CHAPTER ONE

THE PROBLEM

The problem I want to address in this thesis relates to understanding why Aboriginal people in the Kimberley have found it difficult to develop and maintain a regional political consciousness. I became interested in this question as a result of my first visit to the Kimberley in December 1980, only some months after the climax of the Noonkanbah affair which had projected Aborigines into the national and even briefly the international news. During my short visit then, I quickly became aware of the fact that even though the small group of one hundred Aboriginal people from Noonkanbah cattle station had given rise to the first regional Aboriginally controlled organization, the Kimberley Land Council, and had drawn financial, political and moral support from across the nation in what was seen by outsiders as a major land rights battle, any sense of regional solidarity there might have been had already evaporated. The Noonkanbah crisis seemed to reflect a common process in the formation of Aboriginal groups and Aboriginal community life which allows larger grouping only a short life. A brief history of the Noonkanbah affair will help to illustrate the point.

1.1 The Noonkanbah affair

The growing development of mining interests in the Kimberley in the late 1970s, from which the area had hitherto been largely protected, resulted in the international consortium, AMAX Petroleum, gaining an exploration licence on Noonkanbah. The company planned to drill an exploratory oil well in the
vicinity of Pea-Hill, a sacred site on the station. AMAX's actions fuelled misunderstandings, setting the scene for a major conflict. This took on national significance with the aggressive intervention of the State Government, overriding Aboriginal concerns about the sacred sites and using police to enforce the AMAX drilling programme. At this period when the Federal Government had put uniform national land rights on the agenda the whole matter became highly sensitive (Kolig 1987:133-137). Ultimately, despite a nationwide campaign and a trip by an Aboriginal delegation to the UN, Yungnora people were unable to obtain a moratorium on the drilling, but AMAX abandoned the well soon after the drilling had started because no oil worth exploiting was found.

Almost since Noonkanbah Station started in 1887, there had been a group of Aboriginal people living permanently on the station. Originally they were all Nyikina, most of the Noonkanbah lease being on Nyikina country, but speakers of that language gradually mixed with Walmajarri who moved into the area from the 1910s onwards. Between 1949 and 1960, the Department of Native Welfare censuses show that the permanent Aboriginal population at Noonkanbah Station was about 80 people. During this period the group living at Noonkanbah was made up of an equal number of Nyikina and Walmajarri people and called itself Yungnora. Living conditions on Noonkanbah station were precarious and relations between the people and the manager tense. For example, by as late as 1970, there were only two steel-frame rain shelters with dirt floors to accommodate some fifty people then living at Noonkanbah, and the only facility was one pit latrine (DNW, Noonkanbah 8/10/1970). As far as relations with the manager were concerned, an incident in which an old woman was fired, for wasting water while watering flowers next to the homestead, said it all (DNW, Noonkanbah 18/8/1971). According to a 1970 report from the DNW, the rations provided by the management to people were so poor that supplementation from bush foods was essential.

In August 1971, after some incidents between Aboriginal people and the manager, the Yungnora people did something that showed the coherence of the group and the solidarity of its members: during one night the entire Aboriginal population left the station. The "walk off", as such actions are called, was facilitated by some Yungnora people's relatives, living at Fitzroy Crossing, who provided vehicles to transport people from Noonkanbah to the town. Between 1971 and 1976, members of the Yungnora group lived at a temporary camp established in Fitzroy Crossing by the Department for Community Welfare (DCW). Noonkanbah's manager attempted on a few occasions to get the people back on his station, but the leaders of the Yungnora group were determined and refused categorically to return to Noonkanbah as long as he remained manager.

In 1976, Noonkanbah station was purchased by the Aboriginal Land Fund Commission (ALFC). The Noonkanbah lease was vested in the Aboriginal Lands Trust of Western Australia (ALT), who subsequently offered it to the
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Yungnora people. Firstly, they refused because the Department of Aboriginal Affairs (DAA) intended to appoint a white manager to supervise their activities there, even though they were now legally incorporated as the Yungnora Community and were about to become leaseholders of the station. They eventually agreed to move back when a management committee was set up to advise them on the running of the station. The creation of this committee was initiated by the district officer from the DCW. Apart from him the committee included local pastoralists, an accountant from Marra Worra Worra (MWW), an Aboriginal Resource Agency in Fitzroy Crossing, and members from the Yungnora group.

By 1978, a new leader emerged within the Yungnora group. He was then the spokesman for the group and retained this position during the crisis. He was in 1985 Noonkanbah community chairman, even if his leadership was eroded and his influence was continually diminishing. It seems now that the starting point of the entire Noonkanbah controversy was a succession of misunderstandings (Kolig 1987:137). Several mining companies had permits for prospecting in the area and one of them decided to start a survey prior to further mining in the Noonkanbah vicinity. Apparently it was prepared to negotiate over conditions for mining with the Aboriginal communities concerned, but from the very beginning the negotiations went wrong. These negotiations were led by junior representatives of the mining company, who knew little if anything about the way to deal with Aboriginal people. These junior officials received an agreement to start exploration and mining but it was signed only by a former community spokesman no longer considered as a leader by the rest of the Yungnora group. It is not surprising, then, that the Yungnora people did not feel bound at all to the company by an agreement signed in their name by a non-representative leader. The detailed history of the subsequent two year conflict is documented in other places (Hawke & Gallager 1989, Kolig 1987), so I will not go into it here.

It was at Noonkanbah in 1978 that the first Aboriginal regional organisation, the Kimberley Land Council (KLC), was formed. The main purpose of that organisation was to bring all Aboriginal people from the West Kimberley together and to be fully representative of all Aboriginal communities. Therefore the KLC executive committee included representatives from nearly all the Aboriginal groups from the Fitzroy Valley area, who in turn elected their own chairman. Once created, the first task of this Aboriginal organisation was to gain the support of the state opposition for its struggle with mining companies and to bring the mining controversy to the attention of the media. From that point, the KLC became, for many, the official representative of the Yungnora group and acted as a political broker between the Noonkanbah people on the one side, and mining companies and State Government on the other, during the entire Noonkanbah crisis.

Between 1978 and 1980, many important religious ceremonies were held at Noonkanbah, which brought a lot of Aboriginal groups together, partially
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reviving the importance of the place for ceremonial gatherings (Kolig 1981:121). But a new dimension was added, because Noonkanbah also became the site of numerous political gatherings. The Noonkanbah people, through the action of the Kimberley Land Council, gained support from unions and churches across Australia; they also acquired, through the media, the image of a small group of Aboriginal people fighting and struggling for their land against a giant international industrial body, as well as against government policies and politicians. The height of the controversy was reached in August 1980 when a convoy of trucks under police protection, carrying mining equipment, was stopped by a crowd of local Aborigines, with black and white supporters, on the only road that gives access to Noonkanbah. In a dramatic confrontation the blockade was removed, many people arrested and the convoy forced through. The full coverage of the events by the Australian media was relayed overseas. Further international publicity was gained when a KLC representative visited Geneva to address a United Nations commission on the events, drawing attention to the state of black/white relations in Australia and the problems faced by Aboriginal people.

In Australia, there were two main views of the Noonkanbah events. For those in sympathy with the Aborigines, the Noonkanbah people became a symbol of the entire Aboriginal population fighting over land rights issues. By contrast, for those against any land rights policy there was a tendency to condemn anything that was related to the Aboriginal position on Noonkanbah. Locally, things were totally different: once the drilling started the Noonkanbah people bitterly realised that they had lost their fight almost as quickly as they had lost control of the original situation.

When I returned to the Kimberley in 1985, I could see that the Noonkanbah controversy had split people in the area rather than brought them together. For example, the group which returned to Noonkanbah in 1976 was no longer a unified group but was now divided between four discrete settlements on different stations. These residential divisions were mainly caused by deaths of several prominent group members. Ironically, at the same time as the initial Yungnora group had split into smaller residential units, more people than ever associated themselves with it, in the sense that they claimed to belong to one or more of these residential sub-groups (McMahon 1984:12). Even the group that now lived at Noonkanbah was far from being united in the way it had been in 1971. The cattle station, still run by the Yungnora Association, was struggling with financial and administrative difficulties. Aboriginal groups living in the area blamed these difficulties on the Noonkanbah controversy, which they said had divided people and given rise to bad relations between Aborigines from the area and the government.

Relations between the KLC and the Noonkanbah people had also deteriorated, apparently beginning in 1981, and were very irregular and tense at the time of my second visit. Although since the Noonkanbah events the Kimberley Land Council had been openly used by local Aboriginal
communities as a service agency to cash their social security cheques, to pay their registration for motor vehicles, or to get legal help or advice, the people refused any other types of involvement through the KLC, especially in political matters. According to the chairman this lack of political awareness was particularly evident in the Fitzroy Valley area. He suggested it was caused by government policies that encouraged competition between communities through the allocation of resources on a community by community basis (defined according to government criteria). This meant that each of these communities wanted to deal individually with the government, neglecting their common interest at the regional level as well as organisations such as the KLC. The chairman did not relate these circumstances to the Noonkanbah crisis in any way.

By contrast, for an anthropologist\textsuperscript{6} then employed by the same organisation, the Noonkanbah affair was an important element that partly explained the lack of support from Aboriginal groups in the area for the Kimberley Land Council. In his view, the Noonkanbah events involved too many people and became too important for the Aboriginals at the origin of the crisis. He also emphasized one other important factor: although the controversy over prospecting at Noonkanbah, as elsewhere in Australia, was closely associated with the nationwide interest in land rights issues, the Yungnora people did not see their struggle as related to this wider political controversy. Even though the Noonkanbah people became a symbol for the land rights movement across Australia, land rights were not the origin of the dispute, at least as far as Yungnora people were concerned. Members and leaders of the Yungnora group, and others directly involved, blamed outside influences (including some members of the KLC, the media, and black and white activists) for manipulating their own struggle for other purposes. Moreover, under the label of 'Noonkanbah events', the Yungnora people found themselves associated with people unknown to them and ideas they did not share and refused to promote. The anthropologist agreed that the Noonkanbah crisis provided an ideal platform for promoting the KLC as an Aboriginal organisation representative of all Aboriginal groups living in the area, on the one hand, and on the other hand as a privileged political interlocutor acting as a mediator between government and mining companies and the Yungnora people. But once the events were over, the KLC failed to achieve both roles. As a result Noonkanbah people felt betrayed by the KLC, for the prospecting started precisely when the KLC representatives were away at Geneva in an attempt to gain international support over the events. The Yungnora people interpreted this trip as a promotional campaign for the organisation over the Noonkanbah crisis, since it had failed to stop the prospecting from taking place, which in their view was the main issue.

On the other hand, during the year following the Noonkanbah crisis, the KLC relied on Yungnora people to support and promote its political views and ideas. KLC members felt that because of the important role the KLC had
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played in supporting the Yungnora community during the whole affair they had a right to expect strong support of the Council by the community. For various reasons, some of them already mentioned, this support did not eventuate; as a result the KLC lost its regional importance, almost as fast as it had acquired it. Further, the Noonkanbah controversy represented a new phenomenon that reached such a point that it gave local Aboriginal people the feeling they did not control the situation any more.

Beyond the controversy itself, what I found puzzling was that, at the very time various Aboriginal groups and organisations had demonstrated their ability for mobilization in a coherent and successful movement that may have succeeded beyond expectations, it started to collapse, leaving behind nothing but bad memories.

There were certainly external factors as well as the internal tensions that could explain both the success and the failure of this movement, but I believe there are other and deeper reasons as well.

The Noonkanbah crisis is an illustrative example, in the political field, of how in contemporary remote Australia Aboriginal groups are formed, the ways in which they come together, develop specific links and show their solidarity. Once one looks at this aspect of Aboriginal society, it is clear that such social groups have limits, for example in their coherence, duration and perpetuation, and that to some extent the very same forces that bring people or groups together can potentially split them apart.

1.2 Aboriginal groups and aggregations

Of course, the kind of grouping the KLC sought to establish was at an unusually broad level, but even at the more localized "Aboriginal village or community" level similar problems occur. It is at this level of a localized residential population that I sought, on my return, to obtain an understanding of political and group dynamics. Settling in Fitzroy Crossing, the town to which the Noonkanbah people had moved when they walked off the station in 1971, I addressed the problem by looking at the formation, composition, and organisation of this so-called community. I was immediately confronted by a range of questions. What is an Aboriginal community in the Kimberley today? How did people come to live together at a specific location and what keeps them together on a permanent basis? How cohesive are such "communities" and what are their internal sub-divisions? On what basis is there cooperation between sub-divisions? What are the impacts of internal conflicts? These were some of the questions that I would have to explore, if I were to come to grips
with the internal dynamics of social group formation. But, it was also clear that
in order to understand the process fully it was crucial to include external factors
in the analysis; that is to say, constraints imposed from outside that influence
people's views and have to be accommodated. In particular, this concerns
relations between the Aboriginal groups and local whites, local and regional
representatives of government bodies and agencies, as well as government
policy itself at the state level.

The nature of Aboriginal social groups has been investigated frequently by
anthropologists, particularly as they relate to traditional territorial organization,
and recent research linked to land claims have greatly contributed to new
perspectives on the issue (Keen 1988: 108-109). I will not recapitulate the
history of the investigation of these researches but rather focus on some general
issues and concerns with post-colonial social groupings.

Anthropological views on Aboriginal forms of social grouping have
changed at least as much as the object of study itself, from a very static and
functionalist model of "horde or band" (Radcliffe-Brown 1931), to an
ephemeral model "mob" (Sansom 1981) or even a manipulated form of social
formation, "community" (Trigger 1987).

As noted by Merlan (1981:145), it seems important that one should
distinguish between change in social forms that are closely related to contacts
between Aborigines and Europeans, and those that result from the internal
dynamics of Aboriginal society and history. In other words, one should assume
that change, in most aspects of Aboriginal life, did occur in pre-contact times as
well as in post-contact times. The historical dimension is an important element
in the study of the structure and identity of social groups. It is particularly
relevant in today's situation if we accept that history is best understood as
'common shared experiences' and is one of the main components in the
processes of formation and maintenance of social groups in Australia (Sansom

It is in recent history, during the past one hundred years, that traditional
Aboriginal society has undergone the most profound changes. European
colonization of Australia and white settlement in remote areas of the continent
have heavily affected Aboriginal traditional society in many ways, and
introduced dramatic change in Aboriginal people's lives. Of those who survived
the first decades of white settlement, some had to migrate because of pressure
from European expansion, some were displaced on purpose, and others were
attracted to new areas. This was the case in places where missions, cattle
stations, mines or small towns offered what seemed to be an easier way of
obtaining food. These migrant Aboriginal groups generally settled in
residential units larger than those they were used to. Most of them settled
down and gradually developed a strong dependency on products available from
white people. Apart from a very traumatic change, when people moved into
portions of land unfamiliar to them, leaving behind highly 'significant' places,
the main effects of sedentarisation on Aboriginal society were probably on local organisation and economic life (Berndt 1977:4-5, Tonkinson 1974:5).

Aboriginal groups did not remain passive to these changes. Long before the arrival of Europeans, Aborigines had developed ways to link widely separated groups. Usually, these groups shared mythological and ritual sequences and were tied through trade and marriage links. These links were not restricted to groups linguistically or culturally close one to another. In some areas, links bridge cultural and linguistic differences. In other words, to be in contact with groups geographically distant and culturally different was not a new phenomenon for Aborigines; it was amplified only as a result of settlement in new areas and in different forms. Accordingly, cohesive forces of the past followed a similar trend in order to cope with the new situation (Shaw & Toby 1980:6-7).

Traditional ways of setting up and maintaining inter-groups links have been shown by a number of researchers to be used to create new forms of social groups in post-colonial times (e.g. see Anderson 1989:81, Berndt 1977:2, Chase 1980:4, Duncan 1975/6:62, Kolig 1977:39-43, 1981:2, Tonkinson 1974:140, 1988:4-5). Indeed, it seems right to assume that as a result of recent history Aboriginal social identity has changed considerably and that sentiments of belonging to one group are now expanded to larger units. But, within these new groupings internal differences, still based on traditional affiliation but this time to a restricted group of people, are maintained and perpetuated, as noted by several researchers (Anderson 1989: 81-83, Chase 1980:4, Duncan 1975/6:59, Kolig 1981:25/26, Sansom 1982:137, Tonkinson 1974:46, 1988:14-15).

Movements of the Aboriginal population, settlement in new locations and changes caused by Europeans then gradually contributed to the development of new and wider concepts of identity (Berndt 1977:7). Novelties from the white society were interpreted into something coherent, that in turn became part of the ideology used by Aborigines to assert relations between groups and localities (Trigger 1987:220). It is very common to hear Aboriginal people assert that 'we are all the same'. In saying this they attribute new elements and changes to white people, as if they themselves had no influence on the new situation, neglecting the fact that their traditional values and practices influenced the whole process and its outcome (Shaw & Toby 1980:15). In a way, it is possible to say that 'people are all the same' precisely because they have changed. This contradiction is central to the discourse of Aborigines, explaining their survival in a completely different context through conformity to ancestral values and beliefs.

People did not become sedentarised once and for all at the same location. Throughout their life, they usually experienced various settlements, different living environments and several working conditions. Either on their own or with immediate relatives, they frequently moved from one place to another. These movements were accompanied by two main restrictions: they were
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regulated by outside decisions (cattle station managers, missionaries, seasonal work), and occurred within a limited geographical area. Within a given region, groups of Aboriginal people accumulated similar working experiences, shared the same living conditions, and developed ties to the new locality in a more traditional way. Even if the historical dimension of all this was driven by forces external to Aboriginal society, the way these forces were internalized constitutes the basis of their contemporary associations (Chase 1980:2, Kolig 1977:36).

A 'common shared experience' is not simply a basis for Aboriginal social groups within a specific area; in some cases it gave rise to regional expressions of identity. For example, in various places in the north of Australia, the emergence of a regional identity was closely linked to the cattle industry. Such identities took several forms and have been observed in various areas: for example, 'countrymanship', in the Darwin hinterland (Sansom 1978, 1981), or 'Waldadjerisation' in the West Kimberley (Kolig 1977, 1981). Cohesive forces that contributed to the formation of regional identities are similar, even if differences in their expressions are noted. Overall, the entire process is an expansion of boundaries of exclusiveness that delimited small groups in the past, progressively extended through 'common shared experience' to wider groups. The distinction between self and others, instituted by these boundaries, remains as a strong element of identification for these new groups, even if it is in no way as exclusive as it used to be (Sansom 1978:89, 1982:118; Kolig 1977:37-38).

According to Sansom, all those who identified themselves as countrymen share the same Kriol and a common working experience within the same geographical area. These new elements are mixed with traditional components of group formation that now regulate relations between groups of countrymen, such as marriages, ritual activities, and access to financial resources (Sansom 1978:90). In Sansom's analysis, these groups of countrymen are called 'mobs'. The notion of mob, although central to contemporary Aboriginal social grouping, has different meanings in different areas of Australia: for example, Tonkinson links the emergence of a mob with the process of sedentarisation amongst Aboriginal people from the Western Desert (Tonkinson 1988:4-7). In north Queensland, where people were traditionally more sedentary, Anderson shows that there is continuity with the pre-colonial period in contemporary residential units. For those mobs, staying in one place was less important than with whom people co-resided or why they did do so (Anderson 1989:67-70). Thus, the mobs found in the Western Desert and in the Darwin hinterland represent a new Aboriginal social group which in a contemporary form is still made up of components that characterised traditional social groups: it is not a rigourously defined, structured and unchangeable group, but a fluid and fluctuating association of individuals brought together on the ground of their commonalities and a localised identity (Sansom 1978:101, 1981:258-259; Tonkinson 1988:5-7). In Sansom's view, the main bond between mobs of
countrymen is the reflection and interpretation of their common history through language, and, according to him, the Aboriginal view of history as interpreted in Kriol fulfils for contemporary Aborigines the same role that myths did in the past (1978:120-121).

The development of 'Walmadjerisation', analysed by Kolig, is very similar to Sansom's definition of countrymanship. Walmadjerisation arose from a common history of several distinct Aboriginal groups being brought together in the same area. But, in Kolig's perspective, what bound people together was the emergence of new forms of religious activities (Kolig 1981:1-2). Kolig's entire argument is based on a Durkheimian model that social bonds are primarily represented by religion. In his analysis, religious beliefs and practices that, prior to white settlement, bound Aboriginal people together in small groups to localised sites (Kolig 1981:2), were 'reshaped' mainly as a result of change in Aboriginal living conditions (1981:5). Then, a 'reshaped religion' became the vehicle of change but retained its main characteristic: it grouped and unified people, but on a wider basis (Kolig 1981:37). Despite the fact that the central element of the entire dynamic is religion and not language, Kolig shares most of Sansom's views on mobs (1981:27-30) and countrymanship (1981:117-120).

Elsewhere, Kolig has suggested a further development of his notion of Walmadjerisation to "supra-tribal identities", when one religious system is associated with one particular language, which in turn propagated bonds and unified wider units, in a movement that eventually will become a common Aboriginal identity or Aboriginality (Kolig 1977:45). The 'commonality' described by Sansom in the Darwin area (Sansom 1982) is probably a step towards a pan-Aboriginality, among Aborigines over a wide area who share some common cultural features today. 'Commonality' was prompted by white settlement but, according to Sansom, is not a direct result of it for its main components were rooted in the Aboriginal traditional ways of 'doing business' (1982:117). This commonality is expressed Australia-wide, despite local differences, by contemporary Aboriginal individuals and groups. For example, countrymanship is a local and/or regional expression of the Aboriginal commonality in which Australia-wide sentiments take a specific form relevant to the region it is expressed, here the Darwin hinterland (1982:126). These similar sentiments enable cooperation between and amongst mobs and give to the notion of countrymanship its coherence (1982:34). Thus, in his view, countrymanship and like notions underwrite an Australia-wide Aboriginal commonality. The overall dynamic of this movement is paradoxical by nature, for it restricts its cohesion at the same time as it expresses it:

The Aboriginal commonality of fellow feeling and similar understandings contains the countervailing forces that would need to be overcome if a pan-Aboriginal ethnogenesis were to be achieved (Sansom 1982:135).

By this, Sansom suggests that the same elements that enable people to come together restrain them from forming a permanent, coherent and
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structured unit which, for example, would have found its expression in the political arena. The main reason for this is that the basis of Aboriginal commonality, the mob, is a particular set of countrymen bonded together through a complex web of relations that generate debts amongst them. Countrymen realised their countrymanship through these owner/debtor relationships. Such a system is only operational if it is limited and localized, which works precisely against a wider ethnogenesis:

Because people who are 'all same' in the modalities of their social expressions are 'different really' when their loyalties and ties of indebtedness are considered as bases for their association (Sansom 1982:137).

Sansom and Kogion have noted the limits of both movements they analysed but failed to provide a contextual account of these limitations. They acknowledged that recent history gave Aboriginal groups the opportunity to conceptualize and partially express their similarities, but were unable to show the link between the maintenance and perpetuation of traditional categories and internal divisions on the one hand and contemporary constraints on the other. In an analysis of a new Aboriginal settlement, Trigger made that link, when he noted that in Aboriginal villages formed in the mid-1970s of people from diverse linguistic backgrounds, and where sentiments of countrymanship are strong amongst members, there are definitely new tendencies amongst people to form corporate bodies on a linguistic basis or even on a more restricted sub-unit (Trigger 1987:229-231).

The significance of the linguistic factor in the formation of social identity in Aboriginal Australia is discussed in details by Merlan, who stressed that native linguistic ideologies cannot be overlooked in this process (Merlan 1981:133). In Merlan's paper, the Western Roper River example (1981:141-145) is particularly relevant to this study, because it shares historical similarities with the Kimberley area (See Chapter Two). Merlan states that the establishment of stations by white settlers had radical repercussions on the Aboriginal local organization, and resulted in attracting distant Aboriginal groups to move into the area, while 'people identifying with indigenous Roper-region socio-linguistic groupings have to a large extent, remained in the immediate area on cattle stations and settlements' (1981:141). Another common element to both areas is the use of one single name to define one language and the area in which speakers of that language lived (live) and had (have) totemic affiliations.

...Unless a particular circumstances is immediately affecting the levels at which oppositions regarding affiliations to land are being expressed, in general a specific linguistic/cultural identity is projected onto a large land area within which, in theory, speakers of that language reside and to which they are totemically affiliated (Merlan 1981:144).
But like in the Kimberley, there is a difference, in the Western Roper River, between individuals’ linguistic affiliation and their proficiency in that language (Merlan 1981:144-145).

In the Kimberley area, most Aboriginal people can speak more than one language, and the one in which they are the most competent is not necessarily the one they are affiliated to. Further, nearly all young Aboriginal people speak a form of Kriol, common to the entire Kimberley area, but their knowledge of other Aboriginal languages is very limited and sometimes nil, nevertheless, they all are affiliated to language-groups. A similar situation occurs in other areas of Northern Australia, such as the North-West Queensland for example, where elements other than languages proficiency determines an individual’s language affiliation.

...A person’s competence in speaking a language is largely an issue independent of his affiliation to that language name, and to the territory affiliated with that language name (Trigger 1987:220).

Some languages’ names, which in the past did not correspond to a broad form of grouping, became institutionalized as such after the white settlement (Merlan 1981:140), and more recently developed into language-groups to form corporate Aboriginal bodies in order to attract government funds and resources such as housing (Trigger 1987:231). Thus, for some contemporary Aboriginal people language affiliation represents a way to express a social identity used to deal with the Australian bureaucracy (Trigger 1987:232). For Trigger, these groupings, formed in response to external elements, were unlikely to develop into ‘stable sociopolitical units’ (ibid).

In Junjuwa, language-groups or linguistic units did represent a kind of grouping that existed locally prior to the formation of an incorporate body (see Chapters Two and Six). Later, these linguistic affiliations have provided a basis for the development of a community-village identity characterised by opposed although not conflicting elements: the shared sentiment of being ‘all mixed’ as a result of affiliations to new countries, and mixed marriages (Merlan 1981:142, Trigger 1987:231), for example; the preservation of differences, at a more inclusive level of groupings, which cannot be obliterate no matter how well the immigrants are integrated (Merlan 1981:145, Trigger 1987:221).

Such movement, which operates against other recent modalities of group formation, is partly a response to a government decision to give access to funding to Aboriginal groups on a ‘traditional basis’ rather than on a ‘contemporary basis’ (Trigger 1987:231-2). Therefore, if external influences have indeed facilitated the expansion of Aboriginal social identity in larger units, they can also stimulate and encourage a reverse movement. Ironically, it seems that it is only when Aboriginal people have ‘internalised’ one form of grouping as a response to outside elements that they have to ‘conceptualize’ another one to cope with other pressures.
1.3 Outline of thesis

In Chapter Two I outline the history of the Kimberley area. I concentrate on several aspects which are crucial for the understanding of contemporary Aboriginal grouping in the West Kimberley. Then I describe Aboriginal groups in Fitzroy Crossing prior to the construction of Junjuwa village. In Chapter Three I focus on Fitzroy Crossing by providing a description of the township, concentrating on the importance of the local Aboriginal population in the town’s development. Chapter Four deals with Junjuwa community: I look at Junjuwa from its origin until my first field trip. I focus on the community constitution, then I describe the village design and its resident population. In the next Chapter I present cementing elements that have made possible for the notion of Junjuwa as one group to develop. I discuss the bases of group sentiments within Junjuwa and the circumstances in which these notions were expressed and operated. Chapter Six shows that although Junjuwa could operate as one group, its residents had preserved various forms of groupings based on several criteria, that existed before they had moved into the village. In Chapter Seven I discuss associations that provided the basis for group actions amongst Junjuwa residents other than those presented in the previous Chapter. Chapter Eight concentrates on leadership in Junjuwa. I provide a description of the nature and role of leadership at the community level. Chapter Nine deals with external interventions. I discuss the origins and nature of various external interventions and their impact on the community. In the final Chapter I discuss why the cohesive elements that made possible the notion of Junjuwa as a group were not expendable at the regional level.
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1 All names of Aboriginal groups, languages and settlements are spelt according to Hudson & Yu 1987.

2 After World War 2 the Department of Native Welfare conducted surveys of the Aboriginal population and their living conditions on cattle stations twice a year, until 1974.

3 In 1974 the Department of Native Welfare (DNW), merged with another state department and became the Department for Community Welfare (DCW), which in 1985 was changed to the Department for Community Services (DCS).

4 For the details of the purchasing of the Noonkanbah Pty Ltd by the Aboriginal Land Fund Commission, see Hawke & Gallagher 1989:81-85.

5 For the details of this incident, see Hawke & Gallagher 1989.


7 A similar dynamic has been noted by Tonkinson regarding Aboriginal people from the Western Desert (Tonkinson 1988:14-15).
CHAPTER TWO

HISTORICAL OUTLINE

The town of Fitzroy Crossing is located on the Fitzroy River in the West Kimberley district, in the north west of Western Australia. The nearest towns are Derby on the northwestern coast of Western Australia (265 km west), and Halls Creek, which is part of the East Kimberley (300 km east). There is one main road access (The Great Northern Highway) that links Western Australia to the Northern Territory through the Kimberley (Map 1).

Three quarters of the residential population of Fitzroy Crossing is Aboriginal. During the sixteen months I spent at Fitzroy Crossing (December 1985 - March 1987), there were about 600 Aborigines in town and 200 Whites. In government censuses, people living in an area up to 150 km around Fitzroy Crossing are added to the town population. The combined figures reached a total of nearly 300 non-Aboriginals as against 1200 to 1300 Aboriginal people (1473 according to the 1986 Census)\(^1\).

I concentrated my field research on the village of Junjuwa, the oldest and largest of the four Aboriginal settlements established in the town. The rest of the Aboriginal population in the area lived either in similar settlements away from town, on Aboriginal cattle stations such as Noonkanbah, or in outstations or other 'bush camps'.

White settlement in the Kimberley has had a strong impact on Aboriginal people of the area. These external influences on Aboriginal groups ultimately resulted in the creation of villages like Junjuwa, with a residential population of mixed linguistic and regional origins. Prior to European arrival there was some linguistic and cultural variation even within the area around Fitzroy, but as a result of colonization the present day population of the same area is much more
culturally heterogeneous than it ever was in the past. Initially, Aboriginal groups scattered over a very wide area with distinctive cultural and linguistic traditions, were brought together in relatively permanent associations on cattle stations. Later on they were drawn into larger multi-language groups on missions, which were eventually dismantled, giving way to communities like Junjuwa.

Prior to any analysis of these contemporary settlements, commonly known as communities, it is important to understand the historical processes that have led to their creation. For this purpose I will outline in this chapter the successive phases of the regional history and evaluate their impact upon Aboriginal groups. Firstly, I will present the pre-contact distribution of language groups, in so far as it is possible to reconstruct it. Secondly, I will describe the establishment of the pastoral industry, its development and its impact. Thirdly, I will concentrate on Fitzroy Crossing itself and the establishment of the United Aborigines Mission. Finally, I will turn to the history and development of the Aboriginal population at Fitzroy Crossing.

2.1 Pre-contact period

There are few reliable sources that cover the pre-contact period in the Kimberley. Most published work that deals with first contact between Aborigines and Europeans is based on settlers’ journals (Lamond 1986, Buchanan 1933). They concentrate on the harsh living conditions faced by the settlers and trouble caused by 'blacks'. Early anthropological records exist (Mathews 1900, 1901), but unfortunately are too general and not of much use to our present concern. Nevertheless, if one combines later anthropological works (Elkin 1932, Elkin & Capell 1936, Kaberry 1936, 1937, 1939, Love 1936), with personal reminiscences of the older Aboriginal people living in the area about their parents' life, one can gain a reasonably clear idea of the situation prior to 1880. Most of the information available concerns matters such as pre-contact distribution of language groups and types of relationships between these groups, both of great importance for a better understanding of today's situation.

Many members of linguistic groups living today in the Fitzroy area were originally established elsewhere. Only Bunuba, Gooniyandi, Kija and Nyikina were living in the Fitzroy Valley prior to white settlement in the area, but their pre-contact location does not correspond to their contemporary distribution (see Map 2). For example, the Bunuba, although traditionally located on the west side of the Fitzroy river, were further north, and the Nyikina occupied the lower and middle part of the same river but on the south side. The Gooniyandi were established in an area delimited by the Christmas creek and the Fitzroy
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river on the east side of the latter, and finally the Kija were found on the east of a triangular portion of country formed by the Margaret and Fitzroy rivers (see Map 2a). According to Kolig (1981:18), the Djaba, a distinct linguistic group which disappeared as early as 1880, lived where the town of Fitzroy Crossing is now located and as such were the original occupants of the area.

Bunuba, Gooniyandi, Kija and Nyikina present themselves as 'river people' as opposed to 'salt water people' and 'desert people'. The term 'salt water people' is used to refer to speakers of languages who were established on coastal areas either north (Worrorda, Warrwa) or south (Bardi, Nyulnyul, Jabirrjabirr) of the mouth of the Fitzroy. In contrast, 'desert people' applies to languages whose speakers lived well south of the Fitzroy. Those languages are Mangala, whose speakers lived south of the lower Fitzroy, and Jaru, whose speakers occupied an area east of the Fitzroy Valley. These were the closest. Other 'desert people' lived far south in the Great Sandy Desert; they were Walmajarri, Wangkajunga and Kukatja. These three broad groupings were not distinctive coherent cultural or linguistic blocks but reflect the way the contemporary Aboriginal Fitzroy population perceives people's affiliations.

River people (Bunuba and Gooniyandi) had a lot in common, apart from the fact that their languages were closely related (Hudson and Richards 1984:3). For example, they had similar myths for the origin of their country, language and people. In both cases, ancestral beings came from a long way up north, on the other side of the King Leopold Range. Once they reached the Fitzroy, these ancestral beings took different directions. In the Bunuba mythology they followed the river downstream until they hit the Erskine Range, then went north again and disappeared near the west side of the King Leopold Range. Gooniyandi ancestral beings followed the Margaret river upstream and disappeared somewhere near Jaru country. Bunuba and Gooniyandi were also involved in trading activities as well as in joint ritual and social gatherings, at least as asserted by people today, for groups living in neighbouring areas.

It would be wrong to assume that these relationships were limited to groups of people affiliated to these two languages. Bunuba living in the north of the 'Bunuba country' were involved in similar relationships with Unggumi and Ngarinyin who lived respectively south and north of the west part of the King Leopold Range. The same groups of Bunuba were also trading, mainly for sea products, with coastal groups speaking Worrorda and Warrwa languages. To the south east of the Bunuba country, groups of Bunuba had regular contacts with Nyikina. Before white settlement, Nyikina seemed to have acted as cultural and trade brokers between coastal groups established in the hinterland area from Broome to One Arm Point (Karajarri, Yawuru, Junkun and Nyulnyul) and groups of 'river people'. For example, years before white settlers entered Bunuba country, the Bunuba knew about guns and the European practices of abducting Aboriginal people in coastal areas for labour in the pearling industry (Pedersen 1984:7). Highly praised sea products, such as
mother of pearl, were traded alongside the Fitzroy basin as far as the upper Margaret river, and further north east, where Kija lived.

These cultural and material exchanges were directed in various ways along the Fitzroy Valley. Movements seem to have been oriented in the following main directions: from the coast towards the inland, and vice versa, on the one hand, and from the river area towards the north on the other, once again in both directions. In contrast, there is no evidence of formal contacts prior to white settlement, either in anthropological works or in people's reminiscences, between river or salt water people and desert people. In many instances, Bumuba and Goomiyandi people described to me the Fitzroy river as separating river from desert country, for them it was a "...proper fence, like this one you gotta on stations...". Even if groups of Walmajarri, as stated by Kolig (1974:38), started to migrate northward prior to contact with Europeans, they did not cross the Fitzroy until around 1910\(^3\).

Other factors besides group distributions and geographical features may have impeded contacts. For example, the marked differences in social organization may have been obstacles to contact and exchanges between groups living on the north of the Fitzroy basin and those established on the south of it.

Two papers published five years apart in the 1930s deal with social organization in the Kimberleys (Elkin 1932; Kaberry 1937). Although they are both based on fieldwork carried out well into post-contact times\(^4\), Elkin's paper can be used to support an understanding of certain aspects of social organisation in pre-contact times. Elkin was able to observe differences in types of social organisation, kinship systems and marriage rules in the Fitzroy Basin (Elkin 1932:297), differences which Kaberry does not report although working only ten years later (Kaberry 1937:440). Elkin's paper is centered around differences between various types of social organisation, which sometimes led to incompatibility between one type and another (Elkin 1932:317-330). Despite these differences, Elkin presented "inter tribal-influence" (1932:317-320), as well as illustrating his point with systems developed by groups with different forms of social organisation, adjusting their systems one to another (1932:325). The most interesting point in Kaberry's paper is the growing influence of desert groups' social organisation in the area. For example, Wolmeri (Walmajarri)\(^5\), are barely mentioned by Elkin, but they are given a central position in Kaberry's analysis, where most of the groups then living in the Fitzroy Valley had adopted their subsection system (Kaberry 1937:400). Elkin's analysis of the social organisation in the Kimberley shows clearly that the influence from the south and east relayed through the Fitzroy river to the coast was already notable in the late 1920s but not completely established (Elkin 1932 :296-297).
General map of the Kimberley with the principal Aboriginal settlements
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Map 2a

Approximate Distribution of Aboriginal Languages in the Kimberley, pre-contact period

Map 2b

Main movements of Aboriginal populations after White settlement
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In the Fitzroy basin, various forms of social organisation observed by Elkin show differences which coincide with others already mentioned in this Chapter. For example, groups living in the area, including the hinterland of Broome, and the Fitzroy valley up to the top of the Margaret, had the same type of social organisation. In the same coastal area, two other types existed. One amongst Bardi and surrounding groups, the other amongst Karajarri and neighbours. Elkin stated that neither of the two were significantly different from the first mentioned. In fact, in his analysis one (Bardi) is presented as an archaic form of it (Elkin 1932:310-312), and the other (Karajarri) as a modified (probably transitional) version of it (1932:308-310). Still on the coast but north of Derby, mainly amongst groups of Worrorra and Ngarinyin, another type of social organisation prevailed. Once again, this type was not radically different from those found elsewhere in the area. But in that case, specific marriage rules made interactions with people having other forms of kinship system not compatible, especially those found further south of the Fitzroy (Elkin 1932:315). Finally, all groups established east and south of the Fitzroy basin shared a common type of social organization. This type was very similar to those found further east around the border between the Northern Territory and Western Australia, as well as in Central Australia.

Linguists usually classify the languages spoken in the Kimberley area into two groups: northern languages (Bunuba, Gooniyandi, Kija, Nyikina, Nyulnyul, Bardi, Worrorra, Ngarinyin) and southern languages (Walmajarri, Wangkajunga, Jaru) (Hudson and Richards 1984:3). The main difference is that the northern languages are prefixing languages, while southern languages are suffixing languages. This does not mean that there was a total similarity amongst languages within either area.

For example, there were four families of prefixing languages, which include all languages spoken north and near the mouth of the Fitzroy. These four families were

1 The Nyulnyulan family to which are affiliated all languages whose speakers were established in the hinterland of La Grange and Broome, as well as the Nyikina.

2 The Worrorran family, including Worrorra, Ngarinyin, Wunambal and other languages in coastal areas north of Derby.

3 The Bunuban family, to which only Bunuba and Gooniyandi were affiliated.

4 The Djeregan family, whose languages were spoken in the Halls Creek/Kununnura area as well as on the other side of the Northern Territory border. This family includes Kija (Yallop 1982:42).

Languages from one family are not intelligible to those from another family. Nevertheless, these linguistic barriers have faded in places where groups of speakers from different families had regular contacts. For example, in the case of the Bunuba, they distinguished various forms of their language:
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'light' Bunuba as opposed to 'heavy' Bunuba, and a 'long form' as opposed to a 'short form' for many words in the same language. These dialectal forms of the same language were spoken by groups of Bunuba in contact with either Ungarinyin to the north, or Nyikina in the lower Fitzroy. I am not suggesting that local groups had developed common languages by mixing two different languages, although they could certainly communicate with one another, but that differences that existed between languages were in practice denied by people. Bunuba people who came from the north of the Bunuba area frequently told me that Bunuba and Ngarinyin were 'one same language', probably on the basis that in the past small local groups of people of both languages used to interact intensively. On the other hand, that 'similarity' was strongly denied by Bunuba born and reared elsewhere.

As far as southern languages are concerned, they were all related to the Pama-Nyungan South Western family, either as languages (Jaru, Walmajarri) or as dialectal forms of other languages (Wangkajunga, a dialect of Yularidja) (Yallop 1982:48). In the pre-contact period most southern language speakers were scattered in small groups throughout the Great Sandy Desert far south of the Fitzroy Valley. There was only one area where speakers of northern and southern languages were in contact. This was in the East Kimberley where there were contacts between groups of Kija and Jaru. The level and regularity of their interactions is not well documented but there is nothing to suggest that they were different from those between other small groups elsewhere in the area. Jaru, in many ways related to desert people, were ideally placed to provide desert groups with access to the Fitzroy valley area and to gradually influence its local Aboriginal population. This was undoubtedly facilitated by white settlers, who entered the area mostly from the east.

2.2 The pastoral industry

White settlers who moved up to the Kimberley after 1880 were all pastoralists and the cattle and sheep industries were for many decades the main industry of the entire area. The pastoral industry had a strong impact upon the Aboriginal population of both the West and East Kimberley, and still has a major influence in the life of many local Aboriginal settlements.

The first attempt to stimulate settlement in the north west of Western Australia between 1860 and 1870, after Grey's expedition in 1837, was a failure (Bolton 1958). The second attempt proved to be very successful. Forrest and his party surveyed the Kimberley district in 1879, mainly exploring the Fitzroy, Margaret and Ord river valleys, for the party was unable to find a passage through the King Leopold Range (Bolton 1953:27). Back in Perth, Forrest produced an enthusiastic report in which these valleys were each described as
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"capable of pasturing a million sheep" (Forrest, quoted by Bolton 1954:10). This report had a strong impact amongst Western Australian sheep farmers, who at this stage were looking for expansion northward, but also on cattlemen from Queensland and New South Wales who were tempted by the north west venture, as well as on capitalist investors from Sydney and Melbourne. As a result, the Perth administration was submerged with applications for leases between 1882-1883 (Bolton 1953:29). Preference was given to local applicants. In 1881, Yeeda Station, named after a tributary of the Fitzroy, was established in the Derby area (see Map 3 for the location of the main cattle stations). The establishment of the first stations was a slow process that accelerated dramatically during the late 1880s. By 1895, all the most suitable areas were occupied by pastoralists. The last vacant blocks, located north of the King Leopold Range, were taken in the years following the turn of the century.

Settlement started in the West Kimberley, on the coastal area. The first stations, all sheep stations, were created by syndicates of young men from Western Australia. They were sheep graziers whose economic activity was based on the export of one single product: wool. Forrest, later joined by his brother, engaged in an early financial participation in the West Kimberley pastoral industry. The settlement grew slowly alongside the Lennard, Meda and Lower Fitzroy rivers. In 1883, Forrest surveyed the stations established around Derby. This survey confirmed hopes placed in the area for pastoral use, but suggested that leasing conditions should be eased as expenditure was higher than expected (Bolton 1953:34). Applications for land dropped between 1883 and 1887, due to a national economic recession. In the same period a local 'distractive factor' also had a significant impact: the gold rush in the East Kimberley. The rush was ephemeral (1885-1887), and only beneficial for cattlemen freshly arrived in the area who had not expected this sudden local market. Nearly all stations in the eastern part of the West Kimberley, as well as those in the East Kimberley, were started by 'overlanders'. They were given this name because of the overland trips they undertook, with their families and cattle, from Queensland, Victoria and New South Wales to reach the Kimberley. These long journeys took years to complete, the best known overlanders were the Duracks and the MacDonals. The MacDonald family left Victoria in 1881 and established Fossil Downs Station, on the Margaret river, in 1885. The Duracks started a station on the Ord river, in the East Kimberley, after a three year journey from Queensland. Pastoralists in the East Kimberley were nearly all of Irish and Scottish origin. They had a long experience in the cattle industry in the eastern states where a traditional 'open range' grazing was practised. In contrast, West Kimberley pastoralists were from Western Australia, born in the Swan river colony. They were woolgrowers and their grazing method required the use of paddocks. The cattle industry proved to be the more adaptable to local conditions, and developed extremely rapidly from the 1890s onward (Bolton 1954:16-18). It gradually overtook the sheep industry, which declined (mid 1920s) and was eventually abandoned (mid 1950s).
MAP 3
Main cattle stations in the Kimberley

Legend:
- Towns
- - Great Northern Highway

Western Australia
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The decade after the gold rush (1887-1897) was marked by a growing control by banks and financial companies over pastoral leases (Bolton 1953:54). This was mainly due to the first local recession (1887-1890) caused by a combination of several factors. In the West Kimberley, sheep grazers had enormous losses amongst their flocks as a result of attacks by wild dogs, epidemics of scab, and poisonous plants. In order to limit their losses, pastoralists diversified their economy by acquiring cattle and moved to an area free of poisonous plants and disease in the middle Fitzroy (Noonkanbah and Liveringa in 1887). Both moves proved to be successful and the west pastoral industry expanded towards the upper Fitzroy between 1888 and 1890. In the East Kimberley, the disappearance of the local market, once the gold rush was over, together with a severe drought, took their toll. Most of the smallholders were forced to sell to large companies which expanded their holdings and moved further west. The era of absentee owners of properties had just started. By 1895, the pincer movement which started a few years earlier from both ends of the Kimberley district was almost completed. It left virtually no 'unsettled' land in the entire area outside the extreme north, a mountainous and rugged country, where the pastoral industry proved to be inappropriate. It was certainly not a mere coincidence that the heaviest losses due to cattle killing by Aborigines were recorded at this time, between 1895-1900 (Bolton 1953:55). This was certainly not a new problem, but it worsened with the development of the pastoral industry to a point which became fatal for most of the Aboriginal population in the area.

If Aborigines remained passive, and were described as 'friendly' when Forrest surveyed the Kimberley area (Bolton 1953:27), they put up a strong resistance during the early years of settlement. Sheep killings were recorded soon after Yeeda station started (Shacklotch 1950:166). The following year, in mid 1882, a white settler was speared to death by an Aboriginal man (Bolton 1953:32). This was an isolated incident, but reprisals were promptly organised and several conducted by a posse of policemen and settlers. Very soon, Aboriginal inhabitants of the lower Fitzroy found themselves confronted by two unprecedented facts: they were deprived of their land and its best waterholes, and their most courageous men had been shot or taken away and gaol for years. They had little alternative but to move to settle near homesteads where they were given flour, tea, sugar and tobacco in exchange for their labour (Read & Jalaljarri 1978).

In other areas, where the country offered a natural retreat, Aborigines resisted longer. For example, Bunuba could hide in the ranges north and west of the area they occupied. One of them Jandamarra, known as 'Pigeon', was the leading figure of the Aboriginal rebellion during the second part of the 1890s. As soon as stations were established in the Bunuba country (Lillimoorra and Lennard River Station in 1884), its original inhabitants started feeding regularly on sheep (Pedersen 1984:8). They firstly pretended to accept the settlers, and often through women, sent near the homestead with children and old people, the Bunuba acquired a good knowledge of station life. Once a raid was
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created against a station and the settler openly challenged, Aborigines retreated into the ranges where it was almost impossible to track them. In 1890, stock killing was such a problem in the West Kimberley that pastoralists obtained from the Western Australian government the establishment of a police station near Windjana Gorge (Pedersen 1984:10). In the following years, many of the sheep spears were killed or arrested and gaol. Still, a group of about forty men and women, most of them Bunuba, led by Pigeon, controlled the Oscar and Napier Range area. They were armed with rifles and extremely skillful and experienced. Their resistance was an obstacle to the expansion of the pastoral industry to the other side of the range they controlled. It was three years before the police eventually captured Pigeon. During this period, numerous retaliations were carried out against local groups of Aborigines who lived in the area and the number of Bunuba, Nyikina, Unggumi, Ngaranyin and Gooniyandi decreased dramatically.

By 1905, stock killing had ceased in the West Kimberley, and was limited to the outskirts of the settlements in the East Kimberley. Cattle killing in the East Kimberley lasted longer and its impact was heavier on pastoralists whose cattle were already decimated by disease. The police did not seem to be as efficient as they were in the West Kimberley, where government pressures were stronger. It did not take long before the East Kimberley pastoralists took matters into their own hands. They conducted bloody reprisals, that once again decimated local groups (Bolton 1981:126). However, nearly everywhere in the Kimberley, pastoralists also needed Aboriginal labour to survive (Bolton 1953:56, Biskup 1973:35, Pedersen 1984:8). That probably saved the remaining part of the Aboriginal population from total destruction. Local initiatives by pastoralists to control cattle killing by having Aboriginal groups settled on stations and feeding them, inspired the State Government to adopt a new policy to stop a new wave of cattle killing. Between 1906 and 1909, the number of Aborigines arrested for cattle killing in the East Kimberley nearly doubled (137 in 1906 to 219 in 1909, Biskup 1973:99). In order to solve the problem once and for all the Western Australian government purchased a station (Moola Bulla) that became an Aboriginal reserve, the first of its kind in the state. Moola Bulla means "plenty tucker" in Kija, and its aims were to be a "self supporting institution for the relief of indigent natives" (Biskup 1973:100). In this enterprise the government wanted at the same time:

a\ to feed the Aborigines so they would not kill cattle any more;

b\ and to train the Aboriginal population for employment in the pastoral industry.

The cattle killing dropped significantly. All 'bush Aborigines' and cattle spears were taken to Moola Bulla, but many of them ran away (Elkin 1932:329).

The period between 1905 and 1919 was prosperous for the pastoral industry, which became increasingly dependent on Aboriginal labour. This
dependence grew during and after the First World War, for there was then a shortage of experienced white workers. In 1917, the Kimberley pastoral industry employed 277 whites, 803 male and 560 female Aboriginals (Bolton 1954:29). Cattle killing reappeared firstly in the West Kimberley (1917), then in the East Kimberley (1920), and in both cases the most southern stations were affected (Biskup 1973:104). It coincided with a northward migration of groups of Desert Aborigines. This migration probably had several causes:

Either in response to drought or shortages of game, or else impelled by curiosity and a desire to see new regions, migrant groups of Aborigines were continually drifting west and north from the Desert areas to make contact with established camps at station homesteads, and missions. Although at first regarded as visitors, such migrants frequently settled down and assimilated with the station Aborigines (Bolton 1981:140).

The Canning Stock Route, found by Canning in 1911, when pastoralists needed a major outlet from the East Kimberley to the Murchinson gold fields, barely used before, was reopened between 1928 and 1930. The route cut across the Great Sandy Desert and movements of cattle as well as gifts of good from the drovers might have stimulated migration (Read & Japaljarri 1978). In places, pastoralists organised expeditions and rounded up 'bush Aborigines'. They were taken back to stations where they were forced to settle (Merlan 1978). This settlement on stations was also facilitated by the fact that large portions of country were empty of their original inhabitants because of massacres and displacement of population through white settlement, thus making the social life of the cattle station camps attractive.

Linguistic and cultural differences between Aboriginal local groups appeared to have been preserved on stations, because Aboriginal people settled and remained at stations established in or close by their territory. Moreover, even if living and working conditions were hard and unpleasant there was little direct interference in their daily life and practices outside work demands (Green 1981:109). People on stations relied heavily on rations for the main part of their diet, but at the same time they still had periods of intensive hunting and gathering activities, especially during the lay-off times (Bolton 1981:140), and ceremonial activities were rescheduled to coincide with the slack season on stations.

The Aboriginal station population was still increasing through migration during the late 1920s, but the pastoral industry was stagnant and started to decline a few years later. By this stage the distribution of various Aboriginal groups and sub-groups was clearly established. Apart from other migration from the desert area, it did not change much afterwards. Groups based on stations, made up most frequently of speakers of the local language(s) (pre-contact distribution), and of first migrants from the desert, were firmly settled. New residential groups had merged as a consequence of settlement and life on stations, and such groups were maintained until the late 1960s. This is
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confirmed by censuses carried out on most of the West Kimberley cattle stations between the late 1940s and 1974. They show that a core of individuals, usually speakers of one language, remained on the same stations. Movements related directly to pastoral activities or due to ritual or social events occurred, but coherent residential units appeared clearly in these censuses.

Tribal and linguistic identity gave way to a new identity as small groups of people became known by the station where they lived and worked (Green 1981:109).

Groups of migrants, usually less skilled and probably not yet comfortable with their new social and ecological environment, did not settle at once. They were often 'passed on' from one station to another, especially between stations of the same company, where they formed a pool of extra labour. Most of their members were still oriented towards hunting and gathering activities, and these skills were really appreciated by managers in difficult periods.

Pastoralists could not entirely support the increasing needs of their labour force. Aborigines in the cattle industry did not receive any wages in cash before 1950, but pastoralist associations had always maintained that the cost involved in clothing and feeding the Aboriginal station camp was very high (Bolton 1981:152). The Western Australian government decided in the late 1920s to start a chain of feeding depots ('ration camp'), to regulate and control the Aboriginal population on stations. The main idea was to ameliorate their living and working conditions. Some groups, mainly those freshly arrived from desert areas, left the cattle stations and camped near the ration camps. These rations camps closed between 1945 and 1955, and were transferred to various churches to be run as missions (Biskup 1973:106). In the meantime the pastoral industry in the Leopold region was abandoned. The mainly Bunuba, who had lived most of their lives on these stations, moved to Fairfield and Brooking Springs.

From the start of the feeding depots period to the early 1970s, there were two main tendencies amongst the Aboriginal population of the area. One part of the population, which had lived on stations for years, remained associated with the cattle industry; they were mainly river people and people from the desert who had moved into the area long ago. The other part, mainly recent migrants from further south, settled at nearby ration camps and later on moved into missions. All these people met and interacted regularly but did not live together on a permanent basis. Despite the emergence of new residential units on stations, in most areas linguistic differences were very often preserved. The pre-contact distribution of languages was generally respected on stations. Most of the Walmajarri remained on stations in the south, Wangkajunga were concentrated at Christmas Creek, Bunuba worked at Brooking Springs and Fairfield, while Gooniyandi were employed at Fossil Downs and mixed with Walmajarri at Gogo.

The final impact of the pastoral industry on the Aboriginal population of the Kimberley dated to the late 1960s.
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In 1965, a Federal court handed down an award which prescribed that by the end of 1968 all Aborigines employed in the pastoral industry should receive the same wages as other workers (Bolton 1981:166).

Desert migrants were the first victims of the Pastoral Award. Most of them were paid off or sacked and had to leave the stations where they had settled and moved in towards urban centres. The constraints of the award, combined with declining export prices in beef, saw the labour force that had permitted the pastoralists to succeed being forced to leave the cattle stations. Many qualified stockmen lost their jobs and their families had to move. The migration towards missions and local urban centres intensified and these camps became heavily overpopulated. In the Kimberley many Aboriginal people moved in to camping places on the outskirts of such townships as Fitzroy Crossing and Halls Creek (Bolton 1981:168).

In order to illustrate the main movements of population during this period between cattle stations, the lengths of stays and reasons for moving in or out, I have selected several individuals, whose years spent on stations were representative of the major migration patterns of speakers of their respective languages.

Ralphie, a Bunuba, was born in 1931 on Leopold Downs Station near the old homestead. His parents had already been living on that station for over 10 years. He stayed at Leopold until 1940, then he was sent by his male relatives to Fossil Downs for two years. During this two year stay he was circumcised in a Wangka ceremony (see Chapter Five), led jointly by Bunuba men from Brooking Springs Station, and Goonyandi males from Fossil Downs, amongst whom was Ralphie's older sister's husband. He returned to Leopold Station with his parents for about four years. His whereabouts are not recorded between 1947 and 1951, but according to him, he was in the bush with other single Bunuba men somewhere on the old Oscar Range Station. From 1951 to 1955, Ralphie worked at Leopold Downs as a stockman. Then he went to Brooking Springs for two years. It was during that stay that he got married to a Bunuba whose parents and herself had all been born at Brooking Springs. Ralphie and his wife moved to Leopold Downs for one year, then they returned to Brooking Springs for two years (1959-1960). In 1961, Ralphie underwent subincision at Brookings Springs ceremonial ground; amongst those who played a major role in the ceremony was his wife's father. From 1961 until 1967, Ralphie worked on contract as a drover for Kimberley Downs Station; meanwhile, his wife and first child were at the Fitzroy Crossing UAM Reserve. The family met again at Leopold Downs in 1967, where they stayed for one year. Then from 1968 until 1974, they lived and worked at Brooking Springs, where Ralphie's four other children were born. In late 1974 the entire family moved into the UAM reserve and subsequently to Junjuwa where they are still living today.
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Arthur was born on Brooking Spring Station in 1924 at the junction between the Fitzroy and Pigeon creek. His parents were at the time both working at Brooking Springs, but they had only moved in recently. Prior to this they lived at Glenroy Station, where Arthur's mother had been born, while his father had spent most of his life at Tableland Station. Arthur remained at Brooking until the late 1930s; during these years he spent most of his time with his mother in the bush. In 1939 he went to live at Leopold Downs Station for one year with some of his father's male relatives. When he returned to Brooking he was circumcised by Bunuba men from Leopold. During World War II he was droving cattle between Leopold Downs, Derby and Broome. Then he spent about two years in Derby, at a ration camp, with some Walmajarri and Kija who formerly resided at Moola Bulla station. He returned to Leopold for one year (1949) and then to Brooking Springs (1950). In order to avoid forced enrolment in the native police force he hid in the bush for two years (1951-1952). The following year he moved back and forth between Brooking Springs and Jubilee Downs, staying only a few months each time. During one of his stays at Jubilee, he underwent subincision, in a ceremony led by Walmajarri men from Noonkanbah and Cherrabun stations. He spent all of 1954 at Leopold. During 1955 he went to Cherrabun Station to 'pick up' his promised wife, a Walmajarri born at Cherrabun whose parents had spent many years at Moola Bulla. From 1956 to 1959 they lived at the UAM reserve. In 1960 they moved for one year to Leopold Station. Then they lived at Brooking Springs for five years (1961-1965). They moved into the UAM reserve for two years, and in 1967 Arthur returned to Leopold Downs for two years on his own. In 1969 and 1970, Arthur and his family (six children) lived at the UAM reserve. Once again Arthur went to work on his own for two years, this time at Brooking Springs. In mid-1973 Arthur settled at the UAM reserve and later moved to Junjuwa with his extended family; his father was the first appointed community chairman.

Scotty is a Goonyandi, he was born in 1925 on Fossil Downs Station. His parents had lived all their life at Fossil Downs. After his first ten years spent with his parents on Fossil Downs, he was sent to live with some of his mother’s relatives on Gogo or Margaret Downs Station for a few years (1935-1939). During that period he was circumcised by Walmajarri men from Gogo but who originally came from various areas in the vicinity of Lake Gregory. He returned to live with his parents on Fossil Downs until the end of World War II. From 1947 until 1950 he lived in the bush in the northernmost part of Fossil Downs. Then he worked as a stockman at Fossil Downs for two years and moved to Gogo the following year (1954). He remained at Gogo during all of 1955, during which he was subincised by the same groups of Walmajarri men who circumcised him. He got married the following year to a Walmajarri woman whose mother had been born on Gogo but whose father had moved from Billilluna into the Fitzroy Valley in order to get married. In 1957 there was a bad influenza epidemic on Gogo; Scotty and his wife left the station for the bush for about a year and a half. In mid-1958 they went to Fossil Downs and
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stayed there until the end of 1959. From 1960 until late 1963, the couple lived at Gogo Station until their fourth child, a three month old baby boy, died. They moved into the UAM reserve for a year, then to Noonkanbah for another year. In 1966 they returned to Gogo and the following year they lived at Fossil Downs. In 1968 they moved to the Gogo ration camp which was independent from the station and had been established for Aboriginal people leaving the stations after the implementation of the Pastoral Award. In 1970 Scotty and his wife went to live at Fossil Downs but their five children were at the UAM hostel. In 1972, the family were re-united on the UAM reserve. They moved to Junjuwa where they are still living, but they reside from time to time at Muludja a small Community near Fossil Downs Station.

Sydney was a Walmajarri. He was born in the bush somewhere between Lake Gregory and the Canning Stock Road, sometime around 1913. He lived in the bush with his parents until 1920. Both his parents were shot by a posse of policemen and station employees tracking Aboriginal cattle spearmen. Sydney was handed to an Aboriginal tracker who brought him back to Christmas Creek Station. He lived there for a few years with some relatives he had met. In 1925 he ran away and killed a bullock next to Tunnel Gorge. The police arrested him several weeks afterwards and gave him to an old white man who was a bore specialist. Sydney camped with him for two years at Chesnut Windmill on Cherrabun Station. In 1928, some of his father's relative, who knew his whereabouts, came to pick him up and took him to Gogo where he stayed until 1935. Once there he was circumcised by Walmajarri men from his father's country, and learnt about station work. From 1935 until 1941-2 he lived in the bush at the border of Gogo and Cherrabun stations. He was taken for two years to Cherrabun (1943-1945) and was subincised by another group of Walmajarri (related to his mother). In 1947, Sydney's knowledge of the Canning Stock Road area won him a job as a drover. For three years he drove cattle between Fitzroy valley cattle stations and Broome or Wyndham meatworks. Then during a two year period he lived successively at Glenroy and Yeeda Stations, Derby and Gogo Station. In 1953 he worked for a full year at Fossil and got married to a Bunuba, whose parents previously worked at Gogo Station. She had been promised to another Walmajarri man who had died in the meantime. The following year they moved to Leopold Downs for one and a half years. After the birth of their first child (1955), they lived on the UAM reserve for two years. From 1957 to 1959, they lived at Brooking Springs; in 1960 they moved for one year to Kimberley Downs and then returned to Brooking Springs where all of their 7 other children were born. They lived sporadically at the UAM reserve in 1963 and 1964, and later (1973), they moved into the mission for good. Sydney's family was amongst the first to move into Junjuwa. Sydney died in early 1987, before he had any chance to fulfil his life dream: to set up an outstation in his father's country.

Mervyn is a Walmajarri who belongs to the generation of desert people born on stations. He was born in 1948 on Noonkanbah. His birthplace was
fortuitous: his father, who had two wives, had been working on Christmas Creek since he settled on a station (1920). His father was a wood cutter, who moved in to Gogo Station in 1935 with the opportunity of becoming a stockman. Several years afterwards, Mervyn's father was involved in cattle killing and he ran away from Gogo to live in the bush on Noonkanbah Station (1942-1948). Once Mervyn was born, the family went to Gogo for one year; unfortunately, Mervyn's mother died, and his father left for Christmas Creek with his second wife and four children. They stayed at Christmas Creek for two years, and in 1949 they returned to Gogo. During this period they were many problems between Goonyandi and Walmajarri people living at the station. Mervyn's father sent him to Jubilee Downs as a stockboy (1950-1951). Mervyn returned to Gogo in 1952, where he was circumcised by a group of Walmajarri and Wangkajunga men from Jubilee Downs and Christmas Creek. He worked at Gogo until 1954, then he went to live in the bush for three years and returned to Gogo for another year (1958). From 1959 to 1961 he lived with his family at Cherrabun and moved to new Cherrabun in 1962. Then Mervyn got sick and had to stay in the Derby Leprosarium for three years (1963-1966). Once he had recovered he went to Gogo for a year and the following year (1968), he was subincised at Christmas Creek by the same people who circumcised him. He remained at Christmas Creek for two years and in 1971 he worked the full year at Meeda station (next to Derby). He got married in 1972, to a Walmajarri woman whose country was the same as his father's. Mervyn had to take her from school at Fitzroy Crossing and they went to live at Jubilee for one year, before they moved into the UAM reserve the next year (1973), and later into Junjuwa.

James is a Wangkajunga who, with his family (two wives and three children), was amongst the group of 'natives from the bush' who moved into Christmas Creek station between 1961 and 1962 (DNW, Christmas Creek Station, September 1961). James was born somewhere in the bush, sometime around 1920. This last wave of desert migrants from the Canning Stock basin lived in canvas tents for a few weeks. After one month, James and his family were sent to Cherrabun Station. The Cherrabun Aboriginal population rejected the newcomers and threatened to walk off if they remained. The manager did not want to lose well trained workers and James' family along with others were sent to Gogo. At Gogo similar problems occurred and they were sent back to Christmas Creek. Some of the former population of Christmas Creek, most of them Wangkajunga, had already left the station for Fossil Downs and Jubilee. In less than one year James' family had been displaced three times and still could not contribute effectively to station life. In mid-1963 most of the newcomers moved into the UAM reserve, where some of their relatives resided, and settled until 1975. They were amongst the people most reluctant to leave the UAM reserve for Junjuwa village.

These life stories show that patterns of residence and migration during the cattle station era diverged between people from different cultural categories:
people from the desert settled and moved between stations to the south of the Fitzroy Valley, while river people resided mainly, and for longer periods, on stations located to the north of the Fitzroy. Those of the people from the former who married into the latter gradually settled in the river country while others remained on stations associated with the desert people. Trips to other stations were undertaken for several purposes: male initiation, marriage arrangement, funeral ceremonies, visits to relatives. They seemed to have been taken most of the time at Aboriginal initiative. Births and various initiations on specific stations had contributed to reinforce or develop strong bonds between Aboriginal groups and these stations. These associations were perpetuated once people had settled in Fitzroy Crossing.

2.3 Fitzroy Crossing and the United Aborigines Mission

2.3.1 Fitzroy Crossing

The first building erected where the town of Fitzroy Crossing stands today was a telegraph depot. It was built late in 1893 near the ford across the Fitzroy River. The following year, during the dry season, the depot was attacked by a group of Aborigines (Lamond 1986:60). It was probably a group of Gooniyandi and Bunuba, who used to set their seasonal camp in the area every dry season. Not far from the telegraph depot was also an important ceremonial ground which is still in use today (see Chapter Six). Fitzroy Crossing, as a town, started the same year: Joe Blythe, owner of Brooking Springs Station, established a small store and an hotel there.

At the spot where the prospectors had crossed the Fitzroy on their way to Hall's Creek there was now a Telegraph Station and a homestead shanty cum hotel run up by Joe Blythe who then little knew he had founded the town site of Fitzroy Crossing (Durack 1959:344).

Joe Blythe sold his pub and kept the store. The pub was moved about half a kilometre downstream on the same bank of the river. Fitzroy Crossing’s hotel (known as the Crossing Inn) stands today on the very same spot. In mid-1894, Fitzroy Crossing got its first police station. The town was started by a policeman named Pilmer, who terrorized local Aborigines and killed many of them (Pedersen 1984:11). During the rebellion led by Pigeon, Aborigines were not welcome near to the newly created town. In 1896, about seventy of them who attempted to set up camp next to the pub were dispersed “by means of extreme measures” (Biskup 1973:22). Around the turn of the century, several buildings were added and formed the police station compound: a gaol, and a courthouse also used to accommodate police trackers.
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Sketch Map of Fitzroy Crossing in 1970
SCALE 4 cm : 1 km

MAP 4
Changes in Fitzroy Crossing between 1970 and 1976

Sketch Map of Fitzroy Crossing in 1976
SCALE 4 cm : 1 km

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The development of Fitzroy Crossing stopped here for a while, and the town, known as the Crossing, remained little changed until the late 1930s. In that time, in most of the surrounding cattle stations, owners and managers had their own market gardens and raised chickens and pigs. Nevertheless, they relied on the Fitzroy Crossing store for the supply of other goods (flour, tea, coffee, tobacco, blankets and cloth), used on stations to feed and clothe the Aboriginal labour force. The establishment of a ration depot for Aboriginal people, in 1935, was the next step in Fitzroy Crossing's development. The depot was located near the police compound. This ration depot (locally known as the 'ration camp') was the first official Aboriginal camp in town.

The local pub was also very popular. For many white people, mainly those employed in the pastoral industry, this was the main reason to visit Fitzroy Crossing. The arrival of the United Aborigines Mission in 1952 and the establishment of the mission compound constituted the main change faced by this small town since its foundation. Not only was the ration camp moved, but the town centre was also shifted to the mission area. A post office, a nursing post and a school were part of the compound. The mission was not very popular amongst pastoralists as it was seen as attracting the labour force away from their stations. The hospital was built next to the crossing in the mid 1950s. It remained in that location, under the control of the Australian Inland Mission, until 1971. Although the future expansion of Fitzroy Crossing had been planned for in the 1950s, with the town centre located next to the hospital and the police station, it was not until the mid-1960s that the first building was shifted from the mission compound to the new site.

The planned town centre proved to be inappropriately placed, partly because the area was frequently flooded, but mainly because the new route for the highway took it away from the town. Before this second major change Fitzroy Crossing's peculiar location (next to the only ford across the river), and its isolation gave to it the role of urban centre in the Fitzroy Valley area. Most of the surrounding cattle stations relied on Fitzroy Crossing for their food supply as well as other services provided by the hospital, the post office, the police station and above all the local pub. A bridge was built across the river in 1971, as part of the upgrading of the Great Northern Highway which now passes south of Fitzroy Crossing. This resulted in the town gradually losing its importance.

From 1972 the town changed rapidly and by 1976 it presented a completely different aspect (see Map 4). The new town was built to provide accommodation for all the non-Aboriginal people now established at Fitzroy Crossing. Changes in policy towards Aborigines in various areas (health, education, welfare) were accompanied by the creation of many local working opportunities which did not exist previously, and most positions available at Fitzroy Crossing came to be related in one way or another to the Aboriginal population. Without the Aborigines, the entire town economy would collapse today. The social security benefits paid to the Aboriginal population provide
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the town with a regular fortnightly cash flow of about $150,000, of which 90% is spent locally. Even the tourist industry, started in the early 1980s, is too seasonal to ensure the town a regular income that could match these figures. What attracts tourists to Fitzroy Crossing mainly now is the Geikie Gorge National Park, on the Fitzroy River 16 km north-east of town. Each year between mid-April and mid-October about 8,000 people visit the park. For the majority of them, stopping in Fitzroy Crossing is a matter of hours, as they only stay long enough to go on the guided tour boat in the Gorge. A small minority will camp at the Gorge, but the longest stays never exceed a few days.

2.3.2 The United Aborigines Mission

The United Aborigines Mission (UAM) originated from a split in the Australian Inland Mission (AIM), in 1928. The Australian Inland Mission, founded in New South Wales in 1905, was known for its fundamentalist approach to Protestantism.

(It was) A non-denominational society backed largely by the smaller non-conformist churches, especially the Baptist (Marks 1960:72).

Once on its own the UAM decided to start mission posts in Western Australia which so far had been neglected by mission societies. By 1935, the UAM had became the largest missionary society in Western Australia (Biskup 1973:124). The success of the UAM was due to three main factors:

- It did not have any overall policy. The head administration, based in Melbourne, gave local superintendents complete control over their own mission. Free of administrative pressure, these superintendents applied what seemed to them the best policy for local conditions.

- Because of its financial and administrative autonomy UAM went to places where other missions would not. The fact that UAM did not have any local challenge, was an important element in its success.

- Major Protestant societies were on the one hand largely involved in the south seas and on the other hand not interested in setting up missions in Western Australia. Consequently, most members of non conformist churches financially supported UAM as their own church was not part of this particular mission venture (Marks 1960:77-80).

Despite the lack of overall policy, most UAM missions operated in a very similar way. At first, food and clothes were given away free to attract Aborigines. Then, once people were settled on the mission, they were required to work in exchange for food. This policy of 'no work, no food' was applied rigorously, together with a strong evangelism. The UAM was opposed to any
form of traditional ritual. Evangelism was based on the abandonment of ritual life and supported with long and numerous religious services.

It is clear that the more forthright radical policy of the UAM resulted in a more rapid change in the Aboriginal traditional life (Marks 1960:84).

Despite that radical policy and a rigourous discipline in its missions the UAM proved to be successful in a lot of places. This success was mainly due to one mission (Mt Margaret) where the superintendent (Schenk) showed interest in the welfare of Aborigines, the education of children and the training of adults, nearly 20 years before anyone else in the state (Marks 1960:91). Schenk insisted that his staff should speak the main Aboriginal language from the area and believed strongly in the training of Aborigines in fields other than the pastoral industry. His motives were more practical than philanthropical. The isolation of Mt Margaret, the lack of financial support and the large Aboriginal population settled on that station in the late 1930s were key factors. In order to succeed, the mission had to be self-sufficient: Aborigines were trained as mechanics, bakers, cooks and gardeners, for Mt Margaret relied on them to survive.

The lack of central administrative control contributed to poor relations between the state government and the UAM. Western Australian politicians were attracted by the Mt Margaret example. They attempted to establish close relations with Schenk’s mission, but Schenk feared losing his autonomy and was not prepared to have anybody interfering with the way he was running the mission. He categorically refused any government involvement or supervision at Mt Margaret. The UAM was also very hostile to anthropologists. Anthropological research was seen as a threat for, in the UAM view, it incited Aborigines to renew traditional ritual activities (Bolton 1981:149). Operating on its own, the UAM achieved most of its goals, and in the late 1940s the UAM missions were said to be the best in Western Australia. A change in government policy and a financial crisis for the UAM, however, brought the mission into closer cooperation with the Government. In 1948, Middleton was appointed commissioner of Native Welfare. Middleton had experience of fifteen years in New Guinea where he had worked closely with missionaries, and was keen to promote education and training for Aborigines. In the early 1950s, Baptists as well as other non-conformist churches decided to conduct mission activities in Western Australia. As a result, the UAM lost nearly all its financial support and its state-wide dominance (Marks 1960:84). But the UAM had a lot of experience in Western Australia: its methods were reliable and the staff used to working with Aborigines. These two elements put UAM in an ideal position to collaborate with the government.

Between 1950 and 1955, the government decided to hand over feeding depots to missionary groups. In the Fitzroy area the UAM were the only group interested in taking over the depot. From a financial point of view it was
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probably cheaper for the government to use a structure that already existed (feeding depots), and employ experienced people (mission staff), rather than build new places and train new people.

Missions had changed their policy. There was less evangelizing and more practical training, as well as an increasing emphasis on work with children (Biskup 1973:254).

The newly created UAM missions in towns did not face a financial problem any more, as they were subsidised by the government. If they could provide the settled Aboriginal population with accommodation, schooling, sanitary and ablution facilities, nursing posts and recreational activities, missions received from the Western Australian government as much as five shillings per week per adult and twelve shillings and six pence per child; this subsidy nearly doubled in 1953\textsuperscript{15} (Marks 1960:86; Biskup 1973:253).

The UAM took over the Fitzroy Crossing ration camp in 1952 and moved it to a new site, starting a construction program that took nearly three years to complete. The UAM aims were not simply to evangelise the Aborigines, and by 1954 the mission was running a general store and a hostel, had constructed a garage and workshop, had a fairly big market garden, and was operating a school. The ration camp Aboriginal population was therefore moved to the Aboriginal camp part of the mission compound. Most of the ration camp residents were reluctant to move but had no alternative. The entire Aboriginal population was actively involved in building houses as well as in other mission activities. People remember this time as something quite different from what they had previously experienced both on cattle stations and at the ration camp.

The influence of the UAM at Fitzroy Crossing, both on the Aboriginal and white population, was considerable between 1952 and 1974. From 1975 it started to decline as UAM reduced its staff, as gradually State Government bodies took over the mission responsibilities with the Fitzroy Crossing Aboriginal population. When this transfer of responsibilities had been fully completed in 1983, the mission role changed to a weaker 'moral and physical presence' until February 1987. Still today in both communities many people associate themselves with the UAM. People such as the roadhouse's manager and staff, and the Junjuwa project officer, are religiously affiliated to the UAM. Amongst the Aboriginal population, all Junjuwa council members, including the chairman, are members of the Kimberley Christian Fellowship created by the UAM.

Since the end of 1986, the local superintendent is officially the only UAM representative appointed by the head office. Changes in the number of staff appointed by the UAM head office in Melbourne to Fitzroy may be seen as follows:
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- 1950 to 1975 ..........15 staff + 1 superintendent
- 1975 to 1983 ..........3 staff + 1 superintendent
- 1983 to 1986 ..........2 staff + 1 superintendent
- From 1987 ..........1 superintendent

As far as Junjuwa is concerned, most of the old people are very confused about the origin of the village. It is frequently attributed to the Mission people who are often referred to by some Junjuwa residents as "Those who helped us" or again as "Those who gave us what we have today: Jesus and Junjuwa". Moreover, until Junjuwa was funded by the federal Department of Aboriginal Affairs (DAA) to appoint its own project officer in 1981, the UAM superintendent was literally running the place, even if theoretically Junjuwa was jointly controlled by the UAM and the Department for Community Welfare (DCW).

2.4 Aboriginal groups in Fitzroy Crossing

Before turning to the origin of Junjuwa and discussing its composition in Chapter Four, I will briefly outline the main phases of the formation of Aboriginal groups in Fitzroy Crossing.

Prior to the establishment of a government ration camp in the late 1930s, no permanent camp existed for Aboriginal people at Fitzroy Crossing. While I was collecting life histories amongst the oldest people of Junjuwa, several of them referred to a 'camp' located next to what is known today as the old crossing (see Map 4) occupied mainly by Bunuba and Gooniyandi people. This camp was used sporadically when people were staying in town between two mustering campaigns or for other reasons. Another town based camp was located next to the pub and was occupied on and off by a small number of Aborigines employed seasonally by the publican who at that time had a vegetable and fruit garden and raised pigs and chickens. Even while the ration camp was fully operating (1940-1951), a small, tightly knit group of Aboriginal people was living permanently at that settlement.

The third component of Fitzroy Crossing Aboriginal population was provided by the influx of desert migrants, mostly Walmajarri and Wangkajunga. Apart from short and very specific periods of time\textsuperscript{16}, Walmajarri and Wangkajunga would not stay in town. It is possible to distinguish various 'waves' of desert migrants, which gradually brought Walmajarri and Wangkajunga groups to Fitzroy Crossing. A first migration, mainly of groups of Walmajarri, occurred in the 1920s. Another important movement of population is recorded
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in the early 1950s. This one was initiated by Wangkajunga people living further south in the desert. They are said to have 'pushed' Walmajarri groups further west, i.e. towards Fitzroy Crossing, when they settled on cattle stations to the south of the Fitzroy Valley. The last movement was not directed towards stations but rather towards urban centres and took place in the mid 1960s (Kolig 1974:38). When they came to Fitzroy Crossing, members of linguistic groups other than Bunuba and Gooniyandi established their temporary camps on the other side of the river. During the day they would cross the river and stay in town but at night they would return to their camps. The only time they would remain on the west side of the Fitzroy was if they were invited to participate in joint ceremonial activities.

Between 1950 and 1954 the majority of the Aboriginal town based population changed from Bunuba and Gooniyandi to Walmajarri. As a consequence of these changes the permanent Aboriginal population increased rapidly and then stabilized at around one hundred until 1969. The opening of the mission school certainly had an important influence on movements of population towards Fitzroy. But also, UAM staff started to learn Walmajarri as soon as they established the mission in Fitzroy Crossing. From then on Walmajarri became a lingua franca spoken by most UAM people; religious services were conducted in Walmajarri.

This last element partly explains the influence of Walmajarri people on the Aboriginal as well as white population, in town from this period until the present. When the school started, most of children aged between 6 and 15 whose parents lived and worked on stations in the Fitzroy Valley were required to attend. As already mentioned, linguistic differences were broadly respected on stations. Bunuba, Gooniyandi and Kija lived on the stations closer to town and more accessible by roads than those where Walmajarri and Wangkajunga were employed. Also, and this is important to remember, nearly all stations where the labour force was constituted by desert groups were part of a single large company, Emmanuel Brothers Ltd. (Christmas Creek, Cherrabun, Gogo). On those stations lived a large Aboriginal population, managers were frequently changed, and living conditions were very poor. In contrast, river people were employed on family-owned cattle stations where they lived in small groups and experienced a long term relationship with the same manager and his family. Often in those stations managers' wives used to run a 'station school' attended by employees' children. Station schools did not exist before 1957 on any of the Emmanuel properties (the first one was on Gogo Station in 1956). Schools were started primarily as an attempt to retain a permanent Aboriginal population on stations, for by then most people had shifted to Fitzroy Crossing. Then, firstly because families were broken up since the opening of the school in Fitzroy, and secondly because parents had heard about better living and working conditions, a large number of Walmajarri moved to Fitzroy and settled at the Mission Camp. By then the UAM had started a bakery and a butcher shop which operated with Aboriginal employees, and the mission was now able
to compete with the rations provided on stations. Meanwhile, Bunuba and Gooniyandi who decided to remain in town occupied camps already mentioned: the old crossing and the pub.

The Mission school was handed over to the Western Australian government and became a State School in 1965, and ten years later DCW took over the hostel. Between 1971 and 1973, the mission camp became overcrowded. People from all stations in the Fitzroy Valley moved into Fitzroy to stay at the Mission Camp, mainly as a consequence of the Pastoral Award. Prior to 1974, 80% of the one hundred people living there were Walmajarri, but in 1974 there were two hundred and fifty adults permanently at the camp, and most of them came from different traditional and cattle station backgrounds. To use McMahon’s religious classification, the Mission camp was made up of ‘Christians’ (mainly Walmajarri), ‘agnostic Bunuba’ and ‘pagans’ who were Wangkajunga as well as Walmajarri from the last migration (McMahon 1984:7). The Walmajarri held a prominent position within the mission camp, as they were all employed by the UAM and had lived there for years. Bunuba were thus confronted by a situation described by some of them as being as bad as massacres perpetuated by White settlers early in the century. The situation could be summarized as follows:

- Walmajarri had become ‘boss’ on Bunuba land

- important Whites (missionaries) spoke Walmajarri and could not communicate with other groups other than through Walmajarri translators

- Walmajarri were running the mission camp.

If we assume that Kolig is right when he stated that in 1972 the mission camp was considered by Bunuba as "the last outpost of their traditional territory" (Kolig 1974:37), for them to see that Walmajarri were boss was probably a fatal blow.

In order to address the problem of Aboriginal overpopulation in Fitzroy, Kolig, an anthropologist from the AAPA, and McLaren, a regional officer of DCW, were asked to conduct a census and survey, and to submit two separate reports to the State Housing Commission of Western Australia.

Kolig distinguished two main residential units in his survey (Kolig 1975): one was living at the UAM camp and was known as the 'Mission mob', the other was located where Kurnangki village was built in 1985 (see Map 5) and was known as the 'Fig-tree mob'\(^\text{18}\). The Fig-tree mob was formed of two sub groups. The first was a relatively coherent group whose members had walked off Christmas Creek Station; they were mainly Wangkajunga and Walmajarri who called themselves the Yuilbaridja group. The other group was less structured and was an amalgamation of people from various stations. This sub-
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group was living in what is known as Windmill Reserve (see Map 5). Apart from those main groups, Kolig mentioned three smaller units:

- the Kadjina mob, mostly people from Noonkanbah, who were camping on the shore of the Fitzroy near today’s new bridge.

- the Pub mob, made up of a few families, located next to the pub, and more variable in size as well as in duration.

- the Jail mob, mainly drunkards and other people frequently arrested for various offences, even more ephemeral and variable than the previous one (Kolig 1975:7-12, 1981:26-27).

In his report to the State Housing Commission, Kolig insisted very strongly on one point:

On account of the district particularism prevailing among Fitzroy Aborigines...planned change, be it in terms of housing, acquisition of land, economic enterprise or whatever, that does not take this diversity specifically into account, is doomed to absolute failure (Kolig 1975:20, emphasis in the original).

These diversities were indeed taken into account by DCW which was given the responsibility of relocating various sub-groups in different settlements according to the number of distinct Aboriginal groups identified in Kolig’s and McLaren’s surveys (Kolig 1975, McLaren 1975). Various community development programs were initiated by DCW in the mid-1970s. Some have not yet been completed, some have failed, some were abandoned, and others, against all odds, seem to survive: Junjuwa is one of the survivors.
Plate 1
A bird's eye view of Junjuwa Village taken in January 1987. It is possible to identify the three sections of Junjuwa: The Bunuba section (three rows of houses on the left), the Walmajarri section (two rows of houses on the right) and the Wangkajunga section (one row of houses in the background). In the foreground of the picture are the garage and workshop (right) and the two water tanks (left). In the middle of the picture the Junjuwa office and the Junjuwa community health centre. In the background of the picture to the right of the Wangkajunga section in the Junjuwa's people Church.
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1 These figures give a higher percentage of Aboriginal population for Fitzroy Crossing compared to other towns from the Kimberley, which has one of the highest regional concentrations of Aboriginal people in Australia (Heatley 1982:78).

2 Kolig does not give any evidence but mentions that a few speakers of that language were still alive at Fossil Downs Station in the 1930s.

3 One informant, a Bunuba man born around 1910, told me that just before his birth his grandfather was amongst the Bunuba who organised the appropriate ritual to allow Walmajarri to cross the Fitzroy River, which according to him not a single Walmajarri had done before.

4 Elkin spent a year in the Kimberleys from October 1927 to November 1928, and Kaberry conducted her research in the same area between May 1935 and June 1936 (Elkin 1932:299; Kaberry 1937:436).

5 Wolmeri is one of the alternative name for the Walmajarri (Tindale 1974:258).

6 Nyulnyyl with sections, according to Elkin's typology; see his paper for more details on the subject (Elkin 1932).

7 Although I was not able to fully identify the differences that existed between the older dialects of Bunuba as opposed to the language spoken by Junjuwa residents, the distinctions they made showed that linguistic differences existed between Bunuba speakers in the past which seemed to have gradually disappeared, to give way to a 'common Bunuba' but these differences were still remembered.

8 Tindale identified Walmajarri as an alternative group of Kokatja and Wangkajunga as eastern Walmajarri (Tindale 1974:245-246).

9 On the importance of the East Kimberley area as a ritual, and cultural crossroad, see Rowse (1987:94) and McConvell (1985:1).

10 Pigeon had been employed as a police tracker before he became a renegade. See Pedersen 1984, for details of the story.

11 Mainly because of the Forrest brothers' financial involvement in the pastoral venture in the West Kimberley, the area received more support from Perth.

12 This ceremonial ground is essentially associated with Bunuba groups which did not intermarry with groups from the desert: all male Bunuba members of these groups were either circumcised or subincised there. It was located next a permanent waterhole on the Fitzroy called Bunganari.

13 This figure is based of the cash drawn by MWW each fortnight from Derby and Junjuwa - payments of social security benefits.

14 These figures, established from questionnaires given to tourists visiting the park, are from the Geikie Gorge National Park ranger's office and relate to the 1986 tourist season.

15 In order to give a comparison in 1953 mature male Aboriginal stockmen employed on stations were paid between 15 shillings and L 2.10 a week according to their working experience (DNW files:1953).

16 This was mainly at Rodeo time twice a year in June and in September, as well as when people were on their way back to stations if they had had to go to Derby usually, for medical purposes.
17 Missionaries did not learn Bunuba for two reasons: first because very few Bunuba people were living in Fitzroy Crossing at the time and second because most of the UAM people had access to material produced by Schenk which could be used to learn Walmajarri also since this language was related to those spoken by Aboriginal people settled at Mt Margaret.

18 Kurnangki is a Bunuba name which means fig-tree. It is also the name of the site were Kurnangki village was erected as there is a big fig-tree at a nearby spring. They were both created by a mythical ancestor. This was a traditional Bunuba camping place but now the entire population of Kurnangki village is Walmajarri.
CHAPTER THREE

THE TOWNSHIP OF FITZROY CROSSING

In the previous chapter I outlined the regional history of the West Kimberley. I focused on the historical process that led Aboriginal groups of different cultural and linguistic backgrounds to live together in town based villages. At this point, it is crucial to make a clear distinction between the town of Fitzroy Crossing itself and Aboriginal villages within it. Although both are intimately linked in their development, and depend upon each other to survive, it would be a mistake to amalgamate [conceptually] the township and the communities.

This chapter provides a descriptive account of the township of Fitzroy Crossing at the time of my two field trips. Firstly, I will describe the town as I saw it during a short field trip I undertook between December 1980 and February 1981. Secondly, I will give a more detailed account of Fitzroy Crossing between December 1985 and March 1987, emphasizing the town's development since 1981. Finally, I will discuss the employment opportunities in town. I will show that while white people represented only 20 to 25% of the permanent population they occupied all the main positions in the social, economic and administrative life of town.

3.1 Fitzroy Crossing during the wet season 1980-1981

Before I describe the township, I want to point out some of the conditions of my first stay in Fitzroy, for they have influenced the way I saw the town at this time. This first field trip was brief, I conducted it on my own, it took place during the
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wet season, and I lived permanently at Junjuwa village. During the wet season, which usually extends from one to three months between mid-December and mid-March, the town becomes almost a 'ghost town'. Most of the places around which the town life is centred during the rest of the year are either closed or operate with minimal staff. For example, the school was closed, the mission store, the roadhouse, the hospital, and the police station were lightly staffed. At this time of the year, partly because of the climate and partly because of Christmas Holidays, up to half of the white people were in the south of the state where they nearly all came from. It was also the slack season in the cattle industry and many of the surrounding cattle stations were looked after by a handful of caretakers who conducted basic maintenance and repair work around the homestead, as travelling by road becomes impossible at times. Thus there were only forty white people living in town at the time of my stay\textsuperscript{1}. The fact that I was on my own did not facilitate my social integration within the town’s white community, as nearly all permanent residents had their family with them. Not being a 'local' and living by my own was bad enough, but moreover I came for only a short period and I was living with Aboriginal people. This last element would not have been entirely negative at other times, but the Noonkanbah events were very much present in people's minds and in their view anyone involved with the Aborigines in the area had to be an activist of some sort. Accordingly, it is not difficult to understand that my contacts with the white population were infrequent, distant and tense at times. The conditions and the timing of the field trip combined to give me an 'Aboriginal' view of the township that might have been different in other circumstances.

In December 1980, Fitzroy Crossing was half way through the planned development started in the mid 1970s. Prior to this, the town had even less to offer. The town centre was located near the Fitzroy Crossing causeway across the river and its new location followed the upgrading of the Great Northern Highway. From then the town changed rapidly and took on a new face which was the one I saw when I arrived in early December 1980.

At the end of 1980, the Primary School was struggling with several problems. It was short of staff: there were five teachers in charge of nearly two hundred children of primary school age. The building was quite old and inappropriate for the number of pupils but it was to be upgraded at the end of the 1981 school year. The school also faced a problem with children living in settlements away from town who needed to be brought to school. During the previous school year, the Primary School was financed for a bus service to the outlying settlements, but it had to be stopped due to escalating costs. The Education Department refused to subsidise the service on the grounds of the unstable nature of these settlements (NACOC 1981:2). This refusal had two consequences:

- Town based communities like Junjuwa became overcrowded during the school year, as Fitzroy Crossing Primary School was the only one in the area.
3.1.1 The main centres

Living in Junjuwa, I was able to distinguish three main and three minor centres of activity in town, a distinction based on how heavily patronised the centres were.

The closest to Junjuwa and probably the most popular centre in town was the UAM store (see Map 4). It was popular for several reasons. Firstly, its location within the mission compound, together with the other facilities there (Department for Community Welfare office, bakery, butcher shop, church, Summer Institute of Linguistics office, Marra Worra Worra office) 2 together attracted many people, making it a privileged location to meet people and to socialise. This location was also close to the old Aboriginal camp where nearly the entire Aboriginal population of Fitzroy Crossing had lived at some stage or another during the last twenty years: the old camp was regularly visited by its former residents, for many of whom it represented the first contact with the town. Secondly, people from remote settlements came to consult the DCW officer or visit the MWW office to obtain advice. It was, therefore, one of the best places in town to obtain news from distant settlements and to keep up with, for example, the ceremonial life in the area. Thirdly, the mission was one of the three places in town where people could cash their social security cheques. If one was hanging around the store, one would know if a relative was in possession of some cash from which one could benefit. Finally, the mission store had the widest range of items available in town, ranging from fresh products 3 and basic food supplies to 'ringer's' clothes and camping equipment, all of which attracted people. Even when cash was scarce, there was always the chance of meeting a more fortunate relative 4 who, once his/her shopping was done, would give away some food items or soft drinks, which could be repaid on a better day.

Another feature of interest in this same area was the DCW office. At the time there was only one person employed there and he was involved almost entirely with Aboriginal settlements outside town. The UAM had run two hostels in the past, one for single Aboriginal males and the other one for females. One of them had been handed over to the DCW a few years earlier and was about to be renovated. The other was not operating any more as an hostel, but was used to accommodate staff from the mission. Amongst the remaining buildings owned by the mission were a bakery and a 'butcher shop'. The bakery was started in 1975, and was operated by Junjuwa people supervised by staff from UAM. Most of the bread was for Aboriginal consumption, and
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the sales barely covered the costs of ingredients and wages. Although it had apparently not been a very successful enterprise during its five years of existence, it was allocated two loans for new buildings and equipment in 1981, and the UAM store started to sell its bread (NACOC 1981:3).

The 'butcher's shop' was run by Junjuwa. It was the old kitchen where meals, served to the mission camp residents, were prepared prior to the construction of Junjuwa village. Its operation was basic. The Junjuwa chairman would withdraw some money from the community bank account, and then go to Brooking Springs Station, ten kilometres to the north-east of the town, and buy half a 'bullock'. The meat would be taken to the shop, where it would be cut up into pieces by two or three men. These men would then drive around the community and sell the meat from the back of a utility vehicle. The entire process was done with little if any health control, and for that reason it was shut down by the regional health inspector. The butcher shop was not a viable enterprise, for once the chairman and his 'workers' had taken their share of meat as payment for their work, the sales rarely covered the cost.

At this time MWW employed two white people: an accountant and a field officer. The accountant was supervising and advising local Aboriginal groups in financial matters. The field officer was in charge of remote settlements, which he visited frequently in order to evaluate people's needs as well as their desires regarding the place where they would like to settle down. Following its close involvement with the KLC during the Noonkanbah crisis, some local Aboriginal groups started to withdraw from MWW. It was also possible to cash cheques at the MWW office.

The second main centre was the roadhouse. It was located on the Great Northern Highway at the town centre turn off (see Map 5). This roadhouse offered the same services as any roadhouse in remote parts of Australia. It was Fitzroy Crossing's bus station, it had a food store, eat in and take away food, and was a service station with a workshop. The store attracted many Aborigines, and although prices were 20% higher than those at the mission store, the take away shop was the only one in town and was very popular. Once again, the roadhouse was an ideal place to obtain news from other towns and settlements as well as to meet people. The garage and workshop were also frequently crowded as the number of privately owned cars was increasing rapidly amongst the Aboriginal population of town, and most if not all of them needed frequent repairs. The manager and most of the staff from the roadhouse were closely linked to the UAM, which facilitated their relations with Aborigines who were also encouraged by the mission people to have their cars fixed at the roadhouse rather than at the other garage in town. Another important factor that made the roadhouse popular was that credit facilities were easier to obtain here than elsewhere. Once again, through the mission store, it was possible for the roadhouse manager to have access to people's money when important bills were overdue. Finally it was a strategic place to observe people's movements in and out of town. For example, by simply sitting
for a few hours at the roadhouse, one would know who had left town, with which vehicle, who was in the vehicle and in which direction it went. Also when people came into town, one could spot immediately what sort of game or food, if any, people had brought back. This kind of information is much valued by the people.

The last main centre was the Crossing Inn Hotel. It was located next to the junction of Brooking Creek and the Fitzroy River. There was direct road access to the pub, from one dirt road that linked the new bridge to the new town centre. Fitzroy Crossing pub had a garden bar, a lounge bar and an 'Aboriginal' bar. Next to the pub there was also a store, a motel, and a caravan park all owned by the publican. The pub was the third place where it was possible to cash a cheque either at the bar, or in the store. Rooms at the motel would only be occupied from time to time by government workers or public servants passing through Fitzroy Crossing. The store had a good range of items, mainly tinned food and basic products. It was the cheapest place in town to buy food, but not many Aborigines did their shopping at the pub store. There were two reasons for this. Firstly, people who did not drink would not go near the pub lest their 'non drinker' status be questioned. Secondly, if one were to shop at the pub store, one would be approached by a relative, likely to be intoxicated, and be asked for money or food. This second point was illustrated to me by Junjuwa chairman's oldest son. I went fishing with him at the junction, which was a very good spot, and on the way back to Junjuwa he stopped at the pub store and asked me to join him to do some shopping. Before we left the store, he gave me the box with all his shopping and the change and said:

Bernard, carry it to the car for me. You know these drunks outside, some are my relatives. If they see me with the box, they will humbug me for tucker or money. If you carry the box, they will think it's all yours and they be too ashamed to ask a whitefellow (Andrew).

The Crossing Inn was famous for its bars. Officially Aborigines were not banned from access to the lounge or garden bar, but anyone barefooted was not allowed in them. However, in Fitzroy the only people not wearing shoes were the Aborigines. It was unlikely anyway, that Aborigines would try to get in these two bars as they restricted themselves to the infamous 'Blackfellow' bar, or drinking in the bush. The 'Blackfellow' or 'Aboriginal' bar was a large dark room with high concrete walls that separated it from the garden bar. There were no lights, no tables, no chairs, only two wooden benches. A huge grid, welded at the top of the bar on one end and fixed at the ceiling on the other end, symbolised quite clearly the racial relations within the pub. Aborigines handed the money through the square holes of the grid and were handed back glasses of beer. I went a few times to the 'Aboriginal' bar during this first stay at Fitzroy and every time I was struck by the atmosphere. Between twenty and thirty Aboriginal, men and women, most of them drunk, were shouting, arguing, swearing or fighting each other. The noise was amplified by the size of the room and the concrete walls. The ambience was pathetic, but it got worse when
the iron curtain dropped down on the bar without any notice and the police walked in. In 1980, the Aborigines were fully aware of this negative image of themselves, and some preferred to buy a carton of beer and take it to a shady spot in the bush to drink. Unfortunately, this behaviour somehow reinforced the negative image of Aborigines, who in the garden bar are said to be 'good at nothing but drinking beer'. In the garden bar things were different: a few non-Aboriginals would enjoy their beer under the cool shade of centenarian trees. Here there was no shortage of tables, chairs or bar stools. Inside, in the air conditioned lounge bar, the walls were ornamented with ancient tools of the early days of white settlement, and a few customers emptied their stubbies, commenting on the toughness of the town. Patrons in the garden and lounge bar were probably as drunk as were the Aborigines, but they were quiet and enjoyed their drinks in a pleasant ambience.

3.1.2 The minor centres

The first one was the hospital. It was the 'new' hospital called Mindi Rardi after the Bunuba name of the location where it stood. It had been built next to the new town centre, between the power station and the Kindergarten, in the mid 1970s, once the old AIM hospital located at the old crossing had been pulled down. The 'new' hospital was officially opened in 1976, and in 1980 the hospital administration and the hospital clinic were attended to by the only doctor in town. The same doctor was also employed by Community Health, together with two nurses in charge of the Aboriginal settlements in and outside town. Apart from the doctor, the hospital was staffed by six nurses. Even though it had operated for four years, the hospital was not visited frequently by Aborigines despite their serious health problems. Most Aborigines, especially the old people, seemed to miss the AIM hospital, and were reluctant to pass through the new town to reach the hospital. The hospital offered very good services given the size of the town, but the doctor himself admitted that he was achieving better results by visiting communities, even those established in town, with the community health nurses. The people were happy to be treated and showed confidence in the European medicine, but they did not go to the hospital. Even when someone was hospitalised for a few days, their relatives did not visit them as frequently as they would have done at the AIM hospital.

The second minor centre was the police station. It was even newer than the hospital, for it had been built in the late 1970s. The old police station at the old crossing was now used by Geikie Gorge National Park’s ranger. The police compound comprised the court house, the police station, the lock up, and the sergeant’s house. In 1980 the sergeant was assisted by two constables, whose main duties consisted in patrols around the pub to pick up intoxicated
Aborigines. Both constables as well as the sergeant stressed to me the preventative aspect of these arrests; nevertheless, people arrested frequently spent a few days in gaol and were usually fined afterwards. Even if the police were called to go to Junjuwa or to one of the other Aboriginal camps, they were reluctant to answer the call for it would have constituted, according to them, interference in community life. The wet season was a very difficult time for the police force because the Aboriginal camps in town were overcrowded as people from various places in the surrounding region moved into Fitzroy. Disputes and fights occurred regularly between different groups, with or without the influence of alcohol. The Fitzroy Crossing lock up was small and inappropriately designed for the hot climate. It was regularly full and during the day time the heat rapidly became unbearable. The sergeant found a compromise: prisoners were allowed to stay outside in the police compound providing they remained within the fenced area. Then, prisoners could play card games, receive visitors or talk with relatives. As soon as it was known that somebody had been arrested, their families would visit them in the morning and try to find out if they had been involved in a fight and with whom, in order to take appropriate action or retaliation against the culprits or their families. People would also go to the police station for other reasons, for example to obtain a driving or a firearm licence.

The last minor centre was the post office, the only building left at the old town centre. Its location was important and would have attracted a lot of people had it not been so isolated. The mail was sorted only once a day at 3 p.m., and most of the mail for the Aboriginal settlements was picked up by somebody from MWW. Then it was taken to MWW office where people would collect it. Occasionally, people would cash cheques there but as this was not done without proof of identification few Aborigines used this facility. Next to the post office was one of the two public telephone booths in town, but it was not used as much as the other one located next to the roadhouse. The post office offered banking services but Aborigines preferred to use the mission store for such facilities.

3.1.3 The Aboriginal population

About 600 people lived in Junjuwa village in 1980, with the remainder of the town's Aboriginal population, between 200 and 300 people, living in four other settlements. One group was established at Windmill Reserve which was controlled by the Department for Community Welfare. This reserve was built in the early 1970s to accommodate the transient Aboriginal population that had left cattle stations after the implementation of the Pastoral Award. Next to this reserve was Fig Tree camp, or Kurnangki, where about fifty people lived permanently in humpies and tents without any facilities. The two other camps
were Kadjina, located next to the new bridge, and the Old Camp, behind the UAM compound, exactly where the Aboriginal Mission Reserve had been prior to the construction of Junjuwa.

Despite the Pastoral Award, in 1980 there were still people living permanently on the two cattle stations closest to town. A group of about thirty Bunuba was at Brooking Springs Station, while some fifty Walmajarri and Gooniyandi lived at Gogo Station. This last group camped at the location of the planned Bayulu village to be erected on a piece of land excised from Gogo Station Pastoral lease.

As far as entertainment was concerned, there was not much to do. Movies were shown once a fortnight, usually the night after pension day at Junjuwa Hall. The UAM people were in charge of these movie nights and they usually screened old westerns from the early 1950s. The Mission people also organised, once a year, an Aboriginal sports day as well as a Christmas party at which food and refreshments were given away free to Aborigines. Inside Junjuwa village some parties were organised when the community account was critically low. The persons in charge of the party would play 'rock and roll’ tapes, and would provide some food and drinks, usually a stew and cordials. These parties took place in Junjuwa community hall and people had to pay to get in.

3.2 Fitzroy Crossing between December 1985 and March 1987

When I returned to Fitzroy Crossing for sixteen months in December 1985, the town had changed considerably (See Maps 4 and 5). It is again important to stress the conditions of that second stay in Fitzroy, because they influenced my perception both of the town and its population. Firstly, it was a longer stay. In a town like Fitzroy, where the average stay of Europeans employed in town was about twelve months, a person who stayed for over a year became a 'local'. As a direct consequence of that turn over, many people who already lived in Fitzroy for a year or more when I arrived were about to leave town. My arrival was well timed for I was introduced to the European social life of the town by those who were leaving. For some of them it was a real relief to have an outsider to talk to and their open confidences gave me an immediate inside perspective on the town. This also gave me some advantage over the people appointed to vacant positions in town who arrived at Fitzroy after the wet season, by which time I had been living there for three months. Those who had not left at the time of my arrival left Fitzroy prior to the completion of my field trip. As a result, only thirty of the two hundred white people were in town before I arrived and remained there after I had left. Secondly, my family accompanied me during this trip. Therefore, through my wife and daughters, I
had access to several European and Aboriginal activities in Fitzroy that a single man would have missed. Finally, during these sixteen months we rented two houses. The first one, rented for six months, was located in the town centre, where most of the non-Aboriginals lived. The second house, in which we lived for nearly ten months, stood in the mission compound, and was definitely in the Aboriginal part of Fitzroy. Although Fitzroy was still a small town, life at these two ends of town proved to be rather different.

3.2.1 The main centres

In 1985, Fitzroy Crossing Primary School was in the process of undergoing renovations. It had a newly built section, especially designed for Secondary Applied Technical School classes (SATS). There were around two hundred children at Fitzroy Primary School, of whom only 10% were non-Aboriginal. Boys and girls who had completed primary school were attending the SATS classes. There was still no high school in Fitzroy but one was greatly needed. The closest college was at Port Hedland some 700 km south west of Fitzroy. Nearly all the children who had left town to continue schooling had returned home before completing their qualifications or had failed. This was a major concern both for parents and the school authority, who were asking for a high school in Fitzroy as soon as possible. A school bus service was operating around town as well as at the closest settlements. By now, many remote Aboriginal settlements had their own community school and government primary schools had started in other Aboriginal villages of the Fitzroy Valley. There were approximately the same number of children in 1985 as in 1980: by contrast there were three times more people employed at the school. There were definite improvements in ideas and views about the education of Aborigines, but many problems remained and were not about to be solved easily. In my view three problems particularly need to be noted. Firstly, the majority of teachers had no previous experience with Aboriginal children, many of them had just graduated and Fitzroy was their first working experience. They were not aware of the town's main social problems and had very little knowledge of local history. Secondly, children who spoke their own Aboriginal language or Kriol at home were banned from using these languages at school. Knowledge of English is important for acquiring an education in Australia, but the absence of a bilingual program seemed a serious deficiency given their effectiveness in the Northern Territory. Finally, none of the teachers I met was trained in teaching English as a second language.

The roadhouse was still a main centre in 1985/1987 and the most popular part of it was still the take away shop. Since 1981, Aborigines in Fitzroy seemed to have developed an almost immoderate taste for take away products. The
store had been expanded and offered a wider range of products. It remained the most expensive shopping place in town. The garage and workshop had also been enlarged, and there were now two full time mechanics employed permanently. The garage was fully booked for up to a week in advance. Credit facilities were not granted as easily as before, but the roadhouse was still attracting a lot of people. It was especially popular on pension nights as it closed later than the other stores. It had the same manager as in 1980: he was a well known man and was respected by almost the entire Aboriginal population. The roadhouse constituted more than ever a strategic place to observe people's movements in and out of town, since the village of Kurnangki had been erected on the other side of the highway and a new MWW office had been built next to the village (see Map 5).

It would be easy to guess that during the five years the Crossing Inn had not lost its popularity. This time I mostly frequented the lounge or garden bar. It was the place to be on Friday nights at 'happy hour' time, when the prices were lower and it was not uncommon to meet almost half of Fitzroy's non-Aboriginal population. 'Happy hour' did not apply in the 'Aboriginal' bar and this part of the pub was often closed on Friday nights: even when it was open, very few Aborigines came on that particular night. However, by 1985, it was common to see Aborigines in the lounge or garden bar. The same rules as before applied to barefooted people, but many Aboriginal people of the younger generation frequented this part of the pub regularly. Most of the Aboriginal patrons in these bars were those regularly employed in town or on cattle stations, people who had attended high school in Perth, or were of mixed descent. The 'Aboriginal' bar was as pathetic as before but from mid 1985 became less frequented. The main reason for this was that a taxi service became available in town then so that Aboriginal people used the pub more as a bottle shop, and would very rarely drink on the spot. They called a taxi, were driven to the pub, bought a carton of beer and were dropped off in one of the many drinking spots in the bush around town. This presented some definite advantages. Firstly, one could choose with whom one would drink. Secondly, it was easier to flee into the bush when the police arrived or when a fight was about to start.

The pub store had closed down in 1984, and the caravan park had been partly transferred elsewhere. The only people living permanently in the caravan park were the pub's employees. The motel's rooms had been slightly upgraded but they were still very irregularly occupied, and when they were it was mainly for overnight stays. The tourist trade had increased but most of the tourists were likely to stay at the new Caravan Park in the town centre or camped at Geikie Gorge Caravan Park, started in 1984.

In contrast with 1980, the hospital was now a main centre. Aborigines were extremely familiar with the health system and queued every day in the casualty corridor. The hospital had new wards built and its bed capacity had doubled since 1980. Unfortunately, there was still only one doctor in town, but
the hospital was adequately staffed as far as nurses and administrative staff were concerned. The doctor was still employed by the Department of Community Health. The staff at the DCH branch had tripled since 1980 and it had established transportable health units, that did not exist before, in most of the Aboriginal settlements of the area. Nurses from the DCH visited outlying settlements every day, and when necessary people were brought to Fitzroy Hospital. This presented an opportunity for Aborigines from town to visit nurses or new patients, and to get some news from other places. Aboriginal women frequently accompanied nurses during their visits to remote places, such as Noonkanbah, Yiyili, Warrimbha, Djugerari or Christmas Creek. They acted as interpreters and guides but this represented for them an opportunity to visit relatives or to be taken to a particular place. Aborigines were definitely aware of local health problems and expressed particular concern especially with sexually transmitted diseases and child health. Few Aboriginal families had lived for a couple of years in the town centre; they all had relatives in various town’s settlements, who had visited them many times. Therefore, people were not as reluctant as before to pass through Fitzroy’s town centre to go to the hospital. The casualty waiting room was always a great place to socialise, but the hospital had more to offer. For example it was fully air conditioned and for this reason attracted many people during the hottest time of the year prior to the wet season. Several refrigerated fountains were also very attractive. I often saw people who left Junjuwa for a quick drive to the hospital where they filled up a couple of billy cans with ice cold water. Finally, and this posed problems to the hospital administration, many people had realised that it was fairly easy to obtain a 'free meal' if you timed the visit to a patient when meals were served in the wards. The hospital’s matron showed me figures which indicated increasing demands for hospital admissions on a fortnightly cycle tied into the scarcity of cash at the end of the second week of the pay cycle. When I left Fitzroy, a second doctor was due in town the following week, and a branch of the Aboriginal Medical Service was to start in town in late 1987.

Marra Worra Worra’s new office was officially opened in early 1986. It was located within an entirely new building that stood by itself between Windmill reserve and Kurnangki village. MWW had become one of the main centres in town. Four Aboriginal people were employed fulltime as well as five non-Aboriginals. It was still the only Aboriginal resource agency of the Fitzroy Valley and as such was extremely busy. MWW was amongst many other duties and responsibilities, supervising the bookkeepers of six to eight remote settlements. People living in these communities, as well as all those who wished to, received their social security benefits at MWW. Individual cheques were handed over the same day, and Aboriginal bookkeepers from each of the concerned communities came once a fortnight to organise the payment in cash of social benefits. Also, chairpersons and council members of remote settlements visited MWW office frequently for various reasons. These reasons could cover many fields: from simple advice on how to get a loan, to problems experienced with the community school. There were many other reasons that
made this place an attractive one. Firstly, cheques and cash could be collected. Secondly, one always had the chance of finding a lift to remote settlements if one wished to visit them. Thirdly, town based people could always meet relatives living in outlying communities and exchange news. Fourthly, at a weekly meeting of MWW council, members of staff and some members of all communities involved discussed local and regional problems as well as commenting on new state or Federal policies. Finally, a two way radio was in frequent use to inform people about important events such as deaths, ceremonies, meetings, or simply to communicate with remote communities outside the Kimberley area and in the Northern Territory.

The last main centre was entirely new to me. It was a shopping complex built in late 1983 and owned jointly by the publican and the owner of Fitzroy Crossing Enterprise. It included a post office (re-located in 1984), a supermarket, a butcher shop with take away products, a video shop, and a caravan park. The complex was located next to the town centre, and a further development of Fitzroy, with more new houses, was planned nearby. During week days this was probably the most frequented spot in town.

The post office was attracting many Aboriginal people, who started to wait outside the building often a few hours before the mail was even sorted. All Aboriginal communities, as well as many individuals, had their own private mail box. Those waiting outside could easily find out if they or one of their relatives had received their social benefit. Once collected, the mail was taken either to Junjuwa office in the case of mail for persons living in Junjuwa, or to MWW office where all mail for people from other communities was kept. Those with a private mail box cashed their cheques immediately at the supermarket. Banking facilities were available at the post office but less than 5% of the Aboriginal population had saving accounts. It was possible to cash a cheque at the post office but only for people who had saving accounts.

The supermarket manager agreed to cash cheques on condition that people would buy something. The supermarket had a wide range of food items (fresh, tinned, and frozen), as well as a reasonable variety of non food items, considering the remoteness of the place. Prices were the cheapest in town\(^6\) and the supermarket greatly benefited from its central location.

The butcher shop was the only place in town where it was possible to purchase fresh meat\(^7\). The butcher had a licence to slaughter cattle and process meat. Cattle station managers where only allowed to kill a few head of cattle per year for their own consumption, and it was now illegal to buy meat that had not been processed at the local abattoir. The butcher’s wife was running a take away shop at the same location, which made more profit than the butcher shop.

The video shop offered a great variety of products, none of them available at Fitzroy in 1980. It supplied electrical equipment, audio and video material, household items and toys. Video recorder sets had appeared in Fitzroy the previous year. In 1987 the town was still not connected to the national
television network\textsuperscript{8}. Due to the absence of any television channel, video cassettes rapidly became popular with both the Aboriginal and white population.

The caravan park was full during the tourist season. Tourists who travelled in the Kimberley usually stopped for a couple of days at Fitzroy Crossing, mainly to visit Geikie Gorge National Park. The caravan park offered a safe, convenient and central place to stay for those passing through.

3.2.2 The minor centres

The police station had remained a minor centre in town. Two Aboriginal police aides and two extra constables had joined the previous staff of three. The lock up had been expanded, but the 'tradition' of having prisoners outside during the day had survived. This was still what attracted visitors regularly. Some periods were busier than others, for example on pension night or when a magistrate came to town. A magistrate was needed to deal with other crimes as well as with juvenile offenders. He came once every three weeks. There were three Justices of the Peace residing in Fitzroy Crossing who sat in court for minor offences; all were non-Aboriginal even though 95\% of people appearing in court were Aboriginal people. It seemed that there was more cooperation than before between the police force and Aboriginal communities' leaders. When I left Fitzroy, Junjuwa Council was considering an application to enforce its own 'by laws'.

The UAM store was not as predominant as it had been. Firstly, most communities cashed cheques for their members either at their own office (Junjuwa) or through MWW (Noonkanbah, Yiyili, Kurnangki, Kadjina). Those who had their own mail box or received their mail at the post office could cash their cheques in many places. Only a few people, mainly the oldest in town, had kept the UAM store as their postal address and still used the old 'banking' system. Secondly, the shopping complex and the roadhouse had diverted many patrons from the UAM store, mainly because both offered take away facilities, and also because they sold cigarettes and tobacco, that were not available, for religious reasons, at the mission store. Thirdly, a lot of places that previously attracted people to the mission compound, had either been moved (bakery, MWW office, church), had disappeared from town (Summer Institute of Linguistics, 'butcher shop') or had become minor centres on their own (Department for Community Services office). If the UAM store had lost its position as the main retailing store in Fitzroy Crossing it had instead become the main wholesale supplier of community stores to many Aboriginal settlements of the Fitzroy area. It seemed that the UAM store allowed easier repayments and better credit facilities to community stores. There were never
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as many people socialising around the mission store as there had been in 1980. Nevertheless there were a few periods of the day when people came in numbers. At lunch recess or immediately after school, many children went to UAM store to spend their pocket money. Other regular customers were Aborigines employed at the nearby Department for Community Services office, at the Primary School, or those who worked on a casual basis at the second hand shop located behind DCS block. At the mission store they could meet old people and relatives from town who were attending classes at the Karrayili school.

Karrayili was an Aboriginal Education Centre that had been operating for two years. It was located within walking distance of the UAM store. Classes were attended by old people from Junjuwa, Kurnangki, and Windmill Reserve; after the class they always stopped at the mission store because for most of them it was still their 'bank'.

In February 1987, the UAM store was transferred to Junjuwa Community, and was renamed Burrawa store, after the Bunuba name of the two hills behind the mission compound. A new manager was appointed by the Junjuwa council. The community had its own store within the village, and intended to keep Burrawa store as a regional supply centre for Aboriginal community stores.

The Department for Community Services, located next to the mission store, had become a minor centre on its own. There were several reasons for people being found at the DCS office. Firstly it employed a majority of Aboriginal people (five Aborigines and one non-Aboriginal). All but one were from the area and had different linguistic backgrounds. Each of them received many visits from close or distant relatives, often to demand privileged services which they thought they were naturally entitled to receive. Secondly, the DCS dealt with juvenile delinquency, domestic violence and other alcohol related problems, which were all common in town. Thirdly, DCS was still closely involved with several community development schemes, with about ten Aboriginal groups established within the town or in outlying settlements. Members of these groups visited the DCS office a few times a day. Finally, whenever there was a shortage of cash in town, some Aboriginal families attempted to obtain 'food vouchers' from the DCS district officer. In the recent past these vouchers were still handed out generously, but the goals and aims of the DCS were by now quite different, although few people in town seemed to have understood the changes of DCS policy and demands for food vouchers remained numerous though unsuccessful most of the time.

Another minor centre in Fitzroy Crossing was the second garage in town with its mini shopping complex. The garage was on one side of the building, and a store was on the other side. This store sold clothes, toys, tackle and fishing gear, hardware, firearms and ammunition, as well as audio and video materials. It was also the second video club in town. It had more non-Aboriginal customers because of its hardware and tackle sections. It was a bit

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isolated for it stood away from the town centre or any main centres in town. This presented an advantage for Aborigines who regularly patronised the store after pension day. Because of the relative isolation of the place, they had a chance to avoid demands for food or money from relatives. Further, when people were no longer accorded credit facilities at the roadhouse, they would try to have their cars fixed at the second garage.

The last minor centre was in fact two different places that I present together for they were both second hand shops. Both were open only two days a week. The first one was located in the Catholic church, built in 1984 in the town centre. It was run by two Franciscan sisters based in Fitzroy Crossing for a few years. It was basically a second hand clothes shop, and was extremely popular not only amongst Aborigines, but among the white population as well. The other was an Aboriginal cooperative enterprise, supervised by the doctor's wife. The shop employed two Aboriginal women on a part-time basis. Clothes were available as well as second hand furniture and household items. It was only patronised by Aborigines and was seen as a threat by local white store managers. It had suffered from management problems and it did not seem to be a viable enterprise at the time of my departure.

3.2.3 The Aboriginal population

There were between 300 and 400 permanent Aboriginal residents at Junjuwa during 1985-1987. The population fluctuated according to various factors during the 16 month period I lived in Fitzroy (see Table 1 in the next Chapter). Many people had left Junjuwa since 1981, moving into other villages recently built in town or in the area. Junjuwa now had its own community store, a building had been erected for the bakery, and the church had been pulled down from its previous location and rebuild within the village. When I left, more people were planning to move out of Junjuwa.

Kurnangki village had been completed in early 1985, and about 100 people had moved in. Most of Kurnangki residents previously lived at the same location, then called Fig Tree camp, and had moved into Junjuwa while their village was undergoing construction.

Windmill Reserve was renamed Mindi Rardi when it was transferred from the DCS to Junjuwa Community. A group of closely related Walmajarri people lived there. They left Junjuwa in early 1986 and were attempting to start their own community at a location 150 km south east of Fitzroy Crossing. Meanwhile they lived at Mindi Rardi. The houses were old and many had been vandalised; an upgrading program was scheduled for early 1988.
MAP 5
Fitzroy Crossing in 1985/1987

SCALE 4 cm = 1 km
Fitzroy Crossing

Five houses in the town centre, out of thirty, were occupied by Aboriginal families. All these families had at least one of their members regularly employed in town. These houses were State Government houses and were allocated to those who worked for a government body in Fitzroy Crossing.

Two Aboriginal families lived in houses located in the mission compound; both men were employed by the UAM.

The Aboriginal camp at Brooking Springs Station no longer existed, all its residents having moved into Junjuwa village.

Bayulu Village had been completed in the early 1980s, and about 200 people were living there permanently. It had its own community store, its own sports ground and benefited from its relative isolation from town (15 kilometres away). Most of the children attended Gogo Primary School, located next to Gogo station homestead, a couple of kilometres away from the village.

As far as entertainment was concerned, even though I stayed for more than a full year this time, I realised that there was still not much to do. Most of the organised sports events, as well as the races and rodeos, existed five years before. The main new entertainment in town was the 'video'. Video sets and video cassettes were introduced when the shopping complex opened. During the first six months it did not seem to be popular amongst Aboriginal people but this changed rapidly. For example, when I arrived in December 1985 there were eight sets at Junjuwa, and when I left sixteen months later there were sixteen. Figures were similar for Kurnangki: four sets in late 1985 and nine sets in early 1987. The average consumption of video cassettes per day per family was between four and five at the beginning of the fortnight and none to one at the end. Membership of the video hire service cost $85 ($50 of which was refundable when the membership contract was terminated) and cassettes were hired at between $5 and $7 each per day. The range of cassettes available was limited: the two video clubs offered basically the same things. More than 70% of the stock available were violent or war movies (Rambo and Kung fu type...).

Movies were still shown once a fortnight. By now the school was in charge of this activity, and movies were screened at the primary school. They were usually recent pictures and each session attracted large crowds, mainly Aborigines, from town. Other fortnightly movie nights were organised on a different day at Gogo primary school but they were far less popular amongst town based Aborigines. Junjuwa now had its own 'Rock and Roll' band and disco nights were organised regularly in town. It was possible to distinguish two types of disco. Those initiated by a local association or the school people, for which one had to pay to get in, and where food and drinks were available for sale inside, alcohol was banned, and police supervision was available. The 'improvised' discos were often practice sessions of local bands which were joined freely by large crowds. The second type was banned by the police after a few incidents. Once a year, in June, Fitzroy Crossing school organised its sports
carnival and a month later the Fitzroy Valley School Sports Carnival took place, when children from the entire Fitzroy Valley competed for their own school. Regular sports events such as the Basket-Ball Starlight Carnival or the Aboriginal Sports Day had existed for decades and were previously organised by missionaries. Now they were initiated by local associations or the Karrayili Education centre. Fitzroy's most famous events, rodeos twice a year and a yearly race day, attracted nearly the entire population of the Kimberley to town; they had been organised for decades and the tradition was perpetuated by the Fitzroy Crossing Progress Association.

3.3 Employment opportunities at Fitzroy Crossing

My first field trip was too short to evaluate all employment opportunities at Fitzroy Crossing. Nevertheless, it was clear that job opportunities were greater for non-Aborigines. It was a fact that all white people living in town had permanent jobs. As far as the Aborigines were concerned, employment opportunities were scarce. At the time of my stay, only six Aboriginal people out of the Junjuwa population were employed in town (three at the UAM store, two at the hospital and one at the DCW office). There would have been a few more jobs available for Aboriginal people on a casual basis, for example at the school, at the kindergarten or with the Summer Institute of Linguistics, but I did not have the chance to investigate these opportunities.

In 1980, the cattle industry was still the main provider of job opportunities in the area. These opportunities were nowhere near what they had been prior to the implementation of the Pastoral Award. Nevertheless, a few permanent positions were still available for Aborigines in some stations of the Fitzroy Valley. Both women and men were employed: women were housekeepers, cooks or cleaners and men were employed in gardening, fencing, or butchering tasks. Seasonal employment was also available at the time of the mustering season (April to October). Demands for seasonal workers were irregular; at times a station would be in need of three mustering teams with ten to twelve 'ringers' each and at other times less than ten men would be involved in a joint mustering campaign that covered two cattle stations. When extra labour was required, the station manager would send one of his full time Aboriginal employees to recruit required workers at Fitzroy Crossing.

Between 1985 and 1987, I had many chances to investigate employment opportunities in Fitzroy. Overall, the situation was much the same. All non-
Aborigines were employed and only a small minority of Aborigines had jobs. For many positions people had to be recruited outside the Kimberley region. The region was lacking in qualified doctors, nurses, teachers, mechanics, bookkeepers, accountants, electricians, and plumbers, and vacant positions were advertised at least at the State level. Although there were still employment opportunities for local people, chances for non-Aboriginal locals were much higher. The situation was obviously more complex than a simple correlation between identity and employment. Nearly all jobs available locally circulated amongst local Europeans, elsewhere already employed (or their spouses) without being advertised. For example, two part time positions at the primary school (secretary or librarian) were 'transmitted' from one constable's wife to the next. In Junjuwa village the community adviser's wife was doing the bookkeeping for the community. Some nurses worked part time at the video shop or at the roadhouse take away shop. The monopoly by white people was not limited to jobs, as almost all local enterprises and business were owned by only a handful of non-Aboriginal people. For example, the publican also owned the supermarket, the caravan park, and the shopping complex site. He also had shares in a town based building enterprise (Fitzroy Crossing Enterprise). This enterprise had the monopoly for plumbing and electrical repairs and maintenance contracts, construction and upgrading of buildings, road maintenance and repairs, for it was the only one in the area. Fitzroy Crossing Enterprise was also the depot and only agent in town for transport by road. The enterprise owner had also a few houses for rent in town, as well as the video shop in the shopping complex.

It was difficult for Aborigines to break through this monopoly in order to get better access to jobs. But it was true that many factors within the Aboriginal population also made it difficult for people to get a job. There was an extremely high level of illiteracy: qualifications were rare and when held were often inappropriate. Finally, potential applicants suffered from a lack of confidence or had difficulty coping with pressures from relatives and peers. For example, the DCS advertised a position for which preference would be given to a local Aboriginal woman. At least six women were qualified for the job, four applied but none of them came to the interview. For a few weeks several people tried to bolster the applicants' confidence; eventually one came for an interview and was offered the job. She accepted it, but never started. The position remained vacant for six months until DCS, desperately short of staff, offered it to a non-Aboriginal woman.

In 1985-1987 there were thirty positions occupied by Aboriginal people in Fitzroy Crossing outside those available through Aboriginal Incorporated Communities. Six were casual jobs, two at Geikie Gorge National Park during the tourist season, and four at the pub for weekly rubbish collection. Employees were all male for these six casual jobs as well as three other positions, and the remaining twenty-one Aboriginal people regularly employed were women. These figures did not include employment offered by Aboriginal
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communities. For example, Junjuwa employed twelve persons, six of them full time (three office workers, one trainee project officer, two shop assistants), and six part time (two apprentice bakers, four rubbish collectors). Occasionally, specific training schemes were available for a limited period of time. For example, when Junjuwa houses were upgraded in early 1987, eight young men from the community worked for twelve weeks on the program.

Seasonal employment in the cattle industry was still available, but all permanent positions had been eliminated. At the peak of the mustering season, up to sixty men from Junjuwa village were employed in various cattle stations. One difference between 1980 and 1986 was that since 1985 Aboriginal men had the choice of working for an Aboriginal cattle station. These stations were also in need of extra seasonal workers, and one Aboriginal man tried to create his own enterprise. This Junjuwa man had been eager to have his own mustering team which he planned to hire out to stations that required extra seasonal labour. He was offered a chance in 1985, when he had a very successful mustering season. Unfortunately, due to management problems and financial difficulties, he experienced a heavy deficit during the 1986 mustering season.

In 1985-1987 there were more employment opportunities for Aborigines than in 1981; nevertheless, self-determination policies had brought more non-Aboriginal people to town and employment opportunities for Aborigines had not kept pace\(^{11}\).
Plate 2

Sign-board at the main entrance of Junjuwa community. It was at this main entrance that Junjuwa councillors were on duty at night to check residents, outsiders and vehicles entering Junjuwa in order to keep alcoholic beverage outside the village.
Endnotes - Chapter Three

1 Fitzroy Crossing's white population in 1980/1981 was between sixty and seventy.
2 Marra Worra Worra is a resource agency for the Aboriginal settlement of the Fitzroy Valley area.
3 Fresh vegetables and fruits were only available from time to time at the Mission store in 1980.
4 Many people, especially the old ones, banked their cheques at the mission store. Every time they did some shopping, money was taken directly from their account.
5 In one instance a group of nearly forty Aborigines walked into the garden bar to protest against the closure of the Aboriginal bar. They asked the publican to reopen it and forced him, supported by garden bar patrons, to apply 'happy hour' prices in the Aboriginal bar as well. This was the only 'happy hour' that the Aboriginal bar has ever had. After this incident, a police patrol was at the pub every Friday night.
6 A local association known as the Failure to Thrive Committee was concerned with the cost of living at Fitzroy Crossing. It conducted a survey to evaluate the cost of a 'market basket price list' done according to local Aborigines' eating patterns for a family of four for a fortnight. The basket included food items as well as non food items. The survey was carried out in July 1986. The results were: roadhouse $298.77, UAM store $273.49, Supermarket $269.22.
7 Frozen meat was available from both the supermarket and the roadhouse.
8 The 1981 census figures gave a permanent population of 428 people for Fitzroy Crossing. Only the Aboriginal population of Junjuwa was taken into account as a permanent population, so it was estimated that the cost of the town's connection to the Australian network was not worth as there were not enough residents in town.
9 Windmill Reserve was given the same Aboriginal name as Fitzroy Crossing Hospital because they were both included in the area called Mindi Rardi by Bunuba.
10 By set I mean a video recorder and a television set; the average cost of a complete set was between $1200 and $1500.
11 Fitzroy Crossing was in that matter fully representative of the lack of employment opportunities in the Fitzroy Valley area. For more details on this issue, see Arthur 1986.