's linguistic identity as well as their sub-group affiliations. When meetings brought many people together, the seating arrangement was even more revealing of differences that existed between appointed leaders and others. It was also the occasion for a leader to show his support to other leaders or councillors by sitting next to or behind them. But if a leader needed to display his strength he would bring his followers along and they would sit together on their own if they did not wish to be associated with any particular group during the meeting (see example of seating arrangements in Figure 8).

8.1.3 Community chairman

"There is my family, my in-laws, my sisters' husbands, the old people, the project officer and myself right in the middle. Sometimes I really don't know where I stand" (Andrew).

I have mentioned in a previous section that councillors were chosen only amongst a few families. For the chairman's position this choice was even more restricted: all but one of Junjuwa's successive chairmen came from the two most prominent Bunuba families (see Figure 9). Some members of one family had mixed with Walmajarri and Wangkajunga by marrying into these language groups. The current family's head was involved in a strategy of marriages for his daughters designed to extend his network of alliance beyond the Kimberley area. The second family, by contrast, was 'purely' Bunuba; only two marriages of male members of that family were to non-Bunuba, and both marriages did not last long.

During my first period of field work in Fitzroy Crossing I lived in the Junjuwa chairman's house. At this time the Junjuwa chairman was Bunuba, and custodian of significant Bunuba sites located on Mount House station, and had recently moved to Fitzroy Crossing. He did not have close kin in the community but was appointed chairman because no one in the two prominent families was available at that time and both families agreed to nominate him. My stay was short but it was sufficient to realise that the chairman was under
permanent pressure: people wanted to borrow money, others called on him to settle disputes, drunks came to fight him and his position was constantly under challenge. All this was from the Aboriginal people in the community, but he also had many commitments and contacts with non-Aboriginal people that were as demanding: stations managers in need of workers contacted him, hospital and school staff called on him to represent Junjuwa at various meetings, local police relied on him for information on Junjuwa residents. Despite the negative side of his position it brought him some compensations, not in the form of a salary but through his followers who were provided with employment available in town (cattle station, hospital, bakery, butcher shop). In return, his followers would either give him gifts in kind or a part of their wages.

At this time Junjuwa's residents were already facing alcohol related problems, thus the chairman, himself a heavy drinker, decided to set an example by remaining 'dry' during the time of his appointment. He also organised, with the support of several councillors, to control people and vehicles entering Junjuwa in order to keep alcohol out. Because of his lack of close kin within the community he was frequently challenged, but his main difficulties arose from the fact that he was outspoken. Once, he attended a meeting outside the Kimberley and was pressed by Europeans to state Junjuwa's position on a sensitive issue connected with land rights. He presented his own view as Junjuwa's and did not inform Junjuwa's councillors or leaders about it. Not long afterwards he was publicly accused of acting too much on his own initiative. The same night he got drunk and rolled a community vehicle. Two days later he resigned. He was not any better or worse than previous chairmen from the two prominent Bunuba families but the lack of close kin within the community forced him to rely on followers who did not support him when he needed it because their own relatives came as a priority before him.

Between 1985 and 1987, I had better opportunities to know a different Junjuwa chairman, and all the contradictions inherent in the position. This particular chairman's personal background made him extremely representative of Junjuwa.

Andrew was born on Leopold Station in 1951. His mother was Walmajarri, and his father an Aboriginal person of mixed descent, whose mother was Jaru. His parents separated not long after he was born and his mother remarried, this time to a Bunuba man. Andrew saw his step-father as his real father since he raised him. The family lived on Leopold station until 1966, then moved to stay at Brooking Springs station for a few years and finally settled at the mission reserve in Fitzroy Crossing in 1971. Andrew's father the leader of the largest Bunuba sub-group and has been described to me as the last 'Bunuba King'. He was the Bunuba people's spokesperson while they were established at the mission compound. He was subsequently appointed Junjuwa's first chairman and kept the position until he died. Andrew learnt about stockwork in his early teens, then was employed as stockman on
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Gogo station. This was the time he was initiated: he underwent the Walungari ceremony and was circumcised by a group of Jaru and Wangkajunga men at the ceremonial ground behind Bayulu community. During all the time he was employed on stations he was a heavy drinker. At the same period he used to be the leader of a gang of young Bunuba stockmen, who went to Derby after paydays to drink and fight other gangs. He was arrested by Derby police several times and was once sent to Broome Jail for about a month.

When Andrew’s family moved to the UAM compound his life changed drastically. He renewed contacts with his former school teacher, whose strong personality had impressed Andrew while he was attending the AIM school between 1958 and 1962. In a couple of years he became a dedicated Christian, stopped drinking, learnt to play the guitar, acquired a good command of English and a better education than most of his peers. He married a Wangkajunga woman, who had been married once and had three children to her first husband. He was appointed Council member in mid 1977, and was for years Junjuwa’s youngest councillor. He underwent subincision with a group of Wangkajunga men in 1979. The same year he started to work at UAM store as a store assistant. He was a dedicated and committed worker and within two years he was able to take care of the store on his own.

He was appointed Junjuwa’s chairman in 1985 and subsequently nominated his former European supervisor at the UAM store for the community adviser’s position. Over the years he had became a very strong Christian and was actively involved with the KCF. He was looking towards a brighter future for Junjuwa community in which only Aboriginal people would be employed. He was eager to improve the image Aboriginal people had locally and promoted integration with Australian society through self-determination. His personal background and his high respect for the Aboriginal Law faced him with contradictions he could not overcome at times and resulted in his allowing a situation he had been criticising to be perpetuated (privileges to some people, alcoholism, lack of commitment, dependence on a non-Aboriginal).

Partly because Andrew’s life was a summary of Aboriginal local history he appeared to be Junjuwa’s ideal chairman. The various aspects of his personality attracted followers from many backgrounds and statuses in Junjuwa (Walmajarri, Bunuba, Wangkajunga, mixed descent people, Christians, Law people, former drinkers), but because he was so representative of Junjuwa he had also many opponents. Andrew’s opponents were mainly Bunuba male of his age group, for whom, paradoxically, Andrew’s appointment represented a threat. He was the first non-Bunuba chairman12, and as such his Walmajarri kin as well as his Wangkajunga allies were seen as a menace by some Bunuba, who felt his appointment was part of a ‘Walmajarriisation’ of Junjuwa. Andrew had enemies as well amongst young Walmajarri who did not achieve what he did and felt he betrayed them by accepting Junjuwa’s chairmanship. Most of the young Walmajarri did not see the community as a ‘Walmajarri place’, and
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therefore a Walmajarri chairman was necessarily someone who accepted 'working for Bunuba' at his own people's expense.

Junjuwa's chairmanship was a position that required a lot of forbearance. Andrew received a salary as chairman from funds provided by DAA under a scheme for an Aboriginal trainee community adviser. His main responsibility was to act as a liaison person between the community adviser and councillors, which was a very demanding and frustrating task. Andrew's position gave him full time access to a community vehicle and a say over appointments to positions available within Junjuwa. He relied heavily on his close kin and relatives to support him in his duties, and he expected them to set examples that should inspire other people. For example, he encouraged his younger brother, his sisters and their husbands to stop drinking. Similarly, Andrew involved his sisters and his step-children in working activities for Junjuwa enterprises. He appointed his step-son as councillor and gave him the opportunity of a trainee baker's apprenticeship course in Derby, in order to become Junjuwa's first Aboriginal baker in the future. He received council's approval to employ one of his sisters and a step-daughter at Junjuwa community store. He truly believed his own family should be an example in Junjuwa, but many saw it as privileges accorded to the chairman's relatives:

Every time we give a job to someone from Junjuwa they quit after two or three weeks and put the shame on us all. Well, I think my own relatives should back me up in my job as a chairman. Most of them have a problem: they drink, they hang around Junjuwa doing nothing... I want to help them but they should support me in return. But look (here he named one of his sisters and two step-children), they come late at work, they got back into drinking after two weeks, they rob some old people of their change and gave away things free to their friends. Alright, they put the blame on me now, and all the other people think I gave them jobs because they are my mob, they are wrong. I gave them jobs because as chairman's relatives they should help me, but they did not do it and now everybody talk about me (Andrew).

The problems Andrew faced in this area were not only caused by the lack of support from his relatives who left their jobs and criticism from other people about privileges given to his family. His immediate relatives and allies, on the basis of their relatedness to the chairman, challenged community rules and leadership to the point that Andrew found himself in a difficult situation: if he supported them against Junjuwa's leaders he would put his own position at risk, and had he sided with his relatives he would have offended council members and his family would claim he had forgotten about his basic duties:

That Jangala, brother of mine, same mother same country. Well, because he is chairman he goes front and left us behind. He should help us all the way, we are his mob, same blood too, me I fight for him everyday but him he sticks with them old people, Gardiya and Christian mob. I don't know maybe you think he is a good chairman, but myself I think he is proper not good as a brother (Malcolm).
FIGURE 8
Example of seating arrangements during community council meetings

Legend:
B = Bunuba
W = Walmajarri
V = Wangkajungu
G = Gooniyandi
1 and 2 are normal seating arrangements
3 seating arrangement shows a conflict between language groups
4 seating arrangement shows a challenge to a community decision by a leader.
FIGURE 9

Kin connections of successive community chairmen (1975–1987)

G Goonyandi
B Bunuba
V Wangkajunga
W Walmajarri
▲ or ● deceased
1975 Year as Chairman
+1978 Year of Death
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Andrew’s siblings’ negative attitudes could be absorbed within Junjuwa’s conflicts and settled through the tightening of kinship networks (see Chapter Six). But as already pointed out, Andrew’s father was involved in a matrimonial strategy that created several problems for Andrew as chairman. Andrew had three sisters; the older one had married a Jaru from Halls Creek, the second sister’s husband was a Kukatja from Balgo and Andrew’s father was attempting to organise the youngest sister’s marriage to a Warlpiri from Yuendum. The dynamics of this strategy were fascinating, and it represented an achievement for Andrew’s father; but, all these ’outsiders’, who usually kept a low profile during the first months after they had moved into Junjuwa, later took advantage of the fact they had married into the chairman’s family. Whenever Andrew’s sisters’ husbands got drunk and challenged Junjuwa’s residents, they often threatened to call on their ‘mob’ from their former place of residence. Such outsiders presented a danger for Junjuwa’s residents (see Chapter Five), and Andrew had to get personally involved to settle the conflict. He could not take sides against his sisters’ husbands without challenging his own father, and a familial conflict would erupt. Thus, at first Andrew did his best to limit the extent of several disputes involving his sisters’ husbands, then he decided not to get involved anymore. He justified his attitude by pointing out that since these men failed to support him as a chairman, as good brothers-in-law should, he was not bound to be involved in their problems. His attitude received council support but his brothers-in-law reacted very angrily.

About a week after Andrew had made his attitude public, his younger sister’s fiance, a young Warlpiri man from Yuendum, stabbed Andrew’s sister and threatened to kill himself. Andrew’s sister and Jonathan, the Warlpiri man, had been drinking with several other people, at a popular drinking spot next to the Brooking Spring creek (see Map X). Suddenly, Jonathan stood up, started to shout and swear loudly, within minutes he stripped himself naked. Immediately all people but Andrew’s sister ran away, but because she was not supposed to see a naked man (circumcision and subincision scars), Jonathan stabbed her several times in the arm while shouting:

I am the Law, I am a Law man, no woman can look at the Law, no chairman can beat me, I’ll kill you, I’ll kill him, I’ll kill myself (Jonathan).

Those who had fled the spot rushed to Junjuwa’s store to seek assistance from Andrew. When Andrew reached Brooking Spring creek, his sister had fainted and Jonathan was standing next to her, still naked, the knife pointed to his own stomach. Andrew talked to him quietly, mentioned Jonathan’s relatives at Yuendum, and said that he would help him to visit them. Andrew had taken off his shirt and attempted to put it around Jonathan’s waist, but every time he got close enough to do so Jonathan ran away. Many people had gathered to watch. Suddenly, Jonathan started to cry and called on his brother-in-law to help him:
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Jangala, Jangala, please help me, that grog makes me mad, I gonna kill myself now, please Jangala, if you care for me, help me right now... (Jonathan).

But, when Andrew was about to cover Jonathan with his shirt, the latter tried to stab him in the chest. Fortunately for Andrew, Jonathan's drunkenness had slowed down his movements and Andrew was able to grab Jonathan's forearm with one hand and punch Jonathan with the other. Then he tied his shirt around Jonathan's waist, carried him back to his car and drove straight to the police station. Meanwhile somebody had taken Andrew's sister to the hospital. All this was related to me by a very distressed Andrew who expressed his frustration and dejection over the incident:

Yesterday, that problem with my in-law, it was really bad, but nobody helped, nobody backed me up. No councillors, no leaders, no community adviser, I am always on my own. When we talk it's always yes, yes, yes... They all agree, then nobody acts, they do nothing to show their support to me. They all do things on their own: community adviser, councillors, old people, young people, they never really work together. Look at me now I do the rubbish round, I look after the store, I do office work, at night I am at the gate to check for grog. I am on my own all the time. But if I decide something on my own, I am blamed, they say I am like a Gardiya in the station time. Now my in-laws put shame on me, they caused trouble in Junjuwa and they are not from the place, of course people blame me for my in-laws' behaviour, but what can I do? I am alone (Andrew).

It was true that Andrew was isolated and had too many things to take care of by himself. Because Andrew wanted to involve everybody and fought against family and councillors' privileges, he could not rally behind him those whose authority was based on leadership and privileges, and the lack of support became obvious. In public statements all council members and leaders claimed they supported Junjuwa's chairman, but in reality he was often left on his own to act and take decisions.

Consequently Andrew had to seek support from elsewhere, either from young people or from non-Aboriginal people. But in both cases his initiatives were strongly challenged by community councillors, and sub-group leaders as well as Junjuwa residents, who all argued he was going beyond his duty: a chairman was a representative of people's views and ideas and not a person who could act on his own. For example, Andrew agreed to rent the community bus to Fitzroy Xpress when the band performed away from Fitzroy Crossing. He supported his own proposal by explaining to old councillors that young people would not take part in Junjuwa's affairs if the community's policy was not supportive of them. Andrew reminded councillors that he himself had played in a band, and at that time the lack of interest from his own people distressed him. He added that he got out of trouble because some white people helped him, but now time had come for old Aboriginal people to support their young people more positively. Subsequently, some band members came to council meetings to show their interest in community affairs. They obtained the
use of Junjuwa’s bus for three live performances and everybody seemed happy about this change of attitude from both sides. Unfortunately, during a trip to Broome, Fitzroy Xpress members travelled with friends who transported alcohol in Junjuwa’s bus. One Junjuwa’s councillor was at Broome and reported to the community council this breach of Junjuwa’s rules. Even though the band members apologised publicly at the next council meeting and asked forgiveness, the councillors blamed them for ‘making a bad name for Junjuwa and its people’ and consequently decided to suppress the access to Junjuwa’s bus. Further, Andrew’s responsibility was pointed out because he had proposed the idea against the older councillors’ advice. Consequently, young people stayed away from council meetings and for a while Andrew was reluctant to take personal initiatives.

Despite all the problems Andrew’s relatives and allies caused him, both groups represented a vital support that he could not neglect. This was demonstrated at the 1986 Junjuwa Annual General Meeting during the chairman’s election. I have already discussed the challenge to Andrew’s position made by a young Bunuba man, but Andrew’s wife’s relatives’ attitude was significant in the light of what has just been said. They all stood aside for a while until it was clear that people who had gathered behind the challenger were more numerous than those behind Andrew. Then, Andrew’s wife’s relatives joined Andrew’s supporters, who without this last minute support would have lost the election. Their attitudes reinforced the Bunuba people’s negative feelings against Andrew’s non-Bunuba kin, followers and allies. This problem was partly overcome at the following election during which both candidates, Andrew and a Bunuba councillor, who had been chairman previously, got the same number of votes (JCCM 03/11/1987). The community adviser suggested a joint-chairmanship that was approved by the candidates and supported by the council.

Junjuwa’s chairman needed to be a qualified and very dedicated person. Responsibilities and tasks were numerous, both inside and outside Junjuwa. The main problem a chairman faced was caused by his relatives and various factions of Junjuwa which at times supported or challenged the chairman’s authority. Therefore a good chairman needed to have supporters and followers in many sub-groups and informal associations that made up Junjuwa community. Overall, it was a very demanding and frustrating position. This was not just the case in Junjuwa and I do not have knowledge of any chairman in Aboriginal settlements in the Fitzroy Valley area who lasted for long in the position. All chairpersons attracted critics and challenges that often forced them to quit regardless of the way they took care of community affairs

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8.2 Non-Aboriginal Leadership

Non-Aboriginal people employed by Aboriginal communities often have a strong influence over decisions taken by these communities. The situation can reach an extreme when non-Aboriginal people control nearly everything in one given community: access to cash, use of communities’ vehicles and employment allocation. Such cases did exist in the Fitzroy Valley area and these community advisers enjoyed much power locally. These aspects made it a very attractive position for some. It was nevertheless a position full of constraints, frustrations and a heavy work load, making it a difficult one to remain in for a long period.

In the Kimberley, white people have always enjoyed top positions in the pyramidal hierarchy that existed on cattle stations. It was the ‘white boss’ who took all decisions, and told the workers how, where and when tasks should be performed, and no initiatives could be taken without his approval. Even in some situations in which the white manager had been ‘taught’ station work by Aboriginal stockmen and relied on them to keep the station going, the white manager decided on wages, movements of people and living conditions (Marshall 1988:103). After a period of do or die which had traumatised several generations of Kimberley Aborigines, came a paternalistic era, although even during this period the use of the whip was not uncommon (Marshall 1988:123-131). Later, missionaries took over from station managers as the principal authority Aboriginal people had to deal with, and strong discipline was supplemented by a resolute paternalism on the mission reserves. Even though life on mission reserves was a totally different relationship between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people, the ‘do’ and ‘do not’ had set the limit to Aboriginal life within the mission boundaries, all activities depending on the approval of the White authority.

In the case of Junjuwa, the first non-Aboriginal people involved with the community were the UAM superintendent and a local DCW officer (see Chapter Four). Interviews and council minutes confirm that paternalistic attitudes by the former and control over the decision making process by the latter were the main characteristics of their involvement with the community. As a result of the history of Black and White relationship most of Junjuwa’s residents have been ‘brain washed’ by the supremacy of non-Aboriginal over Aborigines to the point that they would not take particular kinds of decisions on their own, if there was a non-Aboriginal person to be found. This attitude was sometimes used as a strategy by Junjuwa residents to avoid the responsibility of a bad or unpopular decision, that consequently was taken by a Gardiya. Overall, however, Aborigines in Junjuwa were not aware of their own rights and did not make a clear distinction the way they dealt with non-Aborigines in
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Junjuwa today compared with the station times. This is revealed for instance in the vocabulary people used and in their attitudes towards White people. This was made clear to me once when the Junjuwa chairman approached me to find out if he had the power to veto a decision that Junjuwa’s community adviser had taken without his consent. When I told him that the community employed a project officer and consequently council members had the authority to dismiss him, if needed, he barely believed me.

It is important to point out at this stage that the community adviser’s personality played a major role in the way they dealt with people and fulfilled their positions. In order to show how different styles in performing community advisers’ tasks influenced Junjuwa’s life, I will present portraits of the last three persons who were employed by Junjuwa in that position.

8.2.1 "If you want to get something from these bastards, you have to kick them in the ass" (Russell).

Russell was appointed Junjuwa’s project officer between 1981 and 1984\textsuperscript{16}. He resigned from the position because he was under a lot of pressure from DAA and Junjuwa’s residents, and had he not done so he would have been dismissed. He was born in England in 1925, came to Australia as a child and was brought up in Perth. Russell moved to the Kimberley after World War II and worked on stations as a windmill and bore specialist. He lived at Christmas Creek for about 10 years and was manager at Brooking Springs Station in 1972/3. At this time many Bunuba people, who afterwards moved to Junjuwa, were living at Brooking Springs. Russell was married to a Bunuba woman whose family included several custodians of significant sites located alongside the Fitzroy between Geikie Gorge and the old crossing. This last element was predominant in his appointment as Junjuwa’s first community adviser:

He was chosen because he was married to an important Bunuba woman, was known to the community and ‘has practical attributes’ (NACOC 1981; McMahon 1984:15)

Russell was involved in several business ventures that had all failed because of poor management. Locally, he was an important figure: he was a member of the Derby Shire Council, was a Justice of the Peace\textsuperscript{17}, and member of many local associations. He had a strong influence over local Aborigines because he had taken part in many initiation ceremonies and was the local undertaker. Further, Russell and his wife fostered a number of mixed descent Aboriginal boys and girls, and were managing the Fitzroy Crossing Group Home between 1976 and 1980\textsuperscript{18}. Many local White and Aboriginal people
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alike hated his attitudes towards Aborigines but it was difficult to by-pass him locally. This is how he was described by the DCW district officer in 1984:

He came to Australia as a child and was brought up by the Christian Brothers in Perth. This upbringing partly explains his familiarity with authoritarian, institutional structures and his lack of familiarity with more open, non-hierarchical interaction... He is often described as authoritarian, paternalistic, bombastic, cruel, kind, humorous, a God hater, overbearing, a 'character'... He has had no training or experience as an enabling, developmental community worker... His only family is his immediate family of wife, son and foster children. He often emphasises in conversation how much Junjuwa people need him and I suspect it is important to appreciate the personal investment he has in Junjuwa and the power status and sense of belonging it gives to him (McMahon 1984:15-16).

McMahon's last comment was confirmed by Russell himself when I interviewed him in 198819. Russell told me that he wished to remain associated with Junjuwa because he saw many residents as his own relatives and in his opinion local Aborigines were not yet ready to run the community on their own, therefore it was better for them that he was involved rather than some "young bloke from down south ignorant of local Blacks" (sic). Russell was prepared to spend the rest of his life in the area because 'here he was somebody'. During the time Russell was Junjuwa project officer he organised the community like a cattle station: non-Aboriginal people at the top with monopoly over expenditures, job allocation and vehicles. People of mixed descent in charge of various community programs (meals on wheels, garden project), and as community workers (administration work, bakery, butcher shop). Aboriginal people of full descent were mainly unemployed, or pensioners. Only some of them were labourers employed in low status jobs for community programs and shops (see Figure 10).

![Pyramidal model of hierarchical organization in the Kimberley](after McMahon 1984:21)

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The Aborigines of mixed descent were either his foster children or workers he had previously employed in his various enterprises. This pyramidal organisation gave him full control over the community. Whenever a councillor or a leader criticised or challenged Russell's attitude, he was 'bought off' by receiving personal advantages such as the use of community vehicles or individual loans, in both cases granted by Russell. An audit completed in 1985 by an accountant from DAA showed that all vehicles owned by councillors had been purchased with community money and that almost two thirds of the loans granted between 1982 and 1984 had never been paid back to Junjuwa. Informal surveys I conducted showed that privileges had been granted to all important members of the most prominent families in Junjuwa. Russell's paternalistic attitudes: meals served at home, shopping done by community workers for Junjuwa residents and use of the book down system, were combined with the strong personal influences he possessed over Junjuwa residents and increased people's dependency on him. Russell always put himself between Junjuwa people and other White people, and gradually severed all contacts that could have threatened his stronghold over the community. For example, the UAM superintendent was notified that he should not attend Junjuwa council meetings anymore, the KLC and MWW executive were also notified that they were not welcome in Junjuwa (JCCM 07/04/1982). These letters had been drafted and signed by Russell in the name of Junjuwa council, and several councillors reacted strongly against this action (JCCM 12/05/1982). Finally when DAA district officers came to deal with Junjuwa, he did his best to prevent contacts between them and Junjuwa leaders by sending the latter away or organising meetings in his house.

By 1980-1, all programs initiated by missionaries in the early years of Junjuwa community (see Chapter Three) had been abandoned and consequently Aboriginal involvement in these developmental projects had disappeared. The fact that Junjuwa residents did not have much of a say in the running of the community did not seem to distress them. Only a few people complained about having their outstanding bills deducted from their social benefits before they received it. What forced Russell to resign was his constant willingness to deal in the name of the people. Two surveys were organised by mining companies to record sites in an area of the Bunuba Territory, northwest of Fitzroy Crossing near the Erskine Range. In both cases, Russell provided a survey team made up with Aboriginals of mixed descent, who he claimed were 'traditional owners' of the area. They flew over the area in a helicopter and cleared the entire area of any significant sites. When this was brought to the knowledge of Junjuwa people, Bunuba people, including those related to Russell, were extremely distressed: they approached the local DCW district officer to seek assistance from him, lodged an official complaint to DAA in Derby and approached the Kimberley office of the Aboriginal Legal Service in order to find out how they could dismiss Russell. They were told that Junjuwa
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council had the power to sack the project officer if not satisfied with his work. This proved to be a real challenge since no Aboriginal people had previously found themselves in that situation, and the council could not take such a decision. Discontent increased when Russell used his position of Justice of the Peace to fine heavily the people who had contacted DCS and DAA. They appeared in the local court after they had been arrested for creating a 'disturbance' at the Aboriginal bar. It was probably just before the council was about to reach a decision to terminate his appointment that Russell resigned from his position.

8.2.2 "I am happy to help Junjuwa people to achieve something, but I'll never put my own ideas in their minds" (Jeff).

Once the DAA's Derby office had been notified of Russell's resignation, the vacant position was advertised. The short list was drawn up by DAA and two applicants selected. They both made the trip to Fitzroy Crossing to be introduced to Junjuwa council, accompanied by one DAA district officer. The councillors agreed to appoint Jeff, but they did not make their choice immediately, notifying DAA and the successful applicant a week after the meeting.

Jeff, originally from Victoria, was in his late twenties but had lived and worked in various states. He had good experience with Aboriginal people since he had been community adviser at Docker River in the Northern Territory for four years. His experience in this field was combined with a good knowledge of Aboriginal administration, and he was fluent in Pitjantjara. A few Walmajarri and Wangkajunga councillors in Junjuwa could speak Pitjantjara and they had been very impressed with his command of the language. Jeff had a completely different approach to the position from Russell, but nonetheless was introduced to his job by the latter. Jeff's main attitude was that Aboriginal lives and decisions were always influenced by White people. Consequently, it was better for Junjuwa to employ someone who acted according to their interests and was keen to attempt to influence government bodies and agencies as directed by the Council. In his own words, Jeff was ready to squeeze as much money as he could from DAA to improve living and social conditions in Junjuwa. While he had been working at Docker River, Jeff had obtained positive answers to many of the requests he addressed to DAA and 'knew the ropes', as he put it.

Unfortunately for Jeff, the situation in the Kimberley was not comparable with the Northern Territory, and neither the attitude of the government representatives nor Aboriginal people's motivations were similar to those he
had dealt with for four years in the Territory. In Western Australia Aboriginal people's rights are almost nonexistent and government attitudes towards them differed accordingly. Further, frictions that occurred between federal and state government bodies influenced the running of Aboriginal communities and made the community adviser’s position a difficult one to manage.

Despite these setbacks, Jeff greatly improved Junjuwa’s office workload by computerizing it and by training a young Aboriginal man for the community adviser position as well as two office workers, all funded by the ADC. For the first time ever, Aboriginal people were the signatories for the Junjuwa cheque account\textsuperscript{21}, and Jeff kept Junjuwa’s council regularly informed of the community income and expenditure.

Jeff was very keen to propose alternatives to Junjuwa people and organised several trips to various Aboriginal settlements in which CDEP had been implemented. His aim was to show Junjuwa councillors that funds and programs were available for them if needed, as well as to make them aware that Aboriginal people did not necessarily need white advisers to help them run their community. Jeff was also supportive of land claims, and applications for excisions and outstations that had been made by Junjuwa’s residents, and had remained filed in Junjuwa’s office for years, were forwarded to the appropriate state authority. Finally, for the first time Junjuwa Community lodged a budget with DAA, based on demands formulated by the people and not simply based on the previous year, as had been the case up until then.

Unfortunately, Jeff’s enthusiasm and dedication worked against him. First, Junjuwa people made some unrealistic demands and neglected community enterprises, which resulted in a loss of credibility in the eyes of the ADC and a difficult financial situation developed. Second, DAA people responded to Jeff’s style by increasing administrative requests from Junjuwa’s office. Jeff himself had to struggle with some contradictions. First, he was supporting Bunuba’s claims and councillors since the community was established on Bunuba territory, but because of his previous appointment he was closer to people who had migrated from the desert. Second, Jeff was a newcomer in the area, whereas the majority of local whites had been long time residents\textsuperscript{22}, and his attitude had disrupted existing relationships between Aboriginal and white people. Jeff constantly stimulated Aboriginal people to get rid of non-Aboriginal tutelage, and his involvement in fields controlled by other whites (DCS, MWW, Hospital, Karrayili), made him unpopular amongst local whites who also dealt with Junjuwa people. He faced a lot of pressure from various sides (DAA, Junjuwa, local whites), and he decided to resign after 10 months, even though both Junjuwa Council and DAA district officer asked him to reconsider his decision.

That place is mad, DAA expects far too much from a project officer, Junjuwa people are completely fucked up by the grog, they’ve been brain washed by station people and missionaries alike, they cannot think by themselves if there is a white bloke around. It’s pathetic, I
am really sympathetic to them but really worried too. Can you believe that alcohol killed 25 people in Fitzroy Crossing last year and nobody seems to care about it. The locals (White people) are pretty protective of their own jobs and privileges: DCS and MWW have split Aboriginal settlements amongst themselves and its all 'private property'. No-one tries to co-ordinate what they are doing on their own, they all seem happy to reproduce the status-quo over and over. It's too much for me, I cannot take anymore of that shit, I give up, good luck for the next guy (Jeff).

Although Jeff resigned after only a short time, his style has changed Junjuwa's residents views of the community's future and of the project adviser's position itself. These changes and other initiatives taken by Jeff had a positive influence on the community. For example, Jeff initiated people's interests in the CDEP scheme as well as in the implementation of by-laws for Junjuwa. In both cases, these changes would give Junjuwa residents more autonomy from the administration and local Whites. But, Jeff's constant comparisons between the local situation and the one he had known before in the Northern Territory was damaging for his perception of Junjuwa and ultimately for his own work because it gave him a distorted view of the town and its problem.

8.2.3 "I know that they all think I am a missionary, but I am not, I am Junjuwa project officer" (Mark).

As soon as Jeff had decided to resign, he advertised the position and all applications were to be sent to the Junjuwa office. During a council meeting held in February 1986, all applications received were discussed. Altogether, there were eight applicants, including one supported by Junjuwa's chairman whom he introduced to the council. The applicant's name was Mark, he used to work at Fitzroy Crossing as UAM store manager a few years earlier, and Andrew had worked under him at that time. Andrew stressed that Mark had already been promised the position by Junjuwa council when Russell resigned, but DAA people did not select his application. The chairman emphasised how important it was to appoint a person who knew the people, was known to them, as well as familiar with the area. Jeff introduced the other applicants but none of them was singled out for the job.

Most of the council members did not have any preference and a few of them offered me the position. Only a few of the leaders wanted to appoint Mark but the entire council eventually agreed to offer him the position because of the DAA district officer's attitude: he came to Junjuwa and started to warn people against Mark because, in DAA's view, his appointment would represent a backward move for the community to the time when Junjuwa residents lived under mission control. He strongly suggested to the leaders that they appoint somebody else and tried to influence their choice. Council members reacted
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against this. Comforted by Jeff's advice, they stated that they wished to select an applicant by themselves and consequently appointed Mark: this was the chairman's choice, and it was an Aboriginal choice.

Mark was in his mid-twenties, he was very eager to help Junjuwa people and extremely keen to prove to Junjuwa councillors that they made the right choice by appointing him. Unfortunately for Mark, although he was indeed familiar with the area, he had no experience as a community adviser. He came to Fitzroy only five days prior to Jeff's departure, which was far too short a time to be instructed and told about everything. Further, right from the beginning Mark adopted an over-confident attitude that did not encourage Jeff to display a lot of patience with him. Everything Mark was told about his position, he pretended he knew already. He was immature but also too keen to demonstrate that he was up to the task. Thus he neglected to ask fundamental questions and advice. Consequently, when Mark found himself alone in Junjuwa's office he realised he had been over-optimistic about his ability to handle the situation and the first few months he worked in Junjuwa were really difficult for him.

Because of his previous work at the UAM store he had good contact with Walmajarri, more particularly with those who were still associated with the mission. The first council meeting Mark attended as community adviser was revealing of his attitude: he opened and closed the meeting and did most of the talking. He mostly talked about himself, his plans for Junjuwa, how he would improve this and that, what should be changed. Junjuwa's chairman was unable to attend this meeting and many councillors were very skeptical about Mark's attitude:

Well, that young bloke I reckon he is a bit cocky. We know him from the mission store alright, but he don't look too good for project officer that bloke. You've bin earin what him bin say: no Gidjigara [= card games, gambling], he don't want to bury them dead people too, well I don't know but he look like he is proper wild. Maybe we should bring him in low gear right now, we are boss not him, no way. Now listen, I am not keen on Jangala (Andrew) idea too, well you know he is a proper Walmajarri not Bunuba, that Mark boy he is from that UAM mob too, same Christian gang that made them Walmajarri boss in Bunuba country. Ok, us Bunuba we are Christian people too, but only little bit not all the way like them mob. Well, with that Mark maybe next time, no tobacco too. I don't know but I reckon we should quieten him down right now, show them, Christian and Walmajarri blokes, we are the boss not him, alright this way more proper (Willy).

Willy's comments relate to Mark's first council meeting, during which he stated that to maintain order within Junjuwa, gambling should be banned. Further he had also indicated that he refused to be the undertaker, as this was not part of his job although his two predecessors agreed to perform that duty since there was no undertaker in Fitzroy Crossing. Worse still, during that first meeting, only Walmajarri people spoke and they all seemed to agree with
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Mark, who made a mistake by addressing them all the time and neglecting other councillors.

The day after this first meeting, Mark had an even more difficult experience: his first pension day as community adviser. The mail is sorted out at Fitzroy Crossing's post office by 2 p.m. and on pension days Jeff had usually cashed all the pensions cheques and handed out cash to the pensioners by 4 p.m. Mark decided to do the pension on his own. Jeff had warned him that some young women, who hang around the office on pension days, had to be watched closely when there was a lot of cash in the office: Mark decided not to take any risks, and asked all office workers to leave the office. Unfortunately, without their assistance it was impossible to complete the pension payout in such a short time. By 7.30 p.m. a large number of pensioners and unhappy relatives had gathered outside Junjuwa office, people were banging at the door, throwing stones at the building, and shouting insults. Mark had locked himself in the office and only came out when Junjuwa's chairman managed to calm down the people telling them there was no cash available in town, something that had happened, before and that this was not Mark's fault.

After the pension day incident, Mark's popularity went down in Junjuwa. He attempted to regain some of it by rescinding a ruling he had made at the first meeting to limit councillors’ access to community vehicles. Councillors were happy about this reversal but it did not gain him support as he had thought it would because the councillors did not like his attitude. Even though they were given back access to community vehicles, they argued that Mark should not have taken the decision on his own. Mark's motives were good and most of his decisions were made to benefit the community, but he acted on his own far too often: he wrote letters in the name of the council and read them to council meetings once they had been sent; he interfered in family disputes and several times called the local police to Junjuwa. He thus isolated himself in the decision-making process and could not get the councillors' and leaders' support when he needed it.

Mark should have limited himself to office work in the first weeks of his appointment, but he wanted to do too much in too many areas right from the beginning, resulting in his being targeted by critics 'town-wide'. The DCS district officer was upset by Mark, who repeatedly sent Junjuwa residents in need of cash to apply for food vouchers at the DCS local office, whereas DCS's new policy was to distance itself from paternalistic attitudes. The local sergeant was also puzzled by how to deal with the Junjuwa community. On the one hand he had received a letter signed by Mark and Junjuwa’s chairman which stated that the police needed council approval before entering community ground. On the other hand the police station was called by Mark two or three times a day in order to stop trouble in Junjuwa. In fact, Mark took too many personal initiatives, some unexpected: for example, he ordered that Junjuwa's store be supplied from the UAM store, when the usual supplier was a Derby based Aboriginal cooperative. Mark argued that getting supplies from the UAM was
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quicker than ordering from Derby, which was true, but although the UAM gave Junjuwa store a 20% discount, once the goods were on Junjuwa store shelves they were more expensive than in any other shops in town. In response to the councillors’ request Mark had provided a community vehicle to take old people shopping: on pension days a bus load of Junjuwa pensioners made the round trip from Junjuwa to the UAM store and the roadhouse. Both the UAM store and the roadhouse were dearer than the local supermarket, but the former was managed by Christians and the latter owned by the publican’s family. Further, Mark deducted money from some people’s social security benefit cheques in order to pay bills at the UAM store or at the roadhouse, on his own initiative, similar to what had been done during the cattle station era and when Russell was community adviser.

Mark’s ways of operating prompted many councillors and leaders to withdraw their support. He was distressed about this situation and a few months after his appointment was thinking of leaving Fitzroy Crossing. At this time the council and several local whites were really keen on seeing him go. But it was this period which coincided with Junjuwa getting opportunities to start new enterprises with the help of ADC. There were also more and more talks about a CDEP scheme to be implemented in the community and the transfer of the UAM lease to the Junjuwa Community was also on the agenda for the end of 1986. These three elements helped Mark to maintain his position since his training was needed for the new Junjuwa store and his personal background could facilitate negotiations with the UAM.

Gradually Mark modified his attitude and simultaneously Andrew started to get more involved in community affairs. He had kept a low profile during the first months of Mark’s appointment for two reasons. First, because he was not really convinced that Mark was the right person for the position but had supported him to fulfil his promise. Second, two of his close kin had died and because of the taboos Andrew had limited his involvement with community affairs. Nevertheless, when Andrew realised that there was real discontent about the person he had nominated and supported for the position, he had a long talk with Mark during which he pointed out to him all that was not done properly. Mark reaffirmed his willingness to do something for Junjuwa people but argued that the lack of support from Junjuwa councillors, the delay needed to take a decision, and perpetual hassles caused by alcohol, gambling and money problems were at the origin of his wrongdoings. Both agreed to help each other and to act according to the new situation (chairman/community adviser) rather than to the former one (store manager/Aboriginal assistant). From then on things improved and both Andrew and Mark did a lot in getting Junjuwa off to a new start: transfer of the UAM lease in February 1987, the CDEP scheme implemented in May 1988, although their closeness drew many critics both inside Junjuwa (Bunuba councillors, young people), and outside (DAA, DCS, MWW).
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Mark's attitude had not change completely but he was less strict with councillors' and leaders' privileges, and did not interfere any longer with gambling, drinking and family disputes within the community. Andrew on his side reacted positively and increased his confidence as a chairman. He challenged Mark's ideas several times and pointed out whenever he thought Mark was not acting as he should.

8.2.4 A personal experience

In early 1987 I had the opportunity for three weeks of experiencing what it was like to be Junjuwa project officer. Mark had taken six weeks' leave. Jeff had made himself available to relieve him for half of that time and both Mark and the Junjuwa council approached me to look after Junjuwa office for the remaining three weeks. Although I was not enthusiastic about the idea at first, I eventually agreed to do it.

It did not take me long to realise that Junjuwa project officer had to be available on a 24 hours basis as well as prepared to do various and sometimes unexpected tasks. Indeed, apart from paying social security benefits to Junjuwa residents and looking after community affairs, I found myself involved in situations far from the job description profile. I do not intend to go into details about all I did during those three weeks, but it is important to stress the wide spectrum of responsibilities, demands, duties and pressures that come on top of the current daily workload. The following are some examples of things I had to do during those three weeks: fill in forms for Junjuwa residents (social security benefits, driving licenses and registration applications); enquire about unpaid social benefits and other administrative problems; assist hospital staff locating young people with suspected venereal disease infections; bail people out of jail; to accompany local DCS staff to the juvenile court; drive sick or wounded people to the hospital, usually in the middle of the night; maintain and fix the Junjuwa diesel water pump; tow back a community vehicle that had broken down at night in the bush; negotiate with cattle stations' managers free access to fishing and hunting spots within station boundaries for Junjuwa residents; host a local MP willing to visit Junjuwa community; and finally attend local meetings organised by local non-Aboriginal organisations, government agencies, and Aboriginal communities.

As one would expect, most of these demands were urgent, important and had to be performed by the project officer in person. Keeping in mind the setbacks a project officer had to face when dealing with community Aboriginal leadership (lack of support, slowness in decision taking, reliance on non-Aborigines), anyone who held that position would be tempted to make all decisions and to act on their own. This was reinforced by the fact that, as I
briefly experienced it, the Junjuwa project officer was an influential and important figure in town. I have to admit that a couple of times during this three week assignment, frustration made me act on my own, but each time I did so it created difficulties between me, as a project officer, and the Aboriginal leadership, making my leadership at the community level unsustainable. Therefore, I insisted on involving as many leaders as possible in responsibilities, tasks and duties I had to deal with.

Being Junjuwa’s project officer for a short time allowed me to confirm my feelings about the importance of the project officer’s personality and relationships with residents as well as his influence on the decision-making process. For example, as soon as I started working, several Bunuba families, with whom I had close links, became more involved in community affairs and members of these families channelled individuals’ requests to the community through me for loans in cash, petrol vouchers or use of community vehicles. These attitudes showed that personal connections were used by Junjuwa residents to obtain privileges in return for the support they gave to the project officer (Myers 1986).

The two council meetings I attended as project officer made me aware that it was possible to influence council decisions, not so much by interfering with the decision-making process, but by presenting items for discussion to the meeting in a certain way or simply by the order of these items on the meeting agenda. This personal experience emphasized how the threefold relationships between the project officer, the community chairman and the community leaders were crucial in making the running of community affairs easy or difficult.

I also became aware that office workers privileged their kin and relatives in their working activities in relations with the Department of Social Security (DSS). All enquiries I made to the state office of the DSS regarding unpaid or delayed payments of benefits were caused by improperly completed or unsigned forms, or applications sent too late. None of the people in such situations were closely related to any office workers and if they were it was the sign of a dispute or a familial conflict. On the contrary, office workers’ kin’s forms were returned duly completed, signed and before the due date. I attempted to discourage office workers from acting as they did by reporting the matter to the council meeting. Unfortunately, I did not notify leaders, especially the office workers’ close kin, before I brought the issue to the council meeting and this personal initiative resulted in further difficulties: two of the three office workers did not come to work on the following pension day, and the third one spread rumours of my ‘wrongdoings’ with community affairs. I quickly had to apologize publicly for my initiative and left the people to decide on whether or not office workers’ attitudes should change.

I experienced how misunderstandings could quickly arise between the project officer and community leaders, and create conflicting sentiments
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between the Aboriginal and the non-Aboriginal leadership in Junjuwa. These conflicts could be overcome but in the meantime community affairs were brought to a standstill and community leadership destabilized.

The first incident was caused by money missing from the office safe. I indicated in the previous Chapter that women and elderly people used the Junjuwa office safe as a deposit place for their savings. One day I gave a pensioner a $50 note out of his savings and noticed before I put the envelope back inside the safe that he had still $100 left. Two days later the same old man came to get some money and I found his envelope empty. I apologized to him and said that I would investigate the missing money. Between his previous and last visit I had had to leave the Junjuwa office a few times but had given the safe keys to only two office workers. I asked them if they had given that money to somebody else by mistake but both denied having anything to do with the incident and got very upset that I could suspect them. I did not accuse any one of them in particular but reported the incident to the council meeting. In the meantime, both office workers had told their fathers, who were leaders and councillors, that I accused them of stealing money. The two leaders challenged my report of the event: their daughters had worked for a long time and no money had been gone missing so far, but since I was new to the job I could have made a mistake myself; if I knew who was guilty I should call her name in front of the council. I declined to do so but was very uncomfortable with the outcome of the incident. For a few days I tightened the supervision over the office workers who responded by coming late to work, leaving early and displayed obvious lack of commitment. The office workers’ fathers, their relatives and followers tried to make an issue of the incident: they pretended that I wanted to please the chairman by having one of his step-daughters employed in the office and therefore I needed to get rid of one worker. The chairman came to discuss the incident. He said that I should not distrust the office workers who were both from influential families within the community. I elected to cut short the incident prior to further development and called for a council meeting. At the meeting I asked council approval to draw $100 from the Junjuwa account to reimburse the pensioner. I stated that since we were the three people directly involved with the incident, we should share the blame and I apologized to the pensioner as well as to the council. All councillors agreed on my suggestion and praised my decision for sharing responsibilities with the two office workers.

The second incident involved the chairman, and two senior councillors and happened a day after an initiation ceremony during, which the chairman’s younger brother had been circumcised. Because of his involvement in the preparation for the ceremony, Junjuwa’s chairman, who was also the community store manager, had had to close the store for two days. The day after the ceremony was a Sunday but in order to allow people to shop, Andrew decided to open the store for a few hours. He sent two councillors to notify Junjuwa residents. About an hour after the store had opened, the chairman’s wife came
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to tell me her husband was having problems at the store. When I got there, the
chairman had locked the store which was full of people with boxes of goods.
He informed me that the people had been told they could buy on credit. He
wanted to avoid a major incident but did not know what to do. We decided to
allow Junjuwa pensioners to purchase up to a $50 of goods on credit. Once the
store was empty I tried to find out how such a rumour came into being. The
chairman said that he allowed the two councillors, who went to notify the
people, to shop on credit in order to thank them for the prominent role they
had played in his brother’s initiation, then he suggested that they probably told
everyone. At the next meeting, the chairman mentioned the incident and
reminded pensioners who purchased goods on credit that money would be
taken from their next pension. I added that people should avoid doing such
things in the future for it complicated office work and blamed ‘those who told
the people they could buy on credit’. Immediately, one of the councillors stood
up and said that I should call his name publicly and should not ‘talk behind’, if I
thought he started the rumour. He went on saying that the chairman had
plotted against him to keep him away from community affairs, and he left the
meeting with several relatives and supporters. This councillor was in charge of
electrical and plumbing maintenance in Junjuwa and declined to do any work
until his name was cleared. I had a private discussion with him during which he
admitted that the other councillor started the rumour but that he could not
blame him because they were close kin; nevertheless he insisted on being
cleared from any wrongdoings in the incident. He adopted a strategy similar to
the one used in the previous incident by making public statements claiming that
people ‘in charge’ of Junjuwa wanted to give his job to someone else. He
decided to support any decisions made by the chairman and me, and
threatened community leadership by rallying many followers to support him.
Eventually, the chairman acknowledged he was the one who had decided to
allow people to shop on credit to thank them for his younger brother’s initiation
ceremonies, but he added that he had to deny it first because there were people
from other communities in the shop at the time and he did not want them to
benefit from it. He apologized to me and to the councillor and stressed the
importance of the community as a group united towards outsiders.

8.3 Community leadership

As stated in the introduction to this chapter, community leadership as it
operated in Junjuwa was an interaction between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal
leadership. That interaction was necessary in the way that it provided a better
representation of Junjuwa and its various components as a community. This did
not mean there was full harmony, complete agreement and total support
between the two types of leadership. On the contrary, frictions were common
between the project officer and Junjuwa councillors, or between the latter and leaders, paradoxically, these disagreements did not necessarily split the community leadership into opposed factions, but helped to make this leadership efficient and reinforced the notion of community as a group.

On the side of Aboriginal leadership, people had the possibility of opposing non-Aboriginal leadership if decisions or new orientations did not suit the councillors, the leaders or the chairman; but, Aboriginal people could also limit their responsibilities to 'Aboriginal business' in the community and leave the charge of 'community affairs' to the project officer. This was common amongst older leaders and councillors, but others insisted on having a say in community leadership, even if the role they played in some area of community affairs was minor compared to the non-Aboriginal leadership. The chairman and councillors appointed in recent years were keen to learn about community affairs and insisted on being part of it. Their eagerness to be involved in the decision-making process was guided by a different type of relationship with the non-Aboriginal community as well as the prospect of a community fully controlled by Aboriginal people. Thus, the chairman and younger councillors played an important part in the community leadership, mainly by acting as brokers between the Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal leadership.

As Junjuwa chairman it's my duty to tell the council about everything. With Mark I learn about community affairs, it's important for me because we cannot have Gardiya working for us all the time, it's time we stand up now and the young councillors will help me to run the community by ourselves. Well, you could say I tell the project officer the Aboriginal way and explain the old people about the Gardiya way, myself I stand in the middle, sometimes it's hard, very hard, but I reckon as a chairman it's my job and it's the only way for Junjuwa people to go ahead and have a chance to do something on their own (Andrew).

Councillors and leaders could not afford to be out of community affairs, but since most of them did not have a clear understanding of 'paper work and money side', as they called it, they limited their participation to supporting the chairman and the project officer in the decision-making process. This support was neither unanimous nor systematic, but once a decision had been discussed, explained and altered, if needed, in order to meet Aboriginal leadership requirements, then the support eventuated. Afterwards, the role councillors and leaders had played became integrated into public discourse on community unity.

That Mark boy, him bin a bit wild alright, but him proper young fella too, we gonna help him understand about that Junjuwa place. Look now, first he wanta make a rule, us we don't like this one rule, but still we help that boy, we talk talk with him and with Jangala (Andrew) too. We have to help each other, we have to back up each other, all the way: councillors, old men (leaders?), young people, chairman, project officer, all the same, altogether we work for that Junjuwa place, Junjuwa, one single mob all the way, alright we bin havin little argument, and trouble little bit hard way too but we talk
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talk about it and then we stand up together, one mob alright, not blackfellas one side, Gardiya one side, no we make them rule together for Junjuwa (Joe).

This in particular brought various forms of leadership together in full support of decisions taken in the name of the community. It consolidated the image of Junjuwa as a group, both inside the community - all leaders and councillors supported the chairman and project officer - as well as at town level. Dissensions, when and if they existed, were not make public.

Differences of views among people who made up the Aboriginal leadership as well as other factors internal to community affairs made community leadership a fragile association that was easily destabilized. In such circumstances it was necessary for people involved in community leadership to reaffirm their commitment to it as well as their support to community based acts even if in the process of doing so some familial privileges needed to be publicly denied. I recall a council meeting that took place at a time where community leadership was very unstable. A few councillors, including the chairman's father, were harassing Mark for money and petrol vouchers to get relatives who had been attending ceremonies elsewhere back to Junjuwa. Mark had stood firm against them and refused to allocate these loans on the basis that the money would not be used for community purposes. Andrew had remained neutral on the issue: he agreed with Mark's attitude but could not challenge his father by siding against him publicly. Subsequently, the councillors involved in that argument refused to attend council meetings for a while and therefore blocked the decision-making process. Mark was upset by the chairman's lack of commitment and to show his discontent decided to sort out on his own current community affairs. The chairman's father started to complain to different leaders that although Junjuwa was an Aboriginal community, and that Aboriginal people were in charge of the community council, Gardiya were still running the place and interfered with Aboriginal business: people were not allowed to take care of their relatives who had to attend ceremonies, which was indeed Aboriginal business. A few days afterwards, the chairman was handed a letter by the local pastor. This letter had been sent to UAM headquarters in Melbourne, and dealt with the forthcoming handing over of the UAM lease to Junjuwa. The letter was written in the name of Junjuwa council but neither the councillors nor the chairman knew of its content. At the following council meeting, the chairman talked about the letter; he stated that even though he agreed with the letter's content, it was not suitable for the community to have a project officer who acted on his own in the name of the people. Mark reacted by complaining about the chairman's lack of commitment regarding community affairs and many councillors not attending meetings regularly. He added that the letter had to be forwarded to the UAM urgently and that was the reason why he had written it but he had been careful to say only what had been agreed to at previous council meetings. Mark apologised to the councillors and then brought up the issue that had caused him to be in conflict with some councillors: should community
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money be given to individuals for private purposes or not? Two councillors that were not directly concerned with this loan, said that in their views it was not a good idea but they wanted to hear other councillors' and leaders' views on the matter. One leader asked the council if it was right that an Aboriginal community should be run by a Gardiya like a cattle station. At this stage the chairman stood up and talked. He told councillors and leaders that they were wrong in blaming Mark and stressed the importance of community based acts and decisions. This is the moment his father chose to expose the rightfulness of his claim.

Well Jangala, I bin tellin you before, many times I bin tellin you, that mother for you, him bin gonna long way for business, long time too him bin gone, one pension bin come already. I don't know nothin, no telegram, no phone, nothin, well I'm proper worried now, I wanta get him back here that old girl, but I'm proper flat, no money no petrol nothin, I am spokesman for Junjuwa, I bin workin hard for that place too, well Junjuwa money is us money too, right, I reckon Junjuwa should help me, that's all (Arthur).

At this point of the meeting, Mark itemised the loans and several free tanks of petrol that had been granted by Junjuwa to the chairman's father for various reasons during the last three months. Andrew interrupted Mark by asking his father not to bring personal and family issues to the community council meetings anymore. He stressed that people, especially himself, had already enough problems in sorting out community affairs that they could not waste time by discussing private problems. He went on by asking council approval for a new rule that would make it impossible for individuals to obtain community money for private purposes. His motion received the entire council approval, including his father's, then he discussed with Mark the content of the next letter to UAM headquarters.

Mark had tried for a long time to cut privileges given to influential families, especially to the chairman's, but so far had failed because he could not get any support. In this particular situation, all the components of community leadership had been pulled apart over one particular incident and in order to get them together again, each side had to make concessions to the other: the project officer had acted on his own but was forgiven because his wrongdoings had been motivated by the lack of support from Aboriginal leadership; the chairman stood up against his father when all privileges previously granted to him had been mentioned and he subsequently initiated a move to suppress these privileges, even though he had ignored, so far, Mark's attempts to do so; the entire council supported the chairman's motion, knowing it was aimed at indicating to Mark that his willingness to work for a better commitment in community affairs was appreciated. After the meeting, interactions between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal leadership were more efficient and the running of community affairs improved accordingly for some time.
Plate 10

House being upgraded in October 1988 as part of the CDEP scheme. Here the fencing team is working in the Bunuba section of Junjuwa.
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Plate 11

This Junjuwa community store was formerly the UAM store located at the entrance to the old mission compound. It had been purchased by Junjuwa as part of the transfer of the UAM lease to the community and subsequently given its new name ‘Burawa store’ after the Bunuba name for the two hills behind the old mission compound.
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Theoretically, the project officer was able to take and apply decisions on his own. He had control over community expenditures and should he wish to do so could easily run the community as a single person. Although, as I showed earlier in this Chapter, if he had adopted this attitude it would have made his position precarious and created tensions within the community, rendering his position unsustainable.

Interaction among community leaders was needed to make community leadership efficient, but other uses of that interaction existed as well. For example, strategic use of that interaction was a possibility if the project officer needed some time before taking a final decision: he would stress the importance of getting the council's support and consequently often delayed the process of decision-making, as this had been pointed out to me by Jeff the previous project officer:

Frankly, I could run the show on my own, dead easy. But you see, I want all my moves to be approved and supported by the entire council and the chairman. There are too many people in Fitzroy who would be happy to point at me if they could prove that I am acting on my own. Sometimes it's a pain but other times it's worth it. I'll give you an example: it takes so long to get council approval on one issue, when it's not properly understood by the people, that it can be handy in some cases. When DAA or other people are pressing me for something and I am not too sure about it, I can freeze the whole thing by taking the matter to council's approval (Jeff).

On the Aboriginal side of leadership, the support given by the project officer as the white authority at the community level was comforting to people in leadership roles as well as highlighting the importance of Aboriginal leadership at the community level.

Sometimes, them Gardiya them proper no good in their head. But this Mark, he's alright, he listen, he listen to me. Well you can see now we are the boss here, not them Gardiya like before, now we are the boss properly, we talk, I tell him and he listen, alright Junjuwa is our place and we make the rules here too, not him, he listen to us (Mervin).

Although mutual support was needed to assert leadership on both sides as well as to reinforce community cohesiveness and autonomy in the decision-making process, the interaction was a fragile balance that was constantly put at risk. Some threats came from within Junjuwa but they were not really dangerous for community leadership since they could be absorbed within subgroups or languages and controlled by leaders or councillors. On the contrary, threats that originated outside Junjuwa could unbalance community leadership and make it inefficient at times. These threats could come from either Aboriginal or non-Aboriginal people and could be directed at either one side or the other of community leadership. I will look at these external interventions and their impact on Junjuwa in the next Chapter.
Endnotes - Chapter Eight

1 The role of cultural brokers in minority groups and their emergence as potential new leaders is discussed in several papers dealing with ethnicity and the relations between the State and minorities; a synthetic approach is proposed by Fred (Fred 1986).

2 Although non-Aboriginal people other than the project officer were employed by Junjuwa community and intervened at times in the decision-making process, I have chosen not to discuss their role in this Chapter but will include them in the next one, under non-Aboriginal interventions.

3 I will call councillors those of the Junjuwa residents appointed to the council of leaders, and leaders any other person recognised as a leader but not appointed as a councillor.

4 This did not accord with the Junjuwa constitution, but older councillors had decided to involve more young Bunuba people in the council to look after community affairs and because of the prospect of getting the UAM lease and some land located in Bunuba country.

5 Working activities under Junjuwa community were limited and sought after because those who were employed also received unemployment benefits.

6 An audit conducted in late 1985 estimated that about $30,000 out of $50,000 granted as loans to Junjuwa residents during the fiscal year had never been paid back to the community.

7 On the notion of followers who support leaders in Aboriginal grouping, see Sansom 1978 and 1981.

8 The two Wangkajunga women moved into the Bunuba part of Junjuwa, but returned regularly to stay with their own families. Many disputes arose about the children who were identified as Bunuba by their fathers’ groups and as Wangkajunga by their mothers; both couples separated after a few years and the children were raised by their Bunuba families.

9 The heads of both the families had died recently and their male members were under taboo caused by the loss, which meant they kept a low profile in community affairs; a single Bunuba male from another part of the Bunuba country, related to both families, was not seen as a threat by any of them and consequently he was offered the chairmanship.

10 It was common at that time for non-Aboriginal people in need of labour to ask the community chairman to provide them with workers.

11 Andrew never mentioned his real father to me and called his step-father, father; when I talk about Andrew’s father it is in fact his step-father.

12 A Wangkajunga man had been appointed chairman previously but it was only to relieve the Bunuba chairman, who had been sick for a few weeks.

13 Often drunk Aboriginal men or women strip themselves naked when they are upset by something.

14 Once again, the threat to kill other people and commit suicide afterwards was a very common attitude amongst heavily intoxicated young Aboriginal men.

15 Non-Aboriginals appointed to such positions were known locally as project officers: I will use one or the other expression in the course of this chapter.

16 I did not know him as Junjuwa project officer since my first field trip was conducted prior to his appointment, which had terminated by the time I returned to the Kimberley. He was, however, still living around Fitzroy Crossing during my second field trip and I had many opportunities to discuss his involvement with Junjuwa.
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17 Until 1983 there was only one Justice of the Peace in Fitzroy, then the roadhouse manager was appointed and finally the school headmaster in late 1987. Since no magistrate made the trip regularly to Fitzroy, the Justice of the Peace acted often as the local magistrate for minor offences. Most offenders were Aboriginal people, therefore such a position gave Russell an even stronger influence over local Aboriginal people.

18 This was the old UAM girls' dormitory that had been taken over by Russell, his wife and a part-Aboriginal worker and turned into an hostel for homeless Aboriginal children and orphans.

19 He was at the time appointed by Junjuwa as CDEP team coordinator. He had attempted to take the project officer's position while Mark was on leave but he failed to achieve his goal, and subsequently was offered that job by Mark, who wanted to have him under his control (see Chapter Nine).

20 The position was advertised for the first time and although all the applications were sent to DAA Derby office, still the short list was made by DAA district officers prior to any meeting with Junjuwa residents.

21 Two signatures were needed: one being either the chairman or spokesperson and the other one of a councillor out of the five chosen by council as co-signatories.

22 The average period of assignment for non-Aboriginal government staff in the Kimberley is between two to three years; at the time of Jeff's appointment most of the non-Aboriginals he had to deal with were either in the last year of their assignment or non-government appointed people who had lived in the area for nearly a decade.

23 There was no appointed undertaker in town and it was too expensive to have somebody sent from Derby for one funeral. Junjuwa community ordered several coffins each year and the funeral was conducted by the project officer, helped by one or two local white people paid by the community (no Aboriginal were prepared to do this task because of the taboos associated with a corpse). The location of the grave was usually chosen by the relatives of the deceased but this caused further problems since, until 1986, there was no official cemetery for Aboriginal people in Fitzroy Crossing. When one was created it was a very traumatic experience for many Aboriginal families to have the graves of their relatives relocated.

24 Since there were still no banking facilities in Fitzroy Crossing in 1987, on pension day Marra Worra Worra drew cash from Derby to pay the pensions to people from the area. The cash came by plane with the mail, then each community wrote a cheque to MWW and cashed it to pay pensioners who resided in the community. It happened regularly and for various reasons (plane delayed, bank holidays, not enough cash in Derby, airstrip flooded, MWW financial difficulties) that no cash was available in town on pension days, therefore cheques had either to be handed out and cashed individually, then rent and bills were rarely paid off, or the project officer had to rely on local enterprises (post office, pub, roadhouse, supermarket) to get cash but this was rarely sufficient to pay all pensioners; consequently, payments were delayed by one or two days and people were very angry about this situation.

25 I was in fact very reluctant to relieve Mark because relationships between myself as an anthropologist and the people were totally different from those that existed between the Junjuwa residents and the project officer. I was worried that this experience could make the remaining period of field work difficult. I eventually accepted, however, because I saw it as something I could give in return to Junjuwa people for their help in the course of my research.

26 Petrol vouchers were issued and signed by the project officer and given to councillors or office workers; otherwise it was impossible to control petrol expenditure.
CHAPTER NINE

JUNJUWA AND EXTERNAL INTERVENTIONS

In this Chapter I examine will look at various types of external influences on Junjuwa community and describe their impact on it as a cohesive group. In describing the township of Fitzroy Crossing (Chapter Three), I have stressed that it cannot be dissociated from Junjuwa community. Indeed, even though Fitzroy Crossing had been established long before Junjuwa existed, the town developed largely because of the Aboriginal population which needed to be serviced and because local enterprises saw business opportunities from the late 1960s onwards. Most of the Aboriginal population that lived in the various town-based and nearby settlements had at one stage resided at Junjuwa. The combination of these two factors resulted in many external interventions in Junjuwa's internal affairs. These interventions were of various origins, of different kinds and were channelled in several ways. External interventions often had only a limited impact on community leadership, but they could also create problems by undermining the cohesion of Junjuwa as a group.

External influences on Junjuwa fall into two main categories according to their origin: those which were initiated by other Aboriginal people and those which originated from non-Aboriginal people. Under the first category I will discuss external interventions by other Aboriginal town-based settlements, either by a group or by individuals; influences from Aboriginal settlements located outside the township; and the role that local Aboriginal organisations played in these external interventions. In the last section of the Chapter I discuss interventions by non-Aboriginal people; I first expose interferences caused by people employed by government bodies; then by people who did not necessarily have an official position (non-government employees). In the conclusion to this chapter I examine the impact of these external factors as a disruptive element that worked against Junjuwa's cohesion as a group.
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9.1 Interventions from other Aboriginal settlements

There were only two other Aboriginal settlements at Fitzroy Crossing: Kurnangki (established in mid-1985), and Mindi Rardi (leased to Junjuwa and sub-leased to Kurlku people in late 1986). All residents in these two settlements had been living in Junjuwa before, either permanently or temporarily. For this reason, as well as for others stated, both Kurnangki and Mindi Rardi interfered with the life of Junjuwa residents. Aboriginal people from the three town-based settlements had a lot in common (see Chapter Two), and kinship networks expanded beyond the separate settlement boundaries (see Chapter Six). Thus, residents of these settlements interacted on a daily basis on many occasions, even though at the level of 'community affairs' leaders and councillors claimed that the three settlements were independent and autonomous.

The main conflict between Kurnangki, as a community, and Junjuwa was over equipment and resources that Junjuwa had and Kurnangki did not. For example, Junjuwa community had a truck, a bus, a tractor, two lawn mowers and many tools. All the vehicles and the equipment were to be used by Junjuwa residents, for community purposes with council's approval. These rules were not strictly followed, however, and demands from residents of other settlements were numerous. Kurnangki village had recurrent problems with plumbing appliances which resulted in heavy electricity and water bills, water waste and health hazards. Members of households in which these problems were really bad often relied on relatives from Junjuwa to get access to Junjuwa plumbing tools and spare parts, so that they could fix it themselves. Unfortunately, many tools were not returned or were damaged, and the stock of spare parts was not renewed, resulting in Junjuwa's household plumbing problems being left unfixed. Several unhappy Junjuwa residents complained to the council that people from outside Junjuwa had been given priority over them. Further, the two workers in charge of plumbing maintenance in Junjuwa argued they could not fix things properly in Junjuwa since their tools were either missing or broken. Furthermore, Junjuwa's project officer refused to purchase new tools or to pay for parts that had been fitted outside the community. In response to these critics and to negative comments, several Junjuwa councillors stated that Junjuwa should help Kurnangki people since many Junjuwa residents had relatives at Kurnangki, although they admitted that stricter controls over the loan of Junjuwa's property to outsiders should be implemented. A letter was drafted by council members in which it was stated that in order to limit inconvenience caused in the past the council should be approached formally before any equipment could be borrowed.

The local DCS officer, who acted as Kurnangki community adviser⁴, had been aware of the situation, and did not want to let misunderstandings develop
Junjuwa and external interventions

between the two settlements. He notified Junjuwa council that Kurnangki Community was prepared to pay for plumbing maintenance on a regular basis, and that instead of getting a contract from a local enterprise, he was happy to offer it to Junjuwa. Junjuwa maintenance team was sent to Kurnangki to make a quotation, and the two councils agreed on how and when the maintenance would be conducted. From then on personal initiatives to borrow Junjuwa’s tools were not taken into account any longer, and Junjuwa was ‘working’ for Kurnangki people and not only ‘helping’. This resulted in Junjuwa residents being able to have maintenance carried out in their houses when they needed it.

This example shows that it was possible to channel demands from one settlement to another in a way that did not interfere too heavily with community leadership and did not cause conflict. However, this initiative opened the gate to an increasing number of other demands for agreements between the councils, often channelled through a non-Aboriginal person, that included payment for the service provided. Ultimately, Junjuwa council, pressed by the growing discontent of Junjuwa residents, decided to terminate the availability of this type of service to other settlements. Junjuwa residents, deprived of the use of community vehicles, access to Junjuwa equipment, and labour force in the form of workers’ teams, argued they were not business people and that the income from these arrangements benefited only councillors and leaders. In doing so they highlighted the fact that an Aboriginal community is not an enterprise, and reminded the community leadership that in order to have the residents’ full support such activities would have to be stopped or strictly limited.

Another intervention by Kurnangki that created problems within Junjuwa was caused by the Kurnangki chairman’s family. The Kurnangki chairman used his position of community appointed leader to obtain privileges from Junjuwa’s chairman’s family. These privileges consisted mainly of access to Junjuwa vehicles, and in the purchase of goods on credit at Junjuwa’s store. These privileges created problems within Junjuwa, firstly because use of community vehicles was limited to council members, and to residents in special circumstances pending council’s approval, and secondly because shopping on credit had been banned at Junjuwa store. As long as these privileges were granted only occasionally, when the Kurnangki Chairman needed some help, it did not have much effect on Junjuwa residents’ life. But, gradually he borrowed Junjuwa’s vehicles more regularly and got to shop on credit more and more frequently. Further, shopping privileges became extended to his immediate family (five daughters, all married with children), apparently without approval from anyone in Junjuwa. This situation provoked several problems: first, the DCS officer, who acted as Kurnangki community adviser, refused to pay off bills run up by the chairman’s family. Second, the Junjuwa store started to have financial problems: only a few bills were partly paid off while credit purchases continued to occur every second day. Third, members of Junjuwa’s chairman’s family who had granted these privileges to the Kurnangki chairman, started to
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encounter open disapproval of their decision. Finally, Junjuwa residents approached the council, in increasing numbers, for similar concessions. The situation developed into an internal crisis which was directed at the Junjuwa chairman's family.

Look that mob over there (he pointed towards the chairman’s father’s house), them proper no good them mob, they gotta everything in that Junjuwa place: motokar, jobs, free tucker, petrol, all the lot alright, but them don't care for Junjuwa people, them only care for boss mob like them lot. True God, it's like I'm tellin you now: that chairman from Kurnangki, Walmajarri boy too, well that chairman mob from Junjuwa them back'im up to get Junjuwa motokar and free tucker too. Myself I reckon them proper wrong, look here, look there, (he pointed at several houses in different directions), we got'em too Walmajarri people right here now, old people, old girl, but look no motokar, no tucker, proper hungry one all them lot. But that mob (chairman’s family), they don’t care about them, them only care about making boss from other places boss for Junjuwa too, but this time we gonna stop it, show them properly that lot they can’t do that no more now, or we gonna finish them lot, that’s it. We can get one chairman from another mob too, one mob that really care for Junjuwa people (Colin).

The situation did not deteriorate further because of the joint efforts of the DCS officer and Junjuwa’s project officer, who both felt that these privileges granted to the Kurnangki chairman should be stopped. They obtained a decision from each council: Junjuwa council decided that the entire council’s approval would be needed prior to an outsider borrowing a community vehicle, and the Kurnangki council agreed that any purchase on credit should first be submitted to the DCS officer for approval.

A similar set of problems arose with Mindi Rardi. Mindi Rardi’s conflicts with Junjuwa started even before the Kurulu people moved into the old Windmill reserve. The Kurulu people had lived in Junjuwa since it started but were eager to set up an outstation at Kurulu², a place where they paid short visits every two or three months. A young Walmajarri female related to one of the Kurulu group leaders was employed at the Fitzroy Crossing DCS office as a community liaison officer. She was amongst the first people to know about DCS willingness to transfer the Windmill reserve lease to an Aboriginal incorporated group. She consulted with Kurulu representatives to find out if they were prepared to move into Windmill reserve, given that they had wanted to leave Junjuwa (see Chapter Six). She received a positive answer once the Kurulu leaders had checked with a Bunuba custodian of the area, to see if he would allow them to move into it³. Then she notified the local DCS officer about the Kurulu people's readiness to reside at Windmill reserve and Junjuwa's approval of it. He advised her to contact the Aboriginal Affairs Planning Authority (AAPA) in Perth, on the behalf of the Kurulu people, since that government agency was in charge of negotiating the transfer of lease from government bodies to Aboriginal communities. A few weeks afterwards a letter from AAPA reached Junjuwa office: the content of this letter sparked strong reactions from council members and Bunuba alike. In this letter, Junjuwa’s
leaders were praised and thanked for their kindness in agreeing to give Windmill reserve to the Kurliku people who would get a 99 year lease and would be granted the full benefit of that reserve for its entire duration. Junjuwa's leaders and the Bunuba people, although they admitted they had agreed to Kurliku people living in the houses located at Windmill for a while, stated that they had never given the land away. Further, they would have liked to notify AAPA themselves of their decision, rather than being confronted with a situation which reminded many Bunuba of the creation of Kurnangki:

This time we gonna fight, we can't let them trick us again like last time with that Kurnangki place. We bin tell'em government people, all right we wanta help them Walmajarri people, but them don't listen properly, them listen one side, not all the way and them bin givin that place to them Kurnangki people, milimil, houses, all the lot. OK we say nothin we're proper quiet mob us Bunuba, we don't like humbug [=trouble] too much. But now them government people them bin doin all the same again, no way, us Bunuba we can't give no more of that Bunuba land away to them desert mob, because us Bunuba we got fuck all, nothin we get, just that Junjuwa place that's all but him proper rubbish place this one. Them young fellas Bunuba them got nothin, well we should think about them lot first and tell them government people we wanta keep that Bunuba land for our young fellas, not give that land away like white fella with paper, that's no good, no we can't no more (Walter).

Subsequently, a meeting was called by Bunuba leaders to discuss the issue with the DCS officer and representatives of the Kurliku people. During that meeting, it became clear that Kurliku representatives were displeased with the initiative taken by their female relative working at DCS and uncomfortable that their desire to move into Windmill had been misinterpreted. The DCS officer exposed his Department's position, and added that it was not his intention to create tensions or problems between Aboriginal people by acting 'behind their backs'. He stated that his department would agree and support any Aboriginal decision about Windmill reserve. Bunuba leaders asked Kurliku representatives about their 'side' of the story. The spokesperson for Kurliku said that since Windmill reserve was located on Bunuba land, it was up to the Bunuba to talk first. The first Bunuba leader outlined the history of Aboriginal settlements in the area: desert people being allowed to settle in Bunuba country: creation of Junjuwa, then Kurnangki and now Windmill. He reminded people about the opportunities to set up outstations in their countries and he pointed out the lack of such opportunities for Bunuba people. The second Bunuba leader called some young Bunuba men to join the meeting and asked them what they wanted to do with the Windmill reserve. They all said they wanted to keep it. The next leader asked who, amongst the Bunuba, was prepared to move into Windmill reserve and his question remained unanswered. Another Bunuba leader argued that Kurliku people helped the community during the time they lived in Junjuwa, and consequently he was prepared to help them too. If they wanted to live at Windmill reserve this was possible but the reserve should have a Bunuba name and the lease be given to Bunuba people. The representatives of the Kurliku group said they were happy to move into the houses, and would like to
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stay at Windmill reserve until their outstation was ready for permanent occupation.

After that meeting other problems arose. Some Walmajarri and Wangkajunga from Junjuwa complained they had been 'left behind' in the issue: they claimed that although the Bunuba were indeed the 'owners' of the Windmill reserve area, many people from other languages, and more particularly Walmajarri and Wangkajunga, had lived on that reserve for a while, had looked after the place and therefore they could not be ignored. Further, their understanding of the problem was that it concerned Junjuwa as a community (both Kurlku people and Bunuba involved in that matter were Junjuwa residents), and therefore all ideas should be taken into consideration before an agreement was made. Following that reaction, another meeting was arranged, this time with representatives of all groups living in Junjuwa, in addition to people directly involved, and a final decision was reached: the reserve would be called by its Bunuba name 'Mindi Rardi', the lease would be transferred from DCS to Junjuwa Community for a 99 year period, and the new leaseholder would sub-lease it to Kurlku people for renewable 5 year periods.

Afterwards all Aboriginal people involved in the transfer of Windmill reserve commented positively on the final decision they had made together. But for nearly 5 months (mid-April to mid-August 1986), from the time the proposed transfer of the reserve was made public until the day Kurlku people moved into Mindi Rardi, the entire town's attention was monopolised by the Windmill Reserve issue and people who were primarily concerned (Bunuba, Kurlku people, Junjuwa residents) had difficulty in reaching a quick and satisfactory decision on their own.

The further away from Fitzroy Crossing Aboriginal settlements were located the less they affected Junjuwa. Any impact they did have was limited to times visitors from various remote settlements stayed at Junjuwa or when Junjuwa residents undertook trips to visit relatives in these settlements. Involvement in Junjuwa's internal affairs was mainly advice in response to rumours about Junjuwa's internal problems that circulated outside Fitzroy Crossing or to open criticism expressed by Junjuwa residents with whom visitors were staying.

One example of external factors developing into community conflict was the role a Walmajarri man from Noonkanbah played in the 'Bunuba coup' during a visit to relatives in Junjuwa. This Walmajarri man, Raymond, resided alternatively at Yungnora (on Noonkanbah station) and at Fitzroy Crossing. He was married to a Bunuba woman whose father was closely related to one of the two most prominent Bunuba families in Junjuwa. Raymond was just about to move back permanently to Yungnora, where he faced a challenge: he was a young but respected man, whose influence was important amongst young and older men alike, who actively engaged in limiting Christian influence in Aboriginal internal affairs. Unfortunately, the Yungnora chairman at this time
was himself a strong Christian, partly as a result of frustration following the Noonkanbah crisis (Hawke & Gallagher 1990:320-321), and encouraged Christian involvement and activities in the settlement’s life. Raymond had a lot of respect for the chairman and old leaders who, for the most part, supported the chairman’s attitudes, but at the same time he did not want them to adhere to ideas that in his view benefited people outside Yungnora (donation to Christian movements, fund raising for building a church, employment of an Aboriginal pastor as book-keeper). Thus, Raymond thought that on the basis of his own experience he could stimulate young Bunuba men to become more involved in community affairs and to express their disagreements to both the Junjuwa chairman and the newly appointed project officer, who in his view also favoured Christian activities. Raymond exposed his ideas to several Bunuba leaders, who agreed that he could speak to young men, which he did on a few occasions. Unfortunately, his suggestions were misinterpreted and young Bunuba men got carried away: they really wanted to take over control from Junjuwa’s elected leadership. Once the coup had failed and Raymond had left town (see Chapter Seven), his role in precipitating the crisis was pointed out by a Bunuba leader:

That Japaljarri boy (Raymond), him bin proper trouble-maker all the way, when we bin havin trouble with that Noonkanbah business long time ago, him bin already stirrin up them mob young fellas to make more trouble with them police and government mob. Look now, he gonna camp at that Yungnora place for good and people bin say him gonna take over that old boss for them mob. Well I don’t know myself but I reckon it’s proper wrong. One night him bin come longa my camp, now him bin say, that Gardiya (Mark) him bin rubblishin us mob, that Jangala (Andrew) him proper no good chairmain and that us mob Bunuba we gonna stand up and fight. Alright, I listen little bit, I reckon him bin talk funny, ok him married that girl proper Bunuba, right, but him Walmajarri lingo properly that boy like them lot him bin talking about (Andrew). I bin say ok, you can talk talk with them Bunuba boys, I don’t know what him bin tellin them boys, quiet mob them lot Bunuba boys, but them got proper mad, them bin talk wrong (swearing), them don’t listen us old fellas and them bin givin us a hard time too. Alright now we all quiet again, no more humbug, but that Japaljarri boy him bin makin all than humbug [=trouble], all the way right through (Colin).

In this example the outsider was blamed as the real cause of what was an internal dispute. He might indeed have played a role in bringing the dispute out into the open but the conflict existed before. Blaming outsiders, as I have already stated in Chapter Five, was a strategy used by Junjuwa leaders to reaffirm Junjuwa’s cohesion as a group whenever it had been challenged.

The second type of involvement in Junjuwa’s affairs from settlements located outside of town was demands for vehicles. Most of these demands originated from Christian oriented settlements which had access to the KCF bus but often needed extra vehicles, such as were available from Junjuwa. Over a three month period, Looma community (See Map 1) approached Junjuwa
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council five times to use the Junjuwa bus. The demands were channelled directly to the chairman, who sought council's approval before responding positively to the requests. The Looma chairman asked to rent the Junjuwa bus only for special occasions (usually to attend a Christian convention) and agreed to pay for petrol and for extra expenses if any.

The first time Junjuwa council was approached for the use of the community bus by Looma, the request was presented as a lucrative operation for Junjuwa community, which at that time did not use the bus very much, and the council's response was positive. The bus was returned in due time with a full tank of petrol and cleaned throughout. The second time Looma people rented the bus they returned it 48 hours late and a few councillors complained to Junjuwa and Looma chairmen about it. The third time Looma community approached Junjuwa to rent the bus some misunderstandings occurred: apparently the Junjuwa chairman and project officer agreed to rent the bus but failed to notify the council about Looma's request. The evening prior to the day the bus had been rented to Looma, the Fitzroy Xpress band requested council's approval to use the bus to go to Derby where the band was due to perform the next day. The council agreed to the band's request, providing a councillor drove it. When the councillor who had been chosen to drive the bus asked the project officer for the vehicles' keys he was told that the bus had been rented to Looma people for three days. The band members and most of the councillors were upset but since the chairman was out of town they did not want to start an argument with the project officer, who in the meantime had provided the band with other transportation to Derby. At the next council meeting, the use of Junjuwa vehicles by people from other communities was debated. The councillors criticised the project officer for renting Junjuwa vehicles, which he saw as a good financial operation for the community, by stating that Junjuwa was not running a business with vehicles, and that these vehicles were the community's property and as such Junjuwa residents should have priority. The chairman was embarrassed by the matter but eventually sided with the councillors against the project officer, whom he blamed for failing to notify the council the third time Looma people asked to rent the vehicle.

The fourth time Looma community expressed its need for the bus, Junjuwa council was divided over what decision should be taken. Bunuba councillors claimed they wanted to use the bus at the same time as the Looma community requested it, to take old people fishing at Brooking Gorge. Walmajarri and Wangkajungga leaders, although they were prepared to lend the vehicle to Looma, acknowledged that Junjuwa residents should be given priority. Looma council was notified that they could not use the bus since Junjuwa people needed the vehicle at the same time. The fishing trip did not materialise and the bus remained parked in front of Junjuwa's office during the entire week-end. The project officer was annoyed with the leaders' behaviour, but it was clear that the council was now reluctant to loan vehicles to other

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communities, and the next time the project officer was approached to rent the bus, he said that Junjuwa vehicles were not for rent any longer.

This particular involvement with another settlement resulted in a conflict because it highlighted the lack of communication that existed within the community leadership. The conflict was overcome by tightening group solidarity amongst leaders at the level of the community and by the Aboriginal leadership standing firm against the project officer until he agreed to act according to their wishes.

All the examples I have discussed so far occurred as a result of demands or involvement from outside Junjuwa. Sometimes other settlements were used by Junjuwa residents, individually or in groups, when internal problems existed in Junjuwa and external support was needed to solve them. I will give two examples to illustrate the impact of external involvement resulting from demands by Junjuwa: one was an individual initiative and the other was initiated by a group of leaders.

An individual initiative to get support from other settlements was made by Arthur, the chairman's father. Arthur had been told that some funding was available to people who had to travel for ceremonial purposes. He contacted the KLCC in Broome in order to get details of applications for grants and afterwards visited Kalumburu and Iminji, two settlements in which he had relatives who shared with him the ownership of a corroboree or Jumba, which he intended to set up in the Fitzroy Valley area. When he returned to Junjuwa, he was very confident about his plans: he would take his 'show' to places as far away as Perth and prove to Blackfellows and Whitefellows alike that Bunuba people have not forgotten about their past. Some days later, he asked me to accompany him to several spots between the Oscar Range and Windjina Gorge associated with his Jumba, and asked me to take photos and to record his version of the entire story. His idea was to produce a booklet with pictures and the story printed in 'proper English' so that Gardiya could understand the show better and would be encouraged to visit Bunuba country. For a few weeks Arthur devoted most of his time to organising details of 'his show'. He told me that Law people he had visited at Kalumburu and Iminji cleared his corroboree and that it was an 'easy one' that every one could watch and enjoy. He selected dancers and singers from amongst his kinmen and other Bunuba, as well as amongst other river people. He ordered two large paintings from a young Gooniyandi male from Yiyili which depicted the main sequences of the story, and organised to have some head decorations made by a Gooniyandi ceremonial leader who lived in Junjuwa. Everything was going according to his schedule and he had planned a rehearsal of his show to which he had invited many local whites.

He came to my house the day before the practice session and looked really depressed. He told me he was having 'big trouble' with his Jumba: Wangkajunga from Junjuwa would not allow such a Jumba to be performed.
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publicly before women, children and white people. For about two weeks he kept saying that he would go ahead because he was sure of his rights: this was a Bunuba story, he was a Bunuba leader, Junjuwa was in Bunuba country, and he had received approval from Bunuba ceremonial leaders in other settlements to go ahead. Even though Wangkajunga people were 'Law people', they could not stop him from showing his corroboree nor could they do anything against him. Nevertheless, he kept postponing the rehearsal of his show: one night it was pension night ('too many drunks'), another night it was too windy (...), then a dancer was sick, and another night it was too dark. After I had known of his problems for about 10 days I tried to obtain information about the identity of the Wangkajunga people who were against the public showing of Arthur's corroboree, as well as about the specific problems with it. In fact there was only one Wangkajunga man opposed to the open display of Arthur's corroboree. He was a renowned 'Law man' whose reputation as expert in 'hard law' was well established across the Fitzroy Valley, right down to Lake Gregory where he originally came from. The problem in Arthur's jumba were the head ornaments made of wooden poles of various sizes and shapes decorated with feathers and brightly coloured knitting wool. According to Arthur these decorations were 'clean' and could be seen by women and children: for Ben, the Wangkajunga opposed to Arthur, these ornaments were 'hard', and could only be displayed at specific male ceremonies attended by fully initiated men only.

Arthur approached Walmajarri ceremonial leaders in various settlements from the Fitzroy Crossing area to find out what would be the reaction of other desert people should he display such head decorations. According to him they all said that such ornaments were suitable for a public performance. Arthur organised a short rehearsal session while Ben was out of town. He sang only a few parts of the entire story and the dancers performed only some dances without body or head decorations. From that point on he organised practice sessions every two or three nights and invited more and more people to attend, especially leaders from the predominantly Walmajarri and Wangkajunga settlements. Each practice session was a step further towards the final performance: bit by bit dancers wore body decorations. At first they were roughly done, then they became more and more elaborate. Similarly, more songs were sung every night and dances became more and more sophisticated. Arthur was playing his leading role by stimulating singers, correcting dancers and telling the story to the audience. Gradually he had invited all Walmajarri and Wangkajunga leaders from the area except Ben, and some had even joined in the dancing and singing. Indeed the corroboree proved to be so popular that many people demanded a full version of it.

Ben was never formally invited to attend a practice session nor did he show any interest in coming to any of these sessions, but he could not ignore what was going on. I left Fitzroy Crossing before Arthur organised a performance of his corroboree with head decorations, but before I departed he had organised a final rehearsal which was attended by a large crowd, including
most of the Walmajarri and Wangkajunga leaders from the settlements located within 200km of Fitzroy Crossing. It was the full version of the corroboree, albeit lacking the head decorations which were ready and were probably used not long after I left.

Although the entire process was long and delicate, Arthur managed to gain support from leaders from the same language and grouping as the person opposed to his corroboree. Gradually all Walmajarri and Wangkajunga people in Junjuwa, comforted by the fact that leaders from other settlements approved and supported Arthur’s corroboree, withdrew their support from Ben, who found himself isolated and as such could not do much to stop Arthur from going ahead with his corroboree. Arthur managed to restore community cohesion on one disputed issue by using people from other settlements as a catalytic element.

The second example occurred not long after Junjuwa and Kurlku representatives had agreed what to do with the Windmill reserve. A meeting called to officially finalise the matter was to be attended by all parties involved: representatives of DCS, AAPA, the Aboriginal groups and settlements involved and a state representative of DAA. Although the Bunuba and Kurlku leaders as well as representatives of Junjuwa council had agreed to attend that meeting, they were concerned that during such an important meeting non-Aboriginal people were likely to do most of the talking and that their own position might be either misinterpreted or misunderstood by non-Aboriginal people. They approached leaders from several Aboriginal settlements (Kurnangki, Bayulu, Noonkanbah, and Bunuba people from Derby and Mowanjum) and invited them to attend the meeting in order to act as mediators between themselves and the Gardiya. Their idea was that once the Junjuwa leaders and Kurlku representatives had expressed their views, leaders from other settlements would act as witnesses and make sure no statement was misunderstood nor any manipulation attempted by the Gardiya.

The meeting did not last for very long: a Bunuba spokesperson spoke first, then a representative for Kuriku. They both confirmed what had been agreed on at the two previous meetings held on that issue (see above in this Chapter), then the Junjuwa chairman stated he was happy both for Junjuwa and the Kurlku people. He added that since the Kuriku people were only a small group, they would not occupy all the houses at Mindi Rardi; and therefore he suggested that some could be dismantled and the materials made available to settlements whose representatives were attending the meeting and showing their concern and interest in what was going on in Junjuwa. I cannot recall that any non-Aboriginal people attending the meeting misunderstood what was said or attempted to manipulate any individuals or groups, but Aboriginal people present certainly felt much more secure having ‘mediators’ attending the meeting:
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We ask them fella to come, sit down and listen that talk-talk business. We bin tell’em before what we gonna do with that new Mindi Rardi place. But first they gonna sit down and listen them Gardiya mob. Myself I don’t get it alright when them Gardiya bin talk, I don’t know what them bin say, don’t talk same like us mob, sometimes them bin talk tricky too. You bin say ‘yes, yes, yes...’, but you don’t hearin properly that Gardiya and him bin trick you alright. Well we gotta them boys to listen for us, them boys them bin to big meeting longa that Perth place, longa that Sydney place too, big mob Gardiya this way too, well them Gardiya them know them boys can hearin that ‘proper English’ language, us old fella we’re not scared no more from that Gardiya funny talking, him bin talked straight alright, we bin listen, we bin hearin too, no trick, alright. we gotta him right this time (James).

What James, a representative of the Kuriku group, expressed after that meeting was a common fear amongst older Aboriginal people unable to understand standard English. As a result of this linguistic problem people feared they might find themselves opposed to or in disagreement with other Aboriginal people from the same community who had been in conflict over one particular issue. To overcome their divisions they relied on people and leaders from other settlements to support and help them make their point clear when dealing with non-Aboriginal people. This time the external intervention represented by Aboriginal leaders from other settlements was used to avoid a possible crisis caused by external elements (non-Aboriginal people) but which would have fractured group coherence at the community level.

9.2 Interventions from Aboriginal organisations

As the oldest and largest Aboriginal settlement at Fitzroy Crossing, Junjuwa has been involved with all Aboriginal-controlled organisations that existed either in town or in the West Kimberley. This was particularly true for the first few years that followed the start of Junjuwa, but from the early 1980s onwards Junjuwa gradually become more distant from nearly all the organisations, either because community leaders were influenced by the project officer or because of Junjuwa’s lack of commitment. Overall it can be said that Junjuwa was always involved at first with a newly established organisation, then the involvement gradually lessened, although links still existed between Junjuwa and most of the Aboriginal-controlled organisations.

An illustration of a Junjuwa relationship with such a local organisation is that with MWW. MWW is an incorporated resource and service agency mainly set up to liaise between various Aboriginal communities and groups in the Fitzroy Crossing area. It was started in late 1978 and Junjuwa was approached to be represented on the MWW executive committee by at least two community
Junjuwa and external interventions
councillors (JCCM 24/01/1979). Councillors from Junjuwa did attend MWW meetings regularly for about a year then dropped out, and relations between Junjuwa and MWW started to deteriorate in early 1981 (JCCM 13/04/81). Junjuwa councillors and leaders gradually stopped all involvement with the resource agency, with the encouragement of the community project officer who felt a newly appointed non-Aboriginal MWW employee was a threat to his stronghold over Junjuwa leaders. Nevertheless, Junjuwa council was always notified about MWW meetings and invited to attend, and copies of all MWW council minutes were forwarded to the Junjuwa office. Throughout the years, according to the local politics and to the various chairmen's personalities (both at MWW and at Junjuwa), the relationship between the two groups ranged from completely ignoring each other, to open conflict with in-between periods of fruitful collaboration. As far as I could evaluate, involvement of MWW in Junjuwa's internal affairs was of two types and generated two kinds of reactions. The first type was individual initiatives, usually from a member of the MWW executive committee, when Junjuwa residents faced problems that came to the knowledge of MWW. These initiatives were aimed at helping Junjuwa people find a suitable solution to their problem. It would usually generate two kinds of response from Junjuwa: if there were enough people in the community convinced of the rightfulness of the external involvement and of the necessity to act, the reaction would be positive; but, if only a few people displayed a vague interest in the involvement in the community's internal affairs, the person who interfered would be firmly told to mind his own business and the MWW executive committee would be notified that Junjuwa was an autonomous and independent community.

The second type of situation in which MWW would intervene in Junjuwa's affairs was in the name of the entire executive committee. Such initiatives were aimed at gaining Junjuwa's support or involvement in programmes, decisions or moves promoted by MWW. This second type of involvement usually met with a negative response from Junjuwa.

An individual initiative from MWW that met with a positive response from Junjuwa was prompted by growing rumours of leadership difficulties between Andrew, Mark and Junjuwa councillors and leaders. One Walmajarri man on MWW executive committee decided to approach separately the three components of Junjuwa's leadership in order to help them to improve their mutual understanding and support. He was an outsider, since he lived at Millijidee, but had once been a Junjuwa resident when he was married to a Bunuba. Further, he was Andrew's schoolmate and had worked on a casual basis at the UAM store at the time Mark was the store manager. His initiative did not fully succeed because he failed to overcome all the problems that existed in Junjuwa leadership, but he started a positive exchange of ideas between the various components of the community leadership. His involvement in Junjuwa's affairs was praised by Junjuwa leaders, who emphasised his
personal 'caring' about the place and his willingness to see people cooperating positively.

Involvement from MWW as an organisation in Junjuwa's affairs usually met with negative responses. By adopting such attitudes Junjuwa people or leaders expressed their desire to remain free of any amalgamation with other settlements controlled by MWW. An example of such an organisation-based move was the setting-up of an artifact store at Fitzroy Crossing. This store was in fact an outlet of an artifact centre located at Broome and controlled by the Kimberley Law and Culture Centre. People from that organisation had decided to open outlets in a number of places for several reasons: to offer various and stable opportunities to local artists to sell their products, to promote artists' work outside the Kimberley (promotion and marketing Australia-wide and overseas), and to set good and fair market prices\textsuperscript{12}. The outlet store located at Fitzroy Crossing was set up to collect artifacts and artists' productions from the middle Fitzroy valley. It operated locally under the supervision of MWW, which promoted it to both Aboriginal artists and to tourists. When Junjuwa council was approached by MWW and asked to market objects and artifacts from Junjuwa residents through the store; the response was negative. A few prominent councillors, themselves craftsmen and artists, refused to have their own objects 'mixed' with those made by people from other settlements. Further, they suspected that MWW would make profit by selling the objects at higher prices in Broome\textsuperscript{13}. As a response to the MWW proposition Junjuwa opened its own artifact outlet, within Junjuwa store, even though most of the artists sold their work individually either in Broome or to local tourists. Although on that issue MWW acted more as a broker between Aboriginal settlements and the KLCC, the initiative was perceived by Junjuwa residents as an attempt to merge Junjuwa with other groups:

All them things (artifacts) we bin makin us Junjuwa people, well we can't givin to that MWW mob, us mob, them mob we're proper different, we don't follow the same way, they go them way, we go us way. Them can't be boss for us things, same way them do with other mob who bin follow them way. Alright, them can boss other mob who stick with them MWW rules but us Junjuwa people we don't mix with them people, we can't give them things from us, we put them longa Junjuwa store, more better that way (Sydney).

Although they were several reasons for Junjuwa craftsmen's reluctance to market their artifacts through the MWW outlet, Junjuwa's final position on the issue was that MWW had interfered with Junjuwa's internal affairs and, since Junjuwa was not regularly associated with MWW, the offer was rejected as a whole.

The other town-based Aboriginal controlled organisation was Karrayili Adult Education Centre. In Chapter Three I outlined the main problems that existed between Karrayili and Junjuwa: the centre was located on Buniuba land but it had an Aboriginal name in Walmajarri language; it was started by the
former DCS officer's wife who was associated with Walmajarri, and more particularly, Kurnangki and Noonkanbah residents; and classes were in Walmajarri. Therefore the centre was not well considered by Bunuba, who tolerated it as a place for old Walmajarri people living in Junjuwa, but limited their contacts with it to a minimum. Karrayili sub-leased the old Summer Institute of Linguistics building from the UAM, but the UAM superintendent made it clear to Karrayili people that they had to deal directly with Junjuwa council since, the community would eventually get the entire UAM compound back.

In late 1986, Junjuwa council was approached by Karrayili, which sought permission to set up a local radio to broadcast in Aboriginal language in the Fitzroy Valley. Junjuwa response was negative: the council notified Karrayili that Junjuwa was not directly associated with any of Karrayili activities, and therefore did not wish to have this radio station set up on what was about to become Junjuwa land. Should Karrayili Aboriginal Board be happy to go ahead with this project it could do so but other languages than Walmajarri should be included in the broadcast programmes. It was also demanded of Karrayili that Junjuwa people should be given a priority in any employment opportunities that might result from the project. It was common knowledge that the non-Aboriginal teacher in charge of Karrayili was closely associated with Walmajarri from Junjuwa, Bayulu, Kurnangki and other settlements. For Junjuwa leaders, and especially Bunuba, this radio station would become a way for predominantly Walmajarri speaking settlements to communicate and as such this project could not receive Junjuwa support. Several young Walmajarri males from various settlements around town had already been contacted to work for the local radio and this again could not be supported by the Junjuwa community. Finally, the non-Aboriginal teacher in charge of Karrayili had been critical of the Junjuwa project officer's approach to community affairs, the radio project was hers and the project officer warned Junjuwa leaders that should this radio exist it could be used 'against' Junjuwa by spreading false rumours about the community in the entire area.

At a regional level Junjuwa was known to have distanced itself from the KLC, especially since the Noonkanbah crisis, although both informed each other of their main activities. For example, Junjuwa was always notified of the venue of KLC meetings and Junjuwa leaders invited to attend. Further, whenever important issues were on the agenda, the KLC chairman would make the trip to Fitzroy Crossing to inform town-based communities. He would join a Junjuwa council meeting to make his announcement to councillors and leaders and then leave the meeting. His attitude was to make KLC activities public as much as he could, but he did not want to interfere with Junjuwa's response to what he had presented to the council, nor did he wish to be involved with internal community affairs.

I came all the way to tell Junjuwa council about some business from the KLC that I have to tell every one. Well, I know they don't follow
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us on many issues but I have to tell them anyway. Once I told them, I can go, I don't need to stay to listen their own business or to be pushy with them, but still it's my job to come and tell them (Adrian).

The fact that the KLC chairman acknowledged that differences existed in various settlements of the West Kimberley with the KLC views facilitated relationship between the KLC and Junjuwa. For example, he once invited representatives from Junjuwa to attend a meeting at Broome. This meeting had been organised to evaluate common problems faced by Aboriginal settlements and Aboriginal-controlled resource and service agencies in the West Kimberley in order to solve them at the regional level. Once the KLC chairman had exposed his organisation's position he introduced Junjuwa representatives and insisted that they should talk, since their views were different from those he had expressed. This change in the KLC attitude towards communities like Junjuwa, which did not adhere to KLC policies, might have been prompted by the controversy that developed between the KLC chairman and the Junjuwa representatives at the Bow River meeting (see Chapter Five). In the past there were more interventions from the KLC in Junjuwa's internal affairs, especially when several non-Aboriginal were employed by this organisation.

Once the Junjuwa leaders had withdrawn from the KLC executive committee they joined a newly formed organisation, based in Derby, the Kamali Land Centre, in which they played a major role for two years (1983-1985). Junjuwa leaders supported this change by arguing that the KLC was oriented too much towards desert and 'sea-side' people and that Kamali was more representative of the river people's 'culture and country'. Although Junjuwa's involvement with Kamali declined after two or three years, some links persisted between some of the Junjuwa leaders, especially the Bumuba, and the Kamali executive committee. Whenever another Aboriginal organisation tried to interfere with Junjuwa's internal affairs or to rely on Junjuwa residents for promoting a particular policy, Kamali representatives would step in. This happened once, after the Bumuba Production had been incorporated.

This incorporated association had been formed to make a film about the life of Pigeon, the 'Bunuba renegade' (cf Jandamarra in Chapter Two). Some Bunuba custodians of Jandamarra life's story had been acting as consultants and advisers, then an association had to be created in order to deal with all the financial and legal details, and this is how Bunuba Productions Incorporated came into being.

A few meetings had been organised at Junjuwa to inform Bunuba people about the progress of the project. The person employed as coordinator by Bunuba Productions was known to Junjuwa people but he did not have their confidence because of his past involvement with the KLC during the Noonkanbah crisis and afterwards with the National Aboriginal Conference (NAC). Bunuba leaders had insisted that at least one Bunuba person should be directly involved with Bunuba Productions and proposed that a young Bunuba
female should be appointed as secretary and liaison person between Junjuwa and Bunuba Productions. The team of people who worked on the movie project had been in the Kimberley area for over a year, dividing their time between Broome (where the Bunuba Productions office was located), several places in the Oscar Range associated with Pigeon's life story, and Fitzroy Crossing.

In early March 1986 a meeting was organised in Junjuwa to finalise all the details before the beginning of a shooting trial which at that time was planned for April 1987. The main issue to be discussed at the meeting was royalties: should they benefit only Bunuba people (regardless of where they lived) or should they benefit Junjuwa Community, the main Bunuba settlement, but in which many people from other linguistic groups resided as well? The way Bunuba leaders understood the sharing of royalties was not clear and since there was only one Bunuba family directly involved with the project¹⁴, other Bunuba thought they would be excluded from financial benefit. The head of the other prominent Bunuba family, who had initiated Junjuwa's move from the KLC to Kamali, approached the Kamali executive committee and asked them to come to Junjuwa to clarify several issues about the movie project. A meeting was called by the Kamali chairman, only two days after the one organised by Bunuba Productions. The Kamali chairman addressed the Junjuwa council and representatives of Bunuba Productions and stressed that a venture in which Junjuwa was involved could not ignore Kamali. He stated that the Bunuba Productions office should not remain located in Broome and that all future plans should be first discussed with the Junjuwa council and the Kamali executive.

Junjuwa people they follow us Kamali, us Kamali we wanna to be in that movie business too. This side river we are all related all the way from Willare right to Wyndham, if some are doing business this side of river, we all gonna do it too, if some are in and some out, well we feel sorry for relatives and this is no good. That side river: Jandamarra, Bunuba mob, Junjuwa mob, them got one business ok, but them can't havin that milimili [=official documents] for that business other side of that river longa Broome, them can't do this, Broome way this is another country, other mob country, not this side mob (Peter).

Despite this ideologically sound statement, it was obvious that both the Kamali chairman and the Bunuba family not yet involved with the movie project were mainly concerned with possible royalties or benefits from the venture they could miss out on. This aspect was so obvious that the Kamali chairman's interference with Junjuwa's internal affairs prompted negative reactions: first, from Walmajarri leaders who stated they had never been associated with Kamali and did not feel bound to rely on it to act as a broker between Junjuwa and Bunuba Productions. Second, the head of the Bunuba family already involved in the film pointed out that the venture was a 'private business' between the film crew and the owners of the Pigeon story and that it
was up to them to decide, with Junjuwa people's approval, where the office should be located and what to do with the royalties.

The Kamali chairman left the meeting and a Bunuba leader, one of the custodians of the Jandamarra story, stated his view:

Us Bunuba people boss for that story we don't like humbug, we don't like people comin from back or side way and tell us what to do. I talk straight now: all you mob Junjuwa people gonna help makin that one movie, no matter what language, no matter what country, no matter what mob, all Junjuwa people gonna help. Alright, this is Junjuwa business now, we gonna get that office back to Junjuwa and all that milimili longa that movie we gonna keep him right here in Junjuwa. We don't want them mob from other place to come here and tell us mob what we gonna do, no way. We all gonna do it and no bad feeling this side (amongst Bunuba), or that side (with Walmajarri), I reckon this is the proper way alright (Ned).

His proposal received the meeting's approval and from then on the Pigeon movie project became a Junjuwa venture: the office was temporarily moved from Broome to Fitzroy, and Junjuwa council was regularly informed of all progress.

Despite this intervention being initiated by a Junjuwa leader, the community leadership reacted by stating its independence from Kamali, prior to reaffirming community cohesion, by including the entire community in a venture that initially concerned only a few people from one linguistic group.

The initiative of one Bunuba leader to contact another Aboriginal-controlled organisation in order to get it to investigate a matter internal to Junjuwa is representative of how individuals in Junjuwa dealt with these issues: should a disagreement exist at the level of the community leadership, one of the strategies available to overcoming it was to involve an Aboriginal organisation as a whole, or some of its representatives. This external intervention was likely to tighten community coherence and leadership as they reacted by asserting their independence from such organisations.

Overall it can be said that interventions by Aboriginal-controlled organisations were most common from those based in Fitzroy Crossing and occurred less frequently from organisations located elsewhere. Should interference be by individuals there was likely to be a positive response from Junjuwa leaders if the issue raised was seen as appropriate. On the other hand should interventions lead to the involvement of organisations, Junjuwa's leadership reacts negatively by stating community independence.

Finally, Aboriginal organisations could be of some strategic use for solving internal leadership problems and in this instance were approached by Junjuwa residents. It should be stressed that over a period of nine years relationships between Junjuwa and the various local Aboriginal-controlled organisations became less critical as the number of non-Aboriginal people involved or
employed by these organisations became fewer and fewer. Previously, nearly all initiatives from any organisations were perceived by Junjuwa residents (and the non-Aboriginals employed by the community) as initiated by non-Aboriginal people attempting to expand their control over Junjuwa.

### 9.3 Non-Aboriginal interventions

Non-Aboriginal people who lived and/or worked at Fitzroy Crossing did so mainly because of the town Aboriginal population. Nearly all employment opportunities available to the non-Aboriginal people were, directly or indirectly, connected with the Aboriginal population. Thus contacts between the two populations occurred on a daily basis. For the white people, relationships with the Aboriginal population were often the main focus of their working activities, and Aboriginal people could not ignore local whites whether or not they were directly involved with them. Consequently, interventions from the non-Aboriginal people in the life of the Aboriginal population were numerous and often contradictory. This resulted in misunderstandings and sometimes led to conflicts. These conflicts were rarely between the two populations, but often arose between and within Aboriginal groups and in the case of Junjuwa threatened community coherence. It is at this level that I shall look at the impact of the non-Aboriginal interventions with Junjuwa.¹⁶

Before I illustrate with examples the extent of these non-Aboriginal interventions it is necessary to describe briefly the nature and the meanings of relationships between individuals or groups from the black and white communities. Broadly speaking, there were two different strategies that led members of one community to establish and maintain relationships with particular individuals or groups of the other one. For white people, good relationships with many Aboriginal people, individually or in groups, meant locally a larger recognition of someone’s position in town. The influence given by a particular status associated with a specific position at Fitzroy Crossing was nothing in itself if one could not show that the influence was acknowledged by many and could, when needed, rally a large support from the Aboriginal population. For an Aboriginal person or a group, it was important to have good relationships with those of the local white people who could take a decision that gave access to privileges (jobs, loans, equipment, food, clothes...). Good relationships with several white people were a must for an Aboriginal group because they offered alternatives in case of problems or conflicts between the group and one of the white people.

Relationships between people of the two populations were complex, multiple and difficult to establish, but once they existed they could be difficult
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to overcome at times. The arrival of a new non-Aboriginal in town was a
challenge for the group who enjoyed a privileged relationship with the former
person in the position as well as the opportunity for other Aboriginal groups to
establish a relationship with the newcomer. The rapid turnover of white people
at Fitzroy Crossing was a challenge to the Aboriginal population for whom
relationships with non-Aboriginal people are based on a mutual trust, only
possible after a long-standing knowledge of each other. Nonetheless, even if
these movements of the white population introduced a precarious element for
the stability of long-standing relationships between members of the two
communities, it also made possible new alliances that gave a dynamic to the
local Aboriginal / non-Aboriginal relationships that ultimately benefited the
Aboriginal people, who in the past had to rely far too often on one single white
person.

Two examples will show how these relationships originated, developed
and ended up closely linking non-Aboriginal individuals to a group of
Aboriginal people. These examples demonstrate that often Aboriginal groups
targeted a specific individual in order to establish a very exclusive relationship
which could become detrimental for the non-Aboriginal person when dealing
with other Aboriginal groups.

Michael was appointed DCS local officer in early 1986. From the
beginning he was willing and careful to benefit all Fitzroy Valley Aboriginal
people in the course of his duties. Michael, a bachelor in his mid-twenties, was
allocated a large house, located in the town site, that belonged to DCS. He had
been in Fitzroy for about a month when he was approached by a single Bunuba
woman, herself a DCS employee, who had some difficulties with her Junjuwa
relatives: she asked him to accommodate her for a few nights. After a couple of
days of reflection Michael agreed to her request. From the day Julia, the
Bunuba woman, moved into Michael’s house many young Bunuba people
stopped by: first they came to visit Julia, then they dropped in to say hello to
Michael, later on they called in for a drink, then they came to play some
snooker and/or to watch a video\textsuperscript{17}, some even stayed overnight. Michael had
felt isolated since he arrived in town and he was happy to have Aboriginal
people around him. He also thought that this situation could help him in his
work. Further, he had intended to privilege relationships with the Bunuba
mainly as a reaction against some Walmajarri people (one group from
Noonkanbah and another one from Kurnangki), who had a very close
relationship with Michael’s predecessor and had tried to impose the same type
of relationship on him from the day he had taken his position. After a few
weeks Bunuba from Junjuwa came in growing numbers to the DCS office,
which they had visited only sporadically for several years\textsuperscript{18}, and all seemed
happy to re-establish friendly contacts with the new DCS officer. Bunuba
people received very positively Michael’s suggestion about a ‘drop-in’ centre to
be opened at Junjuwa (see below in this section). They also asked his advice on
a couple of minor problems they had with the Junjuwa community adviser and
the local doctor. Bunuba demands increased and rapidly Michael had no spare
time to carry on his activities outside town or to take care of problems brought to him by other Aboriginal groups.

Michael approached me since I was also involved mainly with Bunuba people because he was keen to stop his exclusive involvement with them. I pointed out to him that as a non-Aboriginal bachelor with a prominent position in town he might have made a mistake by housing a single Bunuba woman. Already in Junjiwa many Bunuba people talked about him as 'Julia's husband' and consequently her relatives and extended family expected a lot from him. Michael said he had suspected such a thing but he swore that there was nothing between Julia and him. This was beside the point: Michael was a newcomer in town, he held a good position and as such was a choice target for any given Aboriginal group to become 'their Gardiya'\(^{19}\), who was expected to grant privileges and devote his time to them.

A few days later Michael asked Julia to move out from his house, arguing that administratively speaking he was not allowed to accommodate her. Julia complied with his request but this did not reduce nor stop Bunuba demands. At this stage Michael's work in Junjuwa was obviously successful but he was frustrated that all his efforts benefited only a minority of the local Aboriginal population. About a month afterwards, Martha, a Wangkajunga woman, who had spent a year overseas returned to Fitzroy Crossing. She was a very close friend of Michael's predecessor's wife, and she knew they had left town but did not know their whereabouts. She called in at Michael's house hoping he would be able to tell her about her friends. Martha wanted to stay for a few days in Fitzroy Crossing but she had no place to stay in town\(^{20}\) and consequently Michael agreed to accommodate her for a while. Almost immediately Bunuba people changed their attitudes towards Michael and the DCS: at first they did not visit him in his house any longer, then they gradually stopped their involvement with DCS, and many Bunuba avoided Michael for months. Martha stayed only for a few nights at Michael's place before she joined her parents at Christmas Creek. She came to Fitzroy Crossing once or twice a week with many relatives who started to be involved with DCS. Julia asked to be transferred and the other two employees of the DCS office, one Walmajarri and one Wangkajunga, started to show more commitment in their work than they did while Julia was living in Michael's house. Unfortunately, Michael had as many difficulties in limiting his involvement with Wangkajunga people as he had previously had with Bunuba.

The second example is personal. My association with the Bunuba people from Junjuwa was fortuitous: I had been invited to stay in the house of the chairman, a Bunuba man, during my first visit to Junjuwa. During that first stay I had developed close links with Bunuba individuals and families, which were perpetuated during my following field trips. At first this association tended to limit my contacts to a small number of people, but in the course of my research conducted at the community level I could not restrict my collection of data to Bunuba only. Relationships I came to establish later were not liked by all
Bunuba people and it happened, especially during the first weeks of my second stay, that when I was seen with non-Bunuba I was often 'reminded' of my 'duties' by a passing Bunuba person. At first people limited their comments by stating loudly that 'I was a Bunuba'. I did not modify my behaviour and persisted in working with people from other languages. Once, I was talking with two Walmajarri women outside Junjuwa and I was called upon by an old Bunuba woman:

Son, you work for us mob, we look after you before, long time ago, now you come back with that girl and them two babies (my wife and two daughters), well that's proper good but you can’t turn your back to us now, you have to help us Bunuba mob all the way, this people you bin talkin too, them are different, them they'll tell you lies, them they don’t know, us mob we know, we can tell you all about this place, this country, us people, all the lot but you got to stick with us Bunuba people, only us mob (Myriam).

I apologised to Myriam but took the opportunity of the next council meeting to make public my willingness to be involved with all Junjuwa residents regardless of their linguistic origin. In order to point it out clearly to those in attendance I paraphrased the public discourse held by community councillors about Junjuwa: I argued that I saw myself as a Junjuwa person and consequently, in order to understand what Junjuwa was, I had to become 'mixed'; therefore I should be able to talk and work with people from various groups and sub-groups that made Junjuwa a mixed place. If I consider how my field work went afterwards it seemed that I convinced most of the people but whenever I found myself in a position of granting privileges, Bunuba's demands were more numerous than others (see Chapter Eight); similarly, my associations with the Bunuba rendered informants from other languages reluctant at times.

Most of the non-Aboriginal interventions did not affect Junjuwa residents' lives greatly, but it happened that some initiatives taken by white people interfered with community coherence. These interferences were not necessarily meant by those who caused them, but they forced Junjuwa residents to react in order to overcome whatever resulted from them. For example, white people employed by government bodies had to take some initiatives to solve local problems. These initiatives were meant to benefit the entire Aboriginal population of the town but were often implemented at Junjuwa since it was the largest, oldest and most representative settlement in Fitzroy Crossing. Junjuwa residents accepted these initiatives but the outcomes of some created problems within Junjuwa. Invariably the non-Aboriginal person would be blamed for these problems, but it was up to the Aboriginal people to solve them. Solutions needed to overcome some difficult situations could be extreme and sometimes affected the local image of Junjuwa residents but in their view it was the price to pay for preserving the community as they wanted it to be.

For the reasons mentioned earlier, Michael from DCS enjoyed a good relationship with the Bunuba from Junjuwa during the first months of his
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appointment. One of his responsibilities while in Fitzroy Crossing was to limit and if possible reduce juvenile delinquency in the area. Michael had DCS funds to take some positive steps against this social phenomenon. He purchased sports and recreation equipment to make it available in a specific place for youths (school aged children and teenagers), since Fitzroy Crossing lacked such facilities. Michael approached Junjuwa Council and offered to repair one derelict empty house in order to use it as a 'drop-in centre'. This centre, he emphasised, would have to be accessible to all Aboriginal youths from the town area. He had chosen Junjuwa for several reasons: first, because it was the settlement in which the juvenile delinquency was the highest (McMahon 1984:24-26); second, because Junjuwa had a central location in town and was ideally placed between the school and most of the Aboriginal settlements (see Map 5); and finally, because nearly all languages spoken in the area were represented in Junjuwa which in his view would facilitate access to the 'drop-in centre' by all youths from different linguistic origins. His proposal was supported by the Bunuba councillors and leaders who convinced other leaders, even though they were not really enthusiastic about it.\(^{21}\) The Council decided the centre's operating hours and insisted that a councillor be on duty at the 'drop-in centre' to assist the person in charge of the centre. Once it was opened the 'drop-in centre' was very successful: for any Aboriginal kids between six and sixteen it was the place to be in town. School aged children were only admitted outside school hours and the others spent most of their days at the centre. A young Bunuba woman from Junjuwa was appointed by DCS to supervise youth activities at the 'drop-in centre'. However, councillors chosen to be on duty at the recreational centre found all sorts of excuses to stay away from it, as for most of them it was 'a kids' place, not good for men'. The 'drop-in centre' was mostly attracting children from Junjuwa, amongst whom a majority were Bunuba, and although youths from other communities were not banned from the centre they were only a minority. About two weeks after the opening of the 'drop-in centre' a Bunuba gang had taken control of it and its members decided who could have access to the place. Michael paid frequent visits to the centre, as did the Junjuwa chairman, and they both noticed that the majority of youths were Bunuba from Junjuwa. In an attempt to overcome the Bunuba youths' monopoly over the 'drop-in centre' the chairman brought the matter to the next council meeting. Michael organised bus trips between the school and/or other communities and the 'drop-in centre'. As long as Michael and/or a councillor were present, other kids were tolerated by the gang members, but as soon as the adults left the non-Bunuba kids had to leave as well. One gang member pointed out to me that the 'drop-in centre' was located in Junjuwa and as such the Bunuba were the bosses of the recreation place. The situation deteriorated after Julia moved out of Michael's place: the female employee lost faith in her job, she opened the place late, did not come to work and finally resigned. Her resignation resulted in the closing of the 'drop-in centre' for nearly two months because nobody else in Junjuwa seemed interested in the position. After two months a female Wangkajunga, a relative of the Junjuwa chairman's wife, agreed to operate the centre. Once the 'drop-in centre' re-opened it was obvious to anyone who had visited it before that
something had changed. Bunuba youth had deserted the place and it had became a meeting place for mothers with young children, the majority of whom were Walmajarri and Wangkajunga. Then older children from Kurnangki and Mindi Rardi started to come regularly to the 'drop-in centre' after school. Bunuba councillors from Junjuwa complained about the kids' behaviour (loud music, kids hanging around houses at dusk...) and argued that the DCS initiative neglected Junjuwa children. Michael attempted to answer these critics during the following council meeting. He stated that the 'drop-in centre' was open to all children from Fitzroy Crossing, thus Junjuwa youths were not neglected. His second point was that Junjuwa councillors and leaders had the authority to enforce community rules at the 'drop-in centre' since it was located on Junjuwa premises. Bunuba leaders stated that if they acted as Michael suggested this would develop into a conflict between Junjuwa and other communities because, in the 'Aboriginal way', they had no authority over these children.

The situation deteriorated further when a youth gang of Walmajarri and Wangkajunga established its control over the centre. They came to the centre on two consecutive days and stayed late at night. During the day they monopolised all activities available at the 'drop-in centre' and at night they played loud music. Members of the Bunuba gang which previously controlled the place attempted unsuccessfully to chase them away. According to Bunuba leaders, this time supported by Junjuwa's chairman, these youths created a nuisance for residents (noise, alcohol brought into Junjuwa, food stealing, swearing at old people). The only reason why these young people came to Junjuwa was because of the 'drop-in centre' and in the leaders' views it was up to the DCS people to do something to stop these youths' wrongdoings. Michael and the Junjuwa council approached community leaders from the settlements in which these youths resided. The leaders stated that they could not see any wrong in their children going to places especially created for Aboriginal youths from Fitzroy Crossing. They added that it was up to Junjuwa council to supervise activities conducted at the centre and they could not be responsible for something that happened in another community. Tension grew amongst the leaders within Junjuwa community as it did between Junjuwa council and those from Kurnangki and Mindi Rardi. In Junjuwa, leaders and councillors from the same languages or related to the youths did not blame them as much as the rest of the council, thus it resulted in an internal conflict. Fights took place in various places (school, pub, drinking and gambling places), between people of different age groups from various settlements involved in the 'drop-in centre' affair. For the Bunuba leaders there was no doubt that Michael was responsible because he had given the means to people from other settlements to do whatever they wanted in Junjuwa, but the situation had deteriorated too badly and there was nothing a non-Aboriginal could do at this stage. The outcome could have been different if Junjuwa leaders had taken on their responsibilities right from the beginning instead of blaming a 'Gardiya' for making their 'jobs' more and more difficult. Such were the tensions created by the centre that the Junjuwa leaders decided to act.
Plate 12

Rehearsing Bunuba public dance. This dance was part of Arthur's Jumba. During this particular rehearsal some non-initiated young Bunuba and Walmajarri had been invited to join in to show that this was an open ritual. The man in the middle of the picture is a Walmajarri ceremonial leader, he was the first non-Bunuba recruited to take part in a rehearsal by Arthur as part of his strategy to get support from non-Bunuba leaders before he could stage a full version of the Jumba.
Plate 13

Sometimes the Junjuwa Council held its council meetings outside. This was the case during the cool season (July/August) or any time of the year when the council had to settle a conflict, because the seating arrangement was more flexible than in Junjuwa community hall. This picture shows a typical seating arrangement in a conflict situation: the opposed leaders are both standing with their supporters seated around them. In the very background are the women. In the foreground from right to left: the Junjuwa community project officer, the Junjuwa chairman, and two councillors, one from each language to which the opposed leaders belonged.
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One night the 'drop-in centre' was raided: the house was smashed and burnt down, all equipment was destroyed or stolen. Although it seems that this could not be done quietly, nobody in Junjuwa attempted to stop those who conducted the raid. After two days the local police were able to establish that a Bunuba gang was responsible for the raid. They were school aged boys from Junjuwa who belonged to prominent Bunuba families. When they appeared in Court they did not say anything but their fathers claimed they did this as a result of frustration because they could not have access to the 'drop-in centre' which was controlled by a gang alien to Junjuwa. Michael did not want to press any charges against the boys despite the heavy financial loss and Junjuwa Council representatives stated that the boys were not responsible for what they had done and therefore should not be charged. Outside the Juvenile Court Michael was very upset:

I simply do not understand. I do my best to help these kids, there was $15,000 worth of equipment, it was theirs, it was for the kids only and they destroyed it all. There is nothing left, further the leaders and the kids' fathers blame me, they say it's my fault because I let other people inside Junjuwa, but it's their community not mine, it was up to them to supervise the 'drop-in centre' not me. I have other things to take care of, I cannot just devote all my time to Bunuba people and Junjuwa's problems.

All Junjuwa leaders, including Bunuba, condemned the destruction of the recreation place, but those who conducted the raid did not bear the responsibility which was directed to a non-Aboriginal who had interfered with Aboriginal rules that regulate people's access to places. As a result of that interference, Junjuwa leaders disagreed amongst themselves and were in conflict with leaders from other settlements as well as with Michael. For Junjuwa leaders a direct confrontation either with the other leaders or with a non-Aboriginal was not possible, therefore some of them took an initiative to solve the problem once and for all. This was why the Bunuba leaders came to organise the raid. A few weeks after the incident one member of the gang which had participated in the raid admitted, during an interview, that it had been ordered by Bunuba leaders. I was rather surprised and asked one of the leaders involved, who confirmed the boy's statement, adding that it was the only way to solve the problem: they could not act directly against Michael because he was an important Gardiya, neither could they confront leaders of other communities because this would have resulted in a more serious conflict.

Other types of interventions by non-Aboriginal people occurred when two or several of them were opposed and played on their relations with specific Aboriginal people to settle their conflict. In such cases non-Aborigines attempted to involve Aboriginal people in their disputes in order to strengthen their position (Tonkinson 1968:101).

In late 1986, there were growing rumours in Junjuwa that Russell (see Chapter Eight), was willing to move back to Fitzroy Crossing to live in Junjuwa. His contract as project officer with the Christmas Creek community was about
to expire and he wanted the supervise the construction of his house which was to be located at Fitzroy Crossing townsite. Mark, Junjuwa’s project officer, was not keen to have Russell living in Junjuwa because of his close ties with some Bunuba leaders. Further, Russell had a reputation for interfering with other people’s work and Mark was not prepared to add this to his then fragile relationship with Junjuwa council. Because his relationships with Bunuba leaders and councillors in particular were not at their best, he did not want to upset them by making public his feelings towards Russell’s plan. Mark decided therefore to approach some Wangkajunga leaders and advise them to contact their relatives from Christmas Creek before Junjuwa council would take a decision. These leaders obtained negative comments about Russell, who, according to Christmas Creek residents, was 'running away' from the place after several serious conflicts with Christmas Creek leaders. Further, the community was facing heavy debts due to Russell’s poor management. These comments comforted Mark in his position and he brought the issue to the council meeting for a decision. During this meeting Bunuba leaders did most of the talking. They supported Russell’s return to Junjuwa despite the fact that he had been 'tricky' at times, because as they pointed out he had always helped Junjuwa people during difficult times and it was now their turn to pay him back. Wangkajunga leaders made their point by reporting Russell’s wrongdoings at Christmas Creek to the council. They added that if they supported the Bunuba decision to have Russell back in Junjuwa this would put them in a difficult situation with their relatives and allies from Christmas Creek. The Junjuwa chairman, Andrew, caught between his Bunuba relatives and his Wangkajunga allies, was too embarrassed to make any suggestion. No decision was reached and the issue was discussed during several council meetings. Depending on the attendance and according to the quality of speeches the council hesitated between a favourable and a negative answer to Russell’s request. Bunuba leaders became divided on whether or not they should listen to the Wangkajunga leaders for a council decision. Finally, a compromise was suggested by Andrew: Russell’s wife could move into a house since she was a Bunuba, but Russell could only come from time to time, thus he would not officially live in Junjuwa but could come to his wife’s house as often as he wished. Russell’s wife moved into Junjuwa with two female relatives and several children (hers and two fostered) not long after the council decision. At first, Russell came once or twice a week and did not interfere with Mark’s work or with Junjuwa affairs. But when Mark took three weeks’ leave, Russell moved into Junjuwa permanently. With the support of his Bunuba allies, Russell did his best to convince the council members to dismiss Mark and to appoint him instead. He also criticised the Wangkajunga leaders publicly for their support of Mark prior to any council decision. As a result most of these leaders left Junjuwa for a while. For the duration of Mark’s leave Russell behaved as if he was Junjuwa’s community adviser.

Once Mark returned from leave he faced Bunuba leaders’ hostility for several weeks until Russell moved into his own house in the townsite. Then
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Wangkajunga leaders moved back to Junjuwa. Later, Mark was able to find a solution to Russell's challenge to his position by appointing him as CDEP coordinator of team workers (see Appendix 2). In this example, one of the two non-Aboriginals was a Junjuwa employee, but it happened that similar interferences with Junjuwa people's lives were caused by white people not appointed by the community.

This was the case for an incident in which Russell was opposed to Tim, a non-Aboriginal adviser working for MWW. These two men had conflicting relationships for several years already. Tim was living in the old post office which he rented from MWW. The Aboriginal controlled organisation had acquired the building during an auction once the new post office had been completed. With Russell's return to living in Junjuwa, Tim was gathering evidence of his mishandling of Aboriginal funds in order to take Russell to court in the name of the Christmas Creek community. Russell approached me one evening in Junjuwa and asked me to take the minutes of a meeting which was to be organised in his wife's house. The purpose of this meeting was to prepare the incorporation of a Bunuba group. I attended the meeting, together with two Bunuba leaders from Junjuwa, Russell's wife, her sister and sister's son, and three Aboriginals of mixed descent, of whom I knew only one. It was Wallace, one of Russell's foster children, who had made the trip from Kununnura. The two others were related to Russell's wife. They worked and lived in Broome and Halls Creek. Wallace and Russell's wife did most of the talking: they claimed that the group called Darlyngunaya, after the name of a deep stretch of water on the Fitzroy right behind the old post office building, wanted to get its land back. In order to be able to do so they had decided to form an incorporated body under the name of Darlyngunaya and were willing to move to the old post office located in an area particularly significant to the Bunuba (see Chapter Six). Most of those who attended the meeting had been living a long way away from Fitzroy Crossing for a long time. The two Bunuba leaders had only agreed to be registered as members to please Russell's wife. Wallace, the group spokesperson, insisted that they wanted to live together as soon as possible because too many external factors had pulled that group apart for far too long and now they were eager to get reunited. I organised the incorporation of the group through Derby ALS office, but when I left Fitzroy nearly a year after that meeting, none of the incorporation documents had yet been signed, and the members of Darlyngunaya had not met again. I will not discuss the legitimate right of these people forming an incorporated body, nor their willingness to apply for land that was significant to them, but it was obvious that Russell had manipulated them to his own benefit: he put Tim in a difficult position with the local Aborigines. The morning after the first and only meeting of Darlyngunaya, some members of the MWW executive committee investigated Tim's rights to occupy the old post office, despite the fact that they were unhappy with Junjuwa council which did not approach them directly on the issue. Tensions arose in Junjuwa with the Bunuba sub-groups for which the Darlyngunaya claim was not genuine because made by outsiders and as such a threat to future claims from other Bunuba sub-groups. Junjuwa council
members were upset by Russell's initiative because it resulted in a conflict amongst Junjuwa leaders that worked against community cohesion, which was crucial for finalising negotiations with UAM regarding the transfer to Junjuwa of the UAM compound lease. Russell's intervention, prompted by Tim's investigation into Russell's dealings at Christmas Creek, resulted in tensions within Junjuwa as well as between Junjuwa and MWW. Finally, it also probably compromised Darlyngunaya's chances of successfully claiming the old post office because of the circumstances under which this group sought its incorporation.

Neither Russell nor Tim was employed by Junjuwa, but non-Aboriginal community employees could also use this kind of strategy to settle their conflicts. Jeff, Junjuwa's baker, lived in an house owned by Junjuwa, located opposite the Junjuwa chairman's house near the DCS hostel (see Map 5). He was assisted in his work by three young males from Junjuwa: two baker aides and an apprentice. Jeff did not share Mark's views about the running of Junjuwa's bakery and their differences on many issues made their working relations difficult. Jeff had a bad spell, after some problems with the bakery oven had forced him out of work for nearly two weeks, during which he drank heavily. His behaviour resulted in him coming late to work or, worse still, missing full days' work. In Fitzroy Crossing no baker in Junjuwa bakery meant no bread in town and Jeff's difficulties added to the previous mechanical problems resulting in financial and credibility losses for Junjuwa bakery. Further, one night Jeff organised a party in his house to which he invited young male and female residents from Junjuwa. Many of them drank heavily and made a lot of noise during most of the night. The following morning Andrew notified Jeff that the house he was living in was part of Junjuwa premises and as such consumption of alcohol was banned. The chairman understood that Jeff wanted to organise a party with his friends but he should have sought the council's permission beforehand and above all he should not have invited people from Junjuwa. Both Andrew and Mark were displeased by Jeff's work and behaviour and they asked for a council meeting to discuss his dismissal. Initially, Andrew wanted only to warn Jeff but Mark put such pressure on him that he supported the idea that Junjuwa should look for a new baker. It was pointed out to the councillors that Junjuwa was losing money; it had an increasingly bad reputation with its non-Aboriginal employees; and young people from the community were getting drunk with Gardiya on Junjuwa land; all of which did not leave them with much alternative but to ask Jeff to leave. When he was notified, Jeff was very upset by the decision, obviously forced by Mark, and during the following days he visited most of Junjuwa councillors and leaders in their houses. He asked them to give him a chance to defend himself as he pointed out that the decision was taken without him attending the meeting. Jeff came to the next council meeting, which incidentally Mark did not attend because he was away for the day; he asked for forgiveness and was given a second but last chance.
In February 1987, twelve years after Junjuwa community was incorporated as an association. The UAM transferred the lease. This was after several years of negotiations between the UAM, Junjuwa and DAA. In the picture from left to right: A. Lynch from the Aboriginal Land Trust, E. Bridge, State Minister in charge of Aboriginal Affairs, who handed over the lease to the Junjuwa chairman, the Junjuwa project officer and the National Secretary of the UAM.
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Mark was puzzled by the council’s new decision but he did not want to interfere with it so he gave to Andrew the responsibility of the bakery. This first incident had surprised the community’s Aboriginal leadership; people did not approve of what Jeff had done but they also disagreed with Mark’s attitude:

Well, myself I don’t know what’s wrong with them two Gardiya. We got them two working for us Junjuwa mob, alright they should help us, make things easy for us leaders. No way, they make things hard for us, each one goes his own way, one that way, one this way, they make trouble for us councillors too, we don’t know which way to go. Now we go our way, we listen them little bit but we go our way, more better, if some of us mob go one way and some more go other way, well it’s proper no good for us, too much trouble already to get together in that place, we don’t need trouble from Gardiya on the top (Arthur).

Several weeks after the first incident, Mark went on leave. This gave Jeff the opportunity to discuss freely with Andrew Junjuwa’s plan regarding the UAM store soon to be handed over to the community. He found out that Junjuwa had no plans and that it was Mark’s plan, with which he disagreed totally. Jeff contacted an Aboriginal run cooperative that operates mainly in the Northern Territory and offers a supervising and managing service to Aboriginal controlled stores. A representative of this cooperative came to Junjuwa and had a meeting with Andrew and a few councillors. He explained to them that what was planned for Junjuwa’s store was not good in his view and offered some alternatives. Simultaneously, Jeff stirred up his Aboriginal workers against Mark’s handling of Junjuwa’s affairs. Jeff’s initiative and criticisms created more confusion amongst Junjuwa leaders, councillors and many residents who were already confronted with Russell’s challenge to the project officer position (this was at the same time). They did not know whose responsibility it was to advise people, who they should listen to, or which person they should follow and support. When Mark returned he had to face a double challenge from (non-Aboriginal) Russell and Jeff, but eventually he received council support for both his position and his plan for the store. Andrew reminded the councillors and leaders that they had chosen Mark together and therefore they should support or dismiss him together. They chose the first alternative since Mark’s dismissal was likely to have created more divisions amongst them.

All the examples in this section show that interventions from non-Aboriginal people interfered with Junjuwa residents’ lives, the decision making process at the community level as well as group based actions. When such interventions caused serious dissensions within the community, amongst leaders and councillors or between Junjuwa and other communities, Aboriginal people took the necessary steps to remove the problem, in order to re-establish the balance that regulates relationships between groups and within Junjuwa and towards the outside.
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1 Junjuwa was the only town-based settlement which employed a full time project officer. The other settlements received assistance either from DCS or from MWW.

2 The place called Kurku is located about 150 Km southeast of Fitzroy Crossing south of Cherrabun Station (see Map 1).

3 No Bunuba were prepared to live in that place at the time and Bunuba leaders would prefer to authorise people affiliated to other languages from Junjuwa to move into that place than to see people from other settlements move here.

4 Milimili is a local Kriol English expression for all official documents (leases, certificates of incorporation, constitutions).

5 All areas in which Bunuba sub-groups from Junjuwa were willing to establish outstations were located on properties individually owned by non-Aboriginal people and not likely to be on the market for a while.

6 This took place after the Broome incident I discussed in Chapter Eight.

7 The Junjuwa bus was rented at $100 a day plus fuel expenses and had to be returned with a full tank. Those who hired Junjuwa's vehicles also agreed to pay for any damage that occurred during the renting period. None of these rules applied when the community's vehicles were used by Junjuwa residents.

8 Jumba is a generic term used for a special type of ritual. A Jumba is neither secret nor sacred but has been dreamt by the person who becomes the owner of the story depicted in songs and dances. For a discussion on the possible origin of Jumba in the area and their purpose during and after the cattle-station era, see Rowse 1987:94-96.

9 'Easy' rituals were those open to the public, even white people, as opposed to 'hard' ones, as men's secret ceremonies were often called.

10 The story associated with his Jumba related events linked with the river people's country, and at this stage he stated that it was not appropriate to have desert people dancing or singing as a part of his corroboree.

11 This was the main criticism successive KLC chairmen made of Junjuwa; Junjuwa's lack of commitment could partly be explained by the fact that few of the KLC actions and initiatives directly benefited Junjuwa.

12 On the one hand, many tourists bought items locally too cheaply, which discouraged artists; on the other hand, high prices offered by art dealers sometimes tempted people to sell secret objects or old valuable artifacts taken from funeral sites.

13 People from Fitzroy Crossing made special trips to Broome, regardless of travelling expenses, because they obtained higher prices for their artifacts there than anywhere else in the area by selling their craft products to tourist places like the Crocodile farm, and souvenir stores. Therefore people suspected that the MWW outlet was a way to buy at cheap prices from them and to sell at better prices in Broome.

14 It was the Bunuba descent group that had not intermarried with other language groups.

15 I first visited Junjuwa in late 1979 and my last field trip was undertaken in September and October 1988.

16 I am aware that other types of intervention existed but either they did not have a lot of impact on Junjuwa or they were not as significant as those presented in this section.
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17 All the sport and recreation equipment that Michael had acquired for a Junjuwa drop-in centre was made available to Aboriginal youths in Michael’s house prior to the opening of the centre.

18 The close relationship between the previous DCS officer and Walmajarri people and the absence of any Bunuba amongst DCS employees had kept contacts between Bunuba from Junjuwa and DCS to a minimum.

19 Local Aboriginal people often used the expressions ‘our Gardiya or our boss’ when talking about a non-Aboriginal with whom they had privileged ties.

20 She was originally from Christmas Creek and at the time of her visit, all Wangkajunga from Junjuwa had gone away to attend a ceremony.

21 A similar place had been set up in Junjuwa two years before and had rapidly become a drinking and gambling spot which attracted many outsiders and created a nuisance for Junjuwa residents.

22 Even though Wangkajunga leaders had a say in community affairs, there were no speakers of that language appointed as councillors; therefore the Wangkajunga power in decision-making at the council level was limited.

23 The Christmas Creek community employed a community adviser but most of the paper work as well as payment of Social Security benefits was done at MWW office in Fitzroy Crossing. Russell’s negative feelings towards the Aboriginal organisation were an obstacle to a further involvement of Christmas Creek with MWW.

24 Prior to this incident, local stores, the roadhouse and the Crossing Inn bought about 50% of the bread they needed from the Junjuwa bakery. Afterwards, orders dropped significantly, and remote Aboriginal settlements which so far purchased their bread only through Junjuwa, started to get it from Derby.